Editorial Ecozon@ Issue 9.2

Axel Goodbody

Welcome to the Autumn 2018 issue of *Ecozon@*. The themed section of this number, 'Mythology and Ecocriticism: A Natural Encounter,' explores the hitherto only sporadically and unsystematically addressed area of intersection between two vibrant fields of research, examining ancient myths of human transformation of the natural environment and interspecies relations, and their adaptation in modern literary narratives. The Guest Editors, Imelda Martín Junquera and Francisco Molina-Moreno, argue in their introduction that myths have a unique role to play today in facilitating a rebalancing of the species and promoting a more sustainable relationship with the natural environment. Myths, which simultaneously enlighten and obscure the truth, have historically been frequently used in such a way as to advocate human exceptionalism and reinforce male domination. However, the nine articles presented here show that they are capable of fruitful literary adaptation in ways which interrogate and challenge these positions. After an initial essay by Esther Valdés Tejera exploring how the shifting perceptions of the land in the western world have been encapsulated in myths, five authors (Michaela Keck, Charles Krieg, Shiau Bo Liang, Sławomir Studiarz, and Maricel Oró-Piqueras together with Nuria Mina-Riera) examine the reworking of myths in twentieth and twenty-first-century novels. Two essays, by Qurratulaen Liaqat and Luca Bugnone, are concerned with plays. The principal works discussed are by the US, Canadian and Caribbean writers Paul Auster and Rajiv Joseph, Margaret Atwood and Lorna Crozier, and Monique Roffey, the Peruvian José María Arguedas, Britain's Angela Carter, and Euripides. In the final contribution to the section, Ohihane Germandia reads Plato's version of the myth of Prometheus as a debate on the relative justification for environmental intervention and laissez-faire. Five of the essays are in English, but two in Spanish and two in Italian reflect *Ecozon@*'s plurilingual ethos.

The first of the two essays in the General Section, Peter Mortensen's '"We're Going In for Natural Training": Athletics and Agriculture in Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon*', examines the advocacy of athleticism and pro-environmental behaviour in the work of one of America's most popular and influential early twentieth-century authors, and argues that London anticipated contemporary thinkers such as Peter Sloterdijk in combining environmental concern with concern for public health, and modelling types of *askesis*, or exercise, that modern humans must perform to establish a more sustainable relationship with the natural world.

The second essay, Susan Marie Divine's 'The Nature of Anxiety: Precarious City Lives in *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* shows how two Spanish novels written fifty years apart, which share a common location in working-class neighbourhoods on the southern periphery of Madrid, depict the process of urban development and its impact on the

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inhabitants by superimposing the external on the internal, and blending cityscapes with the bodies and minds of women. The basis of communal and individual identity is increasingly eroded as the metaphors from the natural environment in which these are anchored become progressively divorced from reality. The precarious lives of the female protagonists mirror the exploitation of the natural environment.

In the Art and Creative Writing Section, Damiano Benvegnù has selected images and writing relating to the theme of the issue. The section opens with fascinating images from Thomas Feuerstein's installation 'Prometheus Delivered' (the source of the issue's cover image), which depicts Prometheus's entrapment by the technology he gave to humans, and, if we recall the actions of Prometheus's brother Epimetheus, simultaneously hints at the agencies of the nonhuman. These images are followed by a poem, 'Venus and Jupiter' by Deborah Fleming, a short play 'My Tempest' by Catherine Lord, an essay on spiders by Allyson Whipple, and a short story concerned with appreciation of the natural environment by Norbert Kovacs.

The issue concludes with book reviews by Jill E. Anderson and Simon Probst. Jill E. Anderson explores how Chad Weidner's *The Green Ghost: William Burroughs and the Ecological Mind*, the first ecocritical study of this provocative experimental representative of the Beat Generation, invites us to read Burroughs as a writer "immersed in a conservationist, ecological ecocritical, and a biocentric/ deep ecological ethos". Simon Probst's review focuses on the book *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture,* edited by Gabriele Dürbeck, Urte Stobbe, Hubert Zapf and Evi Zemanek.

We note with considerable regret that Hannes Bergthaller is stepping down as Book Reviews Editor due to pressure of other work, and take this opportunity to thank him very warmly, not only for serving as Reviews Editor since the journal was founded, but also for his unfailing support of the work of the *Ecozon@* editorial team. A call for expressions of interest in the position of Book Reviews Editor will shortly be posted on the journal's platform, and we invite enquiries, either to Hannes himself (he is happy to work alongside the new Editor for a transition period), or to our Editor in Chief, Carmen Flys Junquera.

Mythology and Ecocriticism: A Natural Encounter
Introduction[1]

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This issue was conceived to occupy a shared *locus* in the study of myth and ecocriticism which has so far been vacant. Its purpose is to link *topoi* such as Eden, the promised land and the new Canaan as manifestations of paradise, the Arthurian cycle, pastoral Arcadia, unexplored virgin tropical lands, and the American West with the current situation of the world we inhabit, in terms of our relationship with the land and the more-than-human world. Our aim was to show that myths and the literature of nature have been written in acknowledgement and understanding of each other, that they have evolved in parallel, with a common focus on the intervention of human beings in nature. Take the Greek myth of Prometheus for example: his betrayal of the gods led to an alteration of the world order. Prometheus became an icon of human rebellion, a recurrent symbol reminding humans of their inability to overcome divine power. At the same time, the Prometheus myth mirrors the eternal natural cycle of destruction and creation in its repetition throughout the history of literature, in emblematic works like *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley.

If we wish to fully understand the present and the changes that have come about as a consequence of human wars and conflicts such as the events of 9/11 in the USA, the Iraq War and our connections and disconnections with nature, we must therefore go back to the ancient mythologies, and analyse how these have been presented and adapted in history and literature down through the centuries. The Holy Grail is one of the most commonly encountered myths. Since *The Romance of Perceval or Story of the Grail* by Chrétien de Troyes, the story of this chalice has undergone repeated transformations, serving as a symbol of Christianity pitted against the forces of Islam, a myth of eternal return, and a promise of salvation from the sin of Adam and Eve through the Passion of Jesus Christ. This powerful story of the Christian faith and religious devotion gave medieval knights the strength to fight for possession of Jerusalem for

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Christendom. The image of the Fisher King, which is closely associated with the Holy Grail, has also haunted the imagination of European scholars for centuries, and, together with the Grail, experienced different interpretations. The healing properties of the contents of the Grail (supposedly the blood of Jesus Christ) and its power to bestow eternal youth became the principal focus in works ascribing to it the ability to restore health to the land, which was wounded like its King. The mythical quest for the Holy Grail gained an element that linked medieval knights with classical heroes in their quest for the fountain of eternal youth, and this inspired expeditions to the Americas, where sixteenth-century Spanish conquistadors journeyed tirelessly towards El Dorado. The Grail also functioned as an equivalent to the Garden of Eden, from which the King would have been expelled, as his wounds metaphorically imply that he has fallen from Grace.

Myths of origin, cosmogonies and accounts of how the world was created have served to explain natural phenomena, including the nature of vegetal and animal species, all over the world. The most familiar attempt to explain the creation of the Earth is the Biblical Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve's fall from Eden. However, indigenous American myths have also attracted great interest in the last few decades, thanks to the work of anthropologists. Celtic and Nordic mythologies, and Asian traditions like those reflected in the *Enuma eliš* explain the origins of the world in terms which differ from those in Judeo-Christian tradition. But they too are closely connected with the land, nature and the relationship between human beings as farmers or shepherds and other species, as Louise Westling affirms in *The Green Breast of the New World*. Operating with myths often entails a return to the past, rediscovering and recycling old conceptions rather than creating entirely fresh ones. Many myths were originally conceived to explain the creation of the world, or natural disasters ranging from plagues to changes in the climate. Today myths of recovery of Eden often reflect hope, a resilient movement towards a re-balancing of the species leading to a more sustainable relationship with the natural environment. This is at least the case with those discussed in the articles in this issue.

Historically, "the most important mythology humans have developed" in their relationship with the earth has been focused on the attempt to regain Eden, as Carolyn Merchant has pointed out. However, current myth criticism and ecocriticism do not endorse an attitude of nostalgia for the lost paradise, like Milton's eponymous work; on the contrary, it reflects a new attitude towards nature and the more-than-human world. The contributors to the special section in this issue of *Ecozon@* address what Parker Krieg calls the "voyage to recover what has been severed" in terms of a more imbricated relationship of human beings with nature. Most of them also acknowledge the special relevance of forests to the preservation of nature. As Robert Pogue Harrison has argued:

> Ecological concern over forests goes beyond just the forests insofar as forests have now become metonymies for the earth as a whole. What is true for a particular forest's ecosystem is true for the totality of the biosphere. Humanity begins to appear in a new light: as species caught in the delicate and diverse web of a forestlike planetary environment. More precisely, we are beginning to appear to ourselves as a species of parasite which threatens to destroy the hosting organism as a whole. (199)

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Although certain fables and animal myths have tried to teach us throughout history that human beings depend on natural diversity and all species depend on one another, the interaction between species in the natural world has been characterized by human domination, and that in literature by anthropocentrism. The subjugation of nature derives in no small measure from a myth: the Biblical story of how God created man. Women, represented by Eve, were located in the hierarchy of species a step below Adam, whose role it was to exercise control over "inert matter and docile women" (Westling 10). The articles presented here show that, while many myths have served to reinforce human exceptionalism and male superiority, other myths contribute, in their recurrent use in literature and film, to challenging them, and to establishing a more positive connection between the sexes and with other species and the natural world.

The myth of wilderness as a savage and threatening place (rather than an asylum or refuge) has contributed to configuring a positive vision of urban societies, and artificial spaces under the control of humans, as God instructed when He created Adam and Eve. In her account of the lament over the dying wilderness in the USA in the work of early twentieth-century American writers, Louise Westling shows how exploitation was linked with gendering of the land and the landscape, but also how an initially ambivalent attitude towards nature was transformed into an ethic of responsibility through the evocation of certain ancient myths. These myths are validated as important points of reference in the quest for a new understanding of the natural world and effective interspecies communication.

What is then new in the nine essays collected here on mythology and ecocriticism? They reflect on the past, present and future of humanity and nature, more specifically on how the ancient myths have configured the world in the course of history, and how human beings have disregarded the impact of our species on the planet, even though these same myths have warned us of the dangerous impact of our non-ecological practices. All the articles included in this section are concerned with acknowledgement of the agency of animal species or of the natural world at large in their analyses. They explore literary works from a posthuman perspective: human beings are relegated to a subordinate position in representations of a combination of species engaged in an egalitarian relationship.

The first article of the section, Esther Valdés Tejera's "La percepción del paisaje desde la realidad de Occidente: entre la naturaleza y la razón" ("The Perception of the Landscape from the Western Perspective: Between Nature and Reason") aims precisely at tracing the development of societies through the transformation of wild natural spaces into urbanised ones. The author considers representative moments in the history of the perception of the landscape in the West (although she also draws some interesting comparisons with Eastern ideas), and illustrates the paradigm shift between these stages with the help of the myths that underlay the corresponding conceptions (myths of the Mother Earth Goddess, of the Olympian gods, the shift from polytheism to monotheism, etc.). Valdés perceives a tendency to destruction, and sketches some ideas for the future ideology needed to build a sustainable world: such an ideology should be based on the concept of life and centered around ethics.

Michaela Keck's article "Paradise Retold: Revisionist Mythmaking in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy" is directly concerned with the myth of paradise. Keck explores Margaret Atwood's feminist revision of the myth from an ecofeminist standpoint. She shows how Atwood reconceives paradise by duplicating the ancient human dreams of it in Crake's techno pagan and Adam One's eco-millennialist "gardens of delights," both of which are refracted through evolutionary science and ecology. This postmodern vision of the garden of paradise features genetic engineering practices and technological advances, in the attempt to create a perfect society in which there is no longer any distinction between different living beings: they are presented as a single category. Atwood includes several Eves, each with their own characteristic ways of seduction, but avoids the categorization of victims.

In "Carnival Anthropocene: Myth and Cultural Memory in Monique Roffey's *Archipelago,*" Charles Parker Krieg examines the role of myth in and as cultural memory through a reading of the novel *Archipelago* (2013) by the Trinidadian-British author Monique Roffey. Although it initially suggests the journey of an epic hero with psoriasis towards destruction like Captain Ahab against the white whale, this tale reverses the trajectory of the *Moby-Dick* narrative. When the main character's house is destroyed and his family are lost in a natural catastrophe, he embarks on a quest to overcome his flood trauma. Although the novel has a realistic contemporary setting, Krieg shows that it employs mythical elements and narrative structures, and offers an alternative to the familiar story of anthropogenic environmental change as a linear accumulation of loss or foreclosure of the future.

"Una llamada por la justicia medioambiental en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* de José María Arguedas" ("A Call for Environmental Justice in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* by José María Arguedas"), by Shiau Bo Liang, deals with the novel *The Fox from Above and the Fox from Below*, by the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas. The author argues that Arguedas combines his authorial voice with the voices of ancient mythical figures to make a powerful call for environmental justice for indigenous peoples in the context of the industrialization of modern Peru. The mythical figures involved are "zorros" (foxes) taken from the Moche and other ancient Peruvian cultures. Characters in Arguedas's novel metamorphose into foxes, and become trickster heroes. Through their dialogue, Arguedas gives a broad ecocritical account of the environmental and social degradation accompanying Peru's rampant industrialization in the 20th century, focusing on the lost paradise of the coastal city of Chimbote. A return to origins and wilderness, as envisioned by Arguedas, is necessary for the salvation of the indigenous inhabitants from the advances of modern civilization. As Shiau Bo Liang points out, the image of the exploited city as a fallen woman also echoes the tenets of contemporary ecofeminism.

If foxes are, somehow, the heroes in the novel which Shiau Bo Liang deals with, a tiger appears in the play studied by Qurratulaen Liaqat in her article "War-Afflicted Beings: Myth-Ecological Discourse of the Play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by Rajiv Joseph." Liaqat shows how, to convey the hazards of the Iraq war, Rajiv Joseph incorporates ancient and medieval myths (for example, Philomela's rape, as told by

Ovid, and the quest for the Holy Grail), as well as using monotheistic religious texts to build a myth-ecological narrative of the dilapidated ecology of the contemporary world. The setting in this case is of the utmost relevance: the fact that the garden of Eden is believed to have been located in Iraq demonstrates how human beings spend their lives longing for paradise and attempting to return to it, and illustrates the function of myths and spiritual symbols. After the destruction caused by the war, including the bombing of a zoo, Rajiv Joseph reflects on the violation of human, animal and environmental rights. The shooting of a tiger by a US army officer shows how life loses its importance in wartime.

Like the play to which Liaqat's article is devoted, the novel dealt with by Sławomir Studniarz has also something to do with current events involving the US. These serve as an excuse for Studniarz to go back in time and contemplate the Mexican-American war and the end of the frontier as reflected in Paul Auster's novel *Travels in the Scriptorium.* According to Studniarz, Auster's novel offers a revision of two essential myths of the American nation: the myth of the West and the "errand in the wilderness," with Manifest Destiny as its later incarnation justifying the imperialist mission. The wilderness itself is divested of spiritual significance, desacralized, as the Alien Territories are converted into an arena of carnage and indiscriminate slaughter. The 'advances' of civilization against the 'dangers' of the wilderness appear once more in the confrontation between the two.

The symbolic loading of the fox and the tiger in Liang's and Liaqat's essays finds an equivalent in two articles dealing with winged beings, namely a swan and a butterfly. "Rewriting Leda and the Swan: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), and Lorna Crozier's "Forms of Innocence" (1985) and "The Swan Girl" (1995)," by Maricel Oró Piqueras and Núria Mina-Riera, offers a contrastive analysis of Crozier's and Carter's retelling of Ovid's account of the myth of Leda and the swan in his *Metamorphoses* (8AD) (also of W.B. Yeats's poem "Leda and the Swan", written in 1928). The authors show how, in Crozier's and Carter's versions, the original meaning of the swan is subverted, by adopting connotations more in tune with a sense of interspecies community, and challenging the violence that Ovid and Yeats attributed to the bird by presenting it as Zeus in disguise. On the other hand, both Carter and Crozier challenge patriarchal domination by giving voice to and empowering Leda, the young female character in the myth. This empowerment is closely associated with Leda's harmonization with the natural world, since, by going back to nature, the young Ledas in Carter's and Crozier's works come to terms with their adolescent bodies and become women, free of restrictive cultural and social beliefs. Incidentally, it is worth noting that, as well as the above-mentioned motif of paradise lost and recovered, metamorphoses also constitute a central point in the history of myth, and Ovid's stories have been constantly recreated in literary texts, being frequently referenced today. Several of the articles included in this issue mention the influence of *The Metamorphoses* in contemporary literary works.

Luca Bugnone's "Le ali della Dea. Polissena e la Valle di Susa" ("The Wings of the Goddess. Polyxena and the Susa Valley") compares the ancient Greek myth of Polyxena

with a contemporary development in the Susa Valley (north-western Italy) involving the discovery of the rare and striking butterfly *Zerynthia polyxena,* whose scientific name includes that of the ancient Greek heroine. Despite the butterfly being listed in the Habitat Directive of 1992 among the rare, threatened, and endemic species of the European Union, the area where it lives has been selected as the planned route of a new high-speed railway line. Luca Bugnone compares the issue with Euripides' tragedy *Hecuba*, where Polyxena is described as the Trojan princess who prefers to kill herself rather than become a slave. Hence, the butterfly that carries her name might become a Trojan horse, enshrining the idea that "the liberation of nature so ardently desired by environmentalists will not be fully effected without the liberation of women" (G. Gaard).

After these articles dealing with animals as symbols of the drastic transformation and/or destruction of the natural environment, and with the development of interspecies dialogue, more specifically between humans and the more-than-human world, this special section about myths and ecocriticism ends with an article dealing with the question whether human intervention becomes necessary in the natural world or our species is just interfering with the course of natural events in a harmful way for the rest of species: "La torpeza de Epimeteo. La discusión entre intervencionismo y *laissez-faire* a la luz del mito prometeico" ("Epimetheus' Clumsiness. The Discussion between Interventionism and *Laissez-faire* in the Light of Promethean Myth") by Oihane Zuberoa Garmendia Glaria. Taking as her starting point and term of comparison the ancient Greek myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus as told by Plato in his *Protagoras,* the author analyses and rethinks the debate between animalism (the position that humans should not consider themselves any different from the rest of animal species) and environmentalism. She argues that the supporters of interventionism (or environmentalism) are close to one of the conceptions present in Plato's version of the myth, that is: the human being as a creature endowed with culture and, for that reason, with the right to intervene in the relations between animals and the environment. On the other hand, animalists (as supporters of non-intervention) seem to echo the opposite vision of human beings as fragile animals who have not the knowledge or ability to manipulate nature. Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have attempted to synthesize both attitudes in their work *Zoopolis.*

A general conclusion we might draw from the articles of this section is that interdisciplinary dialogue between mythcriticism and ecocriticism is not merely an experiment with doubtful prospects, but has already yielded some interesting reflections, and promises to yield more in future. Just as certain myths have legitimized the subjugation and exploitation of nature by humankind, others reflect a will to attain a harmonious relationship with the natural environment. The predominance of works inspired by the more-than-human world among those examined here reflects a desire to replace anthropocentrism by interspecies dialogue or other alternatives, some of which are envisioned in the contributions to this issue. Judging from the articles we have collected, myths of paradise lost and recovered have most often inspired contemporary writers who, rather than lamenting the historical loss of the wilderness, look actively forward to its transformation into gardens and farmed landscapes. We hope and wish

that, like those ancient myths, these studies will also inspire academic research and other kinds of action responding positively and realistically to the current environmental crisis, and leading in this way to the 'recovery of paradise lost'.

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La percepción del paisaje desde la realidad de Occidente: Entre la naturaleza y la razón

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Resumen

Inmersa la Tierra en una profunda crisis eco-social, que algunos niegan y otros tratan de superar con las mismas recetas que la provocaron, es necesario un nuevo ideario sobre el que construir un mundo sostenible. El paisaje, intersección entre el espacio geográfico y la mirada del observador, se ha configurado en Occidente guiado por las diferentes maneras de entender el mundo a lo largo de la historia. Una interpretación de dichas realidades con los ojos del siglo veintiuno nos permite redefinir las etapas de la percepción del paisaje y poner en contexto el momento actual. A partir del binomio naturaleza-razón, hemos creado una narrativa que transita por nuestro pasado y se detiene en los momentos más representativos de la percepción del paisaje, aquellos que han ido acompañados de un cambio de paradigma. Comprender las consecuencias de dicha evolución nos permite esbozar algunas ideas y ponerle nombre al futuro.

Palabras clave: Paisaje, cambio de paradigma, naturaleza-razón, sostenibilidad, percepción.

Abstract

Given the fact that the Earth is embroiled in a deep eco-social crisis, denied by some while others try to overcome it using the same recipes that provoked it, a new ideology is needed to build a sustainable world. The Western landscape, the intersection between geographical space and the viewers' gaze, was configured following the different ways of understanding the world throughout history. Interpreting these realities from a twenty first century perspective allows us to redefine the stages in the perception of the landscape and place them in context. Based on the binary nature-reason, this paper builds a historical narrative that highlights the most representative moments in landscape perception, those which constitute a paradigm shift. Understanding the consequences of this evolution enables us to outline some ideas that might indicate a direction of the future.

Keywords: Landscape, paradigm shift, nature-reason, sustainability, perception.

Introducción[1]

En tiempos pretéritos, cuando la ciencia era un concepto inexistente y el arte el único modo de representar la realidad, una mirada puso la semilla del primer paisaje. A lo largo de la Historia de Occidente, fueron numerosos los mitos, ritos y símbolos que el individuo utilizó para interpretar, transformar y representar el mundo. La configuración

[1] Esta investigación se ha realizado gracias a una estancia en el Real Colegio Complutense en Harvard University, tomando como base la llevada a cabo por la autora para su tesis doctoral: 'La apreciación estética del paisaje: naturaleza, artificio y símbolo', que fue dirigida por Miguel Ángel Aníbarro y leída en la ETSAM de la Universidad Politécnica de Madrid en 2017.

del territorio fue de su mano. Los textos de Clarence J. Glacken (1967), Denis E. Cosgrove (1984), Simon Schama (1995) y Alain Roger (1997), entre otros, constituyen una rica base para comprender los distintos modos de entender el paisaje a lo largo de la Historia. No obstante, el objetivo de este artículo no es hacer una revisión de esas ideas sino profundizar en las consecuencias que éstas tuvieron para la configuración del territorio en Occidente. Tratar el paisaje desde sus dos dimensiones, física y conceptual al mismo tiempo, resulta interesante en tanto que, en él, lo percibido no se corresponde exclusivamente con el entorno más o menos modificado por el ser humano, sino también y, principalmente, con el lugar que éste se otorga a sí mismo dentro de él. Avanzado ya el siglo XXI e inmersos en una grave crisis eco-social, echamos la vista atrás y nos preguntamos: ¿cómo afectaron los distintos modos de entender la realidad a la configuración de los paisajes?, y lo que es más importante: ¿de qué modo podemos integrar la actual crisis en el imaginario colectivo para colaborar en su superación?

Siguiendo este enfoque, podemos interpretar que las variaciones semánticas del concepto en Occidente están íntimamente vinculadas con el binomio hombre–naturaleza derivado del enfrentamiento entre el pensamiento intuitivo y el racional. Estos pares propios de la concepción binaria del mundo tuvieron su germen en Occidente mucho tiempo antes del nacimiento del paisaje. No fue así en Oriente, cuyo alumbramiento se adelantó al nuestro en once siglos. A este respecto, merece la pena recordar las palabras de Augustin Berque cuando explica que la locución china *shanshui*—paisaje—cuyos dos ideogramas significan montaña-agua, recoge un sentido profundo que hace referencia a "la naturaleza humana unida a la naturaleza cósmica" ("En el origen" 15). Dicho concepto apareció por primera vez en varios versos escritos con motivo del banquete de Lanting, celebrado por el calígrafo Wang Xizhi en el año 353 (Berque, *El pensamiento* 61), y se mantuvo durante siglos de la mano de los pintores, los calígrafos y los jardineros orientales. El concepto oriental de paisaje nació de una concepción animista del mundo en la que todo participa de la misma naturaleza universal.

Por su parte, en Europa, el alumbramiento del paisaje acaecido en el siglo XIV estuvo ligado a visiones artísticas y estéticas, y distanciado de consideraciones espirituales. Por otro lado, las voces en las que encuentra su raíz la palabra—*pagus* en las lenguas romances y *landskip* en las germánicas—hacían referencia a la organización del espacio, a la relación de los habitantes entre sí y con el lugar, y a las obligaciones de estos para con la comunidad y la tierra (Carapinha 114). La noción más actual expresada en el Convenio Europeo del Paisaje[2] asume las acepciones artísticas de los primeros paisajes y también las del antiguo *pagus,* pero se mantiene igualmente alejada del concepto oriental. En opinión de Berque ("En el origen" 15), las connotaciones espirituales del paisaje oriental se deben a que el concepto de naturaleza tenía allí un cierto carácter divino. No así en Occidente, donde en el siglo VI antes de nuestra era la escuela de Mileto separó por primera vez la mitología de las ciencias naturales, hecho que acabaría desembocando, siglos más tarde, en el nacimiento de la física. En aquellas

[2] Redactado por el Consejo de Europa y firmado en Florencia en el 2000, entiende por paisaje "cualquier parte del territorio tal como la percibe la población, cuyo carácter sea el resultado de la acción y la interacción de factores naturales y/o humanos" (n.p.)

fechas, la noción de paisaje se puede identificar como intuición antes incluso de que hubiera una palabra para denominarlo, lo que demuestra, explica Berque, la existencia de un *pensamiento de tipo "paisajero".* El autor define dicho pensamiento como aquel que tenían nuestros ancestros, cuya relación con la naturaleza hacía posible la creación de los más bellos paisajes. Distingue el pensamiento "paisajero" del *pensamiento de paisaje,* con el que se refiere a las reflexiones y representaciones mediante la palabra y la imagen que, por muy reiteradas y brillantes que sean, no nos capacitan para configurar paisajes armoniosos, más bien al contrario (*El pensamiento* 19). Para Berque, el cambio de un tipo de pensamiento a otro se produjo a partir de la revolución copernicana, cuando la naturaleza en Occidente tomó, definitivamente, el significado que le dio la física moderna: el de un objeto neutro vacío de carácter trascendente. Desde entonces, y con más intensidad a partir del siglo XIX, los paisajes surgen de un modo de entender el mundo en el que la naturaleza se contrapone a la ciudad, el ser humano al animal, la razón a la intuición. El dualismo moderno, que enfrenta nuestra visión subjetiva de las cosas con la realidad externa a nosotros, es el responsable de una suerte de incompatibilidad entre el paisaje y la modernidad, afirma Berque. Para ese problema, ofrece una solución que consiste en cambiar nuestro modo de pensar, romper con el dualismo y superar de forma verdadera y definitiva, a este propósito, la modernidad (*El pensamiento* 93). Sobre el pensamiento de pares opuestos en Occidente, Elizabeth Meyer (45) afirma que la contraposición entre hombre-naturaleza, cultura-naturaleza o arquitectura-paisaje, tiene como primera consecuencia la separación del ser humano de la naturaleza, como si fuera una forma de vida ajena a ella. Esto permite al individuo verse a sí mismo como entidad dominante, al tiempo que deja de comprender la naturaleza como algo de lo que formar parte para percibirla, cada vez más, como otredad. Dicho proceso lleva consigo la negación de las raíces culturales e históricas de la constitución natural y científica del individuo y, al mismo tiempo, confiera a ese *otro* -la naturaleza- la categoría de pertenencia.

Así como los valores espirituales del animismo oriental estuvieron en la raíz del concepto en Oriente, la distancia establecida por el individuo occidental con la naturaleza debida a la pérdida de la advocación divina de ésta, por un lado, y al enfrentamiento de pares binarios característico de la supremacía de la razón humana, por otro, motivaron su alumbramiento tardío y un nacimiento desprovisto de los profundos significados de aquel. Las distintas realidades del viejo continente permiten profundizar en la evolución del concepto y poner en contexto los paisajes actuales. Por otra parte, el ideal pastoril con el que se asociaron los paisajes del Nuevo Mundo desde la conquista tuvo consecuencias que son aún perceptibles en Norteamérica. En la primera parte de este artículo y para poner en contexto la cuestión, trazaremos un hilo conductor mencionando los momentos en los que se han producido cambios de paradigma hasta el siglo XVII. En la segunda parte, analizaremos algunas ideas surgidas en el siglo XVIII que nos permitirán entender las raíces ideológicas sobre las que se construyeron los paisajes actuales. Todo ello permitirá explicar, de forma muy resumida, dada la amplitud del tema, las cuestiones planteadas.

Naturaleza y razón: entre el mito, la creencia y la ciencia

En los albores de la humanidad, cuando nuestros antepasados más remotos llegaron a lo que hoy es Europa, convivían varias especies de homínidos cuya vida se regía por las mismas leyes de la vida animal. La distancia entre los pensamientos y los sentimientos de los antiguos humanos era prácticamente inexistente, y el espacio—de haber existido tal concepto—hubiera definido una red de relaciones más que un lugar en el que habitar. En la era zoomórfica o de la supremacía del animal, seres humanos y no humanos formaban parte indisoluble de una suerte de orden natural que era de tipo moral o ritual. Los símbolos y abstracciones representados en las pinturas rupestres surgían de un sentimiento de angustia cósmica ligado a concepciones mágicas del mundo (Giedion 21). Los efectos atmosféricos, los astros, los animales y la naturaleza ignota en todo su conjunto eran considerados como reales por el hecho de participar de un carácter mítico. Durante el largo proceso por el cual los miedos ancestrales fueron superados gracias a la comprensión de algunos ciclos y procesos de la vida, se dieron los primeros pasos para desvincular los elementos naturales de lo cosmogónico. Sin embargo, no sería hasta el Neolítico, cuando algunos animales y sucesos asombrosos, desconocidos y atemorizantes comenzaron a ser dominados mediante la agricultura y la ganadería.

Para las sociedades arcaicas (Eliade 13-52), los conceptos de *ser* y *realidad* estaban basados en símbolos, mitos y ritos que componían un complejo mundo de creencias configuradoras de una realidad metafísica. Los objetos y las acciones no tenían valor en sí mismos puesto que, dicho valor, nacía de su participación en una realidad que los trascendía. Así, por ejemplo, la calidad de las acciones humanas y de los objetos construidos por las personas emanaba de su capacidad para reproducir los actos primordiales de los dioses. Las ciudades babilónicas imitaban las constelaciones celestes y de ese modo, al ser su modelo arquitectónico de naturaleza perpetua, ellos mismos pasaban a formar parte de la eternidad. El rito de cosmización del Caos permitía el paso de lo profano a lo sagrado, de lo efímero a lo eterno, de la muerte a la vida, del ser humano a la divinidad. El concepto de realidad de Eliade nos permite comprender que lo real, en tiempos antiguos, no eran los lugares o los objetos sino las creencias y los mitos de los que aquellos formaban parte gracias al rito. Esta forma de entender el mundo, característica de la cultura de las primeras civilizaciones, permite entender que cada época tiene su propio modo de interpretar el entorno y de entenderse a sí mismo dentro de él. En un sentido similar se expresaba Simón Marchán Fiz:

> El mundo auténtico no es el que percibimos en la Naturaleza sino aquel producido por el hombre: el sol interior, el mundo del Espíritu, tal como se despliega en el curso del tiempo, en la historicidad de sus objetivaciones, en las manifestaciones de los más diversos tiempos y culturas. El mundo verdadero es la historia universal del Espíritu, identificada con los progresos en la conciencia de la libertad y la capacidad para realizarse en el curso del tiempo. (12)

Las deidades supremas de las primeras civilizaciones eran telúricas, y en las distintas cosmogonías aparecen diosas y dioses protectores que se identifican con la Madre Tierra

creadora del mundo.[3] El panteón divino de los pueblos de Mesopotamia y Egipto estaba compuesto por formas híbridas de animales y humanos,[4] que eran acompañados por seres de iconografías mixtas[5] y animales de la vida diaria, considerados, asimismo, como sagrados. Con el discurrir de los siglos, dichos seres superiores dejaron poco a poco de vagar por el mundo conocido en una suerte de abandono de la esencia animal de los dioses. Si previamente el cielo, la tierra y todos los elementos presentes en ella participaban de naturaleza divina, los dioses y los humanos se distanciaban cada vez más entre sí—quedando los faraones y los sacerdotes como los elegidos. En este mundo ininteligible, la parte animal e intuitiva del ser humano dominaba de forma absoluta sobre el yo racional, y los elementos y fenómenos naturales eran los mitos con los que explicar el mundo. Sin embargo, no resulta extraño pensar que, en algún momento de la prehistoria a partir del desarrollo del pensamiento abstracto, un sujeto comprendió que el día sucedía invariablemente a la noche, el verano al invierno, la vida a la muerte, y a partir de entonces, se tomó el tiempo necesario para admirar, sin miedo, una puesta del sol. La estrella, símbolo de la vida y de la eternidad para la mayoría de las civilizaciones antiguas, aseguraba el paso de las estaciones, proporcionaba calor, se asemejaba al fuego, ahuyentaba la noche y la muerte. En aquel instante de lucidez confluyeron el goce intelectual y el goce estético, y se plantó la simiente del primer paisaje. Tener la capacidad de aprehender la belleza natural supuso un ejercicio simultáneo de apreciación sensible y suprasensible que fue incrementándose con el hábito y el conocimiento sobre las cosas. Podríamos considerar ésta como una *etapa simbólica del paisaje*, imprescindible, aunque muy anterior a la aparición de la noción.

En la mitología griega, las entidades primordiales[6] no eran completamente antropomórficas y algunas de ellas ni siquiera solían ser representadas figurativamente. Al contrario de éstas, las siguientes generaciones del panteón divino[7] fueron recogidas por la literatura y representadas por la escultura con atributos plenamente humanos. Esta elevación simbólica de las deidades griegas al Olimpo incrementó la brecha entre los dos mundos, que se hizo más aguda conforme se iba perdiendo el miedo a lo desconocido. Como narran los clásicos grecolatinos desde Homero hasta Ovidio, el contacto entre ambos mundos era muy frecuente, pero los dioses vivían alejados de la tierra y de los mortales. La relación entre unos y otros quedaba restringida a la

[3] Ki o Ninhursag era la diosa de la Tierra en la mitología sumeria, que nació de Nammu, el abismo, al mismo tiempo que An, el dios del cielo; en la mitología egipcia Keb era el dios de la Tierra, representado bajo su esposa Nut, diosa del Cielo, y separado de Shu, dios del aire; por su parte, Gea o Gaia era una deidad primordial, considerada como la Madre Tierra, en la mitología griega.
[4] En Egipto, Ra tenía cuerpo de hombre, cabeza de halcón y sobre ella el disco solar, Anubis presentaba cabeza de chacal, Thot de ibis, etc.
[5] En Sumeria, los espíritus guardianes situados a la entrada de los templos, con forma de leones y toros androcéfalos (*shedu* y *lamassu*), funcionaban como vínculo entre divinidades y humanos y representaban la síntesis del equilibrio entre el cielo, la tierra y el agua.
[6] "En primer lugar existió el Caos. Después Gea la de amplio pecho, sede siempre segura de todos los inmortales que habitaban la nevada cumbre del Olimpo. [En el fondo de la tierra de anchos caminos existió el tenebroso Tártaro]. Por último, Eros, el más hermoso entre los dioses inmortales, que afloja los miembros y cautiva de todos los dioses y todos los hombres el corazón y la sensata voluntad en sus pechos" (Hesíodo 76).
[7] Zeus, Era, Apolo, Ártemis, etc.

naturaleza mixta de los héroes, a la metamorfosis de los dioses para conseguir los favores de las ninfas y las mortales, o a las consultas de los humanos a los oráculos para averiguar si contaban con el favor divino. Como resultado, el entorno natural pasó a ser entendido como parte de la vida diaria donde cultivar, batallar o erigir los templos.[8] A su vez, el temor a los elementos de la naturaleza iba quedando limitado a ciertos lugares, como bosques y montañas en los que habitaba Pan con los faunos de pies de cabra, mares donde los bellos cánticos de sirenas aladas atraían a los marineros para hacerles encallar en las rocas, o islas remotas habitadas por gigantes de un solo ojo. Esta evolución hacia la comprensión de una naturaleza algo más laicizada se vio ampliada durante el Imperio Romano con la construcción de jardines y con las representaciones pictóricas de motivos naturales—-*topia*—lo que pudo haber hecho eclosionar el concepto de paisaje en Occidente. El debate abierto hace unos años sobre si se puede o no hablar de paisaje en la época romana quedó aparentemente zanjado cuando Augustin Berque estableció los seis criterios que verifican su existencia en una cultura determinada.[9] En su opinión, en la Antigua Roma solo se cumplían algunos de dichos criterios, por lo que no sería correcto utilizar el término paisaje para referirse a los de aquella época. Para resolver la situación, el autor acuñó el neologismo "protopaisaje" para designar los paisajes de las culturas occidentales anteriores al Renacimiento. No creemos relevante reabrir esta cuestión, pero si hacer notar que cuando en el *Quattroccento* se cumplieron los seis requisitos establecidos por Berque, lo hicieron ligados a una concepción de la naturaleza alejada de anteriores connotaciones religiosas. Que esto sucediera en la antigua capital del Imperio Romano no parece extraño por dos motivos: el primero, está relacionado con la visión romana del territorio como espacio para la conquista y el engrandecimiento del Imperio; el segundo, hace alusión al parcial abandono de la realidad mítica observada por los griegos que, al menos en el caso de Roma, parecía ser más una tradición heredada de antiguas creencias que el escenario vivido en sus calles.[10] Es decir, aquella realidad mítica de las primeras civilizaciones fue quedando restringida a algunos lugares y personajes públicos—templos, palacios, faraones, emperadores, sacerdotes—y perdía cada vez más fuerza en el día a día. Dicha forma de entender el mundo bastante más laica comenzaba a asemejarse, en este sentido, a la del Renacimiento. Así lo sugiere el deleite del observador hacia el mundo natural que advertimos en la literatura y la pintura de la Antigüedad (Baridon).

La brecha creada entre el sujeto y la naturaleza se hizo más profunda con el abandono del politeísmo, no tanto por el avance del pensamiento racional—como había ocurrido hasta entonces—sino por la relación que el hombre y la mujer establecieron

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[8] Aunque no son muchos los textos griegos antiguos en los que aparecen descripciones de entornos naturales, así se desprende en la *Descripción de Grecia* de Pausanias.

[9] Los criterios eran los siguientes: 1.una literatura que cante las bellezas de los lugares; 2.jardines de recreo; 3.una arquitectura planificada para disfrutar de hermosas vistas; 4.pinturas que representen el entorno; 5.uno o varios términos para decir paisaje; 6.una reflexión explícita sobre el paisaje (Berque, *El pensamiento* 59s).

[10] Las *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio narran los mitos y las leyendas más como una recopilación de antiguas creencias que como una realidad viva. Por su parte, la alegría de vivir y las andanzas de los personajes de la vida romana en el *Satiricón* de Petronio o en *El Asno de Oro* de Apuleyo están muy alejadas de las narraciones griegas del mundo y, más aún, del pensamiento del Antiguo Egipto.

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con su entorno siguiendo los designios divinos. La idea de una Madre Tierra creadora del mundo en un universo politeísta con el que convivían los mortales fue sustituida, en el cristianismo, por un único Dios que habitaba en todas partes y era representado en las alturas. El universo teocéntrico en el que Adán y Eva eran la obra cumbre de la Creación, hecha a imagen y semejanza de Dios, permitió que el resto de lo existente quedara bajo su dominio y cuidado para servir de alimento. José Manuel Marrero Henríquez hace notar la diferencia entre las dos versiones de la Creación que aparecen en el Génesis, de las que se puede extraer un escenario fundamentado "en la igualdad de los sexos y en la fraternidad de todos los seres vivos" (30). Si en la primera versión (Génesis 1:26) hombre y mujer son creados al mismo tiempo y el reino animal puesto bajo su dominio, en la segunda (Génesis 2:21-23) Eva nace de la costilla de su compañero y aparece como la culpable de los males futuros de la humanidad. Ya en 1898 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, en *The Woman's Bible* (14-22), advirtió de la utilización que los ministros de la iglesia habían hecho de esta segunda versión y de su evidente influencia en la concepción patriarcal de Occidente. En nuestra opinión, ambas versiones, aunque de distinto modo, anuncian el camino hacia el antropocentrismo rompiendo con los mitos de las culturas antiguas y situando, por mandato divino, al individuo por encima de la naturaleza. Conviene también recordar la lectura que hizo Rosemary Radford Ruether (15-31) de las versiones babilonia, hebrea y griega de la Creación. Para la autora, las tres interpretaciones responden a suposiciones acerca de la naturaleza del mundo y están basadas en los modelos de las sociedades que las crearon. Es decir, las narraciones de la creación son el modo que tenían las diferentes culturas de explicar lo desconocido. Tanto el dominio del hombre sobre la mujer, como el de éste sobre los animales y el resto de la tierra, toman como base la concepción que cada cultura tiene sobre lo que es real. Y coinciden, en la mayoría de ellas, con la idea de superioridad del hombre sobre la mujer y el resto de seres vivos.

Durante la Edad Media, la relación del individuo con la naturaleza, además de ser un recurso para la subsistencia,[11] se construyó desde la veneración a la obra divina. La comprensión de la naturaleza como símbolo de Dios[12] abocó al individuo a entender el mundo bajo una realidad de carácter místico al tiempo que como espacio para la batalla. Entonces, la posibilidad de disfrutar de una bella vista estaba vetada por distanciar al sujeto del camino verdadero. Tal es el sentimiento de Petrarca cuando, en la cima al Monte Ventoux, necesita recurrir a la lectura de las *Confesiones* de San Agustín de Hipona.[13] Este momento culmen de la representación literaria del paisaje, en el que se admite la posibilidad de admirar su belleza, no solo reconoce el descubrimiento del

[11] Los *Tacuinum sanitatis* y los calendarios anuales representaban los trabajos del campo y el análisis científico de las plantas (Roger 73).

[12] El jardín del Edén, la simbología mariana de las flores, los ascetas como Simeón el Estilita (que vivía sobre una columna alejado del mundo), etc.

[13] "Los hombres van a admirar la altura de las montañas y las enormes olas del mar y la anchura de los ríos y la inmensidad del océano y el curso de los astros, y se abandonan ellos mismos. Quedé desconcertado, lo confieso; y rogando a mi hermano, impaciente por oírme leer, que no me molestara, cerré el libro. Estaba irritado contra mí mismo por seguir admirando las cosas de la tierra cuando desde hace mucho tiempo debería haber aprendido de los filósofos, incluso de los paganos, que solo el espíritu es digno de admiración, a cuya grandeza nada es comparable" (cit. en Roger 92).

paisaje en Occidente, sino que anuncia prematuramente el destronamiento de la divinidad. Además, cuando el sujeto humano se intuye a sí mismo como centro del mundo y dueño de todas las cosas, profundiza en la comprensión de lo natural como lo otro, lo diferente. Bajo esa cosmovisión renacentista y de la mano de las ciencias, las artes y el pensamiento cartesiano, el ser humano pudo percibir la naturaleza de forma artística, alejándola de toda revelación divina. El abandono de los temores hacia los lugares incultos y la capacidad de verlos como algo más que espacios funcionales fueron, en Occidente, las claves para comenzar a disfrutar de la belleza y el carácter de los lugares. Lo que coincidió, no por casualidad, con la primera representación de un paisaje de forma autónoma en la pintura,[14] y con la aparición de algunos términos para nombrarlo. Utilizando la terminología de Berque, este momento marcaría el final de la *etapa "proto-paisajera".*

El desarrollo de la ciencia y la progresiva inteligibilidad del mundo permitieron al individuo establecer una realidad diferente con su entorno, caracterizada por la revelación de los distintos paisajes a ojos de los literatos y pintores, primero, y del resto de la población, después. Es lo que podríamos denominar la *etapa de descubrimiento de los paisajes,* que permitió al sujeto dar forma a los símbolos en el territorio. El campo, la montaña, el mar, el desierto, la selva, los polos, etc. fueron, unas veces, percibidos como paisaje artelizado (Roger), y otras, transformados mediante criterios artísticos—por la trasposición de características arquitectónicas a los jardines o por la configuración de éstos por imitación a la naturaleza. El resto del territorio, ajeno a las categorías de jardín y de paisaje—entendido artísticamente—pertenecía a la de país. De la mano de los viajeros del Grand Tour, las altas montañas y los mares embravecidos dejaron de ser interpretados como espacios amenazantes para convertirse en lugares donde disfrutar de bellas e inquietantes vistas. El desarrollo de las ciencias a la luz de la Ilustración y las expediciones al Nuevo Mundo fueron haciendo que la naturaleza quedase liberada de los vínculos espirituales que aún le quedaban. A partir de entonces, la realidad quedó vinculada a la ciencia, y la naturaleza, desprendida de los antiguos símbolos, pudo ser entendida desde sus propias dinámicas. La balanza que sopesaba naturaleza y razón llegó a su punto de equilibrio en el siglo XVIII, y allí se mantuvo durante cierto tiempo. El individuo conocía la fuerza de la naturaleza y su capacidad de destrucción; pero ya no la temía. La miraba de igual a igual, disfrutando de su belleza y su poder. Quedaron atrás siglos de vasallaje durante los cuales, el sujeto consideraba que una naturaleza divina y dominadora imponía su ley y él no tenía más remedio que acatarla. Por primera vez desde la aparición de los homínidos, la lucha contra el gigante podía tener un resultado favorable para el ser humano: la posibilidad de salir con vida y, al mismo tiempo, disfrutar de la batalla. David y Goliat se enfrentaban como semejantes.

[14] Datan del siglo XV las primeras representaciones pictóricas en las que aparece un paisaje sin referencia alguna a la deidad, sin bien son numerosas las obras anteriores de la escuela flamenca en las que los fondos o las vistas desde una ventana representaban paisajes, habitualmente habitados.

La naturaleza como otredad

Para Max Horkheimer y Theodor Adorno (59), la Ilustración fue el momento feliz del ser humano a lo largo de toda la historia, un periodo altamente civilizado cuyo fin era liberarle del miedo y constituirle en señor. Este momento coincidió, no por casualidad, con aquel en el que la naturaleza fue el objeto principal de la investigación estética. En las primeras décadas de la Ilustración se llegó al culmen de la evolución del pensamiento, cuando la ciencia sustituyó definitivamente a la imaginación a la hora de narrar las cosas, de explicar su origen y asignarles un nombre. En esa época, se desarrollaron las categorías estéticas de lo bello, lo sublime y lo pintoresco. Solo durante un tiempo no hubo señor y no hubo vasallo, dominador ni dominado, y el individuo pudo disfrutar de una suerte de reconciliación en la que naturaleza y razón en el ser humano se encontraban en equilibrio. Culminó, aparentemente, el proceso por el que el sujeto se liberaba de las cadenas del mito y la creencia, superaba sus temores y se alzaba como sujeto autónomo.

Sin embargo, ambos filósofos supieron ver que, bajo los ojos de la ciencia, la realidad cedió al conocimiento el antiguo poder adjudicado a la naturaleza. Al hacerlo, ésta pasaba de entidad dominante a dominada y, dado que el sujeto no deja de ser una parte de la naturaleza, al tiempo que la desmitificaba caía en la trampa de someterse a sí mismo y a sus semejantes. La supremacía de la razón sobre la naturaleza cayó en el mismo error antiguo pero invertido, anulando con ello el impulso vital del ser humano, lo intuitivo y sensible. La Ilustración fue en contra de la naturaleza humana mediante un proceso de alienación, de cosificación.

> El mito se disuelve en Ilustración y la naturaleza en mera objetividad. Los hombres pagan el acrecentamiento de su poder con la alienación de aquello sobre lo cual lo ejercen. La Ilustración se relaciona con las cosas como el dictador con los hombres. Éste los conoce en la medida en que puede manipularlos. El hombre de la ciencia conoce las cosas en la medida en que puede hacerlas. De tal modo, el en sí de las mismas se convierte en para él. En la transformación se revela la esencia de las cosas siempre como lo mismo: como materia o substrato de dominio. (Horkheimer y Adorno 64)

Según Horkheimer y Adorno, a partir de entonces comenzó la decadencia de una sociedad que desembocaría en los totalitarismos del siglo XX. Su tesis vinculaba el concepto de razón con el sistema social y el capitalismo modernos, afirmando que, si la Ilustración condujo a la liberación del sujeto, también provocó la hegemonía de unos pocos sobre la mayoría. Cuando la humanidad se vuelve inhumana agrupando a hombres y mujeres por su esencia de grupo—raza, religión, sexo, nacionalidad, clase social—los identifica entre ellos y los diferencia del resto. Al hacerlo, al crear un conjunto de iguales y situarlos, conceptualmente, en una categoría inferior, los separa de una élite que los somete y los convierte en objetos. Cuestionaban los filósofos el devenir del mundo administrado y jerárquico que se inició a finales de la Edad Media. Comprender lo incomprensible—el holocausto nazi y las causas que lo provocaron—era el único modo de poder evitarlo en el futuro, y debía convertirse en el centro de la filosofía (Horkheimer y Adorno 51). En 2007, Rolf Tiedemann (23) expresaba lo reveladoras que eran las palabras de Adorno cuando hablaba de la burocratización del

mundo, que anula la autonomía del sujeto permitiéndole una libertad restringida a la libertad de mercado, y cuando anunciaba el fin de la Modernidad a través de la conversión del individuo en objeto.

La industrialización impuso la primacía de la máquina. En un siglo y medio, la igualdad de fuerzas que tanto había costado conseguir, el equilibrio del individuo entre su yo racional y su yo natural y el de la sociedad civilizada entre el progreso y el mundo natural, viró hacia el lado contrario. Lejos del miedo, el individuo comenzó a utilizar su poder y su dominio sobre una naturaleza a la que consideraba cada vez más lo otro, lo ajeno, lo diferente. El péndulo, que durante siglos fue acercándose lentamente al eje, osciló bruscamente hacia el lado contrario y allí se mantiene desde entonces. El tan floreciente equilibrio se rompió de nuevo. En adelante, era David el que ganaba casi todas las batallas, y un Goliat cada vez más exhausto despertaba de cuando en cuando lanzando huracanes y terremotos: recordatorio de un gigante que se revuelve contra sus cadenas.

A principios del siglo XIX, en Europa, la aceptación generalizada de la propuesta hegeliana de que la Estética debía limitar su estudio a la filosofía del Arte en lugar de a la belleza natural (Jarque 233) fue demostrativa del cambio de mentalidad en la clase aristocrática. Charles Baudelaire sostenía que los grandes errores del siglo XVIII nacían de concepciones morales equivocadas y de haber tomado la naturaleza "como base, fuente y modelo de todo bien y de toda belleza posibles" (121). No obstante, algunas de las grandes investigaciones científicas, como las de Alexander von Humboldt y Charles Darwin, impulsaron las ciencias de la naturaleza e hicieron temblar los principios de la religión. Ajenos al enfrentamiento entre naturaleza y razón que se estaba produciendo en las humanidades, los naturalistas apuntaban a la idea de que el ser humano es una pieza más dentro del sistema de la Tierra. Esta concepción de la realidad acompañada de la falta de reflexión estética sobre lo natural afectó nuevamente a la percepción de la naturaleza. De un lado, la idea de que la belleza natural no merecía investigación estética alguna, unida a la defensa de la superioridad estética de las creaciones humanas sobre las naturales, suponía un problema añadido a la consideración de la naturaleza como otredad: el de su escasa belleza (Tafalla 47). De otro lado, dicha falta de debate estético dejó ligada la valoración de los paisajes a los cánones del siglo XVIII, por lo que, desde entonces y hasta bien entrado el siglo XX, se siguió recurriendo a las tres categorías estéticas para enjuiciar el paisaje. Así, por ejemplo, los lugares apreciados por las sociedades geográficas españolas lo eran tanto por su interés geológico como por sus valores escénicos. Al definir normativas para la intervención en espacios representativos de lo sublime y lo pintoresco, como las de los parques nacionales, pero no para los demás se diferenciaba a aquellos del resto, como si de figuritas chinas colocadas en el sitio preferente de la vitrina se tratara. Al mismo tiempo, se transmitía el mensaje de que sólo era necesario conservar y proteger unos pocos lugares, quedando los demás abandonados a su suerte.

El pensamiento binario asentado en el siglo XX y la expansión fabril y urbana posteriores a la Segunda Guerra Mundial favorecieron una configuración del territorio en la que los antiguos símbolos culturales, como el palacio y la iglesia, quedaran

desplazados por otros de tipo social y productivo. Los nuevos barrios y las zonas industriales de la periferia de la ciudad, los cultivos extensivos, los territorios deforestados y los entornos rurales abandonados fueron transformando el territorio a una velocidad difícil de asimilar. Para entenderlos como paisajes tendría que pasar algún tiempo, como ha ocurrido con los paisajes vitivinícolas y los industriales que han despertado el interés del público en época reciente. Siguiendo con nuestra división del paisaje por periodos conceptuales podríamos fechar el inicio de la *etapa de los paisajes del dominio* a mediados del siglo XX. Desde entonces, la homogeneización de las ciudades producida por la globalización ha provocado la pérdida de valores identitarios en muchos lugares, y en otros, ha sido necesaria su protección. Reflexionar sobre la oportunidad de construir una carretera o un polígono industrial en cualquier lugar que no gozara de protección era una posibilidad que, hace unas décadas en España, no se planteaba. Circunstancia aprovechada, entre otros, por las industrias inmobiliaria y turística que han dejado en herencia algunos de los paisajes de peor calidad de nuestro país. Los lugares configurados por un pensamiento de tipo "paisajero" permiten aún apreciar valores sociales, patrimoniales, medioambientales, estéticos; es decir, narran un tipo de relación de las personas en comunidad y con la naturaleza. Sin embargo, los valores que caracterizan los paisajes del último siglo muestran un mundo desigual movido por el poder económico, reflejo de los valores que guían nuestro tiempo.

> Lo bello natural desapareció de la estética debido al dominio cada vez más amplio del concepto de libertad y dignidad humana [...] de acuerdo con el cual en el mundo no hay que respetar nada más que lo que el sujeto autónomo se debe a sí mismo. La verdad de esa libertad para el sujeto es al mismo tiempo falsedad: falta de libertad para lo otro. (Adorno 89)

Mientras esto sucedía en Europa y desde la colonización del Nuevo Mundo, América se convirtió en el paradigma de la naturaleza redentora y proveedora de alimentos, que permitía al ser humano una existencia libre, sencilla y feliz junto a ella. La imagen utópica sobre la forma de vida de los pueblos indígenas americanos tenía su contrapunto en el esquema de las ciudades europeas (Marx 75). La llegada de las primeras máquinas al nuevo continente vino a reforzar, de la mano de Thomas Jefferson, el ideal pastoril de una naturaleza cultivada en el entorno rural. Dicha idea se erigió como modelo y punto intermedio entre la vida salvaje y la artificiosidad urbana. Seguidor de las teorías Ilustradas de John Locke, Jefferson defendió, para la recién nacida República americana, un modelo de sociedad democrática basado en profundos principios morales. La figura del labrador autosuficiente, ajeno a los criterios economicistas de los agricultores, los fabricantes y los artesanos, era el mejor exponente de dicha sociedad puesto que, para Jefferson, la economía estaba en la base de la ambición del individuo (Jefferson 165). La aprobación del *Land Ordinance* por el Congreso Confederado de los Estados Unidos en 1785 llegó cuando la mayor parte del continente permanecía inexplorado y nueve de cada diez americanos vivían en granjas.[15] Entonces, la utopía de prescindir de un sistema basado en el comercio y en la industria, como el que empezaba a expandirse por Europa, parecía posible. Cuando en las primeras

[15] Datos del primer censo realizado en los Estados Unidos en 1790.

décadas del siglo XIX los artefactos industriales comenzaron a poblar las granjas americanas, su presencia se interpretó como beneficiosa. La máquina suponía una ayuda para el labriego y era redimida por el contacto con la naturaleza y los valores morales de la sociedad. De esta manera, el ideal pastoril quedaba ligado a los nuevos tiempos y ambos, naturaleza e industria, parecían compatibles (Marx 208). No obstante, aunque en el siglo siguiente la expansión de la locomotora de costa a costa se erigió como emblema de progreso, el ideal pastoril empezó a tambalearse. Tras las Guerra de Secesión, las políticas republicanas impulsaron el crecimiento de la ciudad frente al campo, y las granjas pasaron a depender de la construcción de vías férreas y de los precios de los mercados de abastos. Circunstancias que truncaron la utopía del granjero independiente y feliz, que empezó a ser visto como iletrado y oprimido (Smith 189).

El ideal pastoril tuvo una poderosa representación en el paisaje. La convivencia armónica entre el sujeto y la máquina se alejó de la imagen de las ciudades europeas industrializadas, desiguales y corrompidas. La visión de América como jardín, que se afianzó como promesa de vida y símbolo del espíritu americano, perdura aún en el imaginario colectivo. Así, por ejemplo, la granja, el campo de cultivo y la casa unifamiliar que pueblan hoy el entorno rural y las relaciones que se establecen en los vecindarios en favor de una vida mejor para la comunidad, son herederas de aquel antiguo modelo de valores morales y sociales propugnado por Jefferson. A partir de la popularización del coche tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial, se crearon extensas áreas metropolitanas con un modelo de habitabilidad de casa independiente con jardín abierto. Los cinturones verdes de las ciudades y los numerosos parques escasamente diseñados ofrecían la sensación de vivir en contacto con la naturaleza. Circunstancia que permitía mantener vivo, de alguna manera, el ideal pastoril.[16] Sin embargo, ese estilo de vida dependiente del coche lleva asociados un alto consumo de suelo destinado a la vivienda y una enorme contaminación de gases de efecto invernadero. Por su parte, la importación del modelo urbanístico a la Europa Mediterránea ha tenido efectos más profundos. Una de las consecuencias más evidentes es la desaparición de la plaza tradicional y el pequeño comercio, que han sido sustituidos por las grandes superficies comerciales asociadas al modelo. En estos espacios, las relaciones sociales ya no se generan en torno al espacio público sino alrededor de la idea de consumo. Por su parte, la plaza y el parque público son frecuentemente diseñados con pavimentos duros, y tanto en éstos como en los jardines cerrados se utilizan plantas ornamentales, herencia de los modelos históricos de la jardinería europea. Es decir, si en los Estados Unidos de América el ideal pastoril mantiene ciertas dinámicas naturales y, de algún modo, cohesionada la comunidad, en países como España ha supuesto la destrucción del tejido social sin ganar un ápice de contacto con el mundo natural. La utopía—actualizada al siglo XXI—ha demostrado su falta de sostenibilidad, y la tecnología, cargada de ideología económica, lejos de redimir el mundo, se ha extendido a lo largo y ancho del planeta.

[16] En el área metropolitana de Boston, por ejemplo, la fauna, habitual en los parques y jardines (ciervos, mapaches, coyotes, conejos, ardillas), es considerada parte de la comunidad ecológica.

Si el principio del paisaje fue el Sol, su futuro es la vida

Escribió Jorge Wagensberg: "La objetividad y la inteligibilidad siempre tienen un límite, un límite más allá del cual el método científico queda en el vacío, un vacío que hay que rellenar con ideología" (225). Llegados a un punto de la Historia en el que el cambio de paradigma es ya irrenunciable, no basta con adoptar medidas prácticas, sino que es necesario construir una nueva realidad en la que basar las decisiones. Para que el final de los combustibles fósiles y el del hambre en el mundo sean una realidad; para que se implementen economías circulares en los países desarrollados y en vías de desarrollo; para que se recupere el medio rural y las infraestructuras verdes recorran las ciudades; para frenar, en definitiva, el calentamiento global y crear un mundo más justo y equitativo es necesario construir un nuevo ideario sobre la que gire nuestra existencia.

Si al principio del paisaje fue el Sol y éste fue sustituido por el Dios creador; si la ciencia tomó el relevo y la tecnología aupó a la economía, ¿con qué palabra definir el nuevo paradigma capaz de reconciliar al individuo con la naturaleza? Los científicos, más conscientes que otros de la inteligibilidad y la grandeza de la Tierra, nos enseñan que la vida es más mágica, sorprendente y merecedora de cuidado que cualquier mito o dios imaginado y creado por el ser humano. Si hay aún misterios indescifrables en el mundo, si hay una fascinación que conecta a todos los individuos de todos los tiempos y lugares del Planeta, si hay una realidad sobre la que poder construir el futuro, no es otra que *la vida*. Crear una narrativa en torno a ella, dar forma a un nuevo mito que guíe e inspire a la humanidad, es la pieza sin la cual el futuro seguirá siendo incierto. Podemos asignarle alguna advocación o ninguna, podemos disfrazarla o dejarla desnuda, podemos desarrollar mil tecnologías y poner en práctica mil acciones en el territorio, pero mientras no haya un consenso generalizado de que el futuro se construye sobre la vida de todos los seres del planeta, todo ello quedará registrado en el anecdotario de la Historia. Un cambio de mentalidad que coloque la ética en el centro mismo del discurso supone desplazar el foco hacia intereses más altos, lo que no se traduce en una vuelta a la Edad Media, como anuncian algunos, o en la renuncia a una vida digna y plena. Las humanidades son las responsables de dar forma, mediante la palabra y la imagen, a esa nueva realidad. Las ciencias y las técnicas lo son de crear herramientas que permitan ese tránsito y deberán hacerlo (aquí está el gran reto) superando el modelo económico actual. En la práctica los retos son innumerables, pero el denominador común no puede ser otro que construir nuestra existencia en las dinámicas naturales del mundo, y adaptar las dinámicas antrópicas a aquellas buscando la compatibilidad de ambas. De darse, el mundo humano y el no humano, la naturaleza y la razón en el individuo volverán al punto de equilibrio.

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Paradise Retold: Revisionist Mythmaking in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the subversive potential of myths by exploring Margaret Atwood's feminist revision of creation, more specifically the myth of paradise. According to Adrienne Rich's definition, the "re-vision" of myths signifies the critical adaptation, appropriation, and invasion of traditional texts. As such, myths have not only legitimized exploitative power relationships, but they have also served as a powerful means to participate in and subvert hegemonic discourses. By drawing on the theories of Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer, and Hans Blumenberg, for whom myths constitute cultural-artistic mediations that involve the polarities of affect *and* intellect, terror *and* logos, Atwood's revision of paradise in the *MaddAddam* trilogy may be approached in itself as—to use a term by Hans Blumenberg—a "work of logos." I argue that Atwood revises paradise by duplicating the ancient human dreams of paradise into Crake's techno pagan and Adam One's eco-millennialist "gardens of delights," both of which are refracted through evolutionary science and ecology. Characterized by human destructiveness, these posthuman paradises feature multiple Eves alongside the dominant male figures. Among Atwood's Eves, there is the brazen Oryx as exploited racial "Other" of white society in the *pathos formula* of the Asian "digital virgin prostitute." Atwood employs a self-reflexivity regarding myths that is characteristic of postmodern pastiche and thus highlights storytelling as the distinguishing characteristic of humankind, while her use of an evolutionary grotesque aesthetics erodes clear-cut distinctions between humans, animals, and post-humans. The myth of paradise, the trilogy suggests, is also always a myth of extinction.

Keywords: myth, paradise, ecocriticism, feminist revision, Margaret Atwood.

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en el potencial subversivo de los mitos al explorar la revisión feminista de la creación de Margaret Atwood, más específicamente, el mito del paraíso. Según la definición de Adrienne Rich, la "re-visión" de los mitos significa la adaptación crítica, la apropiación y la invasión de los textos tradicionales. Como tal, los mitos no solo han legitimado las relaciones con poder de explotación, sino que también han servido como un poderoso medio para participar en los discursos hegemónicos y subvertirlos. Al basarse en las teorías de Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer y Hans Blumenberg, para quienes los mitos constituyen mediaciones artístico-culturales que involucran las polaridades del afecto *y* el intelecto, el terror *y* el logos, la revisión del paraíso de Atwood en la triología *MaddAddam* se puede abordar en sí misma como (por usar un término de Hans Blumenberg) una "obra de logos". Argumento que Atwood revisa el paraíso al duplicar los antiguos sueños humanos del paraíso en el tecno pagano de Crake y en los "jardines de las delicias" ecomilenialistas de Adam One, ambos refractados a través de la ciencia y la ecología evolutivas. Caracterizados por la destructividad humana, estos paraísos posthumanos presentan múltiples Evas junto a las figuras masculinas dominantes. Entre las Evas de Atwood está el descarado Oryx como el "Otro" racial explotado de la sociedad blanca en la *pathos formula* de la asiática "prostituta virgen digital". Atwood realiza una autorreflexión sobre los mitos característicos del pastiche posmoderno y destaca la narración de cuentos como la característica distintiva de la humanidad, mientras que su uso de una estética evolutiva grotesca erosiona distinciones muy claras entre humanos, animales y poshumanos. El mito del paraíso, sugiere la trilogía, es siempre un mito de la extinción.

Palabras clave: Mito, paraíso, ecocriticismo, revisión feminista, Margaret Atwood.

Introduction: Myths and Their Revision

Myth theory and criticism have assigned different origins, meanings, and functions to myth. While some theories have established one of the functions of myths as legitimizing exploitative ideologies and unequal power relationships, others underline that myths function as powerful means for participating in and subverting hegemonic discourses. Indeed, whether for colonized peoples, racial minorities, or other oppressed groups, myths have provided—and continue to provide—rich repositories of stories, figures, and symbols that empower the marginalized, represent alternative knowledge systems and are, therefore, key to the resistance and survival of these groups. In conceptualizing the transnational and transgenerational project of women's "revisionist mythmaking," scholars and theorists have underscored its empowering potential, which targets structures of oppression as well as the representations of women perpetuated in myths. This notion of "revision" has famously been defined by Adrienne Rich as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a critical direction," and as "an act of survival" (18).

The relationship between women and Western myth has remained fraught with tension as well. When participating in a phallocentric tradition, women writers inevitably risk complying with the "master's tools" of oppression—language itself. Feminist theorists like Luce Irigaray have insisted on the rigorous deconstruction of the androcentric hierarchies maintained through myth, while others, such as Hélène Cixous, encourage the engagement with myths even if it involves identifying with feminist antitypes (Zajko and Leonard 4). Importantly, the way in which myth is conceptualized shapes its relationship(s) with women, as do changing contexts and discursive constructions of knowledge, especially regarding gender (Zajko 392, 398-99). In particular, approaches to myth that understand myth in contrast to scientific knowledge as irrational, false, and archaic, run the risk of reproducing such gendered categories as the "female" reproductive, natural body versus the "male" metaphysical, rational mind. Ironically, some feminists have positioned their revisionist mythmaking in opposition to "male" logos in order to celebrate women's suppressed psychological, emotional, or spiritual energies. Even when undertaken for strategic reasons, such approaches have reinforced ideas about women's intuitive, embodied powers.[1]

Ecofeminist scholars have taken the connections of the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature as their cue for a "revision" of human-nature relationships in order to postulate an ecofeminist ethics committed to, among others, nature care,

[1] An exception is the field of Classica Africana, where the revision of classical myths has been central to the struggle for the human and *intellectual* equality of African Americans (Walters 1). Black women writers in particular have provided counter representations to the stereotypical portrayals of black women and illuminated the double burden of gender and race.

biodiversity, and environmental justice. Similar to second-wave feminists in myth studies, early ecofeminists such as Mary Daly, Susan Griffin, or Vandana Shiva, have celebrated the "feminine principle," claiming that women hold a special relationship with nature that offers valid alternatives to the exploitation of the environment and oppressed peoples (Leach 68). Since the 1990s, constructivist theories have countered these naturalizing approaches but, in turn, have neglected evolutionary, biological, and material aspects (Alaimo 3). In the past two decades, new materialist approaches have reconsidered the dynamics of human-nature relationships alongside the material-ecological and socio-historical contexts in which women and oppressed peoples relate to nature. Ecofeminists and post-humanist thinkers such as Mary Mellor, Val Plumwood, Karen J. Warren, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, and Rosi Braidotti, have been re-conceptualizing a nature-human continuum that foregrounds the autonomy and agency of (living) matter. Whether these ecofeminist and post-humanist endeavors contribute to a more fruitful dialogue between the humanities and the sciences, which, according to Ursula Heise, ecocriticism's adherence to traditional literary foci has continued to obstruct, remains to be seen ("Remapping English" 28-29).

Scholarship of Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy dealing with myths and the environment has predominantly focused on apocalypse, with the exception of the work of Nazry Bahrawi and Richard Alan Northover. Both examine biblical (creation) myths without, however, considering the tensions involved in the nexus of gender, myth, and religion. Northover's approach proves fruitful in that he illuminates the dialogic and polyphonic potentials of myth as opposed to myth's enforcement of one dominant version (85). Like Bahrawi, he shares the general scholarly consensus that the green religion of the eco-activists of *The Year of the Flood* offers a hopeful, deep ecological vision as opposed to the apocalyptic, materialistic destruction in *Oryx and Crake*. It seems to me that this concurrence is indeed partly, as Heise criticizes, shaped by the ecocritical neglect of biological-material considerations, while also overlooking, as Donna Haraway reminds us, that neither "[f]unctionalism" nor "organicism ... remove the principle of domination" ("Primatology" 492). Furthermore, the understanding of myth as being irreconcilably opposed to reason and intellect may also contribute to scholars being less critical toward Atwood's eco-religious cult than they are towards scientific-technological responses to the environmental crisis.

In this article I focus on the *MaddAddam* trilogy and Atwood's revisions of the myth of paradise in times of environmental crisis by, on the one hand, elucidating the intellectual-aesthetic dimensions of Atwood's mythical reconfigurations. In so doing, I draw on the myth theories of Aby Warburg, Ernst Cassirer, and Hans Blumenberg, who understand myths as cultural-artistic productions and mediations that oscillate in-between the dynamic polarities of affect *and* intellect, terror *and* logos. For them, myths are subject to an ongoing process of re-narration, reconfiguration, and interpretation, which involves intellect as well as aesthetic finesse. Blumenberg even defines myth itself as "a piece of high-carat 'work of logos'" (12). I argue that Atwood's produces two versions of paradise: Crake's techno pagan *and* Adam One's eco-millennialist paradise. Seemingly opposed to each other, both are patriarchal versions of human dominance

refracted through evolutionary science and ecology. Both feature multiple Eves alongside the dominant male figures, most prominent among them the brazen Oryx. Her image as Asian digital virgin prostitute re-writes Eve as exploited racial "Other" and central expressive visual trope (*pathos formula*) of human creation *cum* destruction. Written in the form of postmodern pastiche, the trilogy shows a self-reflexivity regarding myths that highlights storytelling as the distinguishing characteristic of the nature of humankind. At the same time, Atwood employs an evolutionary grotesque aesthetic that erodes clear-cut distinctions between humans, animals, and post-humans.

"Herstory": Myth, Logos, and Feminist Revision

Atwood's trilogy unfolds as a "simultaneal" on two temporal sequences (Porter 1): the present, when the story is narrated; and the past, prior to the human-induced catastrophe that led to the final days of humankind. In *Oryx*, the focalizer of both temporal sequences is Jimmy. In *Year*, focalizers, narrators, and diegetic levels multiply, as the alternating stories of Atwood's women protagonists—Toby and Ren—are punctuated by the sermonic orations and hymns of the environmental activist group of the God's Gardeners. They model their ecological mythology on biblical myths and adapt the Christian liturgical calendar for their festivals in order to celebrate, for example, "The Feast of Adam and All Primates" or "Saint Euell of Wild Foods." In *MaddAddam*, focalizers, narrators, and diegetic levels further diversify through the inclusion of alternating male (Zeb) and female (Toby), human (Toby's) and post-human (Blackbeard's) stories, while events follow those of the first two volumes. By taking over the role of storyteller and recorder, the post-human protagonist Blackbeard in the end grants authority to the "Story of Toby."

Toby's "herstory," which replaces as well as continues the mythmaking Jimmy begins for the Crakers in the first volume, thus, functions as the final authoritative record of humankind and foundational source for the post-human Crakers. Additionally, Atwood uses it for one of the central concerns of feminist revisionist mythmaking: appropriating phallocentrism by invading and reconfiguring traditional mythologies in order to include women's perspectives and self-images. Yet, as is characteristic of Atwood's biting sense of humor, she does not exempt the "sacred" project of feminist mythmaking from revision either. For example, Jimmy remembers the statue of Martha Graham on the campus of his liberal arts-and-humanities college as follows: "There was a gruesome statue of her ... as Judith, cutting off the head of a guy in a historical robe outfit called Holofernes. Retro feminist shit, was the general student opinion" (*Oryx* 218).[2] Clearly, the gynocritical quest to recover mythological women figures is ridiculed as resorting to the very martial powers it desires to eliminate. Indeed, different generations use the forms and modes of representation popular at the time, adapting myths to their specific historical and socio-political concerns, anxieties, and hopes.

[2] The dancer Martha Graham (1894-1991) was a precursor in feminist revisionist mythmaking.

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Furthermore, their re-narrations challenge their predecessors' versions of individual myths.

Atwood herself has long been participating in this trans-generational and transnational project of feminist revisionist mythmaking. Never simple, Atwood's revisions have been examined for their complex deconstructions and artful subversions, their intricate narratology and innovative poetics, their multilayered intertextuality and surprising metafictionality. An example is Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), a postmodern rendition of the Odysseus myth, which includes the perspectives of Penelope and her twelve maids while also illuminating the patriarchal prerogatives that are perpetuated in the relationship of these female figures. By filling these lacunae, Atwood's postmodern variant responds not only to ancient male writers such as Homer or Herodotus, who barely mention the maids and cast Penelope in the role of the stereotypical faithful wife, but also to James Joyce's modernist *Ulysses* (1918-1920). Likewise ignoring the maids, Joyce represents Molly Bloom as the mythical counterpart to the loyal Penelope. Atwood, in turn, highlights the joint but unequal oppression of both classes of women, suggesting that, despite her solidarity, Penelope is complicit in the hanging of the maids.

With the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood shifts her focus to accounts of creation myths—especially paradise—and interweaves them with the scientific knowledge of the evolution and extinction of life forms on earth. In myth theory, the relationship between (sacred) myth and science has also remained fraught with tension and has been considered by some as the antithesis between myth and "truth" ("mythos" vs. "logos"). Historically, in this opposition, myth is seen as belonging to an archaic, primitive stage of human society, which Enlightenment thought gradually replaced by reason. This notion of myth as opposed to reason was perhaps most famously expressed by the German Romantics and later by Wilhelm Nestle in *From Mythos to Logos* (1940) (Blumenberg 48-49). This antithesis still informs our current understanding of myth as fiction, or false truth. There is, however, a critical approach, which underlines the logos of myth not in the sense of truth claims, but in its *apotropaic* function. That is to say, theorists understand myth as rationalizing the human *Angst* triggered by the threats of the natural and social environments into aesthetic forms of representation, be they written or visual. Seen from this critical perspective, myth is, as Blumenberg explains, an ongoing "work" of storytelling that continues to be of significance and that has survived as "a miracle of interwoven reception and construction" despite the fact that it cannot compete with the empirical evidence put forth by science (351). Notably, for Blumenberg the "reception" of myth always involves acts of reflection and representation beyond the mere recognition and reiteration of forms, symbols, and stories.

From Theories of the Symbol to the Logos of Myth

In his philosophy of myth, Blumenberg draws on the work of two other German scholars and their theories of the symbol: Aby Warburg (1866-1929) and Ernst Cassirer

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(1874-1945). Both emphasize the representative function of symbols based on an understanding of symbols as constitutive forms of meanings and insights in a process that involves cognitive expression and rational articulation. Although, as Cassirer noted, the different symbolic forms of language, myth, or science vary in the ways in which they produce the meanings and insights they provide, they nevertheless all share their transcending of a merely sensual, associative or affective view of the world and place humans in a reflective relationship with their environment (Cassirer 13, 128). In his cultural philosophy, Cassirer subsumed all of these symbolic forms under the broader structure of rational thought and logos. Based on this structure, he claimed, humans seek to explain, structure, and make accessible the world they inhabit even though mythical thought differs from scientific logic as it has no "independent, law-bound structure" or "general principle of order" (Skidelsky 104, 119).

Warburg, who explored the survival and continued significance of myth from antiquity into the twentieth-century visual arts, likewise discerned in the symbol "a connection between image and meaning" (Wind 27).[3] Theorizing about the polarity of the symbol, he identified what he called "*Denkraum der Besonnenheit*," meaning a space in-between the polarities of the "magical-linking" and the "logically-dissociative" symbolic figuration (Warburg 484-85). As Edgar Wind explains, this intermediary space is a critical point at which "the psychological excitation ... is neither so concentrated by the compelling power of the metaphor that it turns into action, nor so detached by the force of analytical thought that it fades into conceptual thinking" (Wind 27-29). Warburg located these intermediary contemplative spaces in *pathos formulae*—visual tropes that simultaneously distill and make visible the polarities of affect and reason in the ceaseless oscillation between living image and intellectual abstraction. As *mnemonic* forms with conventional iconographies and meanings, these *pathos formulae* continue to shape the aesthetic forms of contemporary cultural expressions at the same time as their usage in altered historical and cultural circumstances provides novel meanings and new figurations.[4] Cassirer and Warburg's perspectives, thus, paved the way for Blumenberg's philosophy, according to which myth is not only "one of the modes of accomplishment of logos," but also carries subversive potential, since it is always in the process of aesthetic reception (27).

Like musical themes and their variations, Blumenberg explains, mythical versions and transformations are inexhaustible even though they remain—if at times only barely—recognizable. He argues that although myth may lend itself to ideology and tradition, it nevertheless engenders innovation and revision because of its characteristic variability. As in ancient times, myth still functions as a means for humans to attain a reflective distance from the threatening and terrifying powers of the world that surrounds them. Even the advent of modern science and technology, Blumenberg

[3] Warburg left behind a flood of essays, fragmented manuscripts, and notes. It was his colleague and friend Edgar Wind (1900-1971), who put Warburg's theory of the polarity of the symbol into writing.
[4] The "Ninfa Fiorentina" is Warburg's most famous *pathos formula*, which can be traced from water-bearing maenads on ancient sarcophagi to a fruit-carrying woman servant in a Renaissance fresco by Ghirlandaio or the figure of a hysterical woman in a late nineteenth-century oil painting by Moreau de Tours.

contends, has not terminated human attempts to contain the uncanny and unfamiliar through myth, since new technologies and knowledge generate new and unknown adversities. In view of myth's alleviation (*Depotenzierung*) of these terrors, Blumenberg argues, "one should think not only of attitudes of reverence and seeking favor but also of those of provocation, of forcing commitment, and even of malicious cunning, like that of Prometheus and of the 'trickster' figures known all over the world" (16). He underscores the centrality of frivolity, parody, and mockery in the "'work on myth'" (7), which he sees aimed to "deplete superior power[s]" (31) to the point of "bring[ing] myth to the end, to venture the most extreme deformation" and, thus, "the fiction of a final myth" (266). Yet Blumenberg concludes that, in spite of these aesthetic feats, there is no end to myth (633). Because of its *apotropaic* function and characteristic metamorphosis, myth constitutes a ceaseless "work of logos" (12). Atwood's interweaving of science and evolution with creation myths, then, must in itself be seen as one of those intellectual-aesthetic feats in the ongoing work on myth and, hence, as logos.

Myth, Religion, and Feminist Revision

By focusing on myths from biblical texts, Atwood's trilogy participates in yet another contested area of myth theory, namely the relationship between myth and religion. As Robert A. Segal states, scholars have identified myth either as "part of the religious explanation of the world or part of the religious means of controlling the world" (2). Others have defined the relationship between myth and religion, specifically the Bible, as a relationship of "dissonance" since their "distinct aims, interests, [and] worldviews" are fundamentally at odds with one another (Callender 27). Blumenberg also sees myth clashing with religion: with its imaginative and flexible repository of figurations, myth is always "already in the process of reception" as it is always already re-narrated and adapted, whereas religious stories aim to affirm the one correct version and to delegitimize multiple, changing interpretations (216). Despite religion's "mythical features," Blumenberg notes, its "dogmatic mode of fixation" and iconoclasm have resulted in a comparatively scarce manifestation of "work on myth" in literature (218).

However, religious dogma and iconoclasm have by no means deterred artists from rendering their own versions of biblical stories. Ironically, among the visual arts the prohibition of religious images incited their proliferation, while women writers have been taking issue with women's representations in patriarchal religion by adapting and appropriating scriptural stories since long before the twentieth century.[5] Referring mostly to European male writers, Blumenberg excludes the long history of art as well as the revisionist mythmaking by women writers of the 1970s and 1980s in and beyond Europe. Prominent among the North American women writers who aim to transform biblical myths is the poet and scholar Alicia Suskin Ostriker.

Ostriker belongs to those gynocritics whom Jimmy's memories of the Judith figure of Martha Graham mock. Yet, Ostriker has remained an indefatigable contributor

[5] The medieval French writer Christine de Pizan (1364-1429) is considered as one of the foremothers of feminist revisions of myth (McKinley 353-66).

to and spokeswoman for feminist revisions of scripture. One of her main concerns has been women's appropriation of this "ur-text of patriarchy" in order to re-write themselves and their stories within the "existing power structures" (*Feminist Revision* 27-28). Not only has Ostriker traced women writers' multifaceted re-imaginings of biblical women figures and their stories throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in her scholarly work, but her own poetry has contributed a body of scriptural adaptations that aim to critique as well as renew contemporary spirituality. Her claim that "new meanings must generate new forms" is evident in her poems, which show the formal and aesthetic innovations of women's revisionist mythmaking ("Thieves of Language" 236).

Since the 1990s, Ostriker has shifted her focus to the reception of biblical texts. She especially underscores the contemporary concerns of writers, artists, and readers, which, as she states, illuminate biblical stories in novel and meaningful ways (*Feminist Revision* 62). Her recent approach affirms Blumenberg's definition of myth as always being already in the process of reception. Yet Ostriker maintains that, as an authoritative text that "both inspires and repels" (57), the Bible "invite[s] transgressive as well as orthodox readings" (31). These versions, she insists, are rarely clear-cut adversarial revisions, but generally include a mixture of a hermeneutics of suspicion, desire, and indeterminacy (66-67). While she also sees the religious impetus for "truth claims" (67), she nevertheless stresses the palimpsestic texture of scripture as "a kind of paradise of polysemy," being "radically layered, plurally authored, [a] multiply motivated composite ... full of fascinating mysteries, gaps, and inconsistencies" (62).

Wolfgang Iser has suggested that Blumenberg's distinction between myth and dogma is not one that must necessarily constitute an opposition. Rather, it can be seen as a convergence, in that the ever-changing variants of myth shed light on the rigid absolutes of dogma and vice versa (Fuhrmann 541). Iser's comments may not silence Blumenberg's critics (for example Jean Bollack, Jacob Taubes, or Robert A. Segal), but they highlight one of Blumenberg's accomplishments in *Work on Myth*, namely his reclaiming of the potential of myth to provoke, revise, and subvert.

Paradise Retold

In her *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood re-envisions paradise in present-day scientific-technological and ecological-millennialist terms, more specifically in Crake's "Paradice Project" and the "Edencliff Rooftop" of the God's Gardeners. She reconfigures the mythical garden of paradise as (1) a techno pagan post-natural and post-human space cultivated and engineered by humans; and (2) a thriving, urban green commons. Scholars have read Crake's experiment as ethically reprehensible and diametrically opposed to the environmental activism of the God's Gardeners, especially with regard to their differing positions vis-à-vis global capitalism. Indeed, Crake does not deliberately engage with specific myths of paradise, whereas Adam One explicitly draws on biblical myths. However, both Crake and Adam One equally participate in the Western tradition of human dreams of paradise by fusing ancient myths of the Golden Age with the biblical

myth of the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, both their "paradises" constitute two decidedly material-ecological as well as post-human "paradise gardens," whose human population emerges as a creative yet also destructive and, hence, freakish species among manifold other life forms. In this way, both visions are simultaneously stories of creation as well as extinction.

The spelling and sound of "Paradice" (as opposed to paradise) resonates with the onomatopoeia of "splicing" and, thus, points to the implementation of genetic engineering and scientific management in its landscape architecture, atmosphere and weather, as well as its inhabitants—the post-human Crakers named after their "father" Crake, who adopted the name from the extinct bird. Handsome, well proportioned, and of all skin colors, the Crakers live a peaceful communal life without the "destructive features" of *homo sapiens* such as racism, territoriality, omnivorous behavior, jealousy, or malice (*Oryx* 358). Joint mating rituals have eliminated sexual desire, possessiveness, and abuse. They are "perfectly adjusted to their habitat" as they "recycle" what they digest, need neither clothes, nor houses or possessions, and can heal themselves (359). Moreover, they do not age and, like humans, they dream and sing, both features for which, when translated into Crake's neuroscientific lingo, any (post-)human species is "*hardwired*" (411).

Despite all the contemporary bioengineering and splicing, Atwood's post-humans bear a striking resemblance to the tall, strong, and supple inhabitants of the ancient Blessed Isles, who, according to Hesiod or Diodorus, lived in the open air without clothes or houses, and whose communal societies showed neither rivalries nor discord (Delumeau 6-10). Jimmy compares the lack of sexual strife among the Crakers to a "golden-age Grecian frieze" without the usual "pushing and shoving" and displaying instead "the gods cavorting with willing nymphs" (*Oryx* 199). The idea of a life of harmony, joy, and concord among men, women, and nature is also central to the religious myth of paradise, which—like Crake's Paradice—is said to be devoid of the concepts of death, possessiveness, or enmity. Notably, one of the startling features of the post-humans, namely their "crystalline, otherworldly singing" (*Year* 197), likewise characterizes traditional visions of the Golden Age and Eden, which were described as filled with pastoral and angelic song (Delumeau 4-15).

Based on these resemblances, I propose reconsidering Atwood's acknowledgement that, although fiction, *MaddAddam* "does not include any technologies or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory" (Acknowledgements 393). I suggest reading Atwood's adaptations not only with an eye to contemporary and future developments in the fields of biotechnology, bioengineering, or biomedicine, but also with respect to the long—and often wayward—history of how humans have dreamed about future life on earth in ancient and religious myths of paradise. In fact, Crake's Paradice is inextricably intertwined with paradise myths of the past. On the one hand, it continues the dreams of a peaceable, song-filled, and communal life in a hospitable, pleasing, and abundant natural environment as told in stories about the Golden Age and Paradise. On the other hand, alongside the "perfected" post-humans and in view of the mass extinctions, rampant crime, and

economic and sexual exploitation of Atwood's dystopian society, the humans emerge as physically and morally flawed creatures as well as faulty and perverted constructions that mock ideas of Divine Creation or Intelligent Design.

The post-industrial revolution of the new technologies of the 1980s and 1990s has given rise to prospects of human enhancement, cyber utopias, and new life forms. Enthusiasts have been propagating these visions of a perfected post-human society in quasi-religious and millennialist terms, whereas critics have been warning against their ethical ramifications (Karim 15). Yet, no matter whether fervently hailed or damned, "[f]rom the start, these developments were fetishized simultaneously by techno-enthusiasts and techno-catastrophists; simultaneously, side by side, ultimate liberation and ultimate destruction were prophesized" (Buell 13). Crake seems to embrace both, techno-utopia and techno-destruction. His dream of Paradice as a "reboot" (*MaddAddam* 334) of the creation of "brave new humans" (352) is evidently driven by a deep pessimism about the planet's future. Always dressed in "his dark laconic" style (*Oryx* 86), he shows a predilection for web games about the extinction of humans and other life forms. He identifies human desire, and in particular "misplaced sexual energy," as the root cause for environmental and social degradation (345), which, in turn, triggers his own desire for the total eradication of the humans. The genetically engineered pandemic, which massacres the human population, associates Crake's act with "divine" punishment and leads to the Crakers' expulsion from Paradice. Crake's hubristic gesture recalls his earlier gaming obsessions, were it not for the mindboggling consequences for human life. Especially the ludic aspects of Crake's playing at Creator cast his usage of the sciences in a most sobering light. Indeed, he embodies the basic principle of what Ulrich Beck has termed *Risikogesellschaft* (risk society), namely a process in which societies produce uncontrollable, worldwide threats and uncertainties, which then "backfire on these societies" (Wimmer and Quandt 337).

The Edencliff Rooftop of the God's Gardeners also draws on the long-cherished idea of paradise as an earthly "garden of delight" (Delumeau 3), while redefining it as an abundant botanized city space: "[Toby] gazed around in wonder: it was so beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds she'd never seen before. There were vivid butterflies; from nearby came the vibration of bees. Each petal and leaf was fully alive, shining with awareness of her. Even the air of the Garden was different" (*Year* 52). Located in an abandoned urban space as opposed to "a prosperous countryside (*eden*)" (Delumeau 4), Edencliff unites the classical *locus amoenus* with biblical paradise. The Gardeners interweave an Evangelical environmentalism with a New Age eco-consciousness and contemporary ecological and evolutionary knowledge. Needless to say, their urban paradise is plagued by similar oxymoronic discrepancies to Crake's Paradice.

The sermons include encouragement characteristic for their conviction of impending doom. At the same time, the Gardeners' green eschatology includes a noticeable dose of pragmatic advice, ranging from such banalities as the use of sunhats, "butter substitute," or recyclable materials for festivals to concrete survivalist techniques, shrewd warnings against surveillance, and reminders of the importance of

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political subterfuge (*Year* 150). Adam One intersperses his simultaneous preaching of creation care and imminent eco-disaster with rhymed instructions such as "It's better to hope than to mope!" (107), or "if in doubt, spit it out!" (149). Like the songs that follow his sermons, these short reminders undercut pathos with bathos, the high with the low. Playful, irreverent, even anarchic, these elements invite a parodic, undogmatic reading of the Bible (as opposed to the totalitarian theocracy in Atwood's Republic of Gilead in *The Handmaid's Tale*).

In lieu of the traditional emphasis on human sinfulness and God's curse of the serpent and the earth, Atwood's eco-millennialists revere all life forms (including the serpent, but also bacteria and viruses) and advocate human earth care alongside survival training and political resistance against a corporate take-over.[6] What emerges is the creation story of a fascinatingly diverse and alive but long-lost "garden": exploited and overpopulated by what Adam One describes as a "less than Angelic" species, whose "knots of DNA and RNA" tie it "to [its] many fellow Creatures," this lost paradise is now struggling for survival—politically and biologically (*Year* 64). The Gardeners' greened version of political resistance and creation is—like Crake's—deeply pessimistic and undeniably this-worldly. As Adam One predicts, "not this Earth [will be] demolished," but "the Human Species" (508-09), as it will soon "become part of God's great dance of proteins" (486).

Bruised Yet Brazen: Atwood's Multiple Eves

Atwood's revisions of paradise feature numerous Eves, most prominently Oryx and Toby.[7] Jimmy first sees Oryx on an Asian child porn website that he visits with Crake. The porn site shows her as one of three little girls locked in cyberspace in the century-old role of Eve—childlike, playful, and sexualized. However, in the figure of the Asian digital virgin prostitute (Mathews 35), Atwood stresses the fourfold burden of gender, age, race, and class:

> She was small-boned and exquisite, and naked like the rest of them, with nothing on her but a garland of flowers and a pink hair ribbon ... . She was on her knees, with another little girl on either side of her, positioned in front of the standard gargantuan Gulliver-in-Lilliput male torso ... . The act involved whipped cream and a lot of licking. The effect was both innocent and obscene ... . (*Oryx* 103)

The childlike nakedness and flowers associate Oryx with Eve in Paradise. Otherwise, Atwood's representation eschews the iconography of Eve's temptation and the fall, which traditionally shows Eve with Adam alongside the tree of knowledge and the serpent, where Eve either offers Adam the forbidden fruit, or seduces him as personified

[6] Harry O. Maier observes that green Evangelicals in the U.S. are already interpreting Scripture through an environmental lens. By "foregrounding one set of texts over another," their eco-millennialism "counters a heavy emphasis on the Fall, the cursed earth of Gen. 3.17 and notions of depravity" (256).

[7] On the deeply gendered nature of Western visions of paradise, that is, Adam as "heroic agent" and Eve as "virgin land" to be exploited and improved, see also Carolyn Merchant's *Reinventing Eden*, especially chapters 5 and 6.

serpent. Rather, Oryx's posture revives Warburg's *pathos formula* of the ancient nymph who crouches down or is seated in erotic "play" in a *locus amoenus* or paradisal landscape, an iconography Warburg also recognized in Manet's figure of the bathing woman in *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Latsis 16).[8]

Atwood reconfigures Oryx and the other little girls' "fall" as staged phallus worship in cyberspace performed by three prostrate virgin prostitutes. As quickly becomes clear, the virtual sexual act involves no play, and the terrified faces of the girls belie the overdubbed sounds of pleasure. Oryx's pause and "hard little smile" (*Oryx* 103) in the middle of her "workout" (104) expose her "fall" as sexual and economic labor within an institutionalized global industry. Even so, Oryx openly challenges the spectators'—Jimmy and Crake's—voyeuristic male gaze by looking "right into the eyes of the viewer," as if to say, "*I see you watching. I know you, I know what you want*" (104). Her gaze simultaneously underlines and defies her exploitation and commodification. While her look into the webcam confirms its presence, it at the same time elicits feelings of guilt, shame, and desire in Jimmy, forcing him—and by implication other (male) customers—to recognize her as a human subject rather than a virtual sex object (252). He indeed acknowledges that, "for some strange reason Oryx was three-dimensional from the start" (103). Atwood's version of Eve in cyberspace, then, not only represents the "downfall of *man*kind" (Ciobanu 154), but also places the moral burden of the girls' "fall" on the male consumers of the porn site.[9]

When Oryx joins Crake's Paradice Project, she slips into the traditional role of Eve as the "unwitting accomplice to the corruption of humanity" (Held 199), meaning Crake's destruction of the human species. A prototypical temptress, she quickly and expertly seduces Jimmy. With Oryx, Atwood creates an ambiguous Eve figure: sexually and economically exploited, she nevertheless "refuse[s] to be a victim" (*Surfacing* 197), be it through her challenging outward gaze, her active sexual choices, or her varying stories about her past. It is these in particular that position her as "*creative non-victim*" (38), despite her own exploitation by global sex trafficking on the one hand and her role as Crake's handmaid on the other.

In an ironic reversal of Oryx's story, the "Asian-Fusion hybrid" Katrina Wu features as an Eve who never sets foot in Adam One's urban eco-paradise but establishes herself as adept businesswoman in the sex industry (*MaddAddam* 171). Her erotic high-wire performances as "snake woman" (172) revise the traditional associations of Eve with the serpent in terms of female weakness and susceptibility into an empowering flexibility and adaptability reminiscent of the trapeze artist and contortionist in Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (Rao 145). Unlike Oryx, Katrina Wu avoids becoming Adam One's inadvertent accomplice; but like Oryx, she fails as businesswoman in her own right when, ultimately, the power structures of the corporate sex industry, overpower her.

[8] Eve is also a prominent syncretistic figure in (Neo)Renaissance art and literature, a prime example being John Milton's Eve in *Paradise Lost*. Milton identifies her with Venus and Flora, the goddess of flowers and "the nymph Chloris transformed by the touch of Zephyr into a fruitful woman" (Boyette 344).

[9] Gillian M. E. Alban mistakes Oryx's look as a "powerfully assured Medusa Gaze" (91).

In contrast to their racial "Others," Atwood's white Eves—Pilar and Toby—are attributed far more power to survive the fictitious sexist, racist, and corporatized North America of the *MaddAddam* trilogy. As beekeepers and mushroom cultivators, Pilar and Toby represent the creative qualities of Eve.[10] However, theirs are not the traditional procreative Judeo-Christian roles of domesticated women and mothers. In her struggle for economic survival, Toby first sells her ova, but later, through an infection contracted from the harvesting of her ova, loses her reproductive capacity altogether, a feature which she shares with "old walnut-faced Pilar" (*Year* 118). Instead, Atwood equips both Eves with the knowledge of nature's life-giving and life-taking forces in the forms of bees and mushrooms, associating them with ancient Mother Goddesses and their powers of creation, which transcend (mortal) women's reproductive functions.

Honeybees, Pilar teaches Toby, are "messengers between this world and the other worlds" (*Year* 215). Atwood does not invent Pilar's "bee lore" (129), but draws on the cultural history of bees, according to which they are emblems of the prelapsarian Eden (Preston 76). Although the presence of the mushrooms is puzzling at first sight, Atwood here reconfigures ancient matriarchal fertility rituals—involving the consumption of psychedelic mushrooms—with the biblical story of Eve eating from the tree of knowledge in the form of giant Amanita mushrooms.[11] In contradistinction to pagan, religious, or feminist myths that celebrate and define women predominantly as sexual, reproductive beings, Pilar and Toby's superior knowledge of the Amanitas as either invigorating tonic, consciousness-enhancing drug, or deadly poison, becomes a powerful tool in an oppressive phallogocentric society. Thanks to "one of the amanitas" the terminally ill Pilar ends her life (*Year* 214), whereas Toby uses them to kill—and liberate herself from—the sexually abusive Blanco. Tellingly, his infernal brutality and perversion are symbolized in his body tattoo, which shows "snakes twining his arms" and, on his back, an upside-down Eve in chains with her head "stuck in his ass" and her "long hair waving up like flames" (43-45). Still, there is a significant difference between Toby and Pilar as Eve figures: where Pilar links sacred myths of nature with the Gardeners' millennialist ecology, Toby's irreverent comments as a novice provide built-in reflections on the continuities as well as the gaps in past and present creation myths.

[10] Both are assigned the number six ("Eve Six") which, in mythology, carries a host of ambivalent meanings: a perfect number for ancient Pythagoreans, the number six refers to sin as well as to the (good) work of creation in the bible (Yu 11).

[11] One well-known representation of the tree of knowledge in the form of an Amanita is the thirteenth-century fresco in the Chapel of Plaincourault (http://www.herbmuseum.ca/content/fresco-plaincourault-possibly-depicting-fly-agaric). Since the 1990s, R. Gordo Wasson and John M. Allegro's theories, according to which the Christian creation story originated from ancient mushroom worship, have undergone serious scholarly reevaluation and are no longer considered as unscientific.

Pastiche and Evolutionary Grotesque

Toby's reflections provide the trilogy with the self-deprecatory playfulness and self-reflexivity characteristic of pastiche (Eagleton 194; Dyer 93).[12] Harboring grave "doubts" about Pilar's ritualistic communication with the bees, Toby questions not only the effectiveness of these rituals, but also their sacredness (*Year* 120). When relocating the bees from the forest into the human community, in her mind she exposes the ostensible claim to protect the bees as the actual theft of their honey (*MaddAddam* 214). Similarly, her meditative vision of a yawning liobam does not bring about the desired divine guidance, but bathetically reveals the spiritual exercise as mere "child's play" or being "stoned" (222-23). By substituting the biblical revelation of a peaceable kingdom for a material, bioengineered hybrid, which unites the scientific-technological as well as evolutionary-biological aspects of post-humanism and deflects the human gaze with a yawn, Atwood decenters not only the notion of providential design, but also that of any moral and epistemic human high ground.[13] In so doing, Atwood pastiches the elevated, sacred aspects of myth by "shifting from high seriousness to comedy" together with the notion that humans distinguish themselves from other animals through a higher spiritual or intellectual consciousness (Howells 64).

Aesthetically, Atwood's post-human paradises rely on an evolutionary grotesque with which she has the human characters of her trilogy enact travesties of mythical animality on the one hand and exhibit a shocking bestiality on the other. Blanco, whom the corporations have reduced to a "Painballer" with a "reptilian brain" (*MaddAddam* 9) through torture, exemplifies human beastliness and brutalization; whereas the "reptilian lovelies in skintight green scales" of Katrina Wu's pleebland nightclub (252), or Zeb's "grinning like a fairy-tale wolf, [and] holding out his paw of a hand" to Toby (209), represent moments of mythical animality. All these comical and satirical representations underline the evolutionary relationship and relatedness between humans and animals. Ironically, the (genetically modified) animals turn out to be less "savage" than the human society, while the post-human Crakers become life-saving mediators between animals and humans. In this way, Atwood's human animals become merely one—albeit rather freakish—species among numerous interspecies relationships.

Yet, like other species, Atwood's freakish humans will soon be extinct. In this context, Zeb's mythical bear flight in the mountains is also a story about the loss of stories in an age of mass extinction (Heise, *Imagining Extinction* 45). His "bear drag" simultaneously signifies the performance of his death as a human being and the resurrection of the mythical Sasquatch or Bigfoot: "Within a week, Bigfoot-believers

[12] The built-in self-reflexivity of Toby's perspective regarding myths continues and brings to an end Jimmy's inner monologues about the myths that constitute the world in which he comes of age as well as his mythmaking about the Crakers' origins. In *Oryx*, it is through his comments that Crake's otherwise implicit myth of Paradice is illuminated.

[13] The issue of biotechnology, including the genetically modified hybrids, has been the focus of a number of scholarly studies, also in the context of dystopian and science fiction (Anderson 2013; Marks, 2014; Mohr 2015; Defalco 2017). However, scholars have neglected the question of Atwood's literary aesthetics, which constitutes a central aspect of the trilogy's revisionist mythmaking.

from around the world have ... mounted an expedition to the site of the discovery, and are combing the area for footprints and tufts of hair ... and then the scoffers will be shown up for the corrupt, fossilized, obsolete truth-deniers that they are" (*MaddAddam* 83). Zeb's performance of (mythical) animality displays the unwillingness of a society to "accept the demise of a culturally significant species" (Heise, *Imagining Extinction* 38) as well as its very own imminent extinction. Even worse, this society has "lost any firm grip on the distinction between fact and fiction" (40).

Zeb's struggle for survival also becomes a struggle against becoming "wordless" and losing the "glass pane of language" that normally "com[es] between him and not-him" (*MaddAddam* 80). Imminent death threatens him with the loss of language and storytelling and, therefore, the ability to distinguish his self from the living matter that surrounds him: "Soon he'd be overgrown, one with the moss" (80). The human species, Atwood suggests, distinguishes itself from other life forms through storytelling—mythmaking—as a means of taming the terrors and uncertainties of the universe they inhabit. Where Toby seeks to contain her dread of death with storytelling, Zeb wards off "the darkness" in his life with the creative powers of childish rhymes and vulgar ditties (73, 78-79). Indeed, it is in myths' apotropaic function that I see fond notes entering into Atwood's satire, particularly when Blackbeard authorizes Toby's myths at the end of the trilogy:

> This is the end of the Story of Toby. I have written it in this Book. And I have put my name here—Blackbeard—the way Toby first showed me when I was a child. It says that I was the one who set down these words.
> Thank you.
> Now we will sing. (390)

Here, Blackbeard playfully, even lightheartedly, brings to life the human species in the Crakers' creation mythology while glossing over its (self-)extinction. Rather than establishing human exceptionalism, then, creation myths in Atwood's lost paradises alleviate the human terrors in the ongoing drama of evolutionary change and species extinction.

Conclusion: Extinction in Creation Myths

With the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Atwood continues her lifelong occupation with feminist revisionist mythmaking. Combining as well as pastiching ancient and religious dreams of paradise, she duplicates the vision of the harmonious coexistence of men, women, and other life forms into Crake's techno pagan and Adam One's eco-millennialist quests for a perfected (post)humanism. Atwood's postmodern variants of paradise feature multiple Eves, none of whom identifies with either traditional devaluations of women as sexualized and domesticated, or with (eco)feminist celebrations of women as fruitful and close to nature. The haunting *pathos formula* of Oryx as "virtual virgin prostitute" shows that, as racial yet brazen "Others," the Asian Eves demonstrate a remarkable adaptability and agency. Ultimately, however, they remain excluded from an equal share in co-creation. In contrast, their white western counterparts—Pilar and

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Toby—possess the powers to command over life and death, although they do not escape economic and sexual victimhood either.

What these paradises and their resident Eves have in common is the rejection of the spiritual in favor of the material as Atwood's revisions of paradise replace sacred knowledge with evolutionary science. In this way, Atwood tells the story of a freakish species whose pleasures and perversities enmesh with a world of material-ecological as opposed to divinely ordained life processes. Deeply related to other animals on the one hand, the human species distinguishes itself through its myths on the other, an idea that the trilogy displays in its self-awareness with regard to myths as well as in an evolutionary grotesque aesthetic. In a final twist, Atwood further pastiches paradise myths as extinction myths, revealing that each creation myth always also contains the demise of other animals.

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Carnival Anthropocene: Myth and Cultural Memory in Monique Roffey's *Archipelago*

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Abstract

This essay examines the role of myth in and as cultural memory through a reading of the novel, *Archipelago* (2013), by the Trinidadian-British author Monique Roffey. Against conceptions of the Anthropocene as a break from the past—a break that repeats the myth of modernity—I argue that Roffey's use of cultural memory offers a carnivalesque relation to the world in response to the narrative's account of climate change trauma. Drawing on Bakhtin's classic study of the carnival as an occasion for contestation and renewal, as well as Cheryl Lousely's call for a "carnivalesque ecocriticism," this essay expands on the recent ecocritical turn to the field of Memory Studies (Buell; Goodbody; Kennedy) to illustrate the way literature mediates between mythic and historical relations to the natural world. As literary expressions, the carnivalesque and the grotesque evoke myth and play in order to expose and transform the social myths which govern relations and administrate difference. Since literature acts as both a producer and reflector of cultural memory, this essay seeks to highlight the literary potential of myth for connecting past traumas to affirmational modes of political engagement.

Keywords: Climate change, cultural memory, Carnival, Caribbean, Anthropocene, Monique Roffey.

Resumen

Este ensayo examina el papel del mito en y como memoria cultural analizando la novela *Archipelago* (2013), escrita por la autora trinitense-británica Monique Roffey. Frente a la idea del Antropoceno como una ruptura con el pasado—una ruptura que repite el mito de la modernidad—este trabajo argumenta que el uso de la memoria cultural de Roffey ofrece una relación carnavalesca con el mundo en respuesta al trauma del cambio climático detallado en la novela. Basando mi argumento en la teoría clásica de Bakhtin sobre el carnaval como una ocasión para la contestación y la renovación, así como la llamada de Cheryl Lousely por una "ecocrítica carnavalesca," este ensayo amplía el reciente giro de la ecocrítica hacia el campo de los estudios de memoria (Buell; Goodbody; Kennedy) para ilustrar cómo la literatura media entre las relaciones míticas e históricas con el mundo natural. Como expresiones literarias, lo carnavalesco y lo grotesco evocan el mito y el juego para revelar y transformar los mitos sociales que gobiernan las relaciones y gestionan la diferencia. Ya que la literatura actúa tanto como productora y como espejo de la memoria cultural, este ensayo busca destacar el potencial literario del mito para conectar traumas del pasado con modos de compromiso político más afirmativos.

Palabras clave: Cambio climático, memoria cultural, Carnaval, Caribe, Antropoceno, Monique Roffey.

> Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin (10)

The era of intensified climate change poses a challenge for cultural memory in that material archives are often made possible by the very infrastructures putting planetary ecosystems at risk (Craps et al. 10; LeMenager 104). At the same time, climate change threatens to disrupt connections to place and history. The Anthropocene, while nominally a geological periodization, increasingly appears as a cultural narrative: a "theodicy" that justifies present suffering on the altar of a deified *anthropos* to come, promised by ecomodernists whose professional-managerial class ontology of the world resembles a logistics network (Hamilton 234). Rather than calling attention to the various and uneven material attachments in the world from the biological to the economic, this narrative announces the accelerated fungibility of relations. Within postcolonial contexts, such calls for a break or rupture with the past can serve to repress historical injustices. Moreover, they can erase resilient dimensions of traditional knowledge capable of responding to climate change or informing a critique of neoliberal "slow violence" at multiple scales (Nixon 2). Rather than despair, ecocritic Kate Rigby argues that "narrative fiction might contribute to the material-discursive praxis of learning more skillfully to 'dance' with the increasingly unruly elements of our disastrously anthropogenic environment" (11). But what would this narrative dance with shared vulnerability look like? To step out of the accelerating temporality of global extraction, financial accumulation, and climate disruption, is to risk accusations of depoliticization, of falling out of history into myth. Mythical thought is what the Enlightenment was supposed to abolish, but mythical elements may also provide narrative and aesthetic means for attending to the world's materiality in ways that both acknowledge painful continuities *and* recognize possibilities for transformation.

In this essay, I argue that myth is an important dimension of cultural memory in the Anthropocene, as illustrated in the novel *Archipelago* (2013) by Trinidadian-British author Monique Roffey. In a contemporary realist setting, this novel employs mythical elements and narrative structures to offer an alternative to the familiar story of anthropogenic environmental change as a linear accumulation of loss or foreclosure of a future. Roffey's exploration of myth, specifically the cyclical time of the Carnival and her reformulation of the epic, tells—in the words of the main character—a "story of the still emerging Caribbean" (Roffey 203). The recent ecocritical turn toward memory studies leaves open the role of myth in the formation of environmental memory (Buell 31; Goodbody 55; Kennedy 268). Likewise, it offers an opportunity for greater investigation into the role that texts play in mediating memory of the environment across cultures (Craps et al. 1). To write "Carnival Anthropocene," paratactically placing the terms side by side, is to draw out both the risks and possibilities for narratively refashioning cultural memory in a dangerous time.

Archipelago is the story of a middle-class, Trinidadian family recovering from the loss of their infant son and house in a catastrophic flood during a tropical storm, one of many that have afflicted the country in recent years. In order to restore a sense of meaning in his life, the main character, Gavin Weald, takes his daughter Océan and their dog Suzy on a voyage to the Galapagos Islands in his small boat. On the way, the characters travel as much through the environmental and colonial history of the

Caribbean as they do their personal history, both of which are now linked through climate change. The wave that struck their home has left his wife, Claire, in a catatonic state of shock, while Océan suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and screams whenever it rains. Unable to confront what has occurred or to properly mourn, Gavin develops stress-induced psoriasis, an autoimmune condition triggered by environmental stress that causes his skin to peel. That "the flood flipped a switch inside him," and that "his body is sloughing himself from himself," can be read as an outward symptom of his internal dissociation (77). As the "sensitive processor of worldly experience," the "history of the skin" is also environmental history; it is the membrane through which "experiences deposit sediments in our bodily memory" (Berardi 59). Roffey's decision to emphasize the flesh as a material and affective membrane rather than as a primary signifier of ascriptive identity emphasizes environmental frames of injustice. For instance, Gavin's ambiguous racialization is made visible in different contexts, such as when he travels outside Trinidad he worries people see him as a dark-featured kidnapper of his fair-skinned daughter. However, when his house is destroyed by the flood he sees himself as a white man receiving the media attention while poorer and darker Trinidadians are ignored. Through their "weathering" and involuntary memory, this multi-ethnic family is marked as a new class, subject to the visible and invisible permeations of climate change and environmental risk (Neimanis and Walker 563).

Archipelago sits between Roffey's recognizably political novels, *The White Woman on the Green Bicycle* (2011), and *House of Ashes* (2014), yet it is no less urgent. What makes climate change difficult politically also makes it difficult for narrative. As an unevenly distributed process, it is hard to link predictable effects to the motives and intentions of identifiable agents. However, the risk is disproportionately felt by the people who are most precariously situated in the global economy. As Rob Nixon argues, the slow violence of climate change is, not unlike Gavin's psoriasis, "driven inward, somatized into cellular dramas of mutation, into unobserved special effects" (6). Yet in recent years, the intensification of tropical storms has led to catastrophic flooding and erosion in Trinidad, which has wiped out neighborhoods and weakened infrastructure. One such flood destroyed the house of Roffey's brother and inspired the novel. She describes her brother as someone who lives a conventional life, "and around him the banking systems are failing, the ecological system is failing, his way of doing it is no longer dependable, it's not working anymore" (Harris 76). The implication is that climate change is a social condition that is already being endured rather than a future to be avoided. *Archipelago* is not just the story of a particular family; it is the story of an encounter with environmental history of the Caribbean through literature.

The postcolonial ecocritic Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues that island writers are unable to separate "natural history" from the "diasporas of plants and peoples" that populate the Caribbean ("Island Ecologies" 300). In contrast to the "white settler production of nature writing" that understands the natural world as a *refuge* from society, she suggests that island writers "refuse to depict the natural world in terms that erase the relationship between landscape and power" (300). The living traces of colonial

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history are inscribed in the landscape and embodied in the memories of its inhabitants. Following the poet Kamau Brathwaite (1983), DeLoughrey proposes *tidalectics* as an oceanic mode of dialectical becoming that is multi-directional and non-teleological (*Routes and Roots* 2). It is produced through the ebbs and flows of colonization, capital, tourism, cruise liners, oil rigs, non-native species, consumer media, and unpredictable weather. What is so catastrophic about *Archipelago*'s flood for the characters is precisely that it seems to lack a connection to history and a clear relation to power. It comes as a large "brown wave" that de-differentiates objects and their relations to orders of meaning and significance. In this way, literature can function as connective tissue in societies whose cultural memory is disrupted by modernization and climate change.

In the era of oil, Stephanie LeMenager observes that "the petroleum infrastructure has become embodied memory and habitus for modern humans" (104). Given this, ecological narratives must perform a double task of fashioning memory and desire beyond the collective experience of petrocultural modernity without fully breaking from that experience in a way that denies the suffering it has caused, nor the myriad individual pleasures that it provides—including the experience of freedom as personal mobility and limitless consumption. To mediate this distinction scholars in the field of memory studies differentiate between "communicative" and "cultural memory" (Erll 28). Whereas communicative memory is limited to experience of generations currently living, cultural memory reaches further back into events and figures—myths and religious narratives—that continue to shape the "secular" present in profound ways (29). As the "transformation of the past into foundational history, that is, into myth," Jan Assmann contends that cultural memory not only generates the structures through which present is interpreted, in the strong sense it coincides with the consciousness of historical becoming (Erll 32). Roffey's turn to the "deep" figures of cultural memory as a way to reframe "surface" events expresses the urgent need to connect immediate experience with the longer time of anthropogenic environmental history.

Epic Circuits and Historical Trauma

Despite its critique of the oil industry, *Archipelago* won the OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, sponsored by the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago, at the annual Bocas Lit Fest. Previous winners include Derek Walcott, and like Walcott, Roffey narrates the "still emerging Caribbean" through the canonical texts of western humanism. Her conscious evocation of Homer and Melville simultaneously reframes the literary traditions of the western *anthropos* by re-inscribing them through the cultural and environmental memory of the Caribbean. First, there is the role of the epic as the founding narrative of a community told through an Odyssean journey to feel at home again in a world that has become uncannily threatening. The characters interpret their voyage explicitly through Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, albeit from the critical perspective of Starbuck. For cultural memory theorist Astrid Erll, "literary afterlives" like these provide genealogies that establish material continuity between traumatic pasts and the present through mythic figures (3). As such, Gavin and his daughter are

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"literary afterlives" of Ahab's suicidal enterprise who are instead "saved" by a mythical white whale, a ghostly figure from an earlier moment of the oil economy that resurfaces amidst the oil infrastructure that surrounds them.

Archipelago's main character Gavin Weald is a new Odysseus, one whose porous vulnerability stands in contrast to the classical body of the bounded individual. He is introduced as a burping, sloppy, comically depressed middle-aged man who falls asleep standing while peeing at work. After the flood, his psoriasis is a manifestation of failed efforts at putting up barriers, an example of what Cheryl Lousely describes as "patriarchal illusions of domestic 'security' as ecological self-containment" (121). Gavin's condition clears up as he learns that he cannot recover from the trauma by cutting off himself and his family from the world. Through him, Roffey illustrates the exhaustion of the Homeric model. Odysseus is the classic figure of cunning; his subjectivity is formed through sacrificial acts of self-preservation in the process of overcoming an objectified, naturalized, world of dangerous others. Horkheimer and Adorno not only see in Odysseus the prototypical bourgeois subject, whose self-denial enables the present accumulations of wealth at the cost of planetary fungibility, but see Odysseus as prefiguring the "heroes of all true novels after him," in that "he achieves his estrangement from nature by abandoning himself to nature, trying his strength against it" (38). However, Gavin's encounters with nonhumans are moments of shared animal vulnerability rather than obstacles for the hero to sacrificially outwit. The novel begins as his failed efforts at self-protection are proving unsustainable. Indeed, estrangement from nature is his chronic condition, and he must learn how to properly abandon himself so as to repair the relations that have been severed.

In his 1953 book *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James identifies a similar critique in Melville's epic. Reading the whaling ship a precursor to the Fordist factory and corporate liberalism of the Cold War, James finds in *Moby-Dick* a new vision of society that anticipates the crises of the century that was to come (96). "Nature is not a background to men's activity or something to be conquered and used," James writes, "It is a part of man, at every turn physically, intellectually and emotionally, and man is a part of it" (93). Through labor, the modern economy turns humans against nature and their own subjectivity, an alienating process that becomes more abstract in the "immaterial" era of hyper-finance and extraction. "If man does not integrate his daily life with his natural surroundings and his technical achievements," James continues, "they will turn on him and destroy him" (93). This integration also entails rewriting memory so as to avoid instrumental uses of the past. Reflecting on his own relation to history, James argues that a certain kind of liberation from the past would be an "irreparable" and "grievous loss." He does not wish to relate to his past as a tragedy, nor can he imagine a future in which this past has been excluded. James rejects the modern myth of escaping the bounds of history, yet also admits that he cannot "deny that there are memories, and West Indian ones, that I may wish to be liberated from" (*Beyond a Boundary* 59). By taking up Melville's epic, Roffey is intervening in the same historical trajectory that Melville warned against, which now necessarily includes his own set of

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characters as mythic figures through which metaphysical conflicts between society and the natural world are made legible.

The struggle to imbue collective suffering with meaning is as old as the epic itself, but *Archipelago* restages it in the context of climate change. Gavin is troubled most by the fact that "the flood had no meaning, no order; it was a catastrophe to him and meant nothing to nature" (244). However, the meaningless and the miraculous stand side by side, paratactically inviting the reader to join the characters in the act of establishing historical and environmental linkages of meaning. Contingency arrives also in the saving form of miraculous beings. Gavin writes a fragment of a Rumi poem "Zero Circle" that he has "committed to memory" in the ship's logbook: "So let us rather not be sure of anything," it reads, "Beside ourselves and only that, so / Miraculous beings come running to help" (78). They encounter a myriad of species which restore their wonder in a nature that "makes odd creatures, some which can seem quite *un*natural" (75). This extends to wounded animals. "The twitching stumps" of a still-living turtle whose fins had been cut off "suggest the use of radar, a sonar call, as though the severed flesh is searching for the lost parts of itself" (167). When the albino whale surfaces, it is a miraculous confirmation of Gavin and Océan's reverse *Moby-Dick* narrative, that theirs is a voyage to *recover* what has been severed. The whale sings to them with its "sonar moaning" across the gaps of material and narrative history (318). As whale harvesting was the first iteration of the oil industry in the Americas, Roffey poses the question of what it means to be observed and "studied" by this figure from the industrial and literary past (318). To encounter "oil" as a subjective being, to be viewed by this mythical living memory, suggests a different way of relating to nature and contingency. Yes, the past could have been otherwise and so the present might be redeemed. More importantly, however, this experience of seeing oneself *be seen* by this whale dislocates a vision of history grounded in the hero's consciousness and reframes it within the immanent horizon of this mythical whale, a horizon which contains all later developments of the oil industry as well as the storms that has wrecked their lives. This return is a re-surfacing, a repetition as an emergence from the depths, that can be read as a tidalectical movement which narratively decouples memory from its anthropocentric infrastructure.

The recurring temporalities in *Archipelago* can be read as an effect of the flood trauma, as a repetition of past colonial exploitation in the present, and finally as a utopian desire for reconciling history and nature by the individual as part of the community. The encounter with the whale is an example of a mythic form M.H. Abrams identifies as the "circuitous journey," in which the end of the journey is imagined "as 'a "return" to the beginning, but at a higher level" (qtd. in Coupe 64). "'Each man' will not only be 'rejoined with other men,'" Laurence Coupe writes, "but also 'reunited to a nature which is no longer dead and alien but has been resurrected and has assumed a companionable, because a human form'" (64). The circuitous journey is a mythic structure that post-Romantic culture and criticism inherit from medieval and classical sources. Trauma theorist Dominick LaCapra describes it as a "speculative dialectics" where "wholeness is broken through alienation and suffering that is transcended in a

higher, greater wholeness" (95). Translating this romantic myth into a political framework, Walter Benjamin argues that the present is full of pasts through which reunified moments might enable the "leap" out of chronological time into the "messianic time" of revolution (261). The mythic return of the white whale and the repetition of the flood are both redemptive occurrences that reconnect living time with such repressed or excluded elements of history.

What is unspeakable for the main character builds as a formal absence in the narrative itself. For one hundred pages there is no indication that the family had an infant son who drowned in the flood. It is Océan who finally broaches the subject to confirm the reason for their voyage (100). Gavin's continuous flashbacks to the moments before the flood are a symptom of his inability to confront the trauma, and a desire for protection that results in emotional dissociation, physically manifesting in his psoriasis. Meanwhile, his wife Claire experiences "a falling inwards," becoming catatonic and nearly comatose since the flood (108). "She grew up with threats of hurricane, the bombing lashing rains, a lifetime of rainy seasons," Gavin thinks, "Rain like that comes every year in Trinidad" (119). Yet when the familiar and comforting turns destructive, what is lost is not limited to people and property. One's very sense of trust in the world, confirmed by memory, is lost. Gavin's response to losing his child and house is to build "a stronger wall around it," reflecting his use of memory as a kind of autoimmune condition (177). As Gavin tracks their journey at night on the ship, "memories haunt him" and his spatial calculations quickly give way to temporal ones (44). "Since the flood," we are told, "one of his recurring fantasies is to track back to the days before it, remembering what they'd been eating, talking about, [and] who had visited them." Because "the flood hit a week before Christmas Day," "his favorite thing is to let himself be in that time just before his old life ended" (44). This circuitous orientation to time illustrates a struggle between involuntary and voluntary memory.

In his study of Proust, Gilles Deleuze argues that involuntary memory is based on "the resemblance between two sensations, between two moments," that create "a strict *identity* of a quality common to the two sensations or of a sensation common to the two moments, the present and the past" (59). Océan begins screaming, for instance, whenever it rains. Each subsequent storm is not merely a reminder of the flood, but in some sense, *is* the flood. Another involuntary memory is the color pink, a reminder of the pink house that was their home. When they discover an abandoned pink house on the beach near Los Roques, Océan "squeals in delight" yet Gavin flashes back to their dog Suzy being washed away. All he can think about is how even in this "small secluded world," this pink house "isn't safe either" from the waves (103). When they come across ruins of "the infamous slave huts of Bonaire," their pink color establishes a connection between two histories (126). Explaining to Océan that the small houses were made by "black people from Africa" who were "forced to work here against their will," he describes slavery of the salt industry. With no other frame of reference, Océan says it "feels funny in here," "You know, funny. Like… Mummy" (128). Océan links the memory of the place with her mother's trauma while Gavin understands it historically. "The place is haunted no ass by the ghosts of these enslaved people, the sorrow here is evident.

This is a place of trauma," he thinks. "There are many such places like this in the Caribbean, spots where someone massacred someone else, or where slaves were housed, where the horror still resides in stones, in walls" (129). The material remains of the slave huts exposes a shared vulnerability of domestic space that throws into relief Gavin's atomized response to the communal trauma of the flood.

Where involuntary memory can become a circuit that mires people in trauma, voluntary memory can become a strategy to overcome this repetition. Staying with Deleuze, "*voluntary* memory proceeds from an actual present to a present that 'has been,' to something that was present and is no longer;" in other words, "it recomposes [the past] with different *presents*" (57). For example, as the characters reach the Galapagos islands an earthquake levels the Fukushima reactor in Japan and sends a tsunami wave across the Pacific. Moving to high ground, they are able to overcome their traumatic relation to the wave. Understanding that the wave is still "Nature" and, in the broadest sense, shares an identity with the wave that killed a member of their family, they recognize its difference through an act of voluntary memory. The second wave neither erases nor undoes the damage of the first. In fact, given the scale of damage and loss of life in Japan, this second wave is arguably much worse. But for the characters, the second wave enables them to recognize the plurality of a world in which both waves are present, as part of nature, yet neither necessarily negate the miraculous. Rather than mastering nature, the second wave enables Gavin to master the way he relates to nature. "I thought I was separate," Gavin tells Claire after the tsunami. "Me *against* the world. I wanted to escape that house, everything. But really, I'm part of it all, the earth, the sea. I can't get away" (356). The voluntary memory exhibited by the characters is a gesture of affirmation that recognizes how attachments to the natural world, whether negative or positive, constitute environmental subjects.

The environmental figure that destroys his relations to family, community, and the natural world, returns as the embodiment of reconciliation. In the novel's final passages, the mythical "brown wave" is transfigured into lines of Carnival celebrants: "the rain dances down from the night sky and turns every person into a slippery wet brown statue" (357). Gavin looks to the sky and locates himself by way of the Southern Cross constellation, and remembers it passing above him each year, linking this moment in an extended duration of exuberance. "He is Bacchus, he is Dionysus, he is a drunken sailor man, a wild man, a lover man;" according to the free indirect speech, "he is home, back, a person from this particular island, lush and green and fertile, Trinidad, the end link in the chain of this long and dazzling archipelago" (357). This communal reunification is an ecstatic alignment of multiple scales of memory within a cyclical rhythm. Instead of a sense of completion or fulfillment *after* history, as in theodicy, Roffey depicts "jubilation" *within* history through the suspension of ordinary time (356). In "greeting the sweet, sweet rain," the celebrants are not only welcoming the return of the familiar, but also the rains that are to come (358). It is an expression of love for a world even though it contains pain, injustice, and climate change. This "future orientation" has always defined the utopian dimension of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 33).

However, the close of the novel on Carnival celebrations may be read by some as a depoliticizing escape from history into myth. Édouard Glissant, for instance, refers to "Carnival time" as the "ritual exception" in the Caribbean plantation system (64). Yet, he observes that "within this universe of domination and oppression, of silent or professed dehumanization, forms of humanity stubbornly persisted" (65). In the current era of globalization, leftist critics have recognized the carnivalesque as both a description of postmodern capitalism (e.g. Slavoj Žižek) and a description of the protests against it (e.g. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri). How one feels about the carnivalesque generally depends on one's conception of politics. Social change can be understood as a decision that transcendentally cuts history, separating unfree past from emancipated present, or instead as an immanent becoming which emerges out of diverse forms of practice. Both conceptions lend themselves to mythic figurations. *Archipelago* follows the latter. As the narration explains, "an entire people don't recover from torture in just a few centuries [...] recovery takes time; it is the story of the still emerging Caribbean" (203). Readers should thus not mistake the carnival as Roffey's prescription for the climate crisis, but consider *Archipelago* itself as a political narrative act. The carnival and its grotesque aesthetic are a mythical response that enables the recovery and refiguration of relations between society and the environment through the derangement of nature and culture.

Anthropocene Grotesque

Bakhtin famously describes the carnivalesque as "bodily participation in the potentiality of another world" (48). This is not a world that is wholly other, but rather one that is recomposed out of the elements of the existent, allowing participants to affirm experiences and histories that have been repressed. The carnival, as political theorist Andrew Robinson argues, is "expressive rather than instrumental" ("Carnival Against Capital"). In what follows, I develop *Archipelago*'s carnivalesque expression through the aesthetic of the grotesque. For Lousley, the carnival is a site where "physical environments and environmental subjectivities are made and remade" (122). Rather than imposing normative distinctions on places and people, these sites expose "the normal environment as a tenuous construct that suppresses and denies an ecological world of relational flows of energy and desire—a comic, vibrant, grotesque world of porous bodies and identities" (121). "On an affective level," Robinson writes, this "creates a particular intense feeling of immanence and unity—of being part of a historically immortal and uninterrupted process of becoming" ("Carnival Against Capital"). Roffey's kaleidoscopic passages of creatures, cultures, and histories, produce this feeling of connection. The grotesque recombines that which has been excluded from official memory, bringing to life previously passive landscapes and creatures whose names bear the history of colonialism, while the grotesque bodies of characters transform the image of the heroic through their entanglements.

Océan is a compelling grotesque figure. The child character allows Roffey to introduce imaginative and unexpected associations whenever events are questions in the novel's internal discourse. Often, Océan opens Gavin up to experience carnivalesque

moments on their journey. For instance, while snorkeling in Bonaire among the wildly colorful, angelic, and brain-like underwater beings, he witnesses "a crowd of neon fish, blue tangs, together against the red waving hair," who "look like a section of a carnival band as they move together in a harmonious water-dance, part of something, but uniquely startling to the eye" (114). "The sight and emotion don't match," yet his mix of nostalgia and grief turns to joy when he sees his daughter transformed by the aquatic procession:

> Her skin has turned jellyfish white and her arms hang downwards, limp in the turquoise water; her legs are spread, her yellow fins are wild and angle-poised. Her face is split by the mask; her eyes are far apart. He has never seen his daughter like this. Suspended in salt sea, hypnotized, breathing like a fish. She has gone somewhere else; she is like a creature of the sea… This is what he came all this way for, to show her this fairy land… she isn't scared; she's out of herself (115).

Suspended moments like this disrupt even the time-consciousness of their journey. Visual elements of the carnival—the mask, the human-animal hybrid, the mythical location—are all present. The experience of being otherwise among other beings is a therapeutic moment of generative association in which the characters playfully re-establish relations with the world that has injured them. Mythic metamorphosis through the carnivalesque transforms the world's threatening excesses into a participation in the miraculous. The characters recover through this grotesque remaking of bodies and environments.

The grotesque also functions as critique when the characters encounter the postcolonial ecologies of species and waste. Gavin's effort to reach the Galapagos stems from his desire for the ideal island, which has been immunized from anthropogenic change and saved from history. Following the trauma of the flood, his desire for what Emerson calls an "original relation to the universe" partakes in the colonial imagination of islands as remote, isolated, outposts secured by geographic distance (3). As DeLoughrey argues, there is "no other region in the world that has been more radically altered in terms of flora and fauna than the Caribbean islands" ("Island Ecologies" 298). Because of this, Gavin "goes funny on the inside" when the Galapagos is used as a metaphor to describe the impact of domesticated and non-native species introduced on other islands (92). In Venezuela's Los Roques National Park, for instance, they are saddened by the "toothpaste caps and shampoo bottle caps and plastic bottles" that have combined with seaweed, broken coral, and netting, in a field of "'marine debris'" (96). The presence of a pink inhaler, "a private thing," hits home for Gavin. His sense of public and private is disrupted by the circulation of these objects outside the normal frameworks of human intention. Nevertheless, he considers the place "a small miracle, secluded from the world," even though its protected status is made possible by "Chavez and all his oil" (95). "Oil has killed more creatures in the sea and on land over the last two or three decades than any other single substance," he thinks, "Oil and sea don't mix; oil does not dissolve" (95). Oil's inability to dissolve, to melt, or to combine with the watery natures of the Caribbean is what makes it *materially* unassimilable, and thus *metaphorically* incompatible with any desirable future social-ecological relationship.

Anthropocene discourse sometimes affirms the "monstrous" side of the grotesque as it attempts to correct modern distinctions that have upheld practices of externalizing waste and displacing responsibility (Latour, "Love your Monsters"). Yet this separation is not universal. Karl Marx associates this separation with the modern bourgeois subject for whom Nature (space) is a backdrop for human (time) becoming. In the *Grundrisse*, he writes that "It is not the *unity* of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature [...] which requires explanation, or is the result of a historic process, but rather the *separation* between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence" (489). As an aesthetic, the grotesque recombines that which has been separated, corrupting purity with hybridity. For instance, Caribbean writers have often gone "against the convention of falsely legitimizing landscape scenery," having instead "conceived of landscape as basically implicated in a story, in which it too was a vivid character" (Glissant 71). The colonial system of agriculture produces an understanding that the environment is not a neutral agent in social relationships. Likewise, the image of the island as a tropical paradise, immunized from historical change, is a myth that upholds the post-industrial tourist economy.

When they encounter the Sea Empress cruise liner and its wealthy white Americans who are "voyeurs" and "not travelers" like themselves, Gavin observes that "the working people return to saying yessuh and to whoring for the Yankee dollar" (109). The town turns itself into a spectacle, while locals refashion garbage to sell tourists "dolls made of recycled plastic Coke bottles filled with sand" (109). The sight fills him with revulsion, as it brings back memories and histories of racial and colonial hierarchy. Océan, on the other hand, says that "it looks beautiful." Her naive wonder at the Sea Empress enables Gavin to see it as "a grotesque and a spectacle in its own right," and simultaneously "one of the wonders of the Caribbean" (110). Océan's perspective offers a glimpse of the creative potential of what is often called "generational amnesia," in that she encounters the world of beings for the first time without a pre-established interpretive frame. This movement from revulsion at injustice, injury, and pollution, to an aesthetic appreciation of contradiction, hybridity, and the miraculous, is made possible by the grotesque. The transformation of waste (excluded, worthless/worldless objects) into nourishment (sources of income) by the locals is evidence of a resilient and affirmational cunning.

Archipelago's environments expose a contradiction in the way landscapes are mythically naturalized and remembered. The postcolonial Caribbean ecologies enable characters to question the division between past and present waves of species. For instance, those brought by earlier colonization generate a sense of novelty and wonder while contemporary incursions of nonnative species produce a sense of dread. "Tall candle cactus, prickly pear cactus and wild donkeys brought by the Spanish five hundred years ago" populate the coast of Bonaire alongside "wild goats" and "lizards." The latter are "like conquistadors with their spiked helmets and pewter body armour which… reflects the colours of the rainbow" (122). A local guide identifies a litany of species, composing "a vast poetry" of surreal names that bear the memory of those who assigned

them: "tiger groupers, honeycomb cowfish, French angelfish, midnight parrotfish, white spotted filefish, Spanish hogfish, trumpetfish, sand divers, West Indian sea eggs, Christmas tree worms, sea cucumbers" (115). This feeling is shattered when it comes to newly arrived lionfish. While lionfish originate in the Pacific, "six of these fish escaped from a broken tank in Florida during Hurricane Andrew, in 1992." Because "Caribbean fish do not register lionfish as predators" they "moved south down the Antilles chain" like "an unstoppable invasion" (117). Gavin likens this to "hearing the news of a far-away grand-scale death; like how he felt when he heard of the Twin Towers, when he heard about Srebrenica, an unfathomable genocide in another world" (118). This passage illustrates how cultural memory may integrate anthropogenic ecological history, yet that same memory also risks an equally mythical naturalization. By virtue of the passage of time, certain species become constitutive of both the imagined and actual environment. The older invasion becomes easier to accept than the new.

Once something passes from the realm of communicative memory to the mythic realm of cultural memory its problematic status dissipates and it becomes constitutive of the place. A similar contradiction exists in architecture:

> [W]hy does he accept the earlier invasion of the Dutch, the fancy buildings, the wild donkeys brought by the Spanish, and yet he minds the twentieth-century invaders, those who brought the casinos and Taco Bell? Because Americans are also New World—and they haven't built grand cities like the Spanish, the British or the Dutch. They haven't brought people, trees, plants, animals, languages. America is still young and has arrived in modern style, in recent decades. America has colonized invisibly, via cable and satellite TV (175).

This "invisible colonization" describes control over the means of communication and visibility itself. Aleida Assmann refers to these as "transnational memories" as a way to describe the transnational production and reception of cultural memory, as well as the "multidirectional memory" of the Black Atlantic and Holocaust diaspora (550). Such memories, she writes, "conceptualize new forms of belonging, solidarity, and cultural identification in a world characterized by streams of migration and the lingering impact of traumatic and entangled pasts" (546). *Archipelago* lastly interrogates the production and erasure of cultural memory by news companies of the global north that often create mythic (de-historicized) images of environmental disasters and nameless victims on the periphery of globalization—or at least the periphery of global attention. Akin to the images of the American Dust Bowl and displacements of the Great Depression, which depicted migration and hardship as acts of God despite the activist intentions of artists, the lack of context offers a distorted mirror (Fender 4). In Cartagena, Gavin and Océan watch CNN coverage of "something about floods in the countryside," registering "images of crowds standing huddled, rain-soaked, houses broken and bobbing in water." "Trinidad, Venezuela, the rains in Aruba," he thinks, "these floods are here in Colombia, too; they're everywhere" (227). To say that they are everywhere is to depersonalize the experience, to generalize it to the point where it becomes part of the background condition.

While media networks help produce and shape the transnational memory, they obscure regional frictions, such as the racial, national, and class inequalities that shape the contours of climate change. Gavin's own experience is excluded from first-world narratives, but he encounters it transmitted back to him by way of regional disasters. While watching flood coverage of Venezuela, Gavin unexpectedly sympathizes with president Hugo Chavez and the impatience he expresses toward international reporters: "When *his* home was flooded a year ago in Trinidad, scores of people lost their homes; it didn't even make a line of international news because the north doesn't care about floods in the southern hemisphere" (70). By focusing on national "father-leaders so common in the Caribbean" this media coverage reminds Gavin of his own desperate attempts to protect his family (69). This sympathetic identification raises the question as to whether, like the ubiquitous leasing of Dutch extraction and refinery infrastructure by the Venezuelan national oil industry, Gavin may also be complicit in the family's inability to recover (142). Just as the sense of abandonment leads to reactionary efforts at private (or nationalist) securitization, so the self-abandonment of carnival might express a shared expression of trust, hope, and resilience, in the face of adversity.

Roffey's novel illustrates how new environmental relationships in the Anthropocene will not be created out of thin air but out of the myriad other narratives, texts, images, materials, and *myths* that compose the everyday lives of people. In the Anthropocene, the carnival represents a "rejection of that which is finished and completed" and holds open the potential for differing relations in the world (Bakhtin 37). By rejecting the "narrow and artificial optimism" of the latest round of capitalist modernization, as well as the apocalypticism of those whose *ressentiment* binds them to existing arrangements, a carnivalesque ecocritical imagination recognizes that "moments of death and revival, of change and renewal [have] always led to a festive perception of the world," *in spite of* what has been lost (9). The mythic references and grotesque figures of carnivalesque environments allow for generative derangements and associations that renew the past in the present. Contrasted with the communicative memory of the media, literary works are capable of constructing new genealogies of the present in ways that make "the process of construction observable" (Erll 151). *Archipelago* draws on the material and literary sources of this cultural memory to bring submerged Caribbean experiences to the surface. While it depicts the contested workings of individual and transnational memory, narrative fiction can also serve as an archive of cultural memory for future generations, and strengthen resilient forms of engagement in the vulnerable present.

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Una llamada por la justicia medioambiental en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* de José María Arguedas

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Resumen

Este artículo muestra cómo en su novela *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, José María Arguedas combina su voz de autor con la de figuras míticas antiguas para hacer una llamada más poderosa por la justicia ambiental a favor de los pueblos indígenas en el contexto de la industrialización del Perú moderno. A diferencia de sus anteriores novelas realistas *Yawar fiesta*, *Los ríos profundos* y *Todas las sangres*, que tienen una visión más antropológicamente descriptiva de los indios y sus relaciones con los pueblos colonizadores, esta novela se encuadra dentro del realismo mágico y se centra en el paraíso perdido de Chimbote, una ciudad costera. La imagen que Arguedas nos ofrece de la ciudad explotada como una mujer caída es una crítica profética, que confirma los principios del discurso de Val Plumwood y otras ecofeministas contemporáneas. Este narrador reinterpreta la figura mítica del héroe burlador (*trickster*) a través de una actualización literaria de los zorros míticos de la cultura Moche con el fin de crear una forma moderna de pensamiento mitológico. A través del diálogo entre dos zorros, el novelista es capaz de trascender el tiempo y el espacio para brindar a los lectores una amplia perspectiva ecocrítica del transcurso de la degradación ambiental y social que la industrialización desenfrenada produce en el Perú del siglo XX.[1]

Palabras clave: Ecocrítica, ecofeminismo, mito, José María Arguedas, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, héroe burlador.

Abstract

This paper argues that in *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, José María Arguedas combines his authorial voice with ancient mythical figures to make a powerful call for environmental justice for indigenous peoples in the context of the industrialization of modern Peru. Unlike his previous realistic novels *Yawar fiesta, Los ríos profundos* and *Todas las sangres*, which have a more anthropologically descriptive view of Indians and their relations to the colonizing peoples, this novel adopts magic realism and is about the lost paradise of Chimbote, a coastal city. Arguedas' image of the exploited city as a fallen woman is a prescient critique, which confirms tenets of the discourse of Val Plumwood and other contemporary ecofeminists. Although the mythical "zorros" from the highlands and the lowlands are derived from Moche culture and other Peruvian legends, in his new myth recreated in their dialogue, the "zorros" become "trickster heroes" in a modern age with their mythic voices. Through their dialogue, Arguedas is able to transcend time and space to give the readers a broad eco-critical perspective of the course of environmental and social degradation under rampant industrialization in 20th century Peru.

[1] Quisiera agradecer sinceramente las valiosas opiniones de los revisores de esta revista para mejorar el contenido de este artículo.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, ecofeminism, myth, José María Arguedas, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, trickster hero.

José María Arguedas (1911-1969), narrador neo-indigenista peruano, es un novelista que defiende la justicia medioambiental en la sociedad peruana. El medio ambiente es un tema esencial de su narrativa. Al haber sido criado entre indios, compartió desde muy temprano la concepción de la naturaleza propia del hombre andino. Su visión del mundo está nutrida por el misterio, la magia y la honda ternura del mundo indio. Según dice: "Para el hombre quechua monolingüe, el mundo está vivo; no hay mucha diferencia, en cuanto se es ser vivo, entre una montaña, un insecto, una piedra inmensa y el ser humano. No hay, por tanto, muchos límites entre lo maravilloso y lo real" (Larco 28). A través de esta visión percibe una comunicación armoniosa y estrecha entre las cosas, la tierra, la sangre, el río, la montaña, las plantas, los animales y los seres humanos.

Abraham Acosta ha insistido en criticar la pervivencia de un concepto romántico de los indígenas en América Latina. En el modelo decolonial planteado por Mignolo, Acosta señala la nostalgia que muestra este filósofo por una voz amerindia no adulterada y no perturbada aún en la plenitud de su presencia en sí misma y su autoestima (66). Asimismo, con respecto a la crítica literaria sobre Arguedas, Vargas Llosa, aunque admira la obra y la persona de Arguedas, considera que el mundo literario creado por este autor es una "utopía arcaica", ajeno a la realidad total del Perú y a los cambios reales, y agrega que Arguedas "habla de sí mismo en pasado, como se habla de los muertos, porque él es una especie de muerto" (182). Este punto de vista en cierta medida se ajusta a las primeras obras de realismo de Arguedas. Sin embargo, no es aplicable a esta novela posterior, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, que describe la degradación de la ciudad Chimbote. En esta novela, la imagen de la bahía de Chimbote, como imagen de una prostituta, la "zorra", sugiere la explotación de la tierra y del cuerpo.[2] La explotación de la ciudad Chimbote, que es como un microcosmos del Perú, también sugiere la explotación de todo Perú. La ecofeminista australiana Val Plumwood, en su *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, critica el dualismo cultural en la filosofía occidental, cuyo paradigma está estructurado en pares contrastados como cultura/naturaleza, hombre/mujer, mente/cuerpo, mente/naturaleza, civilizado/primitivo, sujeto/objeto, yo/otro... y manifiesta que los colonizadores han adoptado este dualismo en la legitimación de su colonización (41-43). En esta ciudad costera, mientras que los dominadores se benefician de la explotación de la naturaleza, los indígenas tienen que sufrir sus consecuencias del progreso moderno a principios del siglo XX.

[2] La ecofeminista americana, Annette Kolodny cuestiona la construcción de la tierra como femenina, porque tomar la tierra como una figura virginal pasiva alienta a los colonizadores a querer dominarla (9). A diferencia de los escritores coloniales criticados por Kolodny, Arguedas ha creado una imagen de resistencia, tanto masculina como femenina, los zorros y la zorra. Al igual que Kolodny, él es ecológicamente consciente de la explotación en la imagen de una mujer explotada.

Según Flys Junquera *et al*., mientras que la primera oleada de la justicia medioambiental se limitó al tema de la conservación de la naturaleza, refiriéndose al mundo natural y no manipulado por el hombre, en la segunda oleada se ampliaron los temas a los aspectos sociales y humanos.[3] Se nota que los más afectados por la injusticia medioambiental son los pobres, los indígenas y los marginados de la sociedad. Por lo tanto, Adamson sostiene que el movimiento de la justicia medioambiental enfatiza "la intersección entre la opresión social y los asuntos medioambientales" (9). Cabe destacar el papel significativo de las humanidades para la resistencia contra estas situaciones sociales, como demuestran numerosos autores de esta corriente (Adamson and Davis 3-17). Julie Sze opina que la literatura ofrece una manera nueva de concebir la justicia medioambiental, a través de imágenes y metáforas, no a través de estadísticas, y así mismo propicia una representación más flexible con una perspectiva más global y cargada de raíces históricas (Adamson *et al*. 163).

Este artículo muestra cómo en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* José María Arguedas usa figuras míticas antiguas y combina la voz de éstas con la suya para hacer una llamada más poderosa por la justicia medioambiental en el contexto de la industrialización del Perú a favor de los indios. El uso del realismo mágico permite a Arguedas producir una ecocrítica mordaz desde el punto de vista de una pareja mítica derivada de voces indígenas. Esta novela no trata del mito de los indios no tocados por la civilización; los indios que se encuentran en *Yawar fiesta*, *Los ríos profundos* y *Todas las sangres*, son indios que habitan en su medio tradicional. Sin embargo, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* se centra en la figura del indio que ha emigrado a la ciudad, fuera de su entorno cultural. El mito que utiliza Arguedas en esta novela es un mito nuevo, de construcción propia y muy singular. Cuando el novelista combina su voz con la de las antiguas figuras míticas del Perú, el texto entra en el "umbral de la *illiteracy*",[4] que, según Acosta, se caracteriza por la ingobernabilidad que rige las relaciones entre indígenas y no indígenas. En esta novela, los zorros son figuras inmortales que pueden trascender el tiempo y el espacio y se presentan como libres y abiertos para cualquier transformación: son "héroes burladores (*tricksters*)".[5] Arguedas sacrifica su voz de autor para otorgársela a dos zorros míticos, haciendo que su voz propia se combine con la de éstos para que la voz resultante sea más poderosa literariamente; de esta forma quiere concienciar acerca de la degradación medioambiental para conservar la sostenibilidad deseada del medio ambiente del Perú.

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[3] Desde que surgió la corriente ecocrítica en la crítica literaria, según Buell (2005), la consolidación de las tendencias de la justicia medioambiental junto con la del ecofeminismo pertenecen a la segunda oleada de este movimiento (ver *Ecocríticas. Literatura y medio ambiente* 86).

[4] Abraham Acosta define varias veces el término *illiteracy*. Ana Sabau dice que *illiteracy* es un término que no encuentra su traducción en la palabra "analfabetismo" del español, debido a que no pretende hacer referencia a la desposesión de la escritura ni a la incapacidad de un individuo o una comunidad de lectores. Por el contrario, siguiendo la forma en que Acosta lo esboza, *illiteracy* es un término que no puede definirse de forma fija. Se trata pues de un (no)concepto que debe mucho a la deconstrucción y que busca incesantemente eludir la estabilidad de sentido, incluso de su propia (in)definición. De este modo, *illiteracy* describe tanto una operación de lectura como una metodología. Véase la reseña del libro de Abraham Acosta.

[5] Sobre la figura del *trickster*, ver Paul y José Manuel Pedrosa.

En primer lugar, me referiré a los zorros míticos en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, y examinaré sus características como personajes míticos y la estructura del diálogo que entablan. Después analizaré cómo Arguedas nos hace ver el medio ambiente de Chimbote y su destrucción desde los puntos de vista de los dos zorros. Aunque los zorros también relacionan a los indígenas que han emigrado a la ciudad de Chimbote con los papeles que desempeñan en la sociedad y nos muestran sus efectos, su poder se muestra en la forma en que combaten esta atrocidad. Por lo tanto, para terminar, señalaré cómo los dos zorros actúan como burladores y héroes en esta novela.

Los zorros míticos en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*

Arguedas no es el creador de los dos zorros incorporados a esta novela. Por una parte, el escritor se inspira en la cultura Moche,[6] que se desarrolló entre los siglos II y VII, y se extendió hacia los valles de la costa norte del actual Perú. Por otra parte, los dos zorros provienen de una narración mítica quechua, recogida por Francisco de Ávila (1573-1647) y traducida por José María Arguedas, junto con otras historias, bajo el título de Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí (1966). Según la leyenda, en tiempos lejanos dos zorros se encontraron en el cerro Latauzaco, en Huarochirí, sierra del actual departamento de Lima, junto al cuerpo dormido de Huatyacuri, hijo del dios Pariacaca. El mundo estaba dividido en dos regiones: la de arriba, la sierra, y la de abajo, la costa; de ambas regiones provenían los zorros, y cada uno representa una de estas regiones. Los zorros se convirtieron en consejeros de Huatyacuri y le ayudaron a vencer los retos que le impuso el yerno del dios Tamtañamca, pero al mismo tiempo eran observadores discretos y burlones de todo lo que ocurría.

La división del territorio en el mito y la idea de los dos personajes que servían como conexión entre la sierra y la costa inspiró a Arguedas para la creación de su propia realidad mítica sobre Perú. Los dos zorros son representantes de dos lugares y espacios distintos, y son portavoces para cada espacio de la tierra de Perú. Geográficamente son respectivamente de la Sierra, donde están los indios; y de la Costa, representada por Chimbote, el puerto pesquero más grande de aquel mundo, adonde acuden runas (indios), criollos, extranjeros, monjas, curas y prostitutas.

En esta novela, compuesta de varias formas literarias de diario, diálogo y relato, los zorros aparecen por primera vez al final del "Primer diario", y por segunda vez al final del primer capítulo, estableciendo, según Lienhard, "un nexo entre las dos vertientes de la novela, Diarios y Relato" (30). El zorro de arriba y el de abajo se encuentran para intercambiar informaciones sobre los asuntos de su mundo. El zorro de abajo indica las diferencias entre la sierra y la costa:

> Nuestro mundo estaba dividido entonces, como ahora, en dos partes, la tierra en que no llueve y es cálida, el mundo de abajo, cerca del mar, donde los valles yungas encajonados entre cerros escarpados, secos, de color ocre, al acercarse al mar se abren como luz, en venas cargadas de gusanos, moscas, insectos, pájaros que hablan; tierra más virgen y

[6] En la edición de 2011, centenario del nacimiento de José María Arguedas, esta novela lleva en la cubierta la ilustración "Alegoría del puerto de Chimbote" por Estuardo Núñez Carvallo, en la que se ven las cabezas de dos zorros de la cultura Moche con dientes de concha y una aleación de oro, cobre y plata.

> paridora que la de tu círculo. Este mundo de abajo es el mío y comienza en el tuyo, abismos y llanos pequeños o desiguales que el hombre hace producir a fuerza de golpes y canciones; acero, felicidad y sangre, son las montañas y precipicios de más profundidad que existen. ¿Suceden ahora, en este tiempo, historias mejor entendidas, arriba y abajo? (*ZZ* 50)[7]

A partir del capítulo III, la función de los zorros ya no se limita a la continuación del diálogo mitológico de *Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí*, sino que ellos mismos participan en la novela a través de las metamorfosis de don Ángel Rincón Jaramillo (el zorro de abajo), cajabambino de nacimiento y ejecutivo de la fábrica de harina de pescado "Nautilus Fishing"; y don Diego (el zorro de arriba), que ha recibido información sobre la situación de la Sierra y ha venido a compartir lo que sabe con don Ángel, que lo informará, a su vez, sobre la situación de abajo. A través de sus diálogos tratan del problema de la justicia y de la responsabilidad sobre la devastación de Chimbote.

Al final del capítulo III el zorro de arriba se confunde con el Tarta,[8] en el burdel de Chimbote, "El Gato". En el capítulo IV, el zorro de abajo, a través de la metamorfosis de don Ángel, aparece con su señora para hablar de Moncada, personaje loco que predica en las plazas públicas con un muñeco de trapo que tiene colgado de la cruz que lleva representando "su doble" con el que repudia el imperialismo, a los extranjeros y sus representantes, a los mafiosos "Braschis" y al gobierno. El zorro de arriba, a través de la metamorfosis, interviene en la historia de don Esteban de La Cruz. En la segunda parte, según lo que cuenta Maxwell, un joven norteamericano y ex miembro del Cuerpo de Paz, al padre Cardozo, el zorro de arriba también intervino en su historia. En esta parte, este zorro de arriba se confunde con el albañil don Cecilio,[9] y aparece como un mensajero misterioso en la oficina del padre Cardozo.

En la actuación literaria de los zorros míticos como burladores y héroes se alumbra una posibilidad de cambio vinculada a sus poderes de percepción trascendente del tiempo y espacio y a su simbolismo de resistencia. En su artículo "Twin heroes in South American mythology", Alfred Métraux nos revela que en el folklore de América del Sur suelen aparecer un par de hermanos mellizos como héroes culturales, burladores y transformadores. Según el antropólogo, en los mitos de mellizos tiene lugar una antítesis entre la fuerza, el carácter y los logros de los dos héroes, que se desafían entre sí en demostraciones de su poder sobrenatural. Siempre gastan bromas y meten a la gente en problemas. Los grandes hechos realizados por los mellizos cambian el rostro de la naturaleza y provocan la aparición de muchos animales. No sólo son transformadores, sino también grandes héroes culturales con quienes la humanidad está en deuda. Los indios consideran a los Mellizos como personificación del Sol y de la Luna. El Sol siempre es más fuerte e inteligente, como el hermano mayor, mientras que la Luna, como el

[7] A partir de ahora nos referimos a esta obra *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* por las iniciales *ZZ*.
[8] Lienhard indica que, en el personaje del Tarta, junto con la alusión al tartamudeo insinuada por esta novela, es como si hubiera "un tartamudeo sintáctico que deja las frases sin terminar; un tartamudeo narrativo que no permite el desarrollo lógico de las 'historias'; finalmente, un "tartamudeo" del proyecto novelesco global, que deja la novela inconclusa (129). Considero que este tartamudeo coincide con lo que Acosta denomina "*illiteracy*".
[9] Martín Lienhard también señala esta confusión de personajes en su obra citada (141).

hermano menor, es más estúpido y débil. Muchas veces la Luna es asesinada y despedazada para ser devuelta a la vida por el Sol (114-23).

Pedro Trigo ve el mito como "estructuración productiva de praxis social" y declara su contenido como "la trascendencia humana, la comunión, la constitución de un reino de la libertad en la lucha contra el mal que nos acosa íntima y ambientalmente" (27). Sostiene que "Arguedas se plantea como cuestión de vida o muerte la necesidad del mito", y que en este novelista hay una relación muy estrecha entre "la purificación interior y la revolución social", puesto que "el mundo tiene para él resonancias personales y la persona dimensiones cósmicas" (27).

Los zorros pueden transformarse el uno en el otro. De modo que a través de los diálogos entre los zorros, los dos lugares, "arriba" y "abajo", se combinan e invierten sus papeles. La inversión del ciclo alude precisamente al resultado del dualismo simbólico y complementario de la cosmología ancestral andina. En su segundo diálogo, después de que el zorro de arriba diga que "yo he bajado siempre y tú has subido" (*ZZ* 50), el zorro de abajo acuerda "hablemos, alcancémonos hasta donde sea posible y como sea posible" (*ZZ* 51). Más adelante Diego, a punto de transformarse en el "zorro de abajo", justifica: "Ahora soy de arriba y de abajo, entiendo de montañas y costa, porque hablo con un hermano que tengo desde antiguo en la sierra" (*ZZ* 119). Y don Ángel, que pronto se convertirá en el "zorro de arriba", le dice a Diego: "¡Eso! Nos hemos metido, usted en mí y yo en usted" (*ZZ* 126). Las voces de los dos zorros ponen de manifiesto el problema de la justicia y de la responsabilidad. Veamos cómo, a través de sus diálogos, estos dos zorros nos muestran lo que ocurre en Chimbote con las comunidades indígenas, relacionando a los inmigrantes de la ciudad de Chimbote con los papeles que desempeñan en la sociedad y sus efectos, así como también, a través de su transformación, los zorros nos presentan un símbolo de cambio y de esperanza.

La destrucción de la naturaleza de la localidad costera de *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*

El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, truncada por el suicidio del novelista, es una obra especial dentro de la narrativa arguediana, puesto que se aleja del realismo convencional en la representación de la realidad peruana. En esta novela la problemática medioambiental viene representada por el puerto pesquero más grande del mundo: Chimbote está abierto al mundo exterior, a la industrialización, a la explotación extranjera de japoneses, norteamericanos y otros grupos capitalistas. Esta novela se presenta como un corte con el pasado. El puerto que representa Arguedas es un mundo caótico y alienado, confirmando la teoría ecofeminista de Val Plumwood, que alinea las oposiciones dualistas de civilizado/primitivo y hombre/mujer. La novela de Arguedas feminiza la imagen de la ciudad, al igual que muestra la explotación de los inmigrantes indígenas en la ciudad. Al leer la novela lo primero que constatamos es el lenguaje grosero de los pescadores alrededor de imágenes sexuales. La bahía de Chimbote, que antes era limpia y transparente como un espejo, ahora está contaminada por completo, como dice Zavala, pescador sindicalista, que anda siempre por el

prostíbulo: "antes era un espejo, ahora es la puta más generosa 'zorra' que huele a podrido" (*ZZ* 41).

Chimbote se ha convertido en un medio ambiente de explotación de los pescadores y obreros que inmigran a esta ciudad. En esta novela se repite el tema de la seducción del hombre de la sierra por la "zorra" de la bahía de Chimbote, simbolizada como una prostituta. En el mito, como explica el zorro de arriba, se cuenta cómo Tutaykire, guerrero de la sierra, va a la costa y es seducido por la virgen ramera (*ZZ* 50). El zorro de abajo comenta: "Un sexo desconocido confunde a ésos. Las prostitutas carajean, putean, con derecho. Lo distanciaron más al susodicho. A nadie pertenece la 'zorra' de la prostituta; es del mundo de aquí, de mi terreno" (*ZZ* 23). Al final del capítulo III don Ángel (zorro de abajo), después de confesarle a don Diego (zorro de arriba) el plan que tienen los capitalistas para explotar a los inmigrantes indígenas de la Sierra, le lleva al burdel de Chimbote "El Gato" a presenciar un espectáculo sexual, que simboliza dicha explotación. Luego, don Diego desaparece misteriosamente, pero antes tiene que escalar los muros de un depósito de "veinte mil sacos de harina" (*ZZ* 129).[10] Un símbolo sexual exagerado que ayuda a darle una dimensión del realismo mágico.[11] Chimbote está abierto a la explotación de los capitalistas extranjeros. Es como una mujer caída. No sólo se refiere a la costa, sino también a la sierra, a todo Perú. Es una prostituta para el progreso. Con esta metáfora, Arguedas presenta este puerto peruano como una distopía que ilustra la muerte de la cultura, tanto andina como hispánica. Arguedas es consciente de esta problemática y por lo tanto, está practicando la "ética de cuidado" que se encuentra en el ecofeminismo.[12]

Lucero de Vivanco subraya que la realidad de Chimbote "ofrecía a Arguedas un contexto apocalíptico sin mayor necesitad de hiperbolizarla para su ficcionalización":

> [...] no es la destrucción ecológica la que lleva la mayor responsabilidad de generar un apocalipsis en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, sino, más bien, el complejo proceso de modernización. Los distintos espacios simbólicos que constituyen la novela y las dinámicas sociales que en ellos se inscriben así lo evidencian: el burdel, el mercado, el cementerio, la barriada, la fábrica, aglutinan las contradicciones y falencias de la modernidad peruana y constituyen los núcleos de un imaginario apocalíptico actualizado en su faceta distópica y destructiva. (60)

Al trasladarse del mundo narrativo de la sierra a la costa se ven muchos contrastes. En *Todas las sangres* los colonizadores toman la tierra y ejercen su autoridad sobre los colonizados. Los indígenas sufren los despojos y la explotación de los colonizadores, sobreviven en las comunidades con lo poco que les queda. Sin embargo, son

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[10] Esta escena en el burdel con la prostituta refleja el contenido de los diarios intercalados en esta novela. En los diarios el narrador cuenta dos encuentros con prostitutas zambas cuya experiencia le ayuda a recuperarse. El buscarlas y enaltecerlas es un símbolo de la resistencia social de los zorros y la suya, puesto que los zorros son un eco de su voz, un reflejo. En la sociedad de Chimbote las prostitutas están oprimidas, como los indígenas y la naturaleza.

[11] Simboliza miles de casos de explotación debido a la industria pesquera.

[12] Ver Karen Warren sobre la ética del cuidado sensitivo: la "sensibilidad de concebirse a uno mismo fundamentalmente 'en relación con' otros, incluyendo a la naturaleza no humana" (103). Flys Junquera resume las ocho características que traza Warren en su *Ecofeminist Philosophy* para la ética ecofeminista; entre ellas se encuentra la valoración de la ética del cuidado (4, 99).

constructivos, trabajan la tierra unidos, solidarios y fraternales, en beneficio mutuo. Mantienen una relación armoniosa con la naturaleza, que aparece como un apoyo de los indígenas.[13] En cambio, en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* la urbanización separa a la gente y produce una estructura de división entre las personas. Los indios serranos, que son numerosos, siempre proceden del estrato social más bajo, y son los más explotados y manipulados. Después de bajar de la sierra a la costa, pierden su dignidad y hasta su memoria de la comunidad. Algunos que se hacen ricos se convierten en hombres corruptos y manipuladores de sus paisanos pobres y también fracasan.

El zorro de arriba hace hablar al zorro de abajo para que confiese su plan: tratar de corromper y destruir al hombre moral y físicamente. Como bien explica don Ángel: "en Chimbote, a todos se les borra la cara, se les asancocha la moral, se les mete en molde" (*ZZ* 87). Entre don Ángel y los mafiosos "Braschi" se ha creado una compleja estructura injusta, abriendo la industria de harina al principio, pero pronto deteriorando las condiciones de trabajo, y engranando luego alrededor toda la cadena de servicios creada para manipular, causando un círculo vicioso imparable. Los pobres, a pesar de su situación miserable, podrían ahorrar algo para mejorar su vida. Sin embargo, tienen la tentación servida, les inducen a gastar el dinero emborrachándose y acudiendo a prostitutas. Cuanto más pagan, más quieren gastar y más malgastan. Así le revela don Angel a don Diego: "de un sol diario que agarraban, de vez en cuando en sus pueblos, aquí sacaban hasta cien y hasta trescientos o quinientos diarios. Para ellos se abrieron burdeles y cantinas, hechos a medida de sus apetencias y gustos" (*ZZ* 94).

La primera "contaminación" de la moral para los inmigrantes serranos es su aceptación del amor pagado como un placer y prueba de su masculinidad, ya que Aibar Ray subraya el valor del amor sexual para los indios de los Andes como algo "natural y ritual", y que se practica sólo con su pareja elegida (86).

Los de Braschi, por una parte, dañan al hombre; por otra, hacen que el hombre peque también. Los mafiosos adiestran a unos criollos, serranos, incluso a indios para que ejerzan como "provocadores" que "arman los líos". Según don Ángel:

> [...] sacaban chaveta y enseñaron a sacar chaveta, a patear a las putas; aplaudían la prendida del cigarro con billetes de diez, de a quinientos, a regar el piso de las cantinas y burdeles con cerveza hasta con wiski [...] Todo salió a lo calculado y aún más. Tanto más burdelero, putañero, timbero, burlador, cuanto más comprador de refrigeradoras para guardar trapos, calzones de mujer [...] más trampas y chavetazos, más billetes de quinientos o de cien quemados para prender cigarros, más macho el pescador, más gallo, más famoso, saludado, contento. (*ZZ* 94-95)

Los mafiosos "Braschi" y el Chaucato se engañan y se roban entre ellos. Al tiempo que la "mafia" trama su estrategia: "hizo gastar a los pescadores en su debido tiempo; cebó sus apetitos de macho brutos. Con buenos trucos los hizo derrochar todo lo que ganaban; los

[13] Gregory Cajete manifiesta que los indígenas no sólo valoran la tierra como fuente de vida y de sustento, sino también como fuente de su ser espiritual. Siempre mantienen una relación armoniosa con la naturaleza, que está basada en el fundamento de un pacto recíproco de cuidado y responsabilidad. Cf. *Native Science: natural laws of interdependence* (6). Esta cosmología holística coincide con el valor de la "mirada afectuosa" hacia la naturaleza no humana por el que aboga Karen J. Warren en su *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* (101-5).

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mantuvo en conserva de delincuencia, y esa mancha no se lava fácil" (*ZZ* 96). La gran huelga trampeada por los de Braschi, que sigue en toda la costa, deja a los pescadores "con la tripa vacía" (*ZZ* 103) y presos de una creciente irritación. Don Ángel así le confiesa al visitante:

> Y la timbeadera siguió fuerte, hasta que en la gran huelga los pescadores se quedaron con la tripa vacía, en la "última lona"... Después de empeñar máquinas de coser, refigeradoras, televisores, se vieron en las negras. [...] Entonces se vio algo que hemos apuntado en el libro: las placeras de todos los mercados, los comerciantes del Modelo, empezaron a fiar a los pescadores con matrícula; [...] los pescadores se vieron sin billetes [...] en vez de acobardarse se encojonaron; los líderes convirtieron la amargura en pólvora. (*ZZ* 103-04)

El medio ambiente que representa el novelista es corrupto, caótico y degradado. En esta ciudad, que huele a harina de pescado, plata y sexo, los indios, negros, cholos y zambos pierden su identidad y sus raíces culturales. Así comenta don Ángel:

> Ningún indio tiene patria, ¿no? Me consta. No saben pronunciar ni el nombre de su provincia. Ningún cholo, ningún negro verdadero, zambo o injerto tienen concierto entre ellos. Son peores que los indios en eso. ¿Dónde está la patria, amigo? Ni en el corazón ni en la saliva. '¡A la mierda!', es el juramento de los cholos, injertos y negros; y los indios son una manada. ¡Ahí están! En los médanos y zancudales, robándose los unos a los otros. 'A la mierda'. (*ZZ*116)

Se encuentran muchas situaciones de división entre las personas. Arguedas ironiza acerca de la división de las personas refiriéndose al derecho al uso del cementerio. Lo hay para los ricos y para los pobres. Los criollos creen que, al tener más dinero y más poder, tienen más derecho para morir mejor o vivir mejor después de morir. Han reconstruido una muralla y una gran fachada de arco en el cementerio antiguo de la barriada San Pedro y la Beneficiencia, la policía y los párrocos ordenan a los pobres de las barriadas que trasladen su cementerio a otro lugar en La Esperanza baja: "En ese campo [...] serán enterrados los pobres, gratuitamente, sin costo parroquial, municipal ni de la Beneficiencia" (*ZZ* 63). De modo que dentro del diálogo de los dos zorros sobre la degradación cultural en Chimbote, Arguedas alude a la muerte de la cultura tanto andina como hispánica.

Forgues opina que el mestizaje ideal que Arguedas ha intentado plasmar en *Todas las sangres* aquí se encuentra en un proceso de aculturación; un proceso que, en vez de acercar a los diferentes estratos sociales, los va separando y dividiendo más (308). Ello resulta en que todos terminan siendo igual de miserables, peor incluso que los que están en la sierra. Don Cecilio confiesa así al padre Cardozo: "...es como reventazón de miseria y pelea reunido. Aquí en Chimbote, la mayor parte gente barriada nos hemos, más o menos, igualado estos últimos años; nos hemos igualado en la miseria miserableza que será más pesadazo en sus apariencias, padre, que en las alturas sierra" (*ZZ* 229).[14]

[14] El padre Cardozo es la imagen novelesca del padre Camacho a quien Arguedas ecribió para pedir un texto del Nuevo Testamento para un pasaje de esta novela. Ver en la pág. 292 la carta dirigida al padre Camacho en "*El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* en la correspondencia de Arguedas" de Sybila Arredondo de Arguedas y la pág. 353 de "La luz que nadie apagará- Aproximaciones al mito y al cristianismo en el último Arguedas" de José Luis Rouillón, en *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, edición crítica Eve-Marie Fell.

Forgues tiene razón al decir que la pérdida de las raíces se debe a la ruptura de los vínculos con el pueblo de origen (308). Se ve que en Chimbote se están desintegrando de una forma drástica los valores de la cultura quechua que se exaltan en *Todas las sangres*: el regocijo de los serranos cuando logran realizar una hazaña colectiva; la energía con que se enfrentan a una situación dura; la solidaridad que demuestran cuando son víctimas de la situación, por la que son capaces de afrontar y trascender la muerte; la fuerte conexión con la tierra. Marín también afirma una limitación en este tipo humano liberado y liberador de los indios: "El indio que José María Arguedas pone en su obra lo es en la medida en que permanece asido a su geografía" (12), ya que sólo permanece apoyado en la realidad mágica de su tierra, "se afirma en ella y desde ella enfrenta sin temor el futuro" (250).

Además de la visión trascendente de la ciudad, la degradación social está representada por los dos zorros que nos revelan toda la realidad sobre el desplazamiento y la inmigración de la población indígena a la ciudad para trabajar. Según don Ángel, el desplazamiento de la población indígena a la costa tiene dos explicaciones. Por un lado, en la sierra los indios están muy maltratados: "los hacendados grandes y chicos se mean en la boca y en la conciencia de los indios y les sacan el jugo, un pobre juguito reseco; y se lo sacan fácil, a fuerza de la pura costumbre no más", o "Los balean de vez en cuanto y ascienden inmediatamente a los oficiales que ordenan hacer fuego" (*ZZ* 92). Por otro lado, el rumor que hizo correr la "mafia" sobre la riqueza en Chimbote: "La 'mafia' antigua hizo correr la voz, como pólvora, de que en Chimbote se encontraban tierras buenas para hacer casas propias, gratis; que había trabajo en fábricas, tiendas, bares, restaurantes" (*ZZ* 91). Pero ese reclutamiento fue diez años atrás. Ahora las fábricas ya están despidiendo obreros, y sin embargo siguen llegando serranos a Chimbote.

A estos serranos, don Diego los describe como un bicho del médano de San Pedro que "ha brotado de esa laguna cristalina que hay en la entrada del cerro de arena. De allí viene a curiosear, a conocer; con la luz se emborracha" (*ZZ* 89). Don Diego ve un bicho que zumbaba sobre el vidrio de la lámpara, que "se golpeaba a muerte contra el vidrio; era rechazado como un rayo y volvía" (*ZZ* 86). Se levanta y mata el bicho. Éste da una vuelta ciega y produce un sonido penetrante. Don Diego se lo explica así a don Ángel:

> [...] ¡ese zumbido es la queja de una laguna que está en lo más dentro del médano San Pedro, donde los serranos han hecho una barriada de calles bien rectas, a imitación del casco urbano de Chimbote [...] Este bichito se llama "Onquray onquray", que quiere decir en lengua antigua "enfermedad de enfermedad" y ha brotado de esa laguna cristalina que hay en la entrada del cerro de arena. De allí viene a curiosear, a conocer; con la luz se emborracha. Ya va a morir, dando otra vuelta más en círculo [...] ¿Por qué siguen viniendo serranos a Chimbote? ¿Saben que las fábricas están reduciendo su personal una quinta parte? ¿Que a la industria no le conviene seguir teniendo obreros fijos con derechos sociales y que pronto eliminarán a todos y no quedarán sino eventuales bajo el sistema de contratistas generales? (*ZZ* 89-90)

Don Diego ve que los serranos, después de bajar a la costa, son considerados como un bicho y van a ser aplastados en cualquier situación. En efecto, éstos al llegar a la costa se

enfrentan con un medio ambiente muy diferente y se meten en lo que sea para sobrevivir. Según don Ángel:

> [...] otros hambrientos bajaron directamente aquí para trabajar en lo que fuera; en la basura o en la pesca. Se dejaron amarrar por docenas, desnudos, en los fierros del muelle y allí, atorándose, chapoteando, carajeándose unos a otros, aprendieron a nadar, o se metieron a lavar platos, a barrer, a cargar bultos en los mercados que empezaron a aparecer sin regla ni orden. (*ZZ 93*)

Lo que hace Arguedas es presentar la resistencia y subversión a través de unos supervivientes, que con su vida digna y trabajadora, luchan enérgicamente en este medio ambiente destruido y logran encontrar su identidad y el sentido de su vida.

El novelista, para representar a los indígenas, en lugar de resaltar sus cualidades, los convierte en una condición incontrolable e ingobernable, la condición de la *illiteracy*. Los dos zorros se han convertido en zorros "incontrolables": "Estos 'Zorros' se han puesto fuera de mi alcance: corren mucho o están muy lejos. Quizá apunté un blanco demasiado largo o, de repente, alcanzo a los 'Zorros' y ya no los suelto más" (*ZZ* 179). En "¿Último Diario?" el novelista confiesa la imposibilidad de abarcar novelísticamente dicha realidad: "¡Cuántos Hervores han quedado enterrados!" (*ZZ* 243) Ahora veamos cómo los zorros actúan como burladores y héroes en esta novela.

Los zorros como héroes burladores

Las voces de los zorros son una combinación de bien/mal en las figuras indígenas de "burladores", que tienen el poder de cambiar cosas para mejor o peor en el mundo de los seres humanos (Columbus 167-84). Los zorros que aparecen en el capítulo III de esta novela son dos figuras de "burladores" que en su teatralización cómica hablan sobre los problemas de la devastación de Chimbote. Columbus indica que don Diego es el burlador "de nivel alto", y don Ángel, el "de nivel bajo", ya que es vulgar, adúltero, avaro, irresponsable e inhumano.

La apariencia extraña de don Diego despierta una "curiosidad irresistible y risueña" (ZZ 85) en don Ángel:

> [...] era pernicorto, pero muy armoniosamente pernicorto, y esa especialidad de su cuerpo quedaba a cubierto y resaltada por una chaqueta sumamente moderna, larga, casi alevitada y de botones dorados. ...tenía en la mano una gorra gris jaseada que don Ángel había visto usar a los mineros indios de Cerro de Pasco, como primera prenda asimilada de la «civilización»... calzaba zapatos sumamente angostos, también gris jaspeados, admisiblemente peludos y ajustados con pasadores de cuero crudo. Los pantalones eran de color negro chamuscado. (*ZZ* 85)

Su aspecto físico también es de un zorro: "el brazo... era muy corto... sus manos eran peludas y sus dedos sumamente delgados, de uñas largas" (*ZZ* 115). Y su forma de actuación, como la de un zorro: "empezó a mover la cabeza hacia adelante, balanceando el cuerpo como una rama... su cara se afiló, sus mandíbulas se alargaron un poco y sus bigotes se levantaron muy perceptiblemente, ennegreciendo por las puntas" (*ZZ* 89). Cuando escuchaba, "movió las orejas muy visiblemente" (*ZZ* 117). Todo le recuerda a

don Ángel que “en los cuentos de indios, cholos y zambos que aquí en la ‘patria’ se cuentan, se llama Diego al zorro” (*ZZ* 121). En cuanto al rostro de don Ángel, “tenía una cabeza de cerdo, así de inteligente como de astuta; de gustador de cebada, de caldo y sancochados agrios por la mezcla de sus sabores y podredumbres” (*ZZ* 90).

Lienhard manifiesta que mientras que don Diego hace el papel de provocador, don Ángel hace de cómplice de la provocación, poniendo de relieve la complicidad en la risa entre los dos zorros a través del zumbido de una mosca que viene a curiosear y que es matada por el zorro: “La risa contagiosa del zorro (“¡Uy, uy, uy...!”) provoca la hilaridad (“¡Ji, ji, ji...!”) del ejecutivo, en cuya risa vibra el recuerdo de la de Diego y del ‘zumbido premortal del coleóptero’. Poco a poco, la risa ‘a dúo’ del zorro y del ejecutivo y el zumbido de la mosca se funde en una vibración única, una risa cósmica” (126).

Las metáforas escatológicas, sexuales, zoológicas y blasfemas convierten el discurso del zorro de abajo en un signo grotesco que todo lo critica. Los hacendados “se mean” o “se zurran” en los indios (*ZZ* 91, 92). Braschi “putamadreaba mejor que cualquiera” (*ZZ* 100). Tinoco se ve calificado de “cholímetro cabrón” (*ZZ* 109). Chaucato es descrito como “chimpancé, mono de África, gorila” (*ZZ* 142), Ángel Rincón como cerdo y lagarto. La parodia teológica critica por un lado el discurso de los teólogos; por otro, la sociedad que lo usa para defender un poder injusto (Lienhard 127-28).

Los zorros también son héroes. No son héroes tradicionales, sino héroes nuevos en la era moderna de la ecocrítica. Incluso podría considerarse que Arguedas, por cuanto sacrifica su voz de autor para otorgársela a dos zorros míticos con el fin de hacer la crítica, también es un héroe. Las primeras víctimas que sufren la consecuencia de la explotación de los recursos naturales del mar son los alcatraces. El novelista nos revela esta realidad a través del diálogo entre don Diego y don Ángel. Según don Ángel:

> Aquí en Chimbote, está la bahía más grande que la propia conciencia de Dios, porque es el reflejo del rostro de nuestro señor Jesucristo. Allí no más, en la bahía, estaban los bancos de atunes y anchovetas. Y ¿cuántos dormían en esas islas que guardan la bahía de Dios, de mi amor? Millones de toneladas tragaban. Nos las tiramos todas en dos o tres años. Los cochos ahora andan mendigando pior que judíos errantes. (*ZZ* 92-93)

Debido a la destrucción del equilibrio ecológico por la pesca intensiva, la bahía de Chimbote se ha convertido en un paraíso perdido:

> El cocho de antes volaba en bandas [...] [a]rmoniosas [...] lindas, tranquilas, ornamentando el cielo como parte flor de esta bahía. (*ZZ* 95)
> [...]
> Ahora el alcatraz es un gallinazo al revés. El gallinazo tragaba la basura perniciosa; el “cocho” de hoy aguaita, cual mal ladrón, avergozado, los mercados de todos los puertos; en Lima es pior. Desde los techos, parados en filas, fríos, o pajareando con su último aliento, miran la tierra, oiga. Están viejos. Mueren a miles; apestan. (*ZZ* 95)

Como las figuras míticas pueden trascender los límites del tiempo y del espacio, pueden ver mejor toda la historia: el pasado, el presente y el futuro, y son capaces de ver toda la problemática. A través de su diálogo con “Antes... Ahora”, “Aquí... Allí”, don Diego y don Ángel revelan toda la historia que transcurre en Chimbote y la devastación medioambiental de este puerto, consecuencia de la industrialización. Los seres humanos

sólo vemos las aves que vuelan en el presente, pero los zorros míticos pueden ver más allá. La voz de los zorros es como un marco de diálogo, y dentro de este marco Arguedas adopta los puntos de vista de los zorros para hablar de diferentes problemas de indios diferentes, puesto que el mito tiene una vista más amplia.

En esta novela, Arguedas utiliza la duplicación del zorro, como animal tótem entre dos mundos: el mundo quechua frente a la ciudad postcolonial Chimbote, que ilustra la injusticia medioambiental sufrida principalmente por los indígenas, con el fin de poner de manifiesto el problema de la degradación ecológica del medio ambiente de esta ciudad. El novelista no intenta utilizar el mito ancestral de los zorros para contar la historia, sino que lo transforma para representar la sociedad peruana de su época. Las figuras de la mitología son inmortales, pueden trascender los límites del tiempo y del espacio, así como también transformarse en cualquier figura o volverse sobre sí mismas: son capaces de metamorfosis. Transformarse es un método para sobrevivir y mantener viva su cultura y el medio ambiente en el que esta se desarrolla. De modo que el pueblo andino ya no muere sino que se vuelve inmortal. Arguedas se ha dado cuenta de que, para conseguir un cambio social, hace falta adoptar una voz que hable desde el interior de la propia cultura indígena. Por ello recurre al realismo mágico para conseguir la libertad formal que le permita crear su propio mito y hablar "desde dentro".

Como autor, Arguedas emplea un estilo que evoluciona desde el realismo convencional hasta el realismo mágico. El mito indígena que utiliza este novelista se ha convertido en un mito nuevo, propio y muy singular. Los zorros son burladores; a través de su diálogo hablan del sufrimiento de los indígenas que han bajado de la sierra a Chimbote, para criticar el problema social que confronta Chimbote y para reclamar justicia social.

Cabe señalar el papel y la significación de la "danza de tijeras" que incorpora Arguedas en esta novela. Esta danza es una forma de contrapunto que incluye danza y música, y en ella se funden las culturas quechua y española. La danza de tijeras se presenta como una competición entre los danzantes en busca del equilibrio. Cuando don Ángel termina su comentario burlesco sobre los serranos que han sido reclutados para trabajar para los industriales y la mafia local, don Diego le anima a que se ría fuerte para que salga todo lo que tiene acumulado en su interior. Don Diego también empieza a bailar una "yunsa" serrana, que sorprende al personaje de la costa. La danza de don Diego tiene un poder transformador en don Ángel. Al final el baile ha logrado evocar su memoria de los elementos autóctonos, suprimidos y perdidos en la cultura dominante. Don Ángel, inspirado y guiado por el ritmo del cuerpo del bailarín, empieza a bailar también, pero no es capaz de bailar ni cantar divinamente, y mientras tanto recita una canción para criticar la situación contemporánea del país. En la danza de don Diego se ha unido todo y se ha destruido todo: el gorro, los zapatos, la leva, los bigotes... se han transformado en un movimiento en el aire, en estrellas, en algo transparente, cristalino... es decir, la danza ha trascendido todo y ha creado un universo mágico que une a don Ángel con sus recuerdos dulces de infancia.

A continuación, don Ángel invita al visitante a hacer un recorrido por la fábrica donde se produce la harina de pescado. En la fábrica, don Diego se pone a bailar otra vez,

con "una alegría musical" (*ZZ* 122). El baile termina por influir en todos, incluso en don Ángel. Es una danza de vida capaz de transformarlos y presenta rasgos equivalentes al zumbayllu en *Los ríos profundos*, que es asimismo representación del equilibrio entre los opuestos dentro de la cultura andina. De este modo, en esta novela, Ernesto utiliza este trompo como forma de reclamar equilibrio para hacer cambio.

En la Segunda Parte, el zorro aparece como un mensajero que obliga a revelar la verdad. Maxwell, un norteamericano, ex miembro de los Cuerpos de Paz, identificado posteriormente como indio, llega con don Cecilio a la oficina del padre Cardozo y tienen una conversación muy larga con el cura. Cuando Maxwell le pide al padre Cardozo que presida su boda con una chica india, el padre no puede aguantar la risa. En este momento llega el mensajero y se pone inmediatamente a bailar mientras que Maxwell toca música de la sierra, consiguiendo así que el cura cambie su actitud.

Tanto el diálogo entre el padre Cardozo, Cecilio Ramírez y Maxwell, como el diálogo entre los dos zorros, son situaciones donde se contrastan sus ideologías. De esta forma, la tragicomedia de la colonización está representada en las reflexiones mutuas de Maxwell y del Padre Cardozo, integrando la danza indígena como motivo literario que refuerza el componente indígena de la obra. Las dos colonizaciones, la antigua de España y la reciente de Estados Unidos, serán trascendidas simbólicamente por una danza en la que todos, con todas sus contradicciones y su dualismo, deben ser tejidos juntos en el nuevo Perú. Con ello Arguedas perfila su imagen ideal de un Perú futuro, en el que la voz indígena pase a convertirse en parte esencial de su nuevo proyecto del país.

El libro en su conjunto es así también como una danza entre la muerte y la vida. Es una imagen que le ayuda al autor a trascender sus sufrimientos. Dice Arguedas "Yo vivo para escribir (*ZZ* 18)", "Porque si no escribo y publico, me pego un tiro (*ZZ* 14)", "No es una desgracia luchar contra la muerte, escribiendo" (*ZZ* 19). Por eso Arguedas escribe para retrasar su muerte, para encontrar en su escritura fuerza con la que continúa viviendo. Es un libro de vida, porque el libro sigue viviendo. La danza tiene poder, así como también lo tiene el libro. El mismo autor baila con su libro entre la muerte y la vida, y aunque al final se muestra decepcionado por la situación del Perú—y se obsesiona con el suicidio en los últimos años de su vida. También él se incluye en este proceso de transformación y piensa que al acabar con su vida se cierra una etapa de la historia del país.

Si el novelista describiera el mundo caótico de Chimbote con los instrumentos del realismo convencional, su obra tendría dificultades para adquirir el poder de criticar e ir más allá de los dualismos de civilización/indigenidad y mente/cuerpo. En *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, Arguedas pone a prueba un método nuevo para dar poder a la voz de los indígenas, a través de los zorros. El poder de hacer hablar a las figuras míticas es trascender los límites del tiempo y del espacio y abrirse a la eternidad, al pasado ancestral. De este modo, el lector consigue comprender el desastre de lo que está pasando en Chimbote. A la irrefrenable atracción por el progreso propia del ser humano de la modernidad capitalista, el novelista peruano le contrapone las consecuencias que dicho progreso tiene para el medio ambiente. Aunque Arguedas elimina su voz de autor para dar voz a los zorros, estos son su verdadera voz. El novelista utiliza el mito para

tener una panorámica más amplia de la realidad novelada y él mismo funde su voz con la de los zorros míticos para hacer juntos una llamada por la justicia medioambiental tanto más poderosa cuanto que integra las concepciones míticas del mundo indígena del Perú, con el fin de resistir y lograr un cambio capaz de crear un equilibrio nuevo. La búsqueda de un equilibrio que asegure la sostenibilidad del medio ambiente pasa, por tanto, por la integración de una sensibilidad indígena en el centro del porvenir político y económico de un nuevo Perú.

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War-Afflicted Beings: Myth-Ecological Discourse of the Play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by Rajiv Joseph

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Abstract

Every war has grave repercussions for both the human and non-human elements in the geographical location where it erupts. Dramatic productions like Rajiv Joseph's *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* (2009) highlight the consequences of war on the ecosystem of the conflict-stricken vicinity of Baghdad city. In the play, the chaotic world portrayed is an ecocentric site where the ghost of a tiger talks and the destruction of the garden, of Baghdad city and of human values are lamented. To illustrate the hazards of human conflict, Joseph incorporates ancient myths with the tragedy of the Iraq war to raise issues related to Eco-theology, Zoo-criticism, Speciesism, Green Criticism, Eco-Feminism and Environmental Racism against the backdrop of the Iraq War. The author integrates Grail legends, Greek mythology and monotheistic religious texts in the play's structure to draw attention to the impending environmental doom. For example, the garden in the play reminds us of Biblical gardens, the assault of a virgin brings to mind Ovid's story of Philomela's rape, and the quest for a golden toilet seat in the desert is a clear indication of the Grail motif in the play's narrative. All these instances insinuate the embedded mythical patterns and the current era's indifference to the safety of our fellow species. Moreover, the play does not only hint at war crimes, but also refers to the overall structure of the world as an outcome of human negligence and insensitivity towards the environment. In short, the play is a myth-ecological narrative of the dilapidated ecology of the contemporary world.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, ecology, ecotheology, green criticism, Iraq, myth, Post-9/11, war, zoocriticism.

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Resumen

Toda guerra tiene graves repercusiones para los elementos humanos y no humanos de la ubicación geográfica en la que estalla. *Tigre de Bengala en el Zoológico de Bagdad* (2009), de Rajiv Joseph, es una obra de teatro en la que se destacan las consecuencias de la guerra en el ecosistema de las zonas afectadas por conflictos en la ciudad de Bagdad. El mundo caótico retratado es un sitio ecocéntrico en el que habla el fantasma de un tigre, y en el que se lamentan la destrucción del jardín, la ciudad de Bagdad y los valores humanos. Joseph incorpora los mitos antiguos a la tragedia de la guerra de Irak para plantear temas relacionados con la ecoteología, la zoología, la crítica verde, el ecofeminismo y el racismo ambiental en el contexto de la guerra de Iraq. El autor integra las leyendas del Grial, la mitología griega y textos religiosos monoteístas en la estructura de la obra con el fin de llamar la atención sobre el inminente apocalipsis ambiental. Por ejemplo, el jardín de la obra nos recuerda a los jardines bíblicos; el asalto de una virgen en la obra nos hace recordar la historia de la violación de Filomela, narrada por Ovidio; y la búsqueda de un inodoro dorado en el desierto es una clara alusión al motivo del Grial en la narrativa de la obra. Todos estos ejemplos insinúan los modelos míticos incrustados en la obra, y la indiferencia de la era actual hacia la seguridad de los demás seres humanos. La obra no solo insinúa crímenes de guerra, sino que también se refiere a la estructura general del mundo como resultado de la negligencia humana y la

insensibilidad hacia el medio ambiente. En resumen, la obra es una narración mito-ecológica sobre la ecología dilapidada del mundo contemporáneo.

Palabras clave: Ecofeminismo, ecología, ecoteología, crítica verde, Irak, mito, post-9/11, guerra, zoocrítica.

> We are homesick for Eden. We're nostalgic for what is implanted in our hearts. It's built into us, perhaps even at a genetic level. We long for what the first man and woman once enjoyed–a perfect and beautiful home with free and untainted relationship with God, each other, animals, and our environment. (Alcorn 77)

Contemporary humanity is mired in chaos after the fall of the Twin Towers, just as prehistoric humanity had been after Biblical fall. Incessant conflicts and the war on terrorism have divided the world in two: the Muslims and the rest of the world. As depicted in the play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo (BTBZ),* there is no harmony among human beings, animals and their environment. All of Joseph's characters in *BTBZ* want a perfectly coordinated life with their fellow species, but instead, all they see is chaos, destruction and a life out of harmony.

BTBZ narrates the annihilation of the city of Baghdad, including its vegetation, animals, human beings, minerals and common resources. It highlights issues related to eco-theology, which deals with various "facets of theology" associated with "environment and humanity's relationship with the natural world" (Deane-Drummond x). The play's narrative also touches on the area of zoo-criticism and issues related to animal rights. Moreover, green criticism issues are raised through subtle hints about the need to preserve land, plants, water and soil (Coup 4). Furthermore, effects of environmental racism emanating from "racial discrimination during environmental policy making" (Chavis Jr. 3) are also illustrated. Lastly, concerns related to ecofeminism are depicted and imply similarity between the treatment of women and of non-human natural sources (Warren xi).

Interestingly, the mythological criticism devised by Northrop Frye in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* happens to highlight the same ecological issues as Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*. Frye contends that the exploration of divine, human, animal, vegetal, mineral and water worlds in a literary work can help in making a comprehensive analysis of a text's aesthetic value. Considering the affinities between the major concerns of ecocriticism and Frye's myth criticism concept, this paper will sequentially explore the various tiers of Divine, Human, Animal, Mineral and Water worlds proposed by Frye in order to discuss how ancient myths incorporated in the play's narrative raise ecological concerns rampant in the post-9/11 scenario.

According to the framework proposed by Frye, the play is a tragedy in its thematic mode, as it is an elegy for the Iraq war. This paper contends that the play is a bio-centric narrative of the Iraq war because the character Kev's shooting of another character—Tiger—sets the play in motion; it starts in a ravaged zoo and ends in a burnt garden. The action in the play starts in the first scene when Tom tries to feed Tiger, and

instead, Tiger eats Tom's hand. Kev reacts by shooting Tiger, whose ghost then haunts Kev until he ultimately commits suicide. Meanwhile, Musa is a gardener who has been transformed into an interpreter. Musa later kills Tom, thus becoming a murderer. Musa's character hints at humanity's archetypal responsibility towards animals and plants which humans have now given up. Interestingly, Musa does not actually know why he has killed Tom, although we, as the audience, realise that Tom's misbehaviour towards Musa and his discriminatory remarks throughout the play could certainly serve as a possible reason. The fact that Tom is an American who has invaded and plundered Musa's country may be another reason. Additionally, Musa sees the shadow of Uday Hussein in Tom, the latter having also mistreated a teenage girl in the same way Uday assaulted Musa's teenage sister, Hadia.

In the aftermath of the American invasion, the zoo is totally bombarded, the garden is burnt and human rights are violated. In short, the play is an apocalyptic version of the universe in chaos. The play depicts war; indeed, Latour asserts that "one of the undervalued contexts of the anthropocene is war" (63). Similarly, Beakley argues that ecological crisis is an "established part of the post-modern condition" (51). Hence, Joseph has tried to refashion certain myths to mould them into a structure suitable for the post-9/11 milieu. These mythical structures have been used to convey the prevailing eco-critical dilemmas of the violation of human, animal and environmental rights.

Every author chooses a certain image at a specific point in time to depict the world. The choice of image depends "on the unconscious need of the poet and of the society for which he writes" (Foster 567). Similarly, *BTBZ* was inspired by a real event at Baghdad Zoo in 2003 during the American invasion of Iraq, when a US army officer actually killed a Bengal Tiger at the bombarded Baghdad Zoo. Due to American bombardment, some zoo animals were killed, some escaped, and the rest languished in their cages (D. Armstrong n.p.). Joseph picked up this real-life event and spun a beautifully tragic tale of human cruelty out of it. The play gives a mythic quality to our era because Joseph has dug out the most relevant images "from deepest unconsciousness" and brought them into "relation with conscious values ... until [they] can be accepted by his contemporaries" (Foster 568). In addition, the ancient myths in this play are the "central informing power" (Frye, "The Archetypes" 1452) as they have been used to highlight the suffering of multiple ecospheres. Thus, the entire world portrayed by Joseph is a depiction of ecological pandemonium.

This study will explore the role of the physical setting of war-ridden Iraq and the ecological wisdom values inculcated in the play's narrative. Many critics have already concluded that the themes discussed in *BTBZ* are universally applicable to the post-9/11 world because the play raises questions about war, violence and the "assumptions we make about people and nations" (Myatt 1). Moreover, Girard maintains that although "it has a very specific setting—Baghdad, 2003—its ideas and themes are universal" (5). Consequently, the play is a "microcosmic apocalyptic version of the world" (Liaqat 234) and Joseph portrays Baghdad as a space of "environmental disaster" (130), as Hiltner calls it. In addition, the play employs historical, archetypal, Greek and Arthurian legends to raise awareness about environmental hazards. Since every literary work is a

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mythopoeia of its own times (Bell 123), this play is also an eco-mythopoeia of the contemporary which highlights crucial environmental issues by connecting them with ancient myths. This play is indeed an attempt to fashion a mythical world applicable to the chaotic post-9/11 world.

Myths and legends have been used in various literary genres, and are the most ancient inspirations for the content of literary texts. In addition, mythical patterns in literary works portray humanity as "acutely conscious of living in an age of change and crisis" and in need of "historically-specific archetypes to reflect and to deal with their historical situations" (Levine 185). Some popular post-war literary texts like T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* (1922) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) are two ecologically-informed narratives which incorporate multiple strands of myths. In particular, drama is "a genre in which myth has had so vital a function" (Feder 8). Many authors also use theatre for "reviving ancient myth through modern shock" (Cornwell 293). Indeed, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (ca. 429 BC), and Shakespeare's tragedies such as *Macbeth* (1606), *King Lear* (1606) and *Hamlet* (1623) are some classic examples—to name a few—which were inspired by myths and legends of their times. As *BTBZ* incorporates multiple myths into its narrative, this paper uses archetypal criticism to conduct a hermeneutic analysis of the text because myth criticism is "a kind of literary anthropology" (Frye, "The Archetypes" 1452) and analyses "a literary work as a repository of truth, of racial memories" (Douglas 234).

Since the play depicts all human beings, animals, plants, minerals, cities, and deserts as victims of human cruelty and war, it propagates the idea of the "protection of [the] whole chain of ecosystems" (Barkz 144). Similarly, it helps in "consciousness raising" about "a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic support systems". Glotfelty correctly argues that human beings affect the physical world around them. Additionally, she states that human beings have not only destroyed much natural beauty, but have also exterminated and tortured countless fellow species in our headlong race towards apocalypse. Taking a cue from Glotfelty's claim, the play's entire ecosphere portrays Commoners' first law of ecology, which states that everything is connected to everything else (123-126). In short, the play is an extended chronicle of how humanity has destroyed the divine, human, animal, vegetal and mineral worlds in its pursuit of wealth and resources.

According to the observations made during this study, the animal, vegetal, divine and human worlds are interconnected in Joseph's play. Indeed, it is very difficult to separate one strand of ecology from another. The play illustrates this interconnection when Kev says, "We're broken man. You, me, Tiger. It's like we fell through a prism that night at the zoo…" (Joseph 215). Similarly, human beings are compared to the animal kingdom. For example, Uday is called "Tiger of the Tigris" (150) and Americans are compared to "piranhas" (192). Taking this point further, and relating to the garden in the play which is burnt during the American invasion, human beings are also portrayed as having plant-like qualities, further blurring the lines between the human and vegetal world. Moreover, the garden is filled with topiary-shaped animals which, yet again, blur

the boundaries between animals and plants. Therefore, the entire cosmos of *BTBZ* is interconnected and interdependent.

Animal World

Concerning the issue of the depiction of animals, the play mentions both real and topiary animals that are in pitiable condition. The play mainly takes a speciesism approach, challenging the human-centred position of the universe portrayed in it (Moore 13). It also emphasizes moral and ethical issues related to the cause of animal rights (Singer, 1995; Regan, 2001 & 2004). The animal world is the central focus of this play as it starts at the ravaged zoo. Various animals like polar bears, lions, monkeys, giraffes, piranhas and ostriches are mentioned throughout the narrative.

In her critique of *BTBZ*, Una Chaudhuri claims that it belongs to "Theatre of Species" which is "produced by engaging deeply with animal alterity" (137). Moreover, the narrative reveals how the very notion "animal" carries "mythopoetic, biological-ecological, socio-historical, and legal-political resonances that are multiplied when human-animal interactions come into view" (Herman 2). Accordingly, the canon of English literature has been animalized by "representations of animals and interspecies encounters" (Parry 5) just like all other literary traditions. As a result, in the eco-poetics of literature, animals appear as motifs, symbols, characters and phantoms; and "literary animals swarm, threaten, serve, nourish, infect, infest, embellish, and hybridise…" (Parry 2). In this respect, Pollock and Rainwater believe that the many myths and folklore about animals are evidence of a human desire to understand non-human animals (1). Given that, all these facets of animal powers are at play in what Derrida calls "the plural and repeatedly folded frontier" between "those who call themselves men and what so-called men … call the animal" (47). *BTBZ* is a play which has been produced to reflect the animal side of the story and how it interconnects with the human side of wars in our contemporary world.

The most interesting character is Tiger, who is "on the hazy borderlines between human and non-human" (Clark 192) given Joseph's use of anthropomorphism to present Tiger in human form on stage. In the play, Tiger is a human-looking entity that can talk to the audience in human language and, most importantly, has an afterlife and can haunt murderers like Kev. Moreover, he philosophizes and tries to fight his carnivorous nature. Interestingly, the tiger had been a recurrent motif in English literature. It is, for example, mentioned as an awe-inspiring being in the poem *The Tyger* by William Blake. In his poem *Gerontion* (177-179), Eliot uses the tiger as a symbol of Christ. On the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Endangered Species list, the fact that Joseph uses a tiger in his play also raises the issue of animal conservation. Accordingly, this research paper aims to analyse the mythopoetic, ecological, historical and political significance of animal representation in the play.

Firstly, animals suffer throughout the play's narrative. To begin with, they were held in cages because humans wanted them for entertainment. Later, they were bombed during the American invasion of Iraq. The animal world is in mayhem: lions were killed

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"two days" (147) prior to the time in which the play is set, monkeys have been "blown up by an IED" (175), Polar Bear commits suicide (152) and Kev shoots Tiger (153). There are topiary animals in the play as well, which Joseph terms, "Vegetal beasts" (175). Carved out of the bushes by Musa, they are all burnt and ruined because of the war. Thus, *BTBZ* illuminates a variety of issues that speak to the question of whether or not "captivity for conservation" (Wolfe ix-xiv) can be an ethically acceptable goal of the modern zoo. Additionally, it becomes a space where the "entanglements of humans and other animals are so intricate and diverse that the making or diffusion of distinctions between them, likewise, take on multiple hues and forms" (Parry 6). As a result, the analysis of animal, vegetal and human worlds as depicted in the play provides multiple shades of interdependence of various ecological elements.

Secondly, the play's opening scene highlights the issues related to the animals' captivity in the zoo, with Tiger voicing the caged zoo-animals' concerns, ranging from homelessness and distress, to death and human teasing of caged animals. In fact, Tiger becomes a mouthpiece for imprisoned animals everywhere in the world when he exclaims: "Zoo is hell. Ask any animal. Rather be shot and eaten than be stuck in a fucking zoo ten thousand miles from where you were supposed to be" (Joseph 152). He also comments on his own homelessness, hankering for his own real home when he exclaims, "When you are this far from home, you know you're never getting back" (150). According to Tiger, freedom is every "captive's dream" (153). Additionally, when Tom tries to stick food through Tiger's cage and poke him—which results in Tiger eating Kev's hand (153)—it reminds us of the millions of people who go to zoos every day for entertainment and who bother animals with their food offerings and poking. Hence, the play raises many pertinent questions regarding capturing animals either for conservation or entertainment in zoos.

Thirdly, the play raises the issue of animal protection in times of war. Prior to the American invasion, the Baghdad Zoo was considered the largest zoo in the entire Middle East, holding 600 animals (*Discovery Guide* 4). During the US invasion, though, Baghdad Zoo was bombed, and the animals that escaped roamed bewildered through the city. In this regard, Frye asserts: "in the tragic vision the animal world is seen in terms of beasts and birds of prey, wolves, vultures, serpents, dragons and the like" (1456). Therefore, the presence of a carnivorous animal like Tiger reconfirms the play's tragic vision as lions and tigers are both mentioned in the play more than once.

Taking this point further, as lions and tigers are usually perceived as some of the most powerful and majestic creatures in the animal kingdom, their helpless situation heightens the tragedy of the animals in the play. Similarly, Sax affirms that the tiger is usually a solitary animal, considered an "unequivocally romantic beast", representative of "untamed forces of nature" like storms or volcanoes (173). Additionally, the author states that the tiger is considered a "ruler of the earth" and the greatest "primordial" power in China. Moreover, Sax claims that, "the tiger is associated with autumn, since it resembles that season in its violence and destruction". Obviously, if two of the most powerful and venerated animals are in trouble, the rest of the animals have no chance of survival at all. That being the case, the entire animal kingdom in the play is in chaos.

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Thus, the play illustrates the need to protect and preserve animals in the context of war because they are living creatures just like human beings.

Fourthly, Joseph gives Tiger religious connotations. Tiger's resurrection may be analogous to the resurrection of Christ, since Tiger himself says in the play, "What if I'm God…. Maybe I'm Him, maybe Him's me" (223). Moreover, a very interesting thing about Tiger is that he is trying to work out "philosophy about sin and redemption" (197). Furthermore, of all the animals, he is the most eager to find God, saying: "Speak through me, or through her, or through someone, but speak, *God*, speak!" (198). Consequently, Tiger's resurrection and sermons destabilize human beings' sole claim to divinity, the search for God, religiosity and prophet-hood.

Taking this point further, Tiger is a symbol of spiritual decadence and guilt in *BTBZ*. Tiger is shot at the beginning of the play, and his ghost haunts Kev to the point of driving the latter to suicide, reminding us of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* in which the shooting of an albatross haunts the mariner throughout the poem. Given that Tiger is the "animal hero" in the play; his shooting is a "violation of totemic taboo" (Benedict xiii) and goes on to greatly affect both Tom and Kev's lives. Indeed, Tiger's character is a symbolic representation of the spiritual decadence and religious anxiety rampant in the contemporary human world.

In sum, the animal world enhances the tragedy of the situation in the play, with Joseph using animals to reflect on issues of animal protection and conservation, blurring the dialectical boundary between humans and animals and humanity's straddling of religion. Both the imprisoned and bombarded animals at the zoo along with their ghosts in the play portray a world which needs to act when it comes to animal protection and animal rights. The beastly nature of animals is compared to humans' beastly nature, insinuating that human beings are not all that different from animals. The comparison implies that no matter how beastly, dangerous and different animals are from human beings, they nevertheless share certain characteristics with human beings and inhabit the planet alongside humans. They are ecologically connected to various tiers of the chain of being and should therefore be given proper rights and protection.

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Vegetal, Mineral and Water World

In this play, the vegetal, mineral and water worlds mentioned in Frye's methodology are tightly-knit. This section will undertake a joint discussion of each of these three tiers of *The Great Chain of Being*.

The vegetal world is a major key to the play's overall meaning. The fact that Baghdad is an ancient city, home to the Biblical Garden of Eden, and that the word 'Baghdad' itself means 'given by God' (*Discovery Guide* 3) gives the play a universal appeal. Many scenes in the play (Act One, Scene Four; Act Two, Scene One) are set in the topiary garden. Not only has the latter been burnt, it reflects Joseph's very intentional choice in the location of Baghdad for his myth-ecological narrative, as it hints at the universal ecological history of humanity. The entire cosmos of the vegetal world in the play is this burnt topiary garden, as the majority of the play's scenes take place in it. At

one level, this refers to the spiritual decadence of human nature. On another level, the burnt garden is an indication of the burning of Iraq through war and the repercussions of war on the vegetal world. It also refers to a lack of creativity, production and reproduction. Moreover, the garden is a depiction of a green apocalypse nightmare against the backdrop of the prevailing phenomenon of the global warming.

In addition, the garden reminds us of the Garden of Eden, naturally alluding to humanity's nostalgia associated with the heavenly garden. The garden's very presence is a major indication of the play's mythical structure. In literary works, a garden is almost always a subtle hint at Eden, which is mentioned in religious texts as a blissful place, overflowing and abundant. Religious texts portray "nature as a source of revelation" (Kearns 472). Moreover, "nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men" (White 44). Gaster accordingly asserts that the garden "stands for the original state of bliss to which, in this vale of tears, man longingly looks back, and which he hopes eventually to regain" (24). Similarly, Harrison claims that the garden stands "at the centre of a human mode of being that stretches between two impossibilities, or two irrevocable losses: nature and God" (47).

The Garden of Eden is described in the Bible (*Book of Genesis,* Chapters 2 & 3) and mentioned in the *Quran*[1] 139 times. It was the heavenly place described in Bible and Quran where God kept Adam and Eve before their expulsion from the Garden (*Genesis,* 3, 23-24). Moreover, in this regard, Harrison maintains that the concept of paradise in the Quran is vividly described as an eternal abode of abundance, moderation, temperance - a reposeful garden promised as a reward for righteous people in their afterlife, while in Christian tradition, the garden is an afterlife dwelling located "halfway between heaven and hell" (137). The play laments the "bucolic sense of paradise lost" (Egan 291); indeed, in the play, the greenery is charred, and there is no hope of the garden's revival and rejuvenation. This sense of paradise lost compels Tiger to revisit the burnt garden in search of God, as he believes it is "God's Garden" and God "likes gardens..." (Joseph 150). In short, the play mourns the spiritual degeneration of the contemporary world which has lost all hope to regain the peaceful and abundant gardens in the afterlife as promised in monotheistic religious traditions.

Taking this point further, according to both the Biblical and Quranic narratives, God spoke to Musa (Moses in English) through a bush. Since garden, greenery and plants are mostly associated with the divinity of nature, the burnt garden has multiple meanings in the play. Because all the monotheistic texts inform us that God spoke to Musa through the burning bush (*Bible,* Exodus Book 3, verse, 1-17 & *Quran*, chapter 20, verse 10), the very mention of a 'bush' in the play's narrative hints at an affiliation between the green side of the world and human life. Additionally, Tiger mentions the "ruined shrub" (198) in the play. Subsequently, Joseph has used the Biblical instance of bushes in the post-9/11 context to express blighted civilization. Moreover, the association of the burning bush becomes more relevant when Tiger asks God to talk to him through anything. Since the bushes in modern times are burnt, God will not speak

[1] For more details:
http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id= 31214

through them, making it impossible for human beings to take any divine light from them, ever again. The metaphoric garden in the play is totally burnt, implying that the green link to God has been scorched and that divine presence can never be felt in this dilapidated land.

More importantly, the burnt garden also portrays the destruction of vegetation during human conflict and war. In the play, while Uday owns the garden, Musa is the one who prunes the plants and shapes the hedges into animals. However, after the US invasion in Baghdad, the vegetal world is burnt. Since the play is performed in the "wilderness" (Frye 1456) of the topiary garden, the zoo and the desert, Baghdad is depicted as a post-war wasteland. In this regard, Karban argues that plants have their own silent language and respond in sophisticated, silent ways which escape human understanding (3). When Tiger—standing in the burnt garden—says: "But cruelty echoes all around me. Even in this ruined garden. And so I wonder if there is any escape" (215), he is also referring to the cruelty inflicted upon plants which has reduced the garden to a scorched and haunting place. Thus, the play's burnt and ruined garden screams out silently against the cruel wars waged by mankind which destroy the world's innocent vegetation, along with animal and human lives.

One of the major myths Joseph uses to comment on the vegetal world is that of the Holy Grail. All literary genres are derived from the quest-myth, and it is the central myth of literature (Frye, "The Archetypes" 1453). Grail legends are "tales of the Knights of the Round Table which concern the quest for the Holy Grail" (Coote 99). These legends have two strands: one is Arthurian legend and the other is the "purely archetypal" Fisher King (Pratt 307). According to the ancient grail myths, the Knights of the Round Table used to go to deserts in the search of the Holy Grail to save their lands from plague and famine (Windeatt). However, soldiers like Tom, in a post-9/11 scenario, go on quests for gold toilet seats—mocking the quests of the soldiers in this age.

Even Musa, whose own land is plagued by war, goes to the desert in search of weapons. The situation becomes extremely hilarious when Tom dies for the sake of his 'grail', a golden toilet seat. As Tom lies dying, clutching his gold toilet seat ever closer, Kev ironically says, "At least you got your toilet seat" (Joseph 232), which, on a broader scale, serves as a scathing criticism of modern humankind's wars and quests for monetary pursuits and highlights the need to strive for the wellbeing of human ecospheres, rather than pilfering their material resources.

Another very significant implication of the greenery and its destruction lies in the exploitation of female figure, which is usually associated with the earth, land and vegetation (Merchant 10). In Joseph's play, the treatment and condition of women at the hands of men hints at humanity's exploitation of the female body and planet earth alike. While there are many female characters, including three minor female characters—a teenage Iraqi call-girl, an Iraqi woman whose house is raided, and a physically deformed and mutilated leprous woman who appears in the desert—it is Musa's sister Hadia who is the most prominent.

First of all, Uday exploits Hadia when she comes to see the topiary garden her brother Musa works in as a gardener. Based on Uday's innuendo, the audience comes to

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realise that Uday assaulted Musa's teenage sister Hadia when she visited the garden. Uday calls Hadia "little virgin sister" and "little creature" (196), also comparing her to the garden's hedges and greenery, strongly hinting at the environmental concerns depicted in Joseph's play (195-196), and connecting the female figure with the natural world. Likewise, US Marine Tom hires the aforementioned teenage call-girl for self-gratification since Tiger has eaten his hand and Tom can no longer masturbate without assistance from the call-girl. This crude, twenty-dollar act also underscores the exploitation of innocent girls (Joseph 204). This young girl—and those she represents—is not being used for any productive relationship, but rather for a transient material use; just like earth, the female body is being desecrated at a trivial price. In this regard, while Hadia symbolizes the greenery of planet earth which human beings are ruthlessly destroying, the teenage call-girl represents the exploitation of Iraqi land by American invaders.

In the same way, the violation of the female body and its connection with the destruction of nature can be interpreted in light of the Fisher King strand of Grail legends, which narrates "how the court of the rich Fisher King was withdrawn from the knowledge of men when certain of the maidens who frequented the shrine were raped and had their golden cups taken away from them. The curse on the land follows from this act" (Brooks 138). The story goes on to tell that the Grail was guarded by the Fisher King—wounded in the legs or groin—in his 'mysterious castle' located in the wasteland. The Fisher King's recovery of health and land depended on the successful quest of the Grail (Beavis and Cragg 14). Accordingly, recurring hideous violations of the female body (Joseph 193) in Iraq were a result of the war which irreparably devastated the entire ecosphere.

The next tier of *The Great Chain of Being*—the destroyed mineral world, with a ruined castle and desert—underscores the play's overall tragic impact (Frye, "The Archetypes" 1456). In Act Two, Scene Two, the setting is "[a] bombed out building, half standing, in the middle of the night" (Joseph 221). The character of the leper woman, surrounded by this dilapidated mineral world, refers to the mineral exploitation of the Iraqi land. Representing the physical and material structures of the land, she serves as the symbol of the maximum exploitation of planet Earth, with her decrepit shape and her hands inexorably becoming stumps. Additionally, the symbolic significance of the leper woman becomes more evident when Tom asks her for the golden toilet seat (pilfered from Uday's Castle), medicine (to tend Tom's gunshot wound), and water (near Tom's death). Since gold is a mineral which is excavated from the earth, medicines are mostly produced with herbs, and water is derived from the earth, all of these demands made to the leper woman connect her to planet Earth and its resources. Thus, she becomes the provider of gold, a mineral derived from earth, and of medicine—a healing substance primarily derived from herbs, plants and water. The earth is incapable of healing humanity because it has been devastated and ruined by wars and bombing. Therefore, the female figure depicted in the play is the strongest symbol of physical, material, vegetal and mineral plundering of planet Earth at the hands of human beings.

The last on the list in Frye's archetypal framework is water. It comes under the category of 'common resources' which are most brutally exploited by national, international and local communities. Indeed, because of this, the world is currently facing water scarcity issues (Naess 54; Synder 75). Water is also a symbol of purification, spirituality and regeneration, and the absence thereof in *BTBZ* hints at dearth and a lack of spirituality. The leper woman offers water five times (227, 228, 229), but Tom is only interested in gold (although he does go on to ask for water as he nears death, 231). Through Tom, the play hints at the absence of spirituality in contemporary times. Indeed, Tom searched and struggled for gold throughout his life, but only as he lies dying does he realise he is thirsty and needs water, symbolising the human desire for spiritual consolation in the face of death.

Consequently, the vegetal, mineral and water worlds together illustrate the lack of divine presence, a devastation of any spiritual connection with God, humanity's wish to regain the heavenly garden and the spiritual decadence of contemporary times. Moreover, the violation of female body in the play is exactly proportional to the exploitation of planet Earth. The play therefore emphasizes the need to preserve, respect and value natural resources for a healthier physical and spiritual existence.

Human World

The human world is less of a focus than the animal, vegetal, mineral and water worlds are in the play. According to Frye, the tragic vision of the human world is the depiction of tyranny or anarchy with an isolated man serving as "the deserted or betrayed hero" ("The Archetypes" 1455). Accordingly, the structure of the entire human world in the play reflects rampant tyranny and anarchy. In Baghdad, prior to the war, there were tyrannical dictators like Uday; now greedy and senseless soldiers like Tom and Kev are in power. The presence of the ghosts of tyrants like Uday and of greedy soldiers like Tom establishes the tragic version of the play.

In the play, the human world also demonstrates the conflict between races, ethnicities, classes and genders. The human and non-human inhabitants of Iraq are facing what Curtin calls "environmental racism" and "oppression of one by the other" (145). Huggan and Tiffin also highlight the issue of racism in the nations under imperial and colonial rule. They mention the exploitation of the human and non-human in the colonized and invaded areas (180-188). Tom and Kev refer to Musa as "psycho Jihadi" (161) and, ironically, "Habib" (160)—a bastardisation of the term of endearment, "Habibi". Similarly, Musa calls Americans "Johnny" (219). In *BTBZ*, humans are divided into various races, nationalities, classes and ethnicities. Before the American invasion, rulers like Uday—and then after the invasion, Tom and Kev—bully the Iraqi people. Uday himself confesses to causing humans pain (191) as he used to brutally torture and murder innocent people. Later killed by the Americans, Uday's ghost torments Musa throughout the play. After that, Americans invaded Iraq to steal their oil (192) without considering the environmental hazards for the people of the invaded land. Thus, the play comments on the environmental racism prevalent in the contemporary world.

The human world has also been represented through various religious and popular myths just like the animal, mineral, vegetal and water worlds. Most prominently, the play incorporates the major monotheistic divine texts into its narrative to explain the disoriented human world depicted in the play. Sometimes, the play appears to take a sermonizing tone as there are many dialogues, situations and sets that hint at the stories narrated in divine texts like the Quran, the Bible and the Torah.

Firstly, one of the play's main characters—Musa—is named after the Prophet Moses, who is mentioned in all the three texts as a reverent prophet of God (*Bible*, *Exodus Book* 2; *Quran,* Chapter 28, verses 1-46; *Torah*, Shemot, Chapter 2-21). In the play, Musa is a gardener in tyrannical Uday Hussein's castle, surviving under a cruel ruler—just like the Prophet Moses did under the cruel Pharaoh. Uday Hussein is portrayed as the Pharaoh of our times who can kill anyone at his discretion. Musa being a gardener alludes to the profession of the first man, Prophet Adam, who tended the Garden of Eden. Uday is the Satan of Musa's story in the play as well. Uday whispers things to Musa, asking him to kill with the gold-plated gun. As a result, Musa kills Tom and falls prey to the temptations presented by Uday's ghost. Like the Prophet Moses, Musa kills a man and his garden is snatched away by worldly imperial gods.

Secondly, the two American Marines remind us of the story of Cain and Abel narrated in the *Bible* (*Genesis* 4:1-17, King James Version), the *Quran* (Chapter 5, verses 27-31), and the *Torah* (Chapter 4, verses 1-25). Although Tom does not directly kill Kev, his insensitivity and indifference to Kev's pain and need for kindness ultimately leads Kev to suicide:

> Kev: (starts to cry) Tommy. Don't leave. You're my best friend.
> Tom: I am not your friend.
> Kev: Yes you are, man. And I need you, okay? I'm so scared….
> Tom: Well, that's your psycho problem, Kev. Not mine. Now, I have some gold left that I have to get before I leave… (185)

Right after Tom leaves Kev, Kev commits suicide. Therefore, though indirectly, Tom participated in Kev's death.

Thirdly, the theme of sexual perversion is also a very dominant motif in *BTBZ* because sexual violent crimes like rape and perverse sexual activities like prostitution are narrated or acted out on stage. Baghdad is a land where the previous ruler, Uday, violently raped virgins like Hadia; his actions are a sordid offence against humanity. Most importantly, in Middle Eastern culture, a sister, daughter or mother's honour is a very sensitive issue for men. This instance reminds us of Fisher King's land as well as the rape of Philomela (Ovid 189). In *Metamorphosis*, Ovid describes the story of Philomela's rape by Tereus who not only rapes Philomela while she is imprisoned, but cuts out her tongue, censoring her forever. Likewise, the female body in the play is shamelessly exploited, first by Uday and then by Tom. Thus, the mythical story of rape has been insinuated by describing the contemporary horrendous acts.

Fourthly, contemporary man's obsession with gold has been connected with the ancient and cursed desire for gold depicted in the story of King Midas whose mere touch would turn anything to gold (Ovid 537). Musa also calls Uday "King Midas" (194), given

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his penchant for turning everything in his palace into gold. He had a gold-plated gun and a golden toilet seat, both of which are major motifs in the play. Interestingly though, Joseph inverts the myth's curse motif. In *BTBZ*, it is not the King's son Uday who is cursed with the golden touch; instead, Uday's golden gun is cursed. Whoever touches that gun is cursed with killing someone with that gun. All in all, the gun is stolen multiple times and everyone who touches it kills someone. Myatt propounds, "The gold gun binds the men and the tiger to Baghdad's brutal past and its confused, violent present" (3). In this case, the golden gun is a demonic jinx which breaks the people's morality and soul. In short, it combines and critiques two of the most prevalent obsessions in contemporary times related with acquisition of resources like money, gold and weapons.

In conclusion*, BTBZ* is a myth-ecological tragedy of contemporary times. In fact, it is an allegory of the contemporary human situation, depicting a world full of unkind and vicious human beings who have made the lives of their fellow humans and those of other species inordinately difficult. It provides a microcosmic insight into the hazards of waging war—no matter what the reason—and highlights the disastrous effects these contemporary conflicts have on the world's ecology at all levels. The play also alludes to the need for animal conservation and protection. It warns humanity against the impending ecological doom as an outcome of the massive proliferation of global warfare. On the one hand, it laments the bio-degradation of animals, green spaces, minerals and water and, on the other, the inhumane treatment of humans by their fellow humans on the basis of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity and selfish materialistic reasons. The absent God, bombarded zoo, burnt garden, distressed animals, the talking ghost of Tiger, the anguished females, the war for oil resources, the ruined city of Baghdad and unintentional murders all hint at the devastated state of divine, human and non-human realms today. Furthermore, humanity's spiritual decadence has damaged the world's entire ecology because the broken spiritual link to the divine sphere has a poisonous trickledown effect on the entire ecosystem.

The ancient myths applied on the contemporary ecological predicament reveal the demotion of human beings from their high standing and their emergence as villainous perpetrators of the devastation of the various tiers of *The Great Chain of Being*. Subsequently, the play is a denunciation of the grand anthropocentric narrative of humanism in favour of the non-human elements inhabiting the world alongside human beings. In short, by integrating miscellaneous mythical strands related to human and non-human realms, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* provides a fresh and unique perspective on human intervention and the destruction of the multiple ecospheres in the contemporary world.

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The American Waste: A New Take on the Conquest of the West in Paul Auster's Novel *Travels in the Scriptorium*

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Abstract

The subject of the article is the 2006 novel *Travels in the Scriptorium* by Paul Auster, which contains an embedded story, presenting the alternative history of the USA. The article aims to demonstrate that Auster's novel offers a revision of two essential myths of the American nation. The precise moment in the history of the USA that Auster's novel reinvents is the time before the Mexican War and before taking over the Southwest and California. The Mexican War and its political consequences marked the transition of the USA from a republic upholding its libertarian and progressive ideals to an invading imperial power. The shift in the American policy toward its neighboring nations and peoples is reflected in Auster's novel in the presentation of the westward expansion as a brutal invasion. Auster's novel heavily revises the two formative myths of the American state, the myth of the West and the "errand in the wilderness," with Manifest Destiny as its later incarnation justifying the imperialist mission. The wilderness itself is divested of spiritual significance, desacralized, as the Alien Territories are converted into the arena of carnage and indiscriminate slaughter. It is unreservedly sacrificed to the interests of the emerging imperialist enterprise, which is nothing less than the ultimate consequence of the original Puritan venture—the taming of the wilderness and the creation of a model Christian state for the rest of the world to admire.

Keywords: Alternative history, counterfactual, embedded narrative, the errand into the wilderness, American specialness, the myth of the West.

Resumen

El presente artículo gira en torno a la novela *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2006) de Paul Auster, en la que se narra una historia alternativa de los Estados Unidos. El artículo pretende demostrar que la novela de Auster ofrece una revisión de dos mitos esenciales de la nación norteamericana. El momento preciso de la historia de los Estados Unidos que reinventa la novela de Auster es la época anterior a la Guerra de Estados Unidos-México y antes de que se produjera la anexión del suroeste y de California. La Guerra de Estados Unidos-México y sus consecuencias políticas marcaron la transición de los EE.UU. desde una república que defendía sus ideales libertarios y progresistas a una potencia imperial invasora. El cambio de la política estadounidense con respecto a las naciones y pueblos vecinos se refleja en la novela de Auster al presentar la expansión hacia el oeste como una invasión brutal. La novela de Auster revisa en gran medida los dos mitos formativos del estado estadounidense: el mito del Oeste y la "misión en el desierto", con el Destino Manifiesto como su encarnación posterior que justifica la misión imperialista. La propia naturaleza salvaje es despojada de su significado espiritual, desacralizada, a medida que los Territorios Foráneos se convierten en una arena para la carnicería y la matanza indiscriminadas. Esta naturaleza salvaje se sacrifica sin reservas en aras de los intereses de la empresa imperialista emergente, la cual es nada más y nada menos que la consecuencia última de la empresa puritana original: la

domesticación de la naturaleza y la creación de un estado cristiano modelo para que el resto del mundo lo admire.

Palabras clave: Historia alternativa, contrafactual, narrativa incrustada, la misión en el desierto, la singularidad americana, el mito del Oeste.

The subject of the article is the 2006 novel *Travels in the Scriptorium* by Paul Auster, which contains an embedded story presenting an alternative vision of the nineteenth-century USA. The article aims to demonstrate that by rewriting American history, Auster's text offers a revision of two essential myths of the American nation—it recasts its errand into the wilderness, and exposes the humanitarian costs of the conquest of the West. On its appearance in 2006, the novel received a cool reception. As Aliki Varvogli points out, the reviewers generally described *Travels in the Scriptorium* in escapist terms, calling it "a puzzle, a maze, or a magician's trick," "a masterclass in postmodernist fiction," at best concerned with "the morality of fiction-writing" (95). The criticism on this relatively recent novel is rather scant and the neglect can be demonstrated by the fact that in the volume of essays on Auster's fiction *Time, Narrative and Imagination* none tackles *Travels in the Scriptorium*.

The existing publications frequently overlook the inserted story, concentrating instead on the metafictional concerns of the novel and on its protagonist, Mr. Blank. Thus, Debra Shostak, in her article "In the Country of Missing Persons: Paul Auster's Narratives of Trauma," states that the novel situates Mr. Blank "within the stasis of the traumatic condition, lacking memory and thus a sense of his own identity," adding that "The exaggeratedly reflexive plot comprises the recovery, or at least the reinventing, of a history and hence some semblance of a self" (72). Jonathan Boulter in his study *Melancholy and the Archive* devotes one chapter to Auster's novels, including *Travels in the Scriptorium*, which he calls "a radical investigation into the nature of writing" (23). For Boutler, it is "a novel about the creative process" as well as "a profound meditation on the link between the creative act and guilt, guilt over the very act of imagination" (50). He gives only a passing notice to the embedded narrative, pointing out that "in a neat turn at the novel's conclusion, Auster manipulates the novel into something like a Moebius strip," when Mr. Blank begins to read the manuscript entitled *Travels in the Scriptorium*, "apparently authored by N. R. Fanshawe, Auster's own character, the fictional author in *The Locked Room*" (Boulter 55).

Yet some articles have acknowledged the significance of the counterfactual vision of the history of the USA presented in the inserted story, discussing its larger implications. Varvogli in her brief essay recognizes its "allegorical overtones"; in her view, it is the story "about the US fighting their various alien enemies" (98). She traces the embedded narrative back to Auster's earlier novel *Oracle Night*, in which Trause, the fictitious author of the inserted story, describes it to the narrator as "a political parable," premised on the idea "that governments always need enemies, even when they're not at war," and when necessary, they invent them and spread the word to the public

(Varvogli 98). Countering the early reviewers, Varvogli concludes that "To claim that a country's enemy is a discursive construct as Trause does here is to suggest also that Auster's brand of self-reflexive metafiction is not an aesthetic game, a puzzle or a curiosity, but rather a means of interrogating the immediate, lived world of politics and power" (98).

Jesús Ángel González discusses the inserted story in his essay "'Another History': Alternative Americas in Paul Auster's Fiction," placing *Travels in the Scriptorium* alongside the 1989 novel *Moon Palace* and its near-contemporary *Man in the Dark* from 2008. González points out that, in these texts, Auster combines "historical facts with historical fiction (like the outcome of the 2000 election) to create a fictional world presented as a parallel America" (22). He acknowledges the novel's resonance with what he calls "American myths" as well as with "American past and present history"; in his view, Auster's critical stance is quite straightforward, for "the creation of a common enemy as an excuse for a 'phony' war can be related to real nineteenth-century wars with the Native Americans, Mexico or Spain, but also to the contemporary Iraqi or Afghan wars" (González 29).

Jarosław Hetman in his essay "Auster's Alternative History" claims that Auster in *Travels in the Scriptorium* "uses the convention of an alternative history to voice his observations on what Barthes analyzes in his 'Discourse of History,'" that is "the relation between the fictional narrative and the historical narrative" (Hetman 293). Hetman points out that in the embedded narrative, "Despite the alterations in the history of the United States, the basic ideology and the politics of the invading nations remain intact" (298). Speaking of the function of the trope of alternative history and its defamiliarizing effect, he states:

> Paradoxically, fictionalizing certain historical events, instead of weakening their impact on the reader, strengthens it. This is due to the fact that the reader is no longer under such influence of the national ideology that is forced on him (if we assume that the implied reader is either an American or in a broader sense, a representative of the "Western civilization"). (Hetman 298-299)

Counterfactual visions of the historical process have proliferated in the twentieth- and twenty-first century literature, both in historiography and in the realm of fiction. The popularity of hypothetical historical narratives and fictional inversions of the past perhaps can be attributed to the postmodernist speculation on the contingency of history, the speculation that attempts to escape rigid causation of determinism and its polar opposite, arbitrariness of the idealistic philosophy, its imposition of "thought" or will on reality. In the postmodernist view, which radically questions these two explanatory frameworks, the historical process often operates through a chain of coincidences; Michel Foucault even claims that "forces operating in history [...] always appear through the singular randomness of events" (154-155).

In historical studies, counterfactualism means creating alternative outcomes of nodular events, showing other hypothetical developments resulting from what Roman Katsman calls "bifurcation points," moments of crisis at which "events could have proceeded in different ways" (37). These unrealized possibilities had for a long time

been excluded from the prescribed scope of historical inquiry because as Foucault asserts, "we want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities" (155). Nevertheless, he contends that contrary to the official discourse, "the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference" (155). Such "lost" possibilities or imagined impossibilities figure largely in the strain of historiographic writing that Jeremy Black defines in *Other Pasts, Different Presents, Alternative Futures,* as "conjecturing on what did not happen in order to understand what did" (10). Fictions of alternative history are indeed predicated on counterfactual historical assumptions, as Niall Fergusson explains in *Virtual History* (8). Fergusson argues, however, that for many historians, to "imagine alternative courses of events is [...] 'a pure myth, an extravagance of the imagination,'" and he claims that such hostile views of the various influential historians partly explain why answers to the recurring counterfactual questions "have more often been provided by writers of fiction than by historians" (7). Nevertheless, Fergusson cautions that these "products of imagination" generally "lack an empirical basis" and "rely for inspiration on hindsight" (8). In order to account for the recent surge of counterfactual narratives, Katsman states that "alternative history derives from dissatisfaction with existing history or from an inability to explain existing historical phenomena" (28). Conversely, seen in positive terms, it offers "a world view that is realized in the form of 'fictional correction'" (Katsman 28). Referring strictly to the literary genre of alternative history, Katsman points out that in such narratives the "materialization of a certain historical possibility or impossibility" replaces existing history, and it does so overtly (36). Hence, he defines the genre as "the overt alternative realization of the possible" (Katsman 37).

In Auster's novel *Travels in the Scriptorium*, the historical process subjected to a radical revision is the westward expansion of the American state, the inevitable consequence of its foundational myth—the Puritan errand into the wilderness. The conflict between civilization and the untamed nature, between white Christian settlers and the indigenous "heathen" population lies at the heart of the American experience. According to Adam Lloyd-Smith, "the trauma and guilt of race and slavery, along with the settlers' terror of the Indians and the wilderness, and later perhaps some suppressed recognition of Native American genocide" are among the major themes in American literature (8). These issues are inextricably connected with the belated recognition of the waste and destruction of the natural environment concomitant with the creation of a modern industrial state on the American continent. The disastrous impact of an advanced consumer society on the natural world is by no means limited to North America. The damage is worldwide. According to Kate Rigby, we are living in the contemporary era of *ecocrisis;* she has even coined the term *ecocide* by analogy to genocide (11).

The long-standing oversight of environmental devastation and the attempt to redress its negative consequences have been the driving forces behind the emergence of the new, ecocritical perspective in the last decades of the twentieth century. Lawrence Buell in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism* claims that this "environmental

turn in literary and cultural studies" emerged as "a reaction against the marginalization of environmental issues" (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 62). But he cautions that despite its growing academic popularity and appeal, environmental criticism "clearly has not yet achieved the standing within the academy of such other issue-driven discourses as those of race, gender, sexuality, class, and globalization," and it "has not developed its own distinctive methods of investigation" (Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* 129). As Buell suggests, "its merit lies in new, challenging issues, and fresh, innovative perspectives it has introduced" (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 129).

The ecocritical approach has its roots in Romantic visions of the natural world. In her impressive study *Topographies of the Sacred* Rigby states that Romanticism as a literary movement "solicits the reader to see anew, and dwell within, the natural world" (2). Central to this conception is the project of a re-sacralization of nature. Rigby explains that

> Viewed in relation to the religious traditions that have been dominant in the West, privileging a more otherworldly concept of redemption, this project looks like one of "secularization" […] However, reconsidered in relation to the mechanistic and atomistic models of scientific rationalism, which, as Lussier has shown, the romantics were also keen to overthrow, their project appears to be a very different one: something rather more like reenchantment than secularization. (12)

She echoes here Thomas Berry, who sees humanity's "reenchantment with the earth as a living reality" as "the condition for our rescue of the earth from the impending destruction that we are imposing upon it" (392). Berry emphasizes that in order to achieve this common goal, "we must now, in a sense, reinvent the human species within the community of life species," and for this to happen, "Our sense of reality and of value must consciously shift from an anthropocentric to a biocentric norm of reference" (392). As Rigby puts it, "The shift to an ecocritical perspective entails the recognition that the natural world is not simply a passive object of knowledge and control, a mere resource to be bought and sold or an indifferent screen upon which we project culturally specific and socially overdetermined images of nature" (4). Likewise, Jeffrey Myers in *Converging Stories* advocates an ecocentric paradigm to displace the anthropocentrism "predominant in Western thinking about the natural world": "Rather than positioning humanity at the center of the natural world, with human priorities as the *only* legitimate concern, ecocentricity decenters humanity and repositions us as interconnected and on an equal plane with other beings in the natural world" (Myers 9). Rigby (13) and Myers (5) point to the implicit connection between the conceptualization of nature in Western post-Cartesian dualistic thought as "as a blank screen for human projections" (Rigby 13), what Myers calls "the anthropocentric paradigm" (5), and the unprecedented environmental destruction.

Turning to the specifically American context, the mastery and exploitation of nature, "the taming of the wilderness," was inscribed in the process of creating a civilized state on the pristine continent. John Opie and Norbert Elliot in their essay "Tracking the Elusive Jeremiad" notice the presence of "a utilitarian orientation toward

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the environment" from the start; as they put it, "the natural world is merely the vehicle of Danforth's Puritan errand of anthropocentrism" (Opie & Elliot 15). In their view, American history could be perceived as "a narrative of the gradual conquest of the American wilderness, a demonstration of civilization's growing mastery of natural resources, a manifestation of built environments that celebrate their independence from nature" (Opie & Elliot 18).

In opposition to the dominant project of conquering the wilderness and subjecting it to the laws of capital, American Transcendentalism posited the re-sacralization of nature. Rather than treating it as a repository of raw materials, the American Transcendentalists "wanted to embrace nature in a holistic, mystical union so as to be ennobled by it" (Opie & Elliot 21). As Opie and Elliot state, for Emerson "to enter the wilderness was to enter the divine presence" (22). This testifies to the reevaluation of the wilderness in the Romantic period, the process that both fed into and stemmed from the rising nationalist pride. As Roderick Frazier Nash observes in his classic study *Wilderness and the American Mind*, "by the middle decades of the nineteenth century wilderness was recognized as a cultural and moral resource and a basis for national self-esteem" (67). American writers, poets, and painters, such as Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant, Thomas Cole, and many lesser figures, unanimously recognized the uniqueness of American untamed nature and its sublime potential, and generally endowed it with a religious as well as an aesthetic significance (Nash 78).

Yet for most Americans, as David Murdoch observes in *The American West: The Invention of a Myth*, the land was "savage and cruel, like its aboriginal inhabitants the Indians – but it was potentially bountiful": "it offered the opportunity of independence to whoever could seize and use it" (2). The ensuing conquest of the Western wilderness had been at a certain point translated into a powerful national myth, the myth of the West. In the light of this myth, as Murdoch states, "the frontier experience permanently shaped the American character," but above all, "it defined America's core values: individualism, self-reliance, democratic integrity" (3).

There is no denying that in the popular imagination the westward expansion was a unique process that determined the unique destiny of the American nation. Yet as Murdoch explains in his monograph, its reputed profound influence on American history derived from the emphasis placed on the conquest of the West as "an era with clearly defined limits," and as he puts it, "The origin of that emphasis, the insistence on a symbolic moment for the 'end of the West,' lies in the actual emergence, in codified form, of the cluster of images and ideas which accorded such primal significance to the frontier experience" (10). Furthermore, as Murdoch argues, those images and ideas about the West, its heroes and its meaning, "were invented to serve a specific purpose at a particular time": "They were produced in response to the doubts and fears of America in the two decades on either side of the turn of this century" (10). He claims that it is easy to demonstrate that "the *myth* of the West arose out of a crisis which exposed a contradiction at the heart of America's self-image," the crisis "in the minds of many Americans, who saw a frightening conflict between how they conceived their country

and what it had become" (20). According to Murdoch, in the myth of the West, "nostalgia for the lost wilderness and the end of the frontier became bound up with nostalgia for a simpler America" (21). Belying the stark and rather depressing reality, the myth-makers portrayed the West as "the arena where all the old values fuelled heroic endeavour – a world of chivalry, honour, courage and self-reliance" (Murdoch 21).

This "inspired propaganda" was soon bolstered by "an historical hypothesis which confirmed what the propagandists had implied: that the frontier experience had permanently shaped the American character" (Murdoch 22). Such a historical hypothesis was first presented by Frederic Jackson Turner in 1893 in the essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," whose central premise was that the westward expansion forged the American spirit and vitally contributed to the composite nationality of the American people. As Opie and Elliot observe, "Turner found a symbol for democracy, individual, and free enterprise in the West" (23), and articulated "a new aspect of the American myth, that of the disappearing frontier, the elusive mythopoetic West that embodied the essence of the American character" (25).

The official versions of the triumphant American march across the continent largely interpreted the process as preordained and inevitable, as the fulfillment of the nation's Manifest Destiny, or as an "immutable necessity," to use Foucault's phrase. But the American historian David Quinn presented the story of "how the West was won" from an entirely new perspective. In his account Quinn offered a thought-provoking counterfactual scenario for the American settlement, in which, as Black puts it, "he highlighted the importance of Europe's industrial dynamics" for the westward expansion (58). Quinn argued that the colonization of the West might not have been so successful, if it had not been fuelled by the continuing immigration from Europe: "The biggest question mark would lie over the capacity of the indigenes [Native Americans] to stage something of a come-back once European settlements had ceased to be bolstered by officials and soldiers and by increasing numbers of emigrants" (qtd. in Black 58). It is hardly accidental that the name of the central character in one of the earlier novels by Auster, *City of Glass*, Daniel Quinn, echoes so closely the name of David Quinn, the historian who speculated about the outcome of the confrontation between white settlers and the native peoples of North America, for precisely its uncertainty has become the premise of the alternative history presented in *Travels in the Scriptorium*.

The capacity of the indigenous tribes to reclaim their territories taken over by European settlements represents a major threat to the existence of the Confederation, the counterfactual version of the American state in Auster's novel. This unrealized possibility is explicitly mentioned by one of the characters, Minister Joubert, who points out: "If I were in their place, I'd be sorely tempted to reconquer the western provinces. The ground is fertile there. The forests are full of game. It would give them a better, easier life" (Auster 74). The events adumbrating the imaginary history of the USA are included in the inserted narrative, contained in the manuscript found and read by the protagonist of the novel, Mr. Blank. Mr. Blank "is reasonably certain that the present moment can be situated sometime in the early twenty-first century and that he lives in a

country called the United States of America" (Auster 15). By his own admission, Mr. Blank, the reader of the typescript, belongs to the actual history, so he is able to pick out the differences and similarities between the USA and its imaginary counterpart, the Confederation. It is, as he observes,

> Just another name for America. Not the United States as we know it, but a country that has evolved in another way, that has another history. But all the trees, all the mountains, and all the prairies of that country stand exactly where they do in ours. The rivers and oceans are identical. (Auster 87)

The story read by Mr. Blank purports to be a report, or a confession, written in prison by Sigmund Graf, a civil servant employed at the Bureau of Internal Affairs. Prior to his career in civil service, Graf had spent more than a year among the Primitives, which is the derogatory designation of the native inhabitants of the Alien Territories adopted by the official discourse to affirm the supremacy of the Confederation culture. Thus, he can be regarded as an explorer of the West, or rather the Southwest, for in the embedded narrative the frontier is shifted to the vast desert expanses unmistakably suggesting this particular region of the USA, captured in all its essential characteristics: "Emptiness all around, a ferocious blue sky overhead, pounding light, and then, when the sun goes down, a chill to freeze the marrow in your bones" (Auster 91). The transposition of the frontier to the contested territories, the spitting image of Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico, is a move that points to Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, a literary praise of the "'strange mystic unknown' Southwest" (Abbey, *Confessions of a Barbarian* 113, quoted in Murray 15), and a landmark in late twentieth-century American nature writing.

But Graf is not merely an explorer. Living among the indigenous tribes in the Alien Territories, Graf studied their customs and beliefs, their diverse ways of life, and became quite knowledgeable on the subject: "The Tackamen in the east bury their dead, just as we do. The Gangi in the west put their dead on elevated platforms and leave the corpses to rot in the sun. The Crow People in the south burn their dead. The Vahntoo in the north cook the bodies and eat them" (Auster 72). Thus, he comes close to being an ethnographer or an anthropologist. The role he performs in this capacity is far from being neutral, for as Edward Said argues in his essay "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," "recent European and American anthropology [...] carries within it as a major constitutive element the unequal relationship of force between the outside Western ethnographer-observer and a primitive, or at least different but certainly weaker and less developed, non-Western society" (307-308). In his essay Said goes on to disclose "the constitutive role of the observer, the ethnographic 'I' or subject, whose status, field of activity, and moving locus taken together abut with embarrassing strictness on the imperial relationship itself" (308). It follows, then, from Said's argument that an anthropologist is an emissary of the imperial enterprise, an agent of the dominant metropolitan center of power, in this case the capital of the Confederation. Yet of this aspect of his work, of his unwitting entanglement with the warmongering politics of the day, Graf remains fatally unaware.

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In Auster's novel, Graf writes his report in prison, and in the place of his confinement he can sense the desert stretching outside the window of his cell:

> Each time the wind blows from the west, I can smell the sage and juniper bushes, the minima of those dry distances. I lived out there on my own for close to four months, wandering freely from one place to another, sleeping outdoors in all kinds of weather, and to return from the openness of that country to the narrow confines of this room has not been easy for me. (Auster 13)

Quite tellingly, his last wish is "to be able to look at the sky again," "to stand out in the open and look up at the immense blue sky above [him], to gaze at the howling infinite one last time" (Auster 14). The "howling infinite," of course, alludes to the famous passage in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*:

> all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore? But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God—so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! (107)

The sea-voyage in *Moby-Dick* represents the quest for the truth that "resides in landlessness alone," in "the howling infinite" of the illimitable expanse of the ocean. It is playfully introduced as a crucial intertextual motif in the 1976 novella "The King's Indian" by John Gardner, in which the protagonist, Jonathan Church, obviously modelled on Melville's Ishmael, contemplates going to sea:

> I wanted to be there, with Plato and Plotinus, despite all my sensible talk about southern Illinois. In landlessness alone lies the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God! thought I. Better to perish in that howling infinite than be... something or other. (I forget my phrase.) (Gardner 224)

The epistemological dimension of the "howling infinite," which can be traced back to Melville's *Moby-Dick*, is implicit in Thoreau's description of the wilderness in *The Maine Woods.* Thoreau's account of his expedition up the Penobscot river into "the howling wilderness which feeds it," details his confrontation with the pristine natural world, with "the country [that] is virtually unmapped and unexplored, and [where] still waves the virgin forest of the New World" (*The Maine Woods* 82-83). Thoreau is particularly sensitive to the immensity of the scenery and the seeming boundlessness of the woods:

> What is most striking in the Maine wilderness is the continuousness of the forest, with fewer open intervals or glades than you had imagined. Except the few burnt lands, the narrow intervals on the rivers, the bare tops of the high mountains, and the lakes and streams, the forest is uninterrupted. It is even more grim and wild than you had anticipated, a damp and intricate wilderness, in the spring everywhere wet and miry. (*The Maine Woods* 80)

Thoreau depicts the natural landscape in terms strongly reminiscent of Kant's notion of the mathematical sublime, thus effecting the shift from the howling wilderness as its potential locus to the howling infinite as its incarnation. As Philip Shaw explains, in Kant's philosophical system the sublime "refers to things which appear either formless

(a storm at sea; a vast mountain range) or which have form but, for reasons of size, exceed our ability to perceive such form," but even more relevantly, according to Kant, the sublime brings into question the human ability to discern boundaries or spatial or temporal limitations; the sublime is thus "an affront or 'outrage' to our powers of comprehension" (78). Shaw goes on to present Kant's division of the sublime into two categories, "mathematical" and "dynamic." Thus in the mathematical sublime, "the imagination is overwhelmed by spatial or temporal magnitude; the experience is too great for the imagination to 'take it all in' at once," and it puts to test "the ability of the mind to submit formlessness, such as the random, excessive movements of a storm, or the imperceptible contours of a vast cathedral, to the rational idea of totality" (80, 82).

In the contemporary era, the notion of "the howling wilderness" has been resuscitated by Edward Abbey, who employs the phrase in the opening section of *Desert Solitaire,* in the context that literalizes its meaning:

> I came to a dirt road on the right, where a small wooden sign pointed the way: Arches National Monument Eight Miles. I left the pavement, turned east into the howling wilderness. Wind roaring out of the northwest, black clouds across the stars—all I could see were clumps of brush and scattered junipers along the roadside. (Abbey 22)

Abbey quite self-consciously combines the tradition behind the "howling wilderness" with the Transcendentalists' call for a return to nature. As Buell states:

> [Abbey] describes his deepest purpose as "to confront, immediately and directly if it's possible, the bare bones of existence": Thoreau redivivus. [...] just as Thoreau turned to the classics as a way of returning to nature—so Abbey returns to the now classic Thoreau as a way of expressing his own turn to a more primal nature. (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* 72)

The motif of the "howling wilderness" has in fact a long history, going back to the perils faced by Jacob described in the passage 32: 10 in *Deuteronomy*, which in *King James Bible* reads: "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." Then, "the waste howling wilderness" was adapted by William Bradford, who in the earliest account of the American colonization of the New World, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, dwells at length on the dangers and hardships of the settlement. In the providential framework advanced by Bradford, the Pilgrim Fathers, the exclusive, elect group of believers, were vested with the task of bringing out God's design on the earth, a truly daunting and formidable enterprise, as it soon turned out. In his account the Pilgrims are presented as exiles in a "howling wilderness," who struggled against all adversity to bring into being the New Jerusalem: "what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men [...] the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue" (62). Bradford in his chronicle explicitly defined the mission of the colonists in the New World as the taming of the "howling wilderness."

Buell decodes the term as signifying "vacancy, emptiness waiting to be filled" (*The Environmental Imagination* 52), and he contrasts this Puritan vision of the New

World nature with the view that prevailed in the Southern colonies, "dystopian desert" versus "arcadian Utopia":

> This dyadic scheme has sometimes been used to sort out the different provincial enclaves. Marx links the tradition of dystopian stereotyping with Puritan New Englanders' evocation of the howling wilderness, the image of arcadia with the more temperate region of the more latitudinarian Virginia planters. (Buell*, The Environmental Imagination* 60)

In Auster's novel*,* the American wilderness is transformed into "the unmapped expanses of the Alien Territories," the territories inhabited by the Primitives and explored extensively by Graf, the purported author of the embedded narrative. Besides the names of the tribes confined to the Alien Territories, their last stay against the onslaught of the imperialist power, in his account Graf mentions also strange, unfamiliar names of geographical places and topographical features of the imaginary state, of cities and provinces of the Confederation: Neue Welt, Nachtburg, Tierra Blanca, Faux-Lieu, Tierra Vieja Province, Mont Sublime. He refers to fictitious historical events, such as the Southeast Border Wars, and political documents, for example, the Consolidation Treaty of the Fourth of March, perhaps the counterpart of the Declaration of Independence signed on the Fourth of July. He notes the calamities suffered by himself and his family: "the riots at the Sanctus Academy in Beauchamp led to the outbreak of the Faux-Lieu Language Wars, and two months after the invasion I saw my mother and younger brother burn to death during the Sacking of Luz" (Auster 46). Luz, which means "light" in Spanish, is "a textile center in the northwestern part of Faux-Lieu Province"(Auster 47), and as Graf explains, his father and himself "were among the seven thousand who took part in the exodus to the neighboring province of Neue Welt, to Nachtburg" (Auster 47). Their journey from Luz to Nachtburg can be read as transition from light to the city of night, a decline, a fall into darkness; hence in the provided narrative context, the name of the province, Neue Welt, New World, with its paradisiac connotations, seems bitterly ironic.

However, the rationale behind the presented counterfactual incidents and designations appears more complex; it goes beyond clever wordplay. In his report Graf dwells in particular on one disaster, the cholera epidemic termed the Blight of History, and the interpretation of the significance of its timing: "it struck just as the long and elaborately planned Unification ceremonies were about to begin," and "one can understand how it could be interpreted as an evil sign, a judgment on the very nature and purpose of the Confederation itself" (Auster 47). Such circumstances cast a shadow on the Confederation; they put it in a rather unfavorable light. The unification must have been a bloody process, with many victims sacrificed to the higher purpose. The implicit condemnation is borne out by the title attached to the ruler of the Confederation, the Protector, possibly a hint at Cromwell, the Lord Protector of England. Furthermore, one cannot escape noticing the prominence of French, German, and Spanish names, and in consequence, the marked presence of these three nationalities in the Confederation in the place of the Anglo-Saxon domination in the early history of the American republic. The development of the Confederation and its westward expansion were effected with

the participation of settlers from Iberia, Gaul, Albion, Germania, thus, it is an international enterprise. This can be viewed as a correction to the dominant vision of the conquest of the West, which as Murdoch points out, "is white and in essence Anglo-Saxon, and it "pays no attention and gives no credit to the Spanish-American contribution to the winning of the West" (9).

The Confederation as an amalgam of several European states, a surrogate of Western imperialism at large, is presented as a quasi-tyranny intent on wiping out the Primitives. Minister Joubert, a state official, summarizes it aptly: "We slaughtered them and enslaved them and then we herded them together in the parched and barren territories beyond the western provinces" (Auster 73). This treatment is in keeping with the American saga of the West, in which the Indian is a much-demonized ruthless player, but in reality was nothing more than a helpless victim of the nascent capitalist modern order. As Murdoch puts it,

> But by the time he had stopped oscillating between the roles of noble savage and fiendish redskin which public opinion had assigned him, he had become dehumanised. Much of the story presents the Indian as alien, implacable and irredeemable, an aspect (perhaps the most fearsome aspect) of the untamed land to be conquered by the march of progress. (Murdoch 9)

Joubert sends Graf on a mission whose aim is ostensibly to locate and capture Ernesto Land, a presumed subversive illegally operating in the Alien Territories with a hundred men, "a small band of anti-Confederationists." Land, according to Joubert, has acted on his own initiative, "stirring up discontent among the Primitives, preparing to lead them in an insurrection against the western provinces" (Auster 72). Graf openly disbelieves the Minister's allegations, pointing out that

> An uprising is impossible. Military action would require unity among the Primitives, and that has never happened and never will. They're as various and divided as we are. Their social customs, their languages, and their religious beliefs have kept them at odds for centuries. (Auster 72)

Yet Joubert insists that Land has turned against his country and betrayed the Confederation.

Unfortunately, Graf's account is not finished; it just breaks off before telling about how he crosses the border and ventures into the Alien Territories, to which Mr. Blank, the reader of the typescript, reacts with a contemptuous snort. The protagonist is frustrated and disappointed, "regretting having wasted so much time on that misbegotten excuse of a story" (Auster 81). To add to his chagrin, he learns that Graf's report is in fact a fictional work, a novel with the missing final pages. Its reputed author, John Trause, whose surname is the anagram of Auster, is a character appearing in Auster's earlier novel *Oracle Night*. Now Mr. Blank is charged with the task of inventing the ending to Trause's novel. One important narrative problem to be solved by Mr. Blank is Graf's situation once he gets to Ultima, "the westernmost tip of the Confederation, the place that stands at the edge of the known world" (Auster 14). Graf cannot cross the border, nor can he contact the Minister; to make matters worse, the

commander of the garrison in Ultima, Colonel De Vega, pretends that he knows nothing about Land and the hundred rebels who have entered the Alien Territories.

Mr. Blank proves to be very inventive. He is clearly enjoying the role of a fabulator. In his completion of the missing conclusion, Graf does secretly venture into the Alien Territories, where he encounters a village filled with slaughtered Primitives. Thus, his ride into the wilderness leads to the discovery of a gruesome massacre committed on the native people:

> The moment he enters, he's greeted by the overpowering stench of death, the sickening smell of decomposing bodies, and there, in the dim light of the hogan, he sees a dozen slaughtered Gangi—men, women, and children— all of them shot down in cold blood. […] among them Graf recognizes a number of people he befriended twelve years before. (Auster 91)

This part of Mr. Blank's recreation of the story culminates in a shocking twist: Graf comes to the conclusion that Land is responsible for the massacre. He begins to believe that he has stumbled on a much more sinister plot: "What if the rumor of an insurrection is no more than a blind to cover up a far more sinister undertaking: a quiet slaughter of the Primitives that would enable the government to open their territory to white settlement?" (93) Mr. Blank in his rendition of Graf's report aka Trause's novel restates the idea in the following way: "The Confederation is a fragile, newly formed state composed of previously independent colonies and principalities, and in order to hold this tenuous union together, what better way to unite the people than to invent a common enemy and start a war?" (Auster 88). He revises the original text, replacing the derogatory term "Primitives" with "Djinn," reminiscent of the more familiar but equally pejorative "Injuns." At this stage, Mr. Blank is stuck with two conflicting interpretations of the events. The first one, which basically reflects Graf's "reasoning," attributes to Land, De Vega, and the entire military a hideous design "to hatch a phony war with the Djiin in order to hold the Confederation together" (Auster 116). But there is also "Joubert's position"—Land is a traitor acting on his own and uniting the Djinn against the Confederation. However, Mr. Blank is satisfied with neither of these two options. He wants to put another twist on the events, to reveal another layer of deception. He has a flash of inspiration, leading to the erasure of the previously invented incidents: "Back to the beginning. Part two, that is. Back to the beginning of part two, when Graf slips across the border and enters the Alien Territories. Forget the massacre of the Gangi" (Auster 118).

In the new version of Graf's venture into the wilderness, Graf stumbles on the mass of the slaughtered dead, but this time, the corpses of white men in uniforms. Land is among them, which means that he and his troops have been butchered. Graf has no doubt that Land and his men were murdered by the Djiin. But Graf is wrong and it is the most painful irony of the reshaped story. He never realizes that he has been duped; it never occurs to him that "They're all in on it—Joubert, the Ministry of War, De Vega, the whole lot of them" (Auster 120). Land had failed in his mission to stir up a revolt among the Djinn, so the men in power had to "cook up a new plan and send a second army into the Territories" (Auster 120).

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Graf becomes the "key figure" in this devious scheme, because its success depends on what he will put in his report. His superiors count on receiving from Graf "a vivid, eyewitness account of what happened, with all the blame put on the Djiin" (Auster 121), and he unwittingly obliges them. His manuscript, skillfully edited and released to every newspaper in the country, will give the proper justification to the ensuing war against the Djinn, necessary to sway the public opinion. Graf realizes "how cruelly he's been tricked," and "fires a bullet through his skull" (Auster 121). Graf had finally understood his part in the plot, concocted by the imperialist regime. Even though he was the author of the report, he proved to be merely a pawn in the larger political scheme, acting out the role of an emissary of the empire, lending a semblance of legitimacy to the ensuing massacre of the Djinns and the conquest of their territory

The embedded narrative in *Travels in the Scriptorium* shares its basic impulse of inverting the past with the recent postcolonial historical novels which Greg Forter examines in his article "Atlantic and Other Worlds: Critique and Utopia in Postcolonial Historical Fiction." These novels, too, envision the alternative course of events, but there is a fundamental difference between Auster's rewriting of the history of the USA in *Travels in the Scriptorium* and the reinvention of the colonial past in Barry Unsworth's *Sacred Hunger* (1992) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2006). In contrast with Auster's novel, these two novels dramatize "the utopian recovery"; as Forter puts it, "While developing maps of the colonial past, these novels also seek alternative ways to conceptualize the postcolonial future" (1332). In Forter's view, the alternatives to colonial capital they envision are "critical utopias" (1333), because they "engage in the utopian project of constellating alternative, postnational futures, which they locate in the unrealized residues of a 'premodern' past that persists within and disrupts the 'homogeneous, empty time' of colonial modernity" (Forter 1329).

As an example of alternative history, Auster's novel departs from the model prescribed by Katsman, too, in one significant respect: neither the general narrator nor Mr. Blank, nor Sigmund Graf for that matter, explain what chain of circumstances led to the emergence of the Confederation, this peculiar version of the American state. The reader is denied the knowledge which different outcome of which "nodular event" in the early years of the Republic had changed the course of its evolution. Even though the enigma of the "bifurcation point" is unresolved, *Travels in the Scriptorium* offers a new and disturbing vision of the American westward expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century. The lack of technological innovations characteristic of the American life in the second half of the nineteenth century—"No trains, no telegraph" (Auster 115)—suggests the 1830s or the early 1840s as the most plausible timeframe. The precise moment in the history of the USA that Auster's novel reinvents is the time before the Mexican War and before taking over the Southwest and California. The Mexican War and its political consequences marked the transition of the USA from a republic upholding its libertarian and progressive ideals to an invading imperial power. In his essay "Civil Disobedience" written precisely at that time Henry David Thoreau starkly denounced the two evils condoned by the American government, adding to the conquest of the Mexican territories its tolerance of slavery:

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> when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army. (n.p.)

Thoreau sounds here a note of warning against the rising imperialism and the strengthening sense of nationalism, two developments that coalesced in the conviction that the USA had a special mission to fulfil, the spreading of "progress" and "civilization" on the American continent and later, in the world at large as well. In Auster's novel the imperialist mission heralds nascent capitalist and colonial modernity. But the Primitives are not merely subalterns to be subjugated and exploited—to use Marxist and postcolonial terminology, they cannot be assimilated to the process of empire-building and to the establishment of capitalism. In actual American history, pursuing these two aims meant not only the eradication of Native Americans but also the annexation of adjacent countries. This shift in the American policy toward its neighboring nations and peoples is reflected in Auster's novel in the presentation of the westward expansion as a brutal invasion. In the alternative version offered by *Travels in the Scriptorium*, the expansion of the USA hinges on the acquisition of land by hook and by crook, on the displacement and elimination of the Native Americans. The trope of alternative history serves here as a distancing technique, and the effect of strangeness, defamiliarization, works to undermine the naturalization of the Indian slaughter and to liberate the American reader from the neutralizing hold of the myth of the West as a national ideology.

Auster's novel heavily revises the two formative myths of the American state: the westward expansion as the cradle of the American character and the proving ground of democracy, promoted especially by Turner, and the original "errand into the wilderness," with Manifest Destiny as its later incarnation justifying the imperialist mission. The wilderness itself is divested of spiritual significance, desacralized, as the Alien Territories are converted into the arena of carnage and indiscriminate slaughter. It is unreservedly sacrificed to the interests of the emerging imperialist enterprise, which is nothing less than the ultimate consequence of the original Puritan venture—the taming of the wilderness and the creation of a model Christian state for the rest of the world to admire. In the essay "Introduction to *Moby-Dick*" Said comments on "the discourse of American specialness [that] begins with the Puritan 'errand into the wilderness' and continues through such doctrines as Manifest Destiny, 'making the world safe for democracy,' and 'the line drawn in the sand'" (364). The ideological mindset known as "American specialness" or "American exceptionalism," according to Said, "has inspired the military and economic campaigns that devastated and then sought to rebuild Asia, Latin America, the Pacific, and Europe […] without prejudice to its moral fervor or its reluctance to change its self-image as an all-conquering force for good in the world" (364). Speaking of Melville's contribution, Said argues that *Moby-Dick* unmasks what the critic himself calls the American nation's "self-mesmerizing assumptions about its providential significance" (364). Yet Melville's novel delivers

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both "the salutary effect as well as the destructiveness of the American world presence" (Said 364). By contrast, Auster's novel exposes the dire humanitarian and environmental costs of the ideology fostering the belief in the American nation's "providential significance," without any redeeming merit. For in *Travels in the Scriptorium* the rise of the USA as an imperial power and its hegemonic presence in the world are enabled by the destruction of the wilderness, by the ruthless conquest of the West and the concomitant displacement and extermination of Native Americans.

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Rewriting Leda and the Swan: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), and Lorna Crozier's "Forms of Innocence" (1985) and "The Swan Girl" (1995)

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Abstract

Angela Carter (1940-1992) and Lorna Crozier (1948) are two examples of contemporary writers who dedicate part of their work to problematizing historically established constructs that undermine the agency of both nature and women. Carter's and Crozier's agenda is, thus, in line with ecofeminist tenets, which are based on the interconnectedness of all living things on a non-hierarchical level. The intention of this article is to conduct a contrastive analysis of Crozier's and Carter's retelling of the account of Leda and the swan originally described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 AD) and later in W.B. Yeats's poem "Leda and the Swan" (1928). We contend that both Carter's and Crozier's versions of the myth challenge patriarchal domination by giving voice to and empowering Leda, the young female character in the myth. This empowerment is closely associated to Leda's harmonization with the natural world, since, by going back to nature, the young Ledas in Carter's and Crozier's works come to terms with their adolescent bodies in order to become women stripped of restrictive cultural and social beliefs. Accordingly, the original meaning of the figure of the swan is also subverted to adopt connotations more in tune with the creation of a sense of community that challenge the powerful enclosed violence that Ovid and Yeats attributed to this animal by presenting it as Zeus in disguise.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, domination, patriarchy, myth, demythologize.

Resumen

Angela Carter (1940-1992) y Lorna Crozier (1948) son dos autoras contemporáneas cuyas obras se dedican, en parte, a problematizar constructos históricamente muy arraigados que infravaloran tanto la agencia de la mujer como de la naturaleza. La agenda de Carter y Crozier está estrechamente relacionada con los principios ecofeministas, que se basan en la interconexión de todos los seres vivos al mismo nivel, sin jerarquías. Este artículo pretende realizar un análisis comparativo de la reescritura por parte de Carter y Crozier del mito de Leda y el cisne en relación al mito original descrito por Ovidio en Las Metamorfosis (8 dC) así como el poema de W.B. Yeats "Leda and the Swan" (1928). En nuestro artículo, sostenemos que tanto las versiones del mito de Carter como las de Crozier no solo desafían la dominación patriarcal dando voz y empoderando a Leda, la joven protagonista en el mito. A su vez, este empoderamiento está estrechamente relacionado con la armonización de Leda con la naturaleza, puesto que, volviendo al mundo natural, las jóvenes Ledas en las obras de Carter y de Crozier aprenden a aceptar sus cuerpos adolescentes con el fin de llegar a ser mujeres liberadas de creencias socioculturales restrictivas. En ese

sentido, los textos de Carter y Crozier subvierten el significado original de la figura del cisne, que adopta nuevas connotaciones, relacionadas con un sentido de comunidad con el mundo más que humano. Estas nuevas connotaciones cuestionan además la violencia extrema que Ovidio e Yeats atribuyen al cisne al presentarlo como Zeus disfrazado.

Palabras clave: Ecofeminismo, dominación, patriarcado, mito, desmitificar.

Introduction

Angela Carter (1940) and Lorna Crozier (1948) are two examples of contemporary women writers, the former British and the latter Canadian, well-known for their focus on rewriting those myths that have classified (very often randomly and unjustly) groups of people according to specific cultural views. By rewriting these myths, Carter and Crozier endeavour to question patriarchal and anthropocentric approaches to the portrayal of women and family structures and also of nature. At the same time, they also aim to re-inscribe such myths by imagining new options for man/woman and human-being/natural-world relationships. The rewriting of the myth of Leda and the swan within the particular genres in which the authors usually express themselves—narrative, mainly, in the case of Carter; and poetry in the case of Crozier—will prove to be informative of the cultural constructions that Ovid's myth encloses.

Leda and the swan is a myth that has been revisited and retold by a number of authors; the best known of these is W.B. Yeats's "Leda and the Swan." In her analysis of the rewriting of Ovid's myth by a number of Modernist writers, Helen Sword argues that the Modernist fascination with the myth of Leda and the swan can be attributed to two main factors: firstly, its connection with a re-reading of the myth as creative power, since, as Sword argues, "read as a fable of divine inspiration, the Leda myth offers a model of poetic creativity" (305). The second factor Sword identifies is the need to control what was perceived as "dangerous femininity" by either expressing "a male anxiety toward a femme fatale who, so long as her bestial desires remain unfulfilled, can be neither fathomed nor possessed by mortal man" or to "stage a fantasy of sexual abandon" (307). For Sword, Aldous Huxley's and Robert Graves's rewriting of Leda's story enacts a "peaceful idyll" (306) of romantic and sexual ardour devoid of violence and violation. Some critics, on the other hand, agree on interpreting Yeats's poem as "the divine imposition of a mythic design on human existence" (308) translated into the feminine side of creativity represented by divine inspiration enacted upon Zeus through Leda's influence and Leda's power to give life.

As contemporary writers very aware of the need to redefine a patriarchal and anthropocentric vision of the world which clearly affects its organization, Carter and Crozier position Leda center-stage in their rewriting of the myth, while at the same time emphasizing their search for a redefined identity by revising their connections to family and nature. In Carter's and Crozier's rewriting, violence is clearly a means of domination

and subjugation of the young Leda who is expected to enact specific roles within a patriarchal-based organization. The swan's (or Zeus's) attack upon Leda is far removed from romantic and sexual ardour or from creation and creativity. In many interviews, Angela Carter has explained that one of her main aims when writing is to question those "truths" that supposedly form the basis of our world. As she herself stated, "Because I believe that myths are products of the human mind and reflect only aspects of material human practice. I'm in the demythologising business" (Carter, *Expletives* 38). As many critics have argued (Easton; Gamble; Lee; Peach), Carter's works are riddled with literary, cultural and political referents that have shaped our contemporary Western world; as Alison Lee claims: "[h]istorical and literary contexts are important to Carter because her aim is to draw the reader's attention to the way in which those contexts have determined the way we think" (Lee 14). She defines herself primarily as a feminist; thus, she focuses on rewriting those myths, and also those multiple literary and cultural references, that set women within the narrow confines of specific roles.

Likewise, Crozier also follows a demythologizing agenda. In fact, Crozier has rewritten a number of myths, both from the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions. Specifically, seven out of the seventeen poetry collections Crozier has authored so far contain poems devoted to the rewriting of classical stories. In her rewriting of myths, Crozier focuses on giving agency to female characters whose voices, feelings, concerns and opinions were silenced in the original stories. As Crozier asserts in an interview with Elizabeth Philips, "part of my revisioning comes from a feminist stance. In most of the old stories, there's no room for women... The desire to resist erasure is part of the desire to retell" (143–144). By providing different perspectives of the same myth, Crozier's intention is to convey a more thorough understanding of the story, one that breaks with the great master narratives of Western society, as Crozier herself states: "No matter who is telling it, we know there's another narrative that deserves to be heard. And then another. … They challenge our thinking and understanding of what we thought was the 'truth'" (144). Crozier's revisionist mythologizing offers "not a single sacred feminized vision, but rather a plurality of possible ways of understanding human beginnings" (Gingell 67). In this sense, her poems enclose a celebration of life and diversity.

Crozier's and Carter's retellings of patriarchal domination in Leda's myth focus on the figure of Leda and the relationship she establishes with nature and with her social background in order to build her identity, questioning anthropocentric tenets and putting forward ecofeminist ones. As a young girl who is growing towards womanhood, the Leda of Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and Crozier's "Forms of Innocence" and "The Swan Girl" will have to evaluate those cultural symbols that define her identity according to male authority, as represented by the original myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as well as in Modernist rewritings of it. Leda's creativity in constructing her own identity as she transitions from a young girl to a woman, as well as in imbuing new meanings to the swan and to her natural and social environment, will prove to provide conscious agency to the female character.

The Myth of Leda and the Swan through Ecofeminism

Whereas the term "myth" may be difficult to define due to its complex connections to the cultural and social background of one community extending back over time, many authors have agreed on defining myths as stories that account for the origin, survival and development of a specific society. Gert Malan refers to Aristotle's definition of myth in his *Poetica* as "plot, narrative, structure and fable, with logos as its counterpoint" (3). As opposed to discourse or exposition, Malan considers myth to be "any anonymously composed storytelling of origins and destinies, as explanations for reality and behaviour offered by societies to their young" (3). Similarly, in the introduction to *Myth and Subversion in the Contemporary Novel*, José Manuel Losada defines myth as "a relatively simple oral narrative of an extraordinary event with a transcendent and personal referent, theoretically lacking historical evidence and comprising a ritual, a series of constant components, and a conflictive, functional, and etiological nature" (4). In other words, myths are narratives that are transmitted from generation to generation with the aim of creating a sense of community within a specific society. Those narratives not only account for a common origin, but by referring to specific patterns of behaviour that favour a suitable way of organizing themselves, they also enclose values and beliefs that are interpreted as the appropriate ones for that community to follow in order to survive and progress. In this sense, and referring to Paul Ricoeur's work on the meaning and function of myths, Malan states that myths function as "narratives forming a symbolic universe which legitimised actions on the social plane" (1).

As Scott Clive and Robert Dunne, among others, have demonstrated, as fictional stories, myths have also contributed to create canon. Within the Greek tradition, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is clearly one of the most influential works in the communication and dissemination of myths cradled in the Western world. But, of course, as myths have been and are rewritten, they are also imbued with new meanings that, up to contemporary times, seem to have mainly reinforced the values and beliefs as well as the social roles and cultural messages inscribed in those myths. However, following Dunne's arguments, using myths in contemporary works and partially rewriting them allows not only the aesthetic development of the myth—which Dunne considers to also contribute to the creation of canon—but, more importantly, it allows a re-evaluation of those "truths" that underlie contemporary society. As Dunne states, "when authors recognize that there is a conflict between the static prescriptions of the conservative telling of a myth and the present-day social realities, they will try to re-evaluate the conservative versions in order to come up with an updated or new telling" (138). Dunne concludes that proposed "updates" or "radical alternatives" (139) that authors create are usually motivated "by the need to challenge the status quo" (139). This is precisely what Angela Carter and Lorna Crozier endeavour to do with their rewriting of Leda and the swan. In both Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and W.B. Yeats's "Leda and the Swan," Leda is portrayed as Zeus's conquest through a violent sexual act. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Leda appears briefly as

part of the Arachne's tapestry which represents the sexual conquests of Zeus, where Leda is "lying under a swan's wing" (lines 145, 153). Meanwhile, in Yeats's poem, Leda is attacked by the swan, which takes her by surprise ("A sudden blow" l. 1), and sexually abused by him without her being able to resist his power. In both sources, Leda accepts her fate within the context of her position as a mortal being and also as a young inexperienced woman. The rewriting and fictionalizing of the myth by Carter and Crozier not only offers a new meaning to the character of Leda, but also leaves Leda's future options open. This would respond to Carter's objectives when writing fiction, since, according to Gamble, for Carter "[o]ne of the functions of fiction is to try to present a set of ideas in fictional prose, but at the same time, fiction should be open-ended; you bring your own history to it and read it on your own terms" (Gamble 11). In this sense, both Carter's and Crozier's rewriting of the myth focalized around the character of Leda provide open-ended possibilities for young women growing into adulthood.

Given the centrality of challenging a traditional male-centred view in relation to women and nature, ecofeminism will provide a solid theoretical framework to analyse Carter's and Crozier's rewriting of Leda and the swan. Ecofeminism was introduced in the late 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s with the work of prominent critics such as Susan Griffin and Ynestra King, who claimed that gender oppression is closely connected to the domination of non-human nature. As Carolyn Merchant argued in her pioneering work in this field, ecofeminism intended to question the belief that "like wild chaotic nature, women needed to be subdued and kept in their place" (132). Despite the different standpoints that have been developed within the field in recent decades, ecofeminism could be defined, in Erika Cudworth's words, as "a range of perspectives that consider the links between the social organisation of gender and the ways in which societies are organised with respect to 'nature'" in order to "confront a range of social inequalities and to theorize shifting formation of power" (1).

Ecofeminists such as Val Plumwood, Greta Gaard, Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen argue that women are not biologically closer to nature—thus, questioning a more essentially-based understanding of ecofeminism as championed by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva—but that the traditional oppression of both woman and nature by man is one dependent on the social roles and status that women have historically been assigned. According to Plumwood, dichotomies such as man/woman, nature/culture and rational/emotional must be challenged (*Feminism* 46), and in their stead we should "[develop] an environmental culture that values and fully acknowledges the non-human sphere and our dependency on it" (*Environmental Culture* 3). In fact, King, as one of the founders of US ecofeminism, had already established the need to move beyond dualisms as one of the main aims of ecofeminist thought (124). Such a goal goes hand in hand with the core belief of both ecocriticism and ecofeminism that all living and non-living things in the world are interconnected and interdependent, and, therefore, there is no need for hierarchies.

For Cudworth, ecofeminism's *raison d'être* is precisely "to map the connections, the means by which formations and practices of difference and domination interlock"

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(1). Such concepts of the domination of both women and nature by patriarchy that Cudworth develops were originally posited by French feminist philosopher Françoise d'Eaubonne in her 1974 book *Le Féminisme ou la mort*, in which she coined the term eco-feminism. Cudworth identifies three types or degrees of domination, namely: oppression, exploitation and marginalization. Oppression is seen as the toughest level of domination, while marginalization is seen as the least harsh. Cudworth explains that patriarchy can be considered "a system of social relations based on gender oppression in which women are dominated and oppressed by men" (9) in a similar way that natural resources are used for the sole benefit and economic empowerment of men/human beings. Currently, oppression may not only be linked to patriarchy but also to capitalism; since, as Cudworth states, "men are associated with commercial production and women with unpaid labour and reproduction" (115); a socially and culturally-based connection that is depicted in Carter's story. Therefore, socialist feminists argue that capitalism benefits from "women's socioeconomic roles," and, as such, capitalism is partly responsible for gender oppression. Similarly, exploitation "refers to the use of something [or someone] as a resource for the ends of the user" (Cudworth 7), whereas marginalization implies deeming something or someone unimportant, which often leads to its invisibility. In feminist and ecofeminist thought, heterosexual marriage and family have been pinpointed as one of the main sources of gender oppression, in any of its degrees of domination (Mulder 37), as the analysis of the texts will exemplify. This (ill) treatment originates in human-created hierarchies "used to justify oppression" (Bianchi 7). When marriage is based on patriarchal tenets, it promotes the subjugation of the wife and children to the husband/father and the devaluation of the tasks they carry out (Griffin, "Ecofeminism" 221).

The social and family oppression to which women have been and are subjugated takes an even more violent turn when sexual abuse is not only present, but normalized, with the myth of Leda as a clear example. Actually, Griffin argues that society considers women as "targets of rape" (224) because of the social construction of gender. The reasoning that lies behind the subordination of women, which justifies men's abuse, is closely connected to nature, as Karen J. Warren explains: "Animalizing or naturalizing women in a (patriarchal) culture where animals are seen as inferior to humans (men) thereby reinforces and authorizes women's inferior status" (12). In line with Warren, Griffin draws a parallel between men's desire to gain control over women through sexual abuse and ecological destruction, with the metaphorical raping of forests as a clear example. Griffin goes on to explain that the yearning to colonize and rape originates in the fear men have of both nature and women, who are regarded as wild entities. In this sense, sexual abuse is understood "more as an act of domination and aggression than as an expression of an irrepressible, uncensored sexuality" (224). Accordingly, sexual abuse has to do with the male's sense of possession of his own women, and, in turn, the dispossession of pride of other men. This is the case of Leda in the original myth, in which Zeus destroys the pride of King Tyndareus (Leda's husband) by possessing his wife. In Carter's novel and Crozier's poems, the position of domination

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and oppression in the grand narratives as something explained only by men is called into question.

Leda and the Swan in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop*

The Magic Toyshop, Carter's second novel, was published in 1967. The novel is narrated by a third person narrator focalized through the main character, a fifteen-year-old girl named Melanie. The novel starts with Melanie scrutinizing her body and "discovering" her adolescent sexuality in front of the mirror, with a number of cultural references in her mind. Melanie's situation changes completely when her parents die in a plane accident and she, together with her younger brother and sister, have to leave their comfortable upper-middle-class life and beautiful possessions to move in with Uncle Philip and his family. In Uncle Philip's house, Melanie discovers a patriarchal-based household in which Philip's puppets receive better treatment than Philip's own family, composed of his wife Margaret, her two brothers Finn and Francie, and Melanie with her brother Jonathon and sister Victoria. Although the novel includes references to a number of literary texts such as the biblical story of the Garden of Eden and E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale *The Sandman*, the myth of Leda and the swan is placed centre-stage within the story in order to highlight the violence and senselessness of the predominant patriarchal organization of a household and, by extension, of society. As Gamble points out, the main themes in Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* are "a problematic interest in female victimisation—Melanie, the heroine, is 'a good screamer'—and intertextuality, which is the process whereby new texts are created through the reworking of older ones" (33). The changes that Melanie experiences in her body as well as in relation to her role as a young woman against two contrasting social backgrounds—that is, her comfortable position when living with her parents, and her role as practically that of a servant when living with her uncle—are constantly compared with the natural world. Thus, the significance of ecofeminism in analysing Melanie's construction of femininity in the novel. Ultimately, Melanie's main role in Philip's household is that of performing the Leda that will be sexually abused by the swan, which, at the end of the day, represents the powerful Zeus, that is, the patriarchal figure.

The reference to the natural world in relation to Melanie's growth towards womanhood seems to be permanently enacted by the nature/culture dichotomy. The novel starts with Melanie inspecting her changing body at fifteen: "Melanie discovered she was made of flesh and blood. O, my America, my new-found land. She embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of herself, clambering her own mountain ranges, penetrating the moist richness of her secret valleys" (1). Whereas her changing body portrays the simplicity and, at the same time, awe-inspiring beauty of the natural world, the references by which she constructs her femininity are clearly cultural and, as such, based on the male perception of female beauty and sexuality: "She also posed in attitudes, holding things. Pre-Raphaelite, she combed out her long, black hair to stream straight down from a centre [...]. A la Toulouse Lautrec, she dragged her hair sluttishly across her face and sat down in a chair with her legs apart and a bowl of water and a

towel at her feet" (1). Thus, Melanie disguises her adolescent natural beauty by transforming it to iconic models of accepted femininity. Through this process of investigation of her own identity as a woman, Melanie tries on her mother's wedding dress, as symbolizing one of the roles within accepted femininity, that of the wife and future mother. However, not only is the dress uncomfortable and limiting in movement, Melanie also hurts herself wearing it: "The dress was very heavy. The sliding satin had a sheen on it like that on the silver teapot which never went out of the drawing-room cabinet except to be polished. All the moonlight in the room focused on its richness and mysterious folds" (15). It is through contact with nature—by going into the garden—that she loses the dress by trying to get back into her room by climbing a tree and, once in her room, she is naked again in front of the mirror; thus, it is natural elements that shred the dress to pieces and symbolically free Melanie from having to fulfil the role of the virginal wife: "The tree had completed the work the cat started. The skirt hung in three detached panels and the scored and tattered sleeves hung to the bodice by a few threads only. Besides, the dress was filthy, streaked with green from the tree and her own red blood" (22). In the *Magic Toyshop*, as in many of her writings, both her essayistic and fictional ones, Carter aims to protest against the "naturalisation" of sexual inequalities, since, for Carter, "[i]f women can achieve autonomy with their sexuality and their sexual relations, then equality [...] can be achieved in economic and other spheres of society" (Rubinson 320). In this sense, Melanie's journey from her parents' home to Uncle Philip's toyshop to her freedom, symbolized by the burning of Philip's house at the end of the novel, is one in which the exploration of her sexuality and feminine roles goes side by side with her identity being deposed of social and cultural undertones through direct contact with the natural world represented by gardens in the novel.

The identity that Melanie barely envisages when naked in front of the mirror in her parents' home is one she will have to recover and stick to when she moves to her Uncle Philip's house. Once there, Melanie is not only not allowed to have luxuries, such as perfumed soap, but she actually becomes one of Philip's servants not permitted to go to school and, instead, having to work hard, both in the house and in the shop, side by side with her Aunt Margaret. In Philip's house, Melanie feels as if she would be "in limbo" "for the rest of her life, if you could call it a life, dragging out its weary length with no more great joys or fearful griefs for her" (76). Following Cudworth's concept of domination, oppression and marginalization, Melanie feels that she is turning into the ghost-like presence that her Aunt Margaret already represents in the house, since her life revolves around working hard to avoid Philip's bouts of rage when things are not accomplished the way he instructs. Thus, the house, representing Philip's domination, is described as a dark place abounding with old-fashioned and decrepit objects, grotesque toys and puppets. However, when Uncle Philip is not there, the three siblings, Margaret, Finn and Francie seem to flourish under their red-haired Irish spell. For Melanie, "[t]hey were an entity, the Jowles, warm as wool. She envied them bitterly" (76). The happy spells of music and dancing that Melanie experiences with the Jowles when Philip is

away allow her—and also the readers—to envisage a different family structure based on mutual love and respect, rather than constant tyranny.

The episode in which Melanie becomes Leda with a puppet swan constitutes the climax of the novel. The swan is presented as a "grotesque parody of a swan" made of "plywood painted white and coated with glued-on feathers" (165) and with strings pulled by Uncle Philip. Although Melanie initially feels the need to laugh at the absurdity of the situation, she soon realizes that she is actually being "raped" by the puppet. As Morrison argues, "[a]t first she is dismissive of Philip's home-made model of wood, rubber and feathers, a pathetic parody of the 'wild, phallic bird of her imaginings'. But as she rapidly discovers, power and violence still remain in the ancient narrative it represents" (165). Similarly, Gamble and John Sears agree on interpreting the scene as containing violence when defining the feminine and sexual pleasure from a male perspective. Uncle Philip, himself a grotesque version of the patriarchal figure, aimed to subvert Melanie's natural maturation into womanhood not only by being symbolically raped, but by trying to enforce a sexual encounter between Melanie and Finn, Margaret's brother. As Finn explains to Melanie: "He wanted me to do you and he set the scene" (152). Philip pulls the strings of all the characters in the novel in the same way as he does with his puppets. Gamble has actually interpreted Carter's swan as "a joke on patriarchal mythmakers who dress up the principle of male domination in grandiose poetry" and adds that whereas "Yeats mystifies rape as a moment of divine transcendence […] Carter shows it to be an act of brute force" (40). In this respect, Philip not only subverts women but also the natural world to his own purposes, as other men have done before him. The swan, an animal that has been associated with purity and beauty due to the svelteness of its shape and its white colour, becomes a perpetuator of rape in Greek mythology, a characteristic which is repeated and enhanced in Yeats's poem, and which Uncle Philip represents in his grotesque puppet show in front of his family.

After the performance, which results in Melanie half-naked on the floor and very upset because of the violence with which the puppet swan attacks her, Finn destroys the swan; thus, defying Philip's authority. As at the beginning of the novel, when Melanie is deposed of the roles she is supposed to adopt to become a grown-up woman, the scene takes place in the garden. Finn takes the swan to "the pleasure garden," as he explains it to Melanie: "somehow it seemed best of all to bury it in the pleasure garden. Do you know, though, I was almost delirious in the pleasure garden? I was that bad, Melanie… the stone lioness was tracking me. I was sure of it. I heard her growl. And the queen was upright on her pedestal" (173). Finn cuts the big puppet swan into many pieces and buries it just below the statue of the queen, an action that Gamble has interpreted as Finn's "own castration" (41) in order to escape the negative model that Philip represents, not only in his relation to women and the family, but also in his neglect of the natural world. In the same way as Melanie is deposed of her culturally informed femininity, Finn is stripped of his narrowing patriarchal inheritance. Whereas, at the beginning of the novel, Melanie is naked and bleeds while trying to climb the tree, at the

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end of the novel, Finn feels strongly grounded on the earth after symbolically killing the swan as representative of male domination: "The grass was wet and got over the top of my shoes and wet my socks. It was very long, the grass" (174).

Melanie's and Finn's connection to mother earth—in the form of a garden within a big urban space such as London—metaphorically frees them from the cultural inheritance and gender roles they are supposed to fulfil as a young woman and a young man as mirrored in the characters of Uncle Philip and Margaret. The novel finishes when the house is finally burnt down together with all the grotesque toys and puppets that perpetuated the patriarchal interpretation of stories in the performances directed by Philip. Although it is Philip himself who burns the house after finding his wife Margaret in the arms of her brother, the destruction of the house clearly represents the destruction of the "old order," as Morrison refers to it, with the future "left as an undefined space of newness and possibility" (166). Melanie and Finn have the possibility of establishing a different kind of relationship and of creating their own version of stories and myths. The very last sentence of the novel points to the "garden" as a natural space where the young protagonists "faced each other in a wild surmise" (200). Once again, nature, in the form of a garden, represents the place where the two protagonists can start anew after having rejected the interpretations of those narratives that steered them towards the fulfilment of specific roles as a young man and a young woman.

Leda and the Swan in Crozier's poems

The myth of Leda and the swan has been retold by Lorna Crozier in two poems, namely "Forms of Innocence" and "The Swan Girl," included in *The Garden Going On Without Us* (1985)—Crozier's sixth poetry collection—and *Everything Arrives at the Light* (1995)—Crozier's ninth collection—respectively. Both "Forms of Innocence" and "The Swan Girl" are written from Leda's perspective although the speaker is not Leda herself in either of the two poems, but an omniscient narrator focalized through the Ledas, similar to the narrative voice in Carter's novel. With this narrative technique, Crozier attains some poetic distance, which enables her to discuss all the contextual elements that affect Leda's sexuality and subsequent changes in her sense of identity, without falling into the trap of sentimentality. "Forms of Innocence" revolves around an unnamed teenage girl's decision to lose her virginity by practising sex with an unnamed teenage boy. The Leda of this story chooses a black swan she sees flying away through the window of the car where she is having sexual intercourse as the symbol of her "innocence t[aking] flight" (ll. 2–3). The story is also contextualized by the static image of her house, in which her mother keeps a book always open on the coffee table; in it, there is a photograph of a black swan swimming among white swans, symbolizing the fact that the "norm" is not always the fairest choice for a woman, in this case, a young girl. "The Swan Girl," by contrast, deals with sexual abuse and the feelings of confusion and social alienation that Leda experiences as a result of the attack she suffers from the white swan, and the impossibility of being understood by her community. Such a feeling

of misunderstanding is mostly due to her mother's and brothers' regular hunting of swans in the lake for food. This perception of swans as their prey makes it very difficult for this family to associate a swan with a sexual attacker. On the other hand, the fact that her mother keeps the dead swans hanging in their house in readiness for being eaten, may also represent a double symbology of the swan in relation to the young woman's sexuality: while she is attacked by the swan when trying to protect it from her family, in a similar manner to the original Leda in Ovid, the mother in Crozier's poem divests the swans of the meaning of subjugation attributed by previous male poets who revisited Ovid's myth, such as W.B. Yeats.

In "The Swan Girl," Leda is faced first with her own coming to terms and psychological healing process following her traumatic experience. Leda is described as being "changed by something / more than [the wild swans floating on the lake] and less" (ll. 21–22), and "the wounded one" (l. 41). As a teenager and village girl, with innocence as a defining trait of her character, Leda's experience with Zeus undoubtedly changed her because she was suddenly and violently forced into an adulthood defined by domination and submission. Despite the fact that the Leda in Ovid's poem is married and part of the Spartan aristocracy as king Tyndareus's wife and a princess by birth, both Ledas—the village girl and the princess—suffer the same fate. Thus, Crozier's poem puts forward the assertion that irrespective of a woman's social status, according to our mythological Western tradition, she will be treated in accordance with Cudworth's description of patriarchal societies based on oppression, domination and marginalization.

Leda is also changed because the hideous crime was committed by the king of the Greek gods, Zeus, and, therefore, her experience is even more confusing for her, as "she felt the heavens in her womb / but had no word for it / and wondered what to say" (ll. 12–14). As in the original myth, her attacker takes the shape of a swan, an animal which Leda's family killed for its meat. Therefore, regarding the second issue Leda has to face, Leda is made a victim by another victim, or rather by a god disguised as a victim, in the form of a swan. Hence, socially speaking, Leda has descended to the bottom of the social ladder, as she is oppressed by a creature which is also the subject of human oppression. Leda also experiences social alienation arising from her far-fetched account of the rapist swan: "Now she was … / the village crazy girl / with the story of the swan" (ll. 40–43). This social attitude stems from the ambiguous perception of rape, as Norfolk has evidenced in his research, according to which the woman who has been raped is held partially responsible for the crime by certain parts of the population. In fact, in the poem, Leda's name is not mentioned; on the contrary, Leda's identity is defined by the figure of the swan, as the title of the poem makes evident, "The Swan Girl." In line with post-colonialism, the theories of which ecofeminism has in part adopted and adapted, the other—the one who has been colonized, as Leda's body is metaphorically colonized by brute force—is seldom given a name that grants them a personal and genuine identity, but is rather presented as an abstract, a mysterious and different being. Similar to the Leda in Carter's story, the Leda in Crozier's "The Swan Girl" will have to fight to

keep her identity in the face of the patriarchal supremacy represented by the power of the myths into which the character of Leda is drawn.

Whereas "The Swan Girl" voices the female experience regarding the unspoken and taboo subject of sexual abuse, the poem "Forms of Innocence" both subverts and transcends the original myth. What specifically subverts the original myth is the fact that the female persona links her own innocence to a swan, thus, subverting the meaning that Ovid and Yeats give to the swan as a perpetrator of sexual abuse: "A strange shape for innocence / when you think of Leda" (ll. 7–8). The persona wishes to transcend this ancient myth by describing a black swan, not a white one, breaking with "whiteness," the colour associated with purity and virginity in Western societies: "but the girl insists / it was a swan, black / not white as you might expect" (ll. 9–11). The use of the swan as a metaphor liberates the swan in the mythology of all its negative connotations, and, in turn, the female persona is also liberated of her submissive and passive role. In the poem, the female persona is presented as a young woman, freed from social constraints regarding sexuality, and from the social expectations of women in traditional societies, as shown in the analogy between the black swan's free flight and Leda's orgasm: "…the swan's / dark flight across the snow so beautiful / she groaned and the boy groaned with her, / not understanding the sound she made" (ll. 18–21). A second layer of meaning is found in the unexpectedness of the colour of the swan's plumage in the geographical context of the poem, namely Canada, where black swans are rare. Although black swans are an Australian species, some black swans can be spotted in the province of Ottawa, where the descendants of a pair of black Australian swans donated by the Montreal zoo in 1974 live. In this sense, Crozier also directs the attention of the reader to the real swans in Canada, the animals themselves, which the female persona in the poem could never have either sexual intercourse with or be sexually abused by. This is the reason why Leda only sees the swan from a distance, through the car's windshield, thus establishing a clear separation between the myth of Leda—together with its associated patriarchal attitudes towards women—and the contemporary Leda, whose identity only she defines. Such a separation between myth and reality also allows for the swans to be acknowledged in all their animality, thus lifting the burden of anthropomorphism that the Leda and the swan myth had imposed on them. Hence, Crozier is, throughout the poem, playing with the swan on three different imaginary levels, namely the mythological swan, the swan as a metaphor, and the swan as an actual animal.

The liberation of the swan from its mythological negative connotations as abuser enables Crozier to focus on the swan as the animal per se. Each poem presents swans in two different situations, which run parallel to Leda's experiences. The poem "Forms of Innocence" presents swans that, like the girl, are free. Whereas, in "The Swan Girl," both Leda and the swans are presented as victims of abuse. However, while Leda may be able to overcome the psychological and social effects of the assault, the swan's fate is inescapable, as it seems to be a main source of meat for local families: "These were the swans / her brothers caught with nets. / Her mother stuck them / … [so that they] could

be plucked and roasted" (ll. 23–25, 28). Unlike the rest of her family, Leda states clearly her own connection to swans in their shared suffering. Specifically, a simile compares the blood issuing from Leda's vagina after the sexual assault she endured and the swan's bleeding to death: "long necks drooping above pools / of blood, feathers streaked with red / like the flesh of her inner thighs" (ll. 29–32). Such a negative analogy may point to Leda's suffering following the crime that was perpetrated against her, but also to Leda's questioning of the social construction and power relations of both women and animals (swans) in her community. The conclusion she reaches is that she is more attuned to the natural world, as only she can understand the connections between herself and the swans, as the following quotation suggests: "the dead [swans] hung, / their necks feather clappers / in a clear glass bell / only she could see …" (ll. 45–48). Thus she "would not eat [the swans'] wildness" (l. 35); eating the swans' meat would mean Leda's validation of a system of domination that she has already rejected.

Conclusion

Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* and Crozier's "The Swan Girl" and "Forms of Innocence" clearly present three different versions of the myth introduced in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and made popular in literature through Yeats's "Leda and the Swan." The three texts focalize around Leda as a young girl who is moving into adulthood and who is in the process of exploring her own sexuality as part of the building of her identity as a woman. Whereas in Carter's novel and Crozier's "The Swan Girl," Leda is metaphorically attacked and sexually abused by the swan, in Crozier's "Forms of Innocence," Leda, the young girl, is the one who decides to have sexual intercourse with the person of her choice; thus, in this case, Leda is empowered by making her own decisions. Melanie, the Leda in Carter's novel, starts enacting her femininity by taking into account those cultural references that define positive and accepted images of female beauty and behaviour. Thus, by observing herself in the mirror, she becomes the beauty icons of the time and also a wife corseted in an uncomfortable dress that limits her movement. In Crozier's "The Swan Girl," the village girl whose mother and brothers live off swans' meat, will have to face her own shame after having been sexually abused by a swan while trying to hide him under her skirt. This innocent and well-intentioned act is translated into a rite of passage that is not only painful, but also enhances the girl's loneliness in relation to her family and community. Ultimately, the girl is empowered by resorting to nature; by means of establishing a connection between her suffering and that of the hunted swans, Leda does not feel lonely or misunderstood any longer. Such a feeling of companionship, the poem seems to suggest, promotes Leda's gathering of strength to start a process of psychological recovery.

The three Ledas are empowered by strengthening their connection to nature and by the fact that growing into adulthood devoid of cultural constraints in relation to womanhood is the only way to reach a more egalitarian society in terms of gender and also in the relationship between nature and human beings. For Melanie, going into the

garden, as the only natural space within a big metropolis such as London, deposes her not only of the cultural images to which she tried to conform, but also of the patriarchal pressures represented by Uncle Philip and his grotesque puppet swan. Whereas the swan is the family's means of subsistence in "The Swan Girl" and, thus, initially a source of life, the swan also represents a menace and a perpetuation of patriarchal conceptions of womanhood when it inadvertently attacks the girl. In this poem, what is significant is the fact that the mother is the one who slays the swans, an image that may also stand for Crozier's intending to grant some power to the mother who metaphorically kills the meaning of the swan adopted through male-dominated tales, in other words, that of the rapist. In this respect, Carter's novel and Crozier's poems try to defeat the patriarchal domination inscribed in the myth of Leda and the swan, with Crozier's "Forms of Innocence" presenting a Leda that chooses the person with whom she will lose her virginity.

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Le ali della Dea. Polissena e la Valle di Susa

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Riassunto

Formata dal movimento dei ghiacciai quaternari, la Valle di Susa è una valle alpina nel Nord Ovest italiano. Luminoso esempio di "materia narrante", è anche terreno di scontro tra iniziative conservazionistiche e progetti infrastrutturali transnazionali. Il progetto dell'alta velocità-capacità ferroviaria, o TAV, è stato oggetto di dure critiche. Dagli anni Novanta, grandi mobilitazioni riunite sotto il vessillo No TAV dalla valle si sono estese all'intero territorio nazionale. Parallelamente, il TAV gode l'appoggio bipartisan delle forze politiche. Diversi progetti preliminari sono stati stracciati nel tentativo di sedare un conflitto quasi trentennale con le comunità locali, un conflitto che buona parte della popolazione descrive come "resistenza", riallacciandosi all'epopea partigiana contro la piaga nazista. Il 28 luglio 2017, il Movimento No TAV ha annunciato il rinvenimento della sgargiante *Zerynthia polyxena* presso il torrente Clarea. Questa farfalla è inserita nella Direttiva Habitat, adottata dall'Unione europea nel 1992 per promuovere la tutela della biodiversità. Tuttavia, l'area è stata scelta come nuovo sito di cantiere da TELT, Promotore Pubblico responsabile della realizzazione e gestione della sezione transfrontaliera della futura linea Torino-Lyon. La notizia offre una lettura inedita del rapporto fra umano, tecnologia e ambiente in un contesto di altissima tensione economica e sociale quale è la Val di Susa. Nell'*Ecuba*, Euripide racconta che Polissena, principessa troiana, preferì farsi uccidere piuttosto che diventare schiava. La vicenda di Polissena è il cavallo di legno che introduce nel dibattito sul progetto del TAV l'assunto per cui "la liberazione della natura così ardentemente desiderata dagli ambientalisti non potrà mai essere pienamente ottenuta senza la liberazione della donna" (G. Gaard). Una nuova possibilità per il Movimento No TAV di far sentire la propria voce sarà illuminando la verità che il corpo della Terra e i corpi delle donne sono un unico corpo soggiogato e subordinato all'uomo, vittime dello stesso pregiudizio, quello di essere predisposti a uno scopo: compiacere, nutrire, servire. Ho ripercorso una china che va da *La Dea Bianca* di Robert Graves alla stregoneria al fascismo, guidato da alcune eroine letterarie. Coniugando idealmente l'ecofemminismo alla teoria designata da Edward Lorenz, battendo le ali Polissena può davvero scatenare un uragano.

Parole chiave: Valle di Susa, alta velocità, Movimento No TAV, ecofemminismo, farfalla, Polissena.

Abstract

Formed by the movement of large ice sheets during the Quaternary glaciations, the Susa Valley is an alpine site in northwestern Italy. It is a luminous example of "storied matter," but it is also a battlefield between visions of wild nature and the plans of "crossnational" infrastructures. The planned TAV (Treno Alta Velocità, or high-speed train) line has been the source of heavy criticism: since the 1990s, an intense mobilization has spread from the valley all across Italy under the banner of the "No TAV" movement. The TAV project has since enjoyed unwavering political support from the members of parliament, right-wing and left-wing alike. Several preliminary drafts have been overturned in the attempt to quell a three-decades–long clash with the communities, a clash that most of the local people depict as "resistance," latching on to the partisans' epic stories of endurance against the Nazi scourge that took place in the

valley. On July 28, 2017, the No TAV movement announced the discovery of the rare and striking butterfly *Zerynthia polyxena*, among the rare, threatened, or endemic species in the European Union listed in the Habitat Directive adopted in 1992. Yet, the area has been chosen as the new construction site by the company entrusted with the management of the cross-border section of the high-speed railway line between Turin and Lyon (a.k.a. TELT). This piece of news provides an original point of view to address the relationship between human and non-human agencies in a context of economic and social tension such as the Susa Valley. In this paper, I compare contemporary circumstances in the valley to the ancient Greek myth of Polyxena. In the tragedy *Hecuba*, the dramatist Euripides describes Polyxena as the Trojan princess who prefers to kill herself rather than become a slave. Hence, the butterfly that carries her name might become a Trojan horse enshrining the idea that "the liberation of nature so ardently desired by environmentalists will not be fully effected without the liberation of women" (G. Gaard). Combining various critical strains within the Environmental Humanities–from ecofeminism and biosemiotics to environmental history and new materialism–I suggest that richer, more encompassing narratives will be generated only when the similar fate of subjugation experienced by non-human bodies and the bodies of women will be more widely recognized. I carve a meandering spatio-temporal narrative path that goes from Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* to witch trials and fascism, attempting to follow an erratic fluttering pattern amongst the voices of literature. It is the very slanted figure eight pattern that Polyxena makes with its wings, and by which, according to the theory designated by Edward Lorenz, a hurricane could grow, bringing alternative world visions.

Keywords: Susa Valley, high-speed rail, no TAV movement, ecofeminism, butterfly, Polyxena.

Resumen

Formado por el movimiento de grandes capas de hielo durante las glaciaciones cuaternarias, el valle de Susa es un enclave alpino en el noroeste de Italia. Es un ejemplo luminoso de "materia narrada", pero también es un campo de batalla entre las visiones de la naturaleza salvaje y los planes de las infraestructuras "transnacionales". La línea TAV ("Treno Alta Velocità" o tren de alta velocidad) ha sido objeto de fuertes críticas: desde la década de 1990 se ha extendido en toda Italia una intensa movilización bajo el lema del movimiento "No TAV". Desde entonces, el proyecto TAV ha gozado de un apoyo político inquebrantable por parte de los miembros del parlamento, tanto de derecha como de izquierda. Varios proyectos preliminares han sido revocados en un intento de sofocar un enfrentamiento de tres décadas con las comunidades, un choque que la mayoría de la población local concibe como "resistencia", con referencia a las épicas historias de resistencia de los partisanos contra el flagelo nazi que tuvo lugar en el valle. El 28 de julio de 2017, el movimiento No TAV anunció el descubrimiento de la sorprendente mariposa *Zerynthia polyxena*, entre las especies raras, amenazadas o endémicas de la Unión Europea, enumeradas en la Directiva Hábitat adoptada en 1992. Sin embargo, el lugar ha sido elegido como el nuevo sitio de construcción por la empresa encargada de la gestión del tramo transfronterizo de la línea ferroviaria de alta velocidad entre Turín y Lyon (también conocido como TELT). Esta noticia proporciona un punto de vista original para abordar la relación entre los seres humanos y el medio ambiente en un contexto de tensión económica y social como el Valle de Susa. En este artículo, comparo las circunstancias contemporáneas en el valle con el antiguo mito griego de Políxena. En la tragedia *Hécuba*, el dramaturgo Eurípides describe a Políxena como la princesa troyana que prefiere suicidarse antes que ser una esclava. Por lo tanto, la mariposa que lleva su nombre podría convertirse en un caballo de Troya que consagre la idea de que "la liberación de la naturaleza tan ardientemente deseada por los ecologistas no se realizará completamente sin la liberación de las mujeres" (G. Gaard). Combinando varias tendencias críticas dentro de las ciencias humanas ambientales—desde el ecofeminismo y la biosemiótica hasta la historia ambiental y los nuevos materialismos—sugiero que se generarán narrativas más ricas e incluyentes sólo cuando el destino similar de subyugación experimentado por cuerpos no humanos y cuerpos de mujeres sea más ampliamente reconocido. Trazo una ruta narrativa espacio-temporal serpenteante que va desde *La Diosa Blanca* de Robert Graves hasta los juicios de brujas y el fascismo, tratando de seguir un patrón de aleteo

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errático entre las voces de la literatura. Es el patrón inclinado de la figura de ocho que hace Políxena con sus alas, y por obra del cual, de acuerdo con la teoría designada por Edward Lorenz, un huracán podría crecer, trayendo visiones alternativas del mundo.

Palabras clave: Valle de Susa, tren de alta velocidad, movimiento NO TAV, ecofeminismo, mariposa, Políxena.

Conoscere come fare

La bruma intermittente che nasconde la cima del Monviso ci costringe a levare le tende, con buona pace del transetto. Dopo due giorni a scandagliare una a una le foglie di *Sedum*, succulenta piuttosto anonima per noi ma preziosissima per la farfalla *Parnassius apollo* che vi depone le uova, accolgo la notizia senza struggermi più di tanto.

Io e R. mangiucchiamo pane e formaggio in attesa del ritorno di A., "farfallologa" pure lei. Al rifugio canzonano così le due ragazze col retino e il cappello a tesa larga. Si chiacchiera guardando le nuvole arrampicare le falesie, finché R. osserva a bocca piena, neanche ponendosi lo scrupolo d'aggiustare la frase in forma di domanda: "Però non t'interessa molto questo mondo".

Mi lascia completamente disarmato. A me, ecocritico dilettante capitato lì più o meno per caso, il mondo in questione—la lepidotterologia—garba eccome. Perché altrimenti trascorrere due giorni sotto il sole a picco a ispezionare una a una foglie grosse come chicchi di riso, dando alla cerca il senso che un monaco tibetano dà alla confezione del mandala? L'analogia con quel compito immane che una volta portato a termine viene spazzato via a rammentare la caducità delle cose regge tanto più se si pensa al nostro insuccesso: abbiamo scovato un solo uovo d'Apollo tra centinaia di foglie perlustrate, e pure dubbio. Tuttavia, in base al principio scientifico per cui l'assenza di evidenza non è evidenza d'assenza, c'è speranza per la prossima volta. Se l'astronomia è una lezione di umiltà, come diceva Carl Sagan, la lepidotterologia non è da meno. Entrambe ripagano il rigore dei numeri e l'attenzione alle minuzie con visioni di assoluto splendore.

Lì per lì campo una difesa qualsiasi, ribadendo il proposito di tentare d'imparare il più possibile. Rimango a rimuginarci su tutto il viaggio di ritorno, via via che una morsa torrida si stringe sulla pelle, scendendo dalla montagna. Isolato sul sedile posteriore, asciugo il sudore e mi chiedo come l'entusiasmo per la "terapia del sedum" possa esser passato per indifferenza nei confronti delle forme volanti che R. ha inseguito gran parte del tempo. Mentre, infatti, io rovistavo nella terra in canottiera e braghe corte sotto lo sguardo inorridito di A., bardata di tutto punto contro le zecche, R. correva appresso a ogni sfarfallio. Di tanto in tanto mi baluginava negli occhi il riflesso del sole sull'argento delle spille a forma di farfalla appuntate al suo cappello, sorridevo, e subito tornavo a frugare.

Giunti alla metropolitana, saluto e trascino lo zaino fuori dall'auto. Scendo le scale con gli scarponi ai piedi e il retino sulle spalle, adocchiato dai passeggeri con

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quell'espressione a metà fra curiosità e ripulsa che si assume di fronte ai *backpackers*. Dopo due giorni di quasi isolamento tra silenzi alpini e spazi profumati di timo e di menta, rieccomi serrato dentro un guscio metallico, circondato tra afrori sintetici. Mi torna in mente la fulva aglaia (*Argynnis aglaja*) che a Pian della Regina ho visto dimenarsi disperata nella tela di un ragno accorso a soffocarla nelle bave.

Apro la mail.

La Madre dei Bruchi, coordinatrice del gruppo di lavoro sui lepidotteri al Dipartimento di Scienze della Vita e Biologia dei Sistemi, controparte endemica, non meno feroce, della celebre Madre dei Draghi dai capelli d'argento, mi ha inoltrato un articolo del 29 luglio a firma Francesco Falcone: "*L'ultima carta dei No TAV. 'Fermate i lavori per salvare una farfalla*'" (Falcone).

Zerynthia polyxena è tra le 17 specie italiane incluse nella Direttiva 92/43/CEE approvata il 21 maggio 1992, relativa alla conservazione degli habitat naturali e seminaturali e della flora e della fauna selvatiche. La Direttiva Habitat è l'ennesima spina nel fianco di TELT, la società titolare dei lavori per il tunnel transfrontaliero dell'alta velocità tra Torino e Lyon ("*Tunnel Euralpin Lyon Turin*", da cui l'acronimo) alla Maddalena di Chiomonte. La variante di progetto pubblicata prevede un ampliamento oltre il torrente Clarea del cantiere, dal 2012 considerato "area di interesse strategico nazionale" e presidiato notte e giorno da Esercito e Forze dell'Ordine. Non facendo parte di un SIC[1], la Direttiva esclude azioni specifiche di orientamento conservazionistico; tuttavia, nei paesi dove il lepidottero è in declino, la IUCN (*International Union for Conservation of Nature*) suggerisce di "mantenere le aree ecotonali in cui cresce la pianta nutrice" (Balletto *et al.*). La presenza di *Zerynthia*, certificata dal Dipartimento in primavera, è sfuggita ai consulenti tecnici dei promotori della "grande opera", incaricati di redigere la valutazione d'incidenza ambientale. Una svista clamorosa che costringe a nuovi monitoraggi da parte dell'*Agenzia Regionale di Protezione Ambientale* (ARPA) per circoscrivere la zona di diffusione della pianta nutrice.

Mi allungo sul sedile a considerare quel nome: *Zerynthia polyxena*. Con R. abbiamo discusso della liceità di nominare le farfalle col loro appellativo popolare anziché usare la nomenclatura latina così asettica e sussiegosa. Per la comunità internazionale di farfallologi è una necessità finalizzata alla comprensione reciproca. È stato il linguista e filologo Gian Luigi Beccaria a scrivere che lo scienziato "ha bandito i pensieri irrazionali"; "ha scelto un nome perché sia possibile scambiare senza equivoci il concetto" (12).

Ma che ne è del potere evocativo della parola? Per un poeta, ad esempio, sarebbe un peccato chiamare la farfalla della Clarea altrimenti che *Polissena*. Per raccontare storie servono immagini intime, ritmi in grado di risvegliare l'ancestrale ricordo di fuochi accesi, corpi tiepidi e canti, e di produrne di nuovi. I dati della conoscenza vengono filtrati dal cuore, partorendo un'esperienza squisitamente narrativa. Ogni storia è la traduzione del mondo attraverso gli occhi del narratore: un'onda del mare in

[1] "Sito di interesse comunitario" (SCI, "*Site of Community Importance*").

cui si è navigato, e il linguaggio la battigia che la va a catturare. Benedetto Croce la chiamava *espressione poetica*: da *ποιεῖν*, un discorso che fa, che produce, che crea:

> La poesia riannoda il particolare all'universale, accoglie sorpassandoli del pari dolore e piacere, e di sopra il cozzare delle parti contro le parti innalza la visione delle parti nel tutto, sul contrasto l'armonia, sull'angustia del finito la distesa dell'infinito. [...] Al paragone del conoscere della filosofia quello della poesia sembrò diverso e, più che un conoscere, un produrre, un foggiare, un plasmare. (20-1)

"Conoscere come fare", scriveva il filosofo, e lo scriveva a pochi passi dall'attuale cantiere della Maddalena, a Meana, dove villeggiava d'estate. Passeggiando in compagnia di Ada Gobetti, Croce s'ancorava come un uovo di farfalla a una valle densa di simboli, voci e memorie, accolto in una poesia pregna di significati e produttrice di significati. Questo scrigno è rimasto serrato a lungo, relegato ai margini di un corridoio alpino disseminato di fabbriche vuote e di strade. Nel pieno della crisi economica, il treno è arrivato, pensato come panacea per la Valle di Susa.

Ma Polissena è tornata a raccontare le storie che abbiamo dimenticato.

La valle delle madri

Per riscattare il corpo straziato di Ettore, l'eroe caduto, si sussegue un corteo di donne, ciascuna con un omaggio prezioso per il nemico. L'audace Polissena, figlia di Priamo e d'Ecuba, principessa di Troia, si sdraia sulla bilancia posta dinanzi alle mura della città: paga col suo corpo l'onore del fratello e l'amore del popolo, donandosi ad Achille "piede rapido".

Viene Achille a possederla nel tempio d'Apollo Timbreo. Stregato da tanta bellezza, fa per baciarla ma, proprio in quell'istante, Paride scocca la freccia dritto nel tallone, sotto i duri occhi di Polissena.

"*Io non son più l'amor... Son la vendetta!*"

Alla fine della guerra, la città è devastata. Gli uomini sono stati massacrati e le troiane rese schiave dagli Argivi vincitori. Menelao si è ripreso Elena, a Neottolemo è andata Andromaca, moglie di Ettore, ad Agamennone Cassandra, sorella di Polissena, e a Odisseo Ecuba. Appare il fantasma d'Achille impenitente, pretende anche lui una donna.

"Che femmina vuoi?", chiedono gli uomini.

"Polissena", risponde. "Immolatela sulla mia pira".

Lieta di sacrificarsi piuttosto che diventare una schiava, Polissena dice a Odisseo:

> Chiunque sarà chi comprerà me col denaro, me, la sorella di Ettore e di molti altri fratelli valorosi: nella sua casa mi obbligherà a preparare da mangiare, mi costringerà a spazzare la casa, a badare al telaio, mentre vivo una vita che sa solo di amarezza. Un servo comprato chissà dove verrà a sporcare il mio letto, che prima era degno di re. No, no. Io lascio allontanare dai miei occhi ancora liberi la luce del giorno, e consegno il mio corpo all'Ade. [...] Una vita senza onore è un dolore senza fine. (Euripide 225-7)

È il figlio di Achille a condurre la giovenca al sacrificio (239), sul sommo del tumulo. Dinanzi all'esercito greco ammutolito, Neottolemo alza una coppa d'oro; scandisce: "Padre mio, accetta queste mie libagioni che incantano i defunti, che evocano i morti:

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vieni, bevi il puro sangue nero di questa ragazza; è il dono dell'esercito per te, è il mio dono". Estrae la spada dal fodero, ordina di tenere la fanciulla.

Polissena si rivolge agli Achei: "Uomini di Argo, voi che avete saccheggiato la mia città, io muoio per mia libera scelta. Che nessuno tocchi il mio corpo: offrirò il mio collo con coraggio. Vi prego per gli dèi, lasciatemi libera perché libera io muoia—e poi uccidetemi [...]" (239-41).

Agamennone ordina alle guardie di farsi da parte. Sentito il comando, la ragazza si strappa le vesti mostrando il seno e il ventre "meravigliosi come quelli di una statua". S'inginocchia, e pronuncia parole piene di coraggio: "Ecco, giovane Nottolemo, se è il petto che tu vuoi colpire, è qui, colpiscilo; se vuoi ferire al collo, è qui pronta la mia gola" (241).

Sgozzata, sanguinante, Polissena cade "nascondendo quel che bisogna nascondere agli occhi degli uomini" (243). Spira libera tra i fiori dei Danai, commossi da tanta nobiltà.

Ecuba, la tragedia di Euripide scritta attorno al 424 a. C., tratteggia assieme a *Le troiane*, di pochi anni successiva, il destino toccato alle donne dopo la caduta della città. Il motivo venne ripreso da Sofocle, ma non si hanno che pochi frammenti della sua versione, e da Seneca, il quale aggiunse considerazioni filosofiche connesse alla caducità del potere e alla mortalità dell'anima. La storia invece parla da sé, con poche immagini. Nella barbarie in cui le troiane sono precipitate per mano virile, ridotte a serve, rese oggetti, smerciate e abusate, Polissena brilla come emblema di dignità ed eroismo.

Ecuba avrà anche lei la sua rivalsa, che per altri è condanna: Polimestore le annuncia che, dopo morta, si tramuterà in cagna dagli occhi fiammeggianti. Dante così la descrive nel canto XXX dell'*Inferno*:

> Ecuba trista, misera e cattiva
> poscia che vide Polissena morta,
> [...] forsennata latrò sì come cane;
> tanto il dolor le fé la mente torta. (C. XXX v. 16,17 – 20,21)

Nella profusione di figure femminili della classicità, ciascuna con la sua sfera di competenza, restano memorabili Polissena e la madre, lupa al seguito di Ecate, "dea delle strade e dei crocicchi":

> signora delle ombre e dei fantasmi i cui paurosi convegni s'immaginava avvenissero appunto nelle piazze e nei trivî, rischiarati, di notte, dall'incerto lume della luna. E s'intende come la dea degli spettri dovesse essere riguardata anche come dea delle streghe e delle maliarde, vaganti, di notte, per operare i loro incantesimi e i loro scongiuri. (Giannelli)

Sovente giustapposta ad Artemide, Ecate era rappresentata come una figura triforme, o tricipite, detta *ecateo*, evidente derivazione delle tre fasi della luna o della triplice influenza della dea sul mondo celeste, terreno e ctonio. Applicando quella che chiamava "grammatica storica del mito poetico", metodo sincretico fondato sulle etimologie, lo studioso del mito Robert Graves rinvenne l'archetipo della triade in molte religioni indo-

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europee, sostenendo che costituisse il fondamento di un antico culto in onore dell'unica Dea, la Grande Madre, le cui vestigia sarebbero le statuette delle Veneri neolitiche.

In Val di Susa, il culto celtico delle Madri fu traslato nelle *Matres* o *Matronae* romane, quindi nelle dee Cibele e Cerere. "Cima" segue il latino *cyma*, "germoglio", derivato dal greco *kŷma* e *kỳō*: "concepisco" (Devoto 80). Il nome romano del Monginevro era *Mons Matrona*, toponimo traslitterato dal probabile originale celtico al plurale, *materōn.* Alla figura della Vergine Maria sono associate diverse cime locali, tra le quali il Rocciamelone, e numerose apparizioni presso grotte e sorgive. Il *Chronicon Novalicense* riporta l'apparizione delle Tre Marie nei pressi dell'abbazia della Novalesa, fondata nell'VIII secolo e un tempo stazione termale.

Accanto alle madri, dalla collina Seja prospiciente Villardora, a Cassafrera, voragine a 2.500 metri battuta dalle raffiche e vegliata dalle punte Rocciavré, Cristalliera e Malanotte, vivevano donne mutaforma, cagne reiette seguaci di Ecate: le streghe o *masche*.

Nel 1749, fu l'abate illuminista Girolamo Tartarotti con il suo *Del Congresso notturno delle lammie* a riassumere la storia della stregoneria e della "deplorabil carneficina" subita da "queste miserabili" (XXIX) nei secoli precedenti. Tartarotti ricollegò alla stregoneria l'antico culto di Artemide-Diana alla quale Ecate era spesso giustapposta come guardiana delle strade: "Si ha da Giacopo Passavanti che *tregenda* appellavasi in alcun luogo d'Italia la torma di quelle donne, forse da *trivium*, cioè crocicchio di strade, ove tuttora si crede dal volgo, che le streghe raccolgansi a danzare la notte; o da *trivia*, che fu cognome di Diana" (27).

Tartarotti pone l'accento sul nesso tra adesione alla "compagnia notturna" e contesti sociali di particolari privazioni. Diana era difatti adorata come dea dei poveri e degli oppressi. Come scrive Luciano Parinetto, la strega "è soprattutto la contadina, la montanara, vale a dire la persona più sfruttata dalla patriarcale e gerarchica società feudale"; la donna vittima dello *jus primae noctis* "conculcata nel legittimo desiderio di libertà personale e sessuale e nella sua volontà di potenza". La stregoneria è stata la negazione radicale del cosmo teologico feudale con al vertice Dio e la deificazione del suo opposto, "quel Pan che era morto al trionfo del cristianesimo e che rappresentava la vitalità, la gioia, la potenza, la comunione con quella natura che era stata sconsacrata e cui la teologia cristiana aveva sovrapposto la figura del diavolo" (27).

Il mondo stregonesco dipinto da Tartarotti è fatto di "trasmutazioni in animali, ne' quali tutte costantemente credono di essere state cangiate, come in lupi, gatti, topi, cavallette, ed altro" e di accoppiamenti col diavolo, con successivo concepimento non di individui umani "ma bruchi, e bacherozzoli" (87). Se l'assimilazione del femminino al subumano, al non umano e al naturale in epoca medievale, e l'incancrenirsi di questo nodo culturale nei secoli seguenti sono diventati lampanti, il merito è del dibattito fiorito a partire dagli anni Settanta con l'irruzione simultanea di due movimenti sociali reticenti: la liberazione della donna e il movimento ecologico. Così Carolyn Merchant:

> La ninfa vergine offriva pace e serenità, la terra madre nutrimento e fertilità, ma la natura apportava anche pestilenze, carestie e tempeste. [...] La strega, simbolo della violenza della natura, suscitava tempeste, causava malattie, distruggeva raccolti, impediva la

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> procreazione e uccideva i bambini piccoli. Anche la donna disordinata, come la natura caotica, doveva essere sottoposta a controllo. (175)

La ragione ordinata andava contrapponendosi alla materia disordinata. L'illuminato Tartarotti toglie il guanto discutendo l'indole delle "povere femminelle di contado" (105):

> Sono trasportate da gagliarde passioni, come ira, amore, invidia, che con molta difficoltà raffrenano [...]. Sono avvezze a far poco uso della ragione, e molto della fantasia; da che nasce, che le cose sensibili hanno sopra loro grandissima forza. Son timide, maliziose, instabili, curiose, pieghevoli, e credule, e in conseguenza facili ad essere ingannate. (106-7)

L'abate compativa insomma le streghe per le sofferenze subite, ma biasimava le donne per l'imbecillità che le aveva condotte a cedere al demonio. Si esprimeva alla metà del Settecento, al termine di una profonda transizione culturale.

Nel mondo omerico di Polissena, "il paesaggio naturale reca in sé i presagi e i segni che guidano gli esseri umani nelle loro fatiche; gli dei parlano direttamente attraverso i disegni delle nuvole, delle onde, e nel volo degli uccelli", scrive David Abram (*Spell* 102-3).[2] Zeus lancia fulmini; Atena invia venti propizi alle imbarcazioni che incrociano con a bordo i suoi protetti; gli dei si trasformano in fuoco, in bestie, in acqua: "sembrano indistinguibili dagli elementi naturali che manifestano il loro potere" (103).[3]

Fino al Rinascimento, la concezione ereditata da Aristotele aveva visto l'universo come gerarchicamente organizzato e geocentrico, una catena viva di esseri nella quale ciascun membro condivideva qualche carattere col gradino inferiore e superiore. L'essere umano era accomunato al mondo degli animali non umani dalla sensibilità, e al mondo angelico dalla razionalità. Diceva Giambattista Della Porta, "il mondo esser un animal in parte maschio, et in parte femina, e co'l vicendevole amore delle sue membra s'unisce a se stesso" (18). La materia era la manifestazione immanente della legge divina, dotata di una vitalità sua propria, di un soffio vitale che l'animava: l'*Anima Mundi* o Anima del Mondo.

La crisi procurata dalla notizia di una Terra sbalzata alla periferia del cosmo, di una materia indisciplinata e selvaggia, di un'autorità maschile minata dalla magia brada della *masca*, che funse da catalizzatore del caos: tutto questo doveva essere arginato. Al mondo come organismo venne gradualmente a sostituirsi la metafora del mondo come *macchina*. Per merito di Cartesio, dice Abram

> il continuum gerarchico delle forme di vita, comunemente chiamato "Cerchio della Vita", fu polarizzato in una dicotomia assoluta tra materia inerte e meccanica (inclusi minerali, piante e animali, come anche il corpo umano) e purissima mente pensante (provincia esclusiva degli umani e di Dio). (*Spell* 48)[4]

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[2] "In the Homeric songs, the natural landscape itself bears the omens and signs that instruct human beings in their endeavors; the gods speak directly through the patterns of clouds, waves, and the flight of birds." Tutte le traduzioni in italiano dagli originali in inglese sono state fatte dall'autore, salvo diversa indicazione.

[3] "Indeed, the gods seem indistinguishable at times from the natural elements that display their power."

[4] "This hierarchical continuum of living forms, commonly called 'the Great Chain of Being,' was polarized into a thorough dichotomy between mechanical, unthinking matter (including al minerals, plants, and

La vita e la vitalità del mondo "furono sacrificati a un mondo pieno di materia morta e passiva" (Merchant 151): un corpo sottomesso, un meccanismo da intendere, ordinare e regolare come un orologio (244). Non dovemmo farci alcuno scrupolo "nel manipolare, sfruttare, o sperimentare sugli altri animali in ogni maniera ci sembrasse opportuna" (Abram, *Spell* 48).[5] Non più per mezzo della magia femminile, ma attraverso la *tecnica*, prerogativa virile.

Bonifica integrale

Già Elizabeth Dodson Gray nel suo *Green Paradise Lost* (1979) aveva messo in luce le insidie racchiuse nella metafora di "madre natura". Poiché nella cultura occidentale il processo di socializzazione dei ragazzi che "si fanno uomini" comporta la negazione della dipendenza dalla madre, per il bambino, diversamente dalla bambina, "la madre, e per estensione tutte le donne, diventano non solo *un* altro, ma *l'altro*—l'oggetto contro il quale l'identità del bambino è formata e definita" (Kheel 247-8).[6]

I *Saggi di naturali esperienze* di Lorenzo Magalotti, del 1667, sono la sintesi dei lavori sperimentali compiuti lungo l'arco di un decennio presso la fiorentina Accademia galileiana del Cimento. Autentica galleria degli orrori, commemora la triste svestizione imposta al corpo di "madre natura" per espungerne i segreti. Vi si narra come il Torricelli "ebbe anche pensiero di rinchiudere nello spazio voto diversi animali, per osservare in essi il moto, il volo, il respiro ed ogn'altro accidente che quivi patissero" (Magalotti 137):

> Una Farfalla, o ch'ell'avesse patito innanzi nel venir brancicata con le mani mettendola nel vaso, o si patisse poi per la privazione dell'aria, certa cosa è che appena fatto il voto parve priva di movimento, scorgendosi a gran fatica un tremolìo languidissimo nelle sue ali. Sventolaron bene all'entrar dell'aria, ma non si poté ben discernere se l'animale o 'l vento se le muovesse. Indi a poco cavata dal vaso si trovò morta. (138)

Il presupposto che tecnologia e progresso siano espedienti per affrancare la specie umana dalla tirannia della materia sono alla base dell'addomesticamento delle Alpi, avvenuto tramite la messa in opera di sentieri, terrazzamenti, disboscamenti e sterminio indiscriminato dei grandi carnivori. Per millenni l'essere umano ha plasmato le terre alte. In Val di Susa, l'estensione degli habitat di prateria derivata dallo sfalcio, dal pascolo e dalla viticoltura ha tuttavia sostenuto anche la presenza dei lepidotteri. Ma la retorica del dominio non ha trovato compimento in queste esperienze. Come ha notato lo storico dell'ambiente Marco Armiero, è nell'industria idroelettrica che la metamorfosi delle montagne da materia caotica a macchina razionale ha avuto il suo acme, di pari passo con la costituzione dell'Italia unita:

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animals, as well as the human body) and pure, thinking mind (the exclusive province of humans and God)."

[5] "We humans need have no scruples about manipulating, exploiting, or experimenting upon other animals in any manner we see fit."

[6] "The mother figure, and by extension all women, become not just *an* other, but *the* other-the object against which the boy child's identity is formed and defined."

> Mettere al lavoro l'acqua delle montagne era idealmente un modo per domare una volta per tutte il carattere selvatico di quel paesaggio. Le dighe, le opere di rimboschimento e i bacini idrici dovevano imporre un ordine moderno al caos dell'acqua e delle rocce, in modo da bandire per sempre dai monti della patria le valanghe e le inondazioni. [...] Una fusione mistica tra la fiducia nel progresso scientifico-tecnologico e un potere centrale assoluto, il tutto nel segno della crescita illimitata. (*Le montagne* 32)

La tecnologia rese le Alpi mansuete mete turistiche per iniziativa di CAI e Touring Club Italiano, sponsorizzato dalle società idroelettriche. L'alta valle si popolò di alberghi, impianti sciistici, strade. La ferrovia da Torino a Susa, una delle più antiche d'Italia, e quella del Moncenisio che seguiva il tracciato della strada napoleonica, precorsero l'apertura del traforo del Frejus nel 1891, presentata dal Primo Ministro Cavour come una scelta tra "progredire o perire" (*Atti* 2775).

La nozione di ordine ha fatto da chiave di volta per l'assoggettamento dell'ambiente; l'icona della madre prestata alla patria è stata invece funzionale all'addomesticamento delle donne. Le italiane erano madri, mogli, casalinghe, vedove: figure dai pallidi ruoli ancillari, "madri d'eroi" o, tuttalpiù, crocerossine eroiche. La Grande Guerra rappresentò uno spartiacque. Come ricorda Maria Addis Saba, le donne non solo assolsero ai doveri di sempre, ossia la cura di casa e famiglia, ma molte, "per necessità loro e della nazione, espletarono i lavori maschili, nelle fabbriche, sui treni, negli uffici: con una capacità riconosciuta anche dall'allora Presidente del Consiglio Boselli e dagli alti gradi militari". La promessa del suffragio e del pari trattamento economico sul mercato del lavoro parvero un riconoscimento obbligato. Il premio fu invece "una ondata di misoginia feroce". I reduci reclamarono con violenza i loro posti, una violenza che in Italia "fu una, non l'ultima, causa del fascismo" (Addis Saba 109).

Victoria De Grazia ha sottolineato che nonostante le proteste e le rivendicazioni sia delle socialiste sia dell'*Unione donne cattoliche italiane*, che portarono a un soffio dall'approvazione del diritto di voto nel 1919, la pervasiva influenza del positivismo scientifico e della dottrina cattolica nelle questioni riguardanti la fertilità portò a ritenere prioritario, piuttosto che l'emancipazione femminile, arginare il declino demografico dovuto all'emigrazione verso le Americhe. Inalterata restò pertanto l'equazione donna-madre.

Tutt'altro che fortuito dunque il successo di un movimento politico che, perlomeno all'inizio, si presentò come moderna forza di liberazione, infiammato da adunate e competizioni sportive che davano alle donne una scusa buona per uscire finalmente da sole. Facendo proprie le istanze portate dai Futuristi, che per pura contestazione avevano promosso il divorzio e addirittura—brevemente—il suffragio, il fascismo venne accolto entusiasticamente con la fondazione spontanea dei *fasci femminili*, pressoché ignorati dagli alti gradi del partito. Gli sforzi delle militanti si scontrarono con le manovre di Mussolini, volte a ritardare attraverso esasperanti procedure burocratiche la creazione di un registro di donne "aventi diritto" al voto, nullificato dall'abolizione delle elezioni locali il 2 settembre 1926 con un decreto che sanciva la selezione dei Potestà da parte del governo centrale. Lo stesso anno, col codice Rocco, vennero vietati l'aborto e la contraccezione, considerati delitti contro la stirpe.

Scrive De Grazia: “Le donne italiane […] rischiavano anche l’esclusione dall’intera sfera pubblica: i loro diritti sul posto di lavoro, i contributi alla cultura, e il servizio come volontarie furono ridiscussi dal messaggio ufficiale che il loro dovere preminente fosse procurare figli alla nazione” (44).[7]

Il governo gettò la maschera firmando il Concordato con la Santa Sede, il quale saldò indissolubilmente il ruolo della donna nell’Italia fascista a quello di “custode del focolare”. In questo modo, il risentimento contro qualsiasi cambiamento della condizione femminile, a lungo sedimentato nella società, cristallizzò in un asfissiante antifemminismo pronatalista. Nel suo intervento all’assemblea del PNF il 14 settembre 1929, Mussolini proclamò: “Si lancia un trinomio che in Regime fascista non è una formula soltanto, ma una realtà: autorità, ordine e giustizia. Questo trinomio è il risultato fatale della civiltà contemporanea, dominata dal lavoro e dalla macchina” (Mussolini).

I trinomi mussoliniani autorità-ordine-giustizia e Dio-patria-famiglia, illuminati da una fede descritta “pura e diritta come un’arma levata nella luce del sole”, funsero da fondamenta concettuali per le politiche del Regime, incentrate sul disciplinamento dei corpi femminili e del corpo della patria, coinvolta anch’essa in un vasto programma di bonifica. Come ha osservato Armiero (“Green” 284), i fascisti si appropriarono, attraverso i discorsi e attraverso concrete politiche, dei corpi e dei paesaggi italiani, fondendoli in un’unica narrazione. Il programma di “bonifica integrale” nacque infatti col proposito di creare un’Italia “tutta bonificata, coltivata, irrigata, disciplinata, cioè fascista” (Biancini 57): “Sogniamo e prepariamo—con l’alacre fatica di ogni giorno—l’Italia di domani, libera e ricca, sonante di cantieri, coi mari e i cieli popolati dalle sue flotte, colla terra ovunque fecondata dai suoi aratri” (118).

In questo discorso di Mussolini pronunciato a Trieste il 6 febbraio 1921, come in molti discorsi suoi e di altri gerarchi, campeggia il nesso, ricorrente nella propaganda, tra fertilità femminile e fertilità della terra. Il 10 marzo 1929 il Duce così apriva la prima Assemblea Quinquennale del Regime: “La nostra terra è bellissima, ma angusta: 30 milioni di ettari per 42 milioni di uomini. Un imperativo assoluto si pone: bisogna dare la massima fecondità a ogni zolla di terra” (Biancini 214).

La terra infeconda doveva essere fecondata per mezzo della forza fisica e della tecnica: “La scienza ci dà le armi fondamentali per il nostro riscatto: sarebbe follia e suicidio non servirsene”, dirà Mussolini a Torre di Zuino qualche anno più tardi, il 21 settembre 1938 (Biancini 190). L’opera di bonifica, concepita nei termini di una *reconquista* della patria-donna, procedette in parallelo con l’affermazione del binomio donna-madre, sia nei discorsi, sia nelle pratiche, dapprima col varo dell’Opera nazionale per la Maternità e l’Infanzia, poi con l’istituzione nel 1933 della Giornata della Madre e del Bambino, stabilita al 24 dicembre, a fissare ideologicamente la figura della madre fascista alla castità della Madonna.

Non allinearsi comportava il marchio della devianza. Annacarla Valeriano ha rinvenuto negli archivi del manicomio di Teramo numerosi casi di donne internate per

[7] “Italian women […] also risked exclusion from the entire public sphere: their rights in the workplace, their contribution to culture, and their service as volunteers were all called into question by the official message that their preeminent duty was to bear the nation’s children”.

esaurimento nervoso o a seguito di depressione *post partum*: donne di ceto basso, contadine malnutrite che avevano avuto 12 o 14 figli e lavoravano nei campi, curavano i mariti, la casa e la prole. Erano le massaie rurali decantate con toni trionfalistici da Mussolini, rinchiuse se osavano manifestare la volontà di non voler più fare figli: le madri cosiddette "snaturate", che andavano cioè contro natura.

La natura femminile propagandata dal regime era sottomessa, disciplinata e produttiva. La compiuta donna fascista venne immortalata dalla rivista *Il Comune di Bologna* nel 1933: una fotografia di tre donne con la didascalia "Gruppo di nutrici di massima produzione lattifera. Al centro Girolimetto Antonietta, la regina del latte, la cui secrezione giornaliera è di Kg. 2,500" (Bertani 16).

Forme primordiali

Dagli anni Trenta in poi, nelle letture scolastiche cominciarono ad apparire figure di armigere, riesumate al profilarsi del conflitto: Camilla, vergine dell'Eneide; Caterina Sforza, che difese Forlì contro Cesare Borgia; e le Amazzoni (Addis Saba 37). La propaganda bellica si rivolgeva direttamente alle bambine, ma era ormai troppo tardi. Sofferenze e privazioni avevano reso il regime sempre più odioso. Con l'occupazione tedesca, le donne entrarono in guerra e nella storia, però sul fronte opposto, facendosi combattenti e staffette. In treno, in bicicletta o a piedi percorrevano chilometri recando gli ordini e fungendo da collegamento tra le varie formazioni, "spesso non rivelando nemmeno ai genitori, o alla madre, che erano partigiane" (Addis Saba 110):

> Ma se ripenso a quei momenti, non mi viene in mente il pericolo, piuttosto la solitudine. Che trovavo bellissima, mi dava un senso di forza, di proprietà di me stessa, di rapporto intimo con il paesaggio intorno. E anche di rapporto solido fra me stessa e il mondo al quale appartenevo in quei mesi. Qualche volta mi veniva da cantare. (Ombra 39)

Si organizzarono tra Milano e Torino i *Gruppi di Difesa della Donna e per l'assistenza ai combattenti della libertà*, nome scelto dagli uomini e speculare alle *Ausiliare* della Repubblica di Salò, che tradisce la latitanza di un principio di parità perfino tra le fila di comunisti, azionisti e popolari. Non tacque l'antipatia per quel nome invalso in fretta una delle azioniste attive in Val di Susa, Ada Gobetti, cui diedero da partigiana il nome di battaglia Ulisse: "In primo luogo è troppo lungo; e poi perché 'difesa' della donna e 'assistenza' ecc.? Non sarebbe più semplice dire 'volontarie della libertà' anche per le donne?" (*Diario* 72).

Nel *Diario partigiano* vengono ricordati gli anni meanesi e la "luminosa parentesi" (9) delle passeggiate e delle conversazioni con Benedetto Croce, troppo presto convertiti nella rischiosa organizzazione della Resistenza. Con tono lucido e sollecito, la narrazione alterna momenti sereni a episodi di violenza, come questo del giugno 1944:

> A Susa, intorno alla scuola, c'era una folla di donne – mogli, madri, sorelle – che cercavano invano d'impietosire le sentinelle, italiane, per indurle a portare ai loro cibi e messaggi [...]. – Via, andate via, qui non fate niente, – dicevano i militi italiani, con tono conciliante, cercando di spinger via le donne che, con la passiva ostinazione dei disperati, non si decidevano a muoversi. – *Raus! Raus!* – gridarono allora due tedeschi, saltando fuori col fucile in mano; e in pochi minuti, colpendole alla cieca col calcio del fucile, dispersero le

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> donne. Mentre compivan l'atto brutale, il loro volto non esprimeva neanche brutalità: impassibili, senz'anima; e nei gesti spietati non c'era furore, né crudeltà, ma qualcosa di paurosamente meccanico. (*Diario* 147)

Nell'introduzione all'edizione del 1964 de *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, Italo Calvino descrisse la passione partigiana come "la fusione tra paesaggio e persone", alludendo al rinsaldarsi del rapporto tra esseri umani e mondo non umano attraverso la promiscuità con la terra, in funzione strategica e difensiva. Di "naturalizzazione dei ribelli di montagna" e del soffermarsi della memorialistica "sull'abilità dei partigiani nel fondersi con il paesaggio fino a scomparire" ha parlato Armiero (*Le montagne* 180). Rispetto all'opera di altri autori, come Calvino e Beppe Fenoglio, nel *Diario* il tema è meno esplicito, scarnificato della retorica e del lirismo. Le immagini di comunione col non umano abbracciano soprattutto i compagni di tutti i giorni, descritti in episodi di intensa bellezza e commozione contro l'oscenità della guerra. I confini sono sfumati, riavvicinati i due mondi. Ecco la descrizione di Gobetti della rappresaglia tedesca di Meana del 7 agosto 1944, quando le borgate del paese vennero razziate e incendiate:

> I tedeschi le han portate via tutte, vacche, pecore, muli, con difficoltà, a forza, perché non volevano andare. Son bestie che capiscono, *cônôsente* come dicono qui, attaccate al padrone che divide con loro fraternamente la stalla e la fatica; alcune son tornate indietro, nonostante i colpi, muggendo disperatamente, con angoscia quasi umana. Il vecchio Martin dei Cordola, che ha oltre diciotto anni, per due volte è riuscito a spezzare la corda con cui lo trascinavano, e a tornare indietro correndo, nitrendo; ma l'han portato via lo stesso. (*Diario* 184)

L'impresa della lotta, scriveva Gobetti, riduce i rapporti umani "al loro significato essenziale" (308), restituisce vitalità alla materia e revitalizza istinti ancestrali:

> Vidi spegnersi le ultime stelle, la luce avanzar lentamente nel cielo, la montagna destarsi nell'immenso silenzio. Ero perfettamente calma; non provavo più né esaltazione né angoscia né rimpianto né ansia né desiderio. Ero in uno stato d'animo di perfetta, quasi animale aderenza alla realtà. (306)

In questa realtà vivida e vibrante, nella rarefazione che estingue ogni bisogno, riaffiora l'icona della madre, restituita all'ecateo primigenio. Corpo santo e misterioso, stretto al non umano e al calore delle fiamme:

> – Laggiù c'è la mamma, c'è la mucca, c'è il fuoco, – continuava a ripetere Eraldo, per farmi e farsi coraggio. E quella semplice frase "c'è la mamma" suonava alle mie orecchie come una musica di paradiso. Vedere un volto di donna mi pareva una cosa meravigliosa. Mi sentivo sporca, spettinata, lacera: avevo i pantaloni a brandelli; mi pareva che soltanto una donna potesse capir tutte queste cose e aiutarmi, sia pur con la sua muta simpatia; una donna che ci avrebbe preparato da mangiare, che ci avrebbe sistemato un giaciglio, a cui avrei potuto cedere la responsabilità (che sentivo, pur senza completamente assolverla) d'organizzar per gli altri le forme primordiali della vita. (315)

Amarissima è quindi la descrizione della vacuità della politica all'indomani della Liberazione, la mediocrità e l'irrisione dei colleghi dell'amministrazione comunale di Torino per le "idee rivoluzionarie" e la "testolina bizzarra" (343) di Gobetti. Un'amarezza condivisa da molte partigiane, costrette a farsi da parte e a lasciar sfilare in parata nelle

città liberate i soli combattenti maschi, o a sfilare semmai col bracciale della Croce rossa. Costrette, persino, a tacere sulle "avventure" vissute assieme ai maschi da una morale pronta a puntare il dito, una morale che a tutt'oggi ignora perlopiù le storie delle ribelli e trascura nel *Diario* la preziosità delle meditazioni e dei gesti di una donna dai tre volti, di moglie, di madre e di volontaria per la libertà, scagliata nella furia di piombo. Una donna che con la lotta si erse ad esempio di anticonformismo contro "l'indiscriminata e conformistica obbedienza" che facilmente precipita nella "voluttà di servire".

Nell'articolo del 1962 *Quando non si deve obbedire*, Gobetti ammoniva il giovane dall'adagiarsi nel comodo conformismo del "così fanno tutti". Solo in questo modo

> rispetterà le leggi, anche se non gli fanno comodo, quando le riconosca giuste; ma le respingerà, ribellandosi, quando siano in contrasto con quella intima "voce particolare" che indusse Socrate a farsi condannare a morte piuttosto di dir cosa diversa da ciò che gli dettava la coscienza, che spinse Antigone alla ribellione. (*Quando* 28)

Un atteggiamento non dissimile dalla Polissena di Euripide. Ed è proprio sulle sue tracce che sono tornato in Val di Susa.

La tregenda

La carreggiata s'allarga in uno spiazzo che affaccia di sotto, su geometrie affilate fatte di spigoli e di scale che contraddicono il "verzicante assedio" di qua dal torrente. Così chiamava Carlo Emilio Gadda il proliferare informe di robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) o *gaggia*, specie alloctona, ossia aliena, originaria degli Appallaci e nota laggiù come *black locust*. Gadda incolpava il fattore di Brusuglio della sua diffusione, Alessandro Manzoni, che ne cantava le lodi e distribuiva semi qua e là fra gli amici, obbligandolo anni dopo a denunciare un nemico che sapeva avrebbe vinto ed ha vinto, naturalizzandosi in un battibaleno, inviso allo scrittore quanto prediletto dalle api e dai legnaioli.

A un analogo assedio pare opporre resistenza il cantiere del TAV, porro di forte precipitato in un'orgia di uova, di linfa, d'acqua e terra, di sangue e di sperma. Le talpe meccaniche razzolano in questo cantuccio ornato di terrazzamenti e di vigne sotto le zampe poderose del viadotto costruito sul finire degli anni Ottanta; qui dove si baciano e nelle gorge s'arricciano e disfano Dora e Clarea.

Scendo in borgata, tra abitazioni sghembe e muri a secco. I vecchi ci coltivavano la vite, la segale, la canapa: tra Giaglione, Gravere e Chiomonte ne è pieno, e proseguono fino a Chianocco. Tutto o quasi abbandonato. Una maglia di sentieri, tra cui la GTA, la *Grande Traversata delle Alpi*, risale la valle lungo il torrente, si alza a mezzacosta fino al passo del Col Clapier. Lassù, in cima alla bella strada militare, a piantonare il confine durante l'ultima guerra stavano i "Lupi del caposaldo Clapier". Si dice che Annibale sia passato da lì, ma val quel che vale: è passato un po' dappertutto, quello lì.

L'atmosfera è opprimente. Pattuglie di alpini e poliziotti presidiano l'arena del cantiere, avvezzi a un tronfio stoicismo e, talvolta, a rispondere alle provocazioni con lacrimogeni e proiettili di gomma. Con retino, guida dei lepidotteri e braghette da

trekking, è difficile mi si avverta come minaccia, tuttavia è già confondere, sviare chi guarda, una forma d'offesa.

Perlustro la boscaglia in cerca di una liana minuta dalle foglie a forma di cuore, carnose, con venature evidenti. Sui manuali è descritta con tecnicismi che nel sottobosco fitto e sulle gibbosità prodotte dalle piene del Clarea, avendo foglie poco più grandi dell'edera e non essendo periodo di fioritura, non sono di alcuna utilità. Sull'origine del nome *Aristolochia* non c'è accordo; riguardo all'etimo, faccio riferimento a quei due o tre vocaboli di greco che conosco: *aristos* (ἄριστος) dovrebbe stare per "nobile", e *locheia* (λοχεία) significa "utero". Più che cuoriformi, in effetti, le foglie della pianta han forma di utero. Su di esse Polissena depone l'uovo; il "nobile ventre" nutre il bruco in vista della *diapausa*, il lungo sonno invernale che trascorrerà come pupa, per sfarfallare a primavera. In quanto vitale per la riproduzione e la conservazione del lepidottero, dove c'è aristolochia non può esserci un deposito per lo smistamento di materiali di scavo potenzialmente amiantiferi, né fabbricati di sorta, ma questo spetta deciderlo ad altri, torchiati dalla loro coscienza.

Io vengo a ficcare il naso in un ambiente depauperato, accompagnato da Macaone, Icaro, Ipparchia, Dafne e Cavolaia. Indifferenti ai confini tracciati dagli umani per scacciare altri umani, le farfalle scavalcano le reti e si perdono oltre l'orizzonte che riesco a vedere. Seguo quel volo irregolare e imprevedibile: uno schema unico, molto difficile da seguire per i predatori, in particolare per gli uccelli. Piuttosto che agitare le ali su e giù come gli uccelli, infatti, le farfalle contraggono i loro corpi formando una figura obliqua a 8, generando un vortice con le ali anteriori che solleva quelle posteriori. Mi sovviene l'immagine della Madre dei Bruchi che si inginocchiava per guardarle, piegandosi come piegano le ali le farfalle, come fosse una di loro. Ho visto in quel gesto un contatto tra specie diverse, un cenno d'umiltà. Gli insetti pronubi come api e lepidotteri hanno d'altronde già nel nome il ruolo di pontieri. Loro contribuiscono all'impollinazione, e la pronuba—da pro-*nubĕre*, "sposare"—era tra i Romani la matrona che assisteva la sposa nella cerimonia nuziale. Qui invece, tra l'erba, trovo segni di guerra: bossoli di lacrimogeni, pietre, immondizie. La terra è pregna di violenza e tristezza. Mi aggrappo a quel che Gobetti scriveva:

> C'era una borgata completamente bruciata, evidentemente in seguito al rastrellamento dell'altro giorno. Le mura delle case erano in piedi (la pietra delle nostre cave resiste anche al fuoco), ma le finestre sembravano occhi spenti. E già, tenaci e pazienti come formiche, gli abitanti incominciavano a ricostruire: qui una porta, là una trave del tetto. Tutti lavoravano, anche i bambini. E si sentiva che, anche se apparentemente distrutta, la borgata non era morta e non voleva morire. (*Diario* 202)

Il borgo, i castagni, il silenzio e il pensiero che al sicuro riposano le ninfe di Polissena, tutto sussurra la stessa tenacia e pazienza. Come sul Clapier, dove si diceva "Resistere ad ogni costo"; o come i "No TAV" che dicono "Resistere per esistere". Ogni tempo ha la sua Resistenza, ogni epoca i suoi partigiani, umani e non umani.

Prendiamo Polissena. È subnemorale, cioè parzialmente legata ad ambienti boschivi; eliofila, ossia amante della luce e degli spazi di prateria; stazionaria, quindi poco propensa a cambiare abitudini. Delle popolazioni scomparse in area Alpina e

prealpina, per nove le cause sono "sconosciute", per le restanti 35 il motivo è la sottrazione di habitat (Bonelli *et al.* 102), vale a dire abbandono delle superfici agricole, rimboschimento, soprattutto antropizzazione degli ambienti naturali, che per le specie elusive è una forma di sterilizzazione, di condanna. Le ali lunghe e slanciate di colore giallo con macchie nere, rosse e blu e il corpo e il capo neri con strie rosso acceso, eredità della fase larvale, costituiscono la colorazione cosiddetta aposematica, un monito per i predatori riguardo il sapore sgradevole e la tossicità: "Noi di qui non ci muoviamo. E tu sta' fermo dove sei".

Come nel mito, Polissena ha una sorella, *Zerynthia Cassandra*: gemella, se non per minute varianti dell'apparato genitale. Le popolazioni italiane hanno un areale di diffusione ben distinto: Cassandra a sud della valle del Po, a nord Polissena. Ironico che due farfalle minacciate rispettivamente dai cambiamenti climatici e dall'antropizzazione rechino il nome di una profetessa latrice di sventure circondata da orecchie da mercante e di una principessa che elegge il suicidio sull'abiura della libertà. *Nomen omen*. A quello di Polissena possiamo riconnettere una catena ininterrotta di racconti che va da Omero a Gobetti, dalla Grecia arcaica alla Valle di Susa. Tutta la nostra storia, Polissena la ricorda ogni volta che batte le ali.

Guardandomi attorno scorgo un'infinità di altri racconti: rocce verdi nel greto del torrente, frammenti del fondale basaltico dell'antica Tetide sbalzato su con l'orogenesi alpina; il nome stesso di questa petrosa valletta laterale, Clarea, dal latino *glarea* che significa ghiaia. Davvero ogni condensazione di materia rimanda a qualcos'altro, è carica di tracce, di simboli, di storie. Jesper Hoffmeyer ha parlato di *semiosfera*, "una sfera proprio come l'atmosfera, l'idrosfera, e la biosfera" che incorpora "ogni forma di comunicazione: suoni, odori, movimenti, colori, forme, campi elettrici, radiazioni di calore, onde di ogni genere, segnali chimici, tocchi, e così via" (VII).[8] Ciascun segno è una voce, e ogni voce una storia. Studiando a fondo e tendendo l'orecchio, ciascuno di noi può cogliere le cronache di coevoluzione, di contatto e di scambio tra mondi solo apparentemente estranei: può guardare la materia non come macchina inerte, bensì, come ha scritto Serenella Iovino, "come testo, come spazio narrativo", un "palinsesto corporeo in cui le storie sono inscritte" (*Stories* 451).[9]

Leggere questo testo e farne una letteratura equivale ad attuare, secondo Iovino, una "strategia di sopravvivenza" (*Ecologia*). Nel paradosso di un mondo che ha strappato la mente dal corpo, la ragione dal cuore, il linguaggio dalle cose, non è facile afferrare il significato di questa definizione. Ma ecco, "poiché una lingua contiene in sé una cultura, quando la lingua cambia, cambia sotto aspetti importanti anche la cultura" (Merchant 41). Solo cambiando le nostre parole potremo redimerci. Va riconosciuto alla materia il potere poietico, generativo, che giustificando il legame etimologico con la

[8] "The semiosphere is a sphere just like the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the biosphere. It penetrates to every corner of these other spheres, incorporating all forms of communication: sound, smells, movements, colors, shapes, electrical fields, thermal radiation, waves of all kinds, chemical signals, touching, and so on."

[9] "Matter as a text, as a site of narrativity, a storied matter, a corporeal palimpsest in which stories are inscribed."

parola latina *mater*, “madre”, conclude Iovino (*Stories* 453), le conferisce dignità, vitalità e una voce.

Come ha scritto Jane Bennett, “l’idea di una materia intrinsecamente inanimata può essere uno degli impedimenti all’emergere di modi di produzione e consumo più ecologici e materialmente sostenibili” (IX). È necessario un salto “dall’ambientalismo al materialismo vitalistico, da un mondo della natura contro la cultura a un monismo eterogeneo di corpi vibranti” (121).[10] Il monismo descritto da Bennett assume quasi toni panteistici; ma è una fede, dice David Abram, *corporale*, che “scorre sotto tutte le mere credenze”. È la fede implicita del corpo umano “nel fermo sostegno dell’aria e nel rinnovarsi della luce ad ogni alba, la sua fede nelle montagne e nei fiumi e nel duraturo sostentamento della terra” (*Becoming* 278).[11] Il dio di questo culto non sarebbe che il mondo, e sacri sarebbero i corpi, tutti.

Parimenti, non va dimenticato che “la liberazione della natura così ardentemente desiderata dagli ambientalisti non potrà mai essere pienamente ottenuta senza la liberazione della donna” (Gaard 114).[12] Soltanto quando abbandoniamo il discorso patriarcale

> cominciamo a udire storie più vaste e più ricche. Ascoltare queste storie più grandi significa ascoltare la natura. Le voci delle donne e la voce della natura sono state zittite dal patriarcato. Donne e natura sono considerate oggetti dal patriarcato, e gli oggetti non parlano, gli oggetti non sentono, e gli oggetti non hanno bisogni. Gli oggetti esistono solo per esaudire i bisogni altrui. (Kheel 260)[13]

È molto popolare la metafora che esprime la nozione di *dipendenza sensibile alle condizioni iniziali* descritta nella teoria del caos. In una conferenza del 1972 il matematico e meteorologo Edward Lorenz si domandava se il batter d’ali di una farfalla in Brasile potesse provocare un tornado in Texas. Una metafora suggestiva, che pensando a Polissena diventa evidenza.

Beccaria scrive che “tutti i nomi legati alle categorie del sacro, nomi di animali-demoni, nomi di piante dotate di un qualche potere, hanno operato congiuntamente alla edificazione di una realtà spirituale” (55). In questa luce, Polissena non è più l’insetto sacrificato sull’altare dello “sviluppo”: è l’emblema capace di sprofondarci nell’abisso della memoria per risorgere come grido di ribellione. Se, come sostiene Beccaria, l’essere umano ha tratto le parole dalle proprie rappresentazioni del mondo, allora è anche vero il contrario: le parole possono plasmare (*ποιεῖν*) un mondo nuovo.

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[10] “The figure of an intrinsically inanimate matter may be one of the impediments to the emergence of more ecological and more materially sustainable modes of production and consumption”; “A shift from environmentalism to vital materialism, from a world of nature versus culture to a heterogeneous monism of vibrant bodies.”

[11] “That corporeal faith that flows underneath all mere beliefs: the human body’s implicit faith in the steady sustenance of the air and the renewal of light every dawn, its faith in mountains and rivers and the enduring support of the ground […].”

[12] “The liberation of nature so ardently desired by environmentalists will not be fully effected without the liberation of women.”

[13] “As we disengage from patriarchal discourse, we begin to hear larger and fuller stories. Hearing these bigger stories means learning to listen to nature. The voice of women and the voice of nature have been muted under patriarchy. Women and nature are considered objects under patriarchy, and objects do not speak, objects do not feel, and objects have no needs. Objects exist only to serve the needs of others.”

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"Quale sarà il mondo che uscirà dal tormento di oggi?" si chiedeva Gobetti (*Diario* 192). Intravedo il fondo del torrente tra flutti e riflessi, e penso: ecco la risposta, qualcosa che scorgi e subito sfugge, qualcosa che passa e passando è cambiata. Dobbiamo porci in ascolto, con umiltà, e dissolverci nel silenzio. Quando sentiamo le tribù indigene parlare di "spiriti", scrive Abram, supponiamo erroneamente "col nostro impoverito senso della materia, che si riferiscano a un insieme di potenze soprannaturali separate dal mondo fisico". Ma gli spiriti di cui parlano hanno più a che vedere "con le miriadi di raffiche, di brezze, di correnti che influenzano la vita in ogni dove" (*Becoming* 149).[14]

L'obbligo di ascoltare, di fare un passo indietro, ci proietta in avanti, fino a cogliere una scintilla di verità, una scintilla del *sacro*:

> Le montagne si succedevano, una catena dietro l'altra, senza fine: picchi, guglie, massicci, fusi in un unico incanto dalla rosea luce dell'alba. Olimpo? Valhalla? Ogni paragone appariva inadeguato, come inadeguato mi appare oggi ogni tentativo di descrizione. Le parole umane sono insufficienti. In quel momento ebbi la sensazione d'una realtà esterna e sovrumana che tutto il tormento della conoscenza dell'uomo non riuscirà mai completamente a intendere e dominare. "Chi va alla montagna, è come se andasse da sua madre" pensai. E sentii nella solidità impassibile della montagna qualcosa di primevo, d'essenzialmente, fondamentalmente materno. (*Diario* 310)

Nel cantiere i fanali s'accendono, gelide luci alogene che rischiarano il bosco al crepuscolo. Dappertutto, vedo *Aristolochia*. È sulle vicine terrazze, sotto le vecchie viti inselvatichite. È lì, brilla in quella luce spietata, custode dei sussurri di Polissena.

Alzo gli occhi alla mulattiera. Una torma di donne in vesti cremisi scende alla borgata reggendo torce sfavillanti nella sera d'agosto. Rinnovano i *Nemoralia* in onore di Diana. Invadono il bosco, schierandosi lungo le reti.

Intonano una nota lunga e solenne che presto accelera, prende vigore, si fa danza. La riconosco: è l'intermezzo de *Le Villi* di Giacomo Puccini, la sua opera prima, incentrata sulle creature del folklore mitteleuropeo, spiriti di fanciulle tradite o abbandonate o di madri straziate dalla morte dei figli che ogni notte vanno in cerca dei traditori e li costringono a un ballo convulso che li uccide per sfinimento.

Una delle donne avanza, circondata da uno sciame di ancelle. I veli vorticano nel vortice delle fiamme, gli occhi scintillano contro il filo spinato.

Scopre i seni. Urla: "*Non son più l'amor... Son la vendetta!*"

In cima alla salita, dietro lo spiazzo, c'è un muro di cemento alto una decina di metri ornato dalle scritte "No TAV", "Giù le mani dalla Valsusa!", "TAV = Mafie" e l'immancabile "ACAB". Poso il retino, recupero la bomboletta di vernice rossa dallo zaino, unico elemento equivoco della mia attrezzatura. Vergo una lemniscata: le ali della Dea.

[14] "Indeed, whenever indigenous, tribal persons speak (often matter-of-fact) about 'the spirits', we moderns mistakenly assume, in keeping with our own impoverished sense of matter, that they're alluding to a supernatural set of powers unrelated to the tangible earth. We come much closer to the shadowed savvy of our indigenous brothers and sisters, however, when we realize that the spirits they speak of have a great deal in common with the myriad gusts, breezes, and winds that influence life in any locale [...]."

"Volitivo, tenace e paziente; vincente ogni resistenza, superante ogni ostacolo…", sussurro. "Il genio poetico, scriveva Croce, è come una madre. 'Non c'è fatica che risparmi per allevare forte e bella la sua prole' e, attraverso la sua voce, 'canta la Dea'. *La poesia*, 171."

Mi volto a guardare il cantiere, bruscolo abbacinante contro la mole oscura e invitta della montagna. Vedendolo così, nudo tallone di un mondo in rovina, mi sovviene il distico d'apertura a *La Tregenda*, eco al primo canto dell'*Inferno* dantesco:

> Ei, tremando di freddo e di paura,
> È già nel mezzo della Selva oscura. (Fisher 40)

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La torpeza de Epimeteo. La discusión entre intervencionismo y *laissez-faire* a la luz del mito prometeico

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Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como fin relanzar y repensar la discusión entre los defensores del intervencionismo y los defensores del no-intervencionismo partiendo del análisis del mito griego de Prometeo y Epimeteo que Platón recoge en el *Protágoras*. En dicho mito se dan dos visiones muy dispares de lo humano; en la primera, el humano es concebido como un animal frágil, y, en la segunda, como un ser dotado de cultura, alejado del resto de animales y cercano a la divinidad. Si bien el mito tiene su origen en la Antigüedad, esas dos caracterizaciones siguen vigentes en la discusión planteada, ya que los defensores de la no-intervención creen que el humano es frágil ante la naturaleza y no tiene las herramientas necesarias para intervenir en ella, y al contrario, los defensores de la intervención creen que el humano, al poseer cultura y ser una especie *superior*, puede y debe interferir en las relaciones que se dan en el mundo salvaje en interés de los animales y el ecosistema.

Palabras clave: Prometeo, Epimeteo, animales salvajes, intervencionismo, *laissez-faire*.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze and rethink the traditional opposition between animalism and environmentalism taking into account the myth of Prometheus and Epimetheus that Plato tells in the *Protagoras*. According to the myth, a human can be conceived in two different ways: like a fragile animal or like an animal close to divinity. Despite the antiquity of the myth, we can perceive that these two visions of the human being are present in the discussion that we are trying to explain. In fact, the interventionists think that human beings have culture and for that reason they have to intervene in the relations between animals and environment. On the contrary, the advocates of non-intervention, either good or bad, think that human beings are equal to the other animals and for that reason they must not impose their wishes, and not only that, they also think that they have not enough intelligence to manipulate nature for the sake of animals nor of the ecosystem.

Key words: Prometheus, Epimetheus, wild animals, interventionism, *laissez-faire*.

Introducción

Si de reelaboración moderna de mitos griegos debiéramos hablar, sin duda alguna, los primeros ejemplos que vendrían a la mente los hallaríamos en la literatura y en el arte, pues muchos son los autores que han tomado los personajes, motivos o argumentos de aquellos mitos y los han reescrito con un fin artístico. Por citar algunos de los más populares recordemos, en el área literaria, a Camus y el mito de Sísifo, Joyce y

el de Ulises, Gide y el mito prometeico, Cortázar y el minotauro, entre otros, y Apollinaire y su Tiresias, el Orfeo de Monteverdi, o Gluck e Ifigenia, en el ámbito de la ópera.

No debe olvidarse, tampoco, otra gran fuente de recuperación y utilización de mitos, que es efectivamente el área que nos ocupa: la filosofía. Mediante dichos mitos, los pensadores han expresado o, más bien, han respaldado sus presupuestos filosóficos y así han dado continuidad a la tradición y han actualizado los mitos (Aparicio Maydeu 26). Hegel y Zambrano sobre Antígona, Freud sobre Edipo, por citar algunos, dan buen ejemplo de lo anterior. Mas, si bien es cierto que muchos de los mitos han sido utilizados para explicar e interpretar la relación que existe entre el ser humano y su entorno, parece que ese ejercicio de reelaboración no es tan usual en los estudios filosóficos animalistas o medioambientalistas, cosa paradójica, puesto que los estudios citados tienen como principal objetivo analizar la relación del humano con su entorno, en este caso, con su entorno natural.[1] Por dicha razón, el presente trabajo tiene como objetivo lanzar una discusión de temática actual partiendo del mito de Prometeo y Epimeteo que se recoge en el *Protágoras* de Platón.

El problema que se desea analizar es la rivalidad entre medioambientalistas y animalistas, o, dicho de otro modo, entre intervencionistas y no-intervencionistas. Para explicar esa confrontación se traen a colación dos estadios del ser humano descritos en el mito prometeico: en el primer estadio, el hombre aparece emparentado al resto de animales, y, en el segundo y posterior estadio, sin embargo, el hombre se diferencia del resto de animales. Esas dos maneras de definir las características de lo humano han seguido vigentes hasta la actualidad, y lo que se intenta demostrar es que esas dos visiones han condicionado la manera de intervenir o interactuar con el medio ambiente y con los animales: unos, justificando la intervención, y los otros, justificando la no-intervención. Para ello, primeramente, se analiza brevemente el mito y las dos visiones de lo humano que se dan en él. A continuación, se analizan la visión no-intervencionista y la visión intervencionista y se emparentan con las dos caracterizaciones de lo humano que ofrece el mito, y finalmente se analiza una propuesta teórica que se coloca entre ambas posturas, para intentar discernir sobre qué características de lo humano se basa.

Prometeo y Epimeteo

Podría decirse que el mito prometeico ha sido uno de los más reelaborados en la modernidad, sobre todo por el movimiento romántico. Tanto es así que parece que cada gran poeta o artista tenía su Prometeo: Goethe, Mary Shelley, Byron, Percy B. Shelley, Beethoven y Liszt, entre otros. Para los modernos, el hombre de su época era equiparado a Prometeo, ya que, gracias a los avances de la técnica, éste llegó a conseguir cosas inimaginables, igualando su poder al de Prometeo, símbolo de la rebelión ante los dioses. Pero vayamos al mito originario.

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[1] Podría citarse a Derrida (2008) como uno de los autores que parte de un mito, en su caso un mito bíblico, para hablar de la problemática de los animales, pero son escasos los estudios de esta índole.

El titán Prometeo era hijo de Jápeto y Asia (o de Gea, según la versión atribuida a Esquilo). Prometeo tenía tres hermanos: Atlas, Epimeteo y Menecio, pero sin duda Prometeo era el más astuto de todos. Era el gran benefactor de la humanidad, no temía a los dioses y por eso se divertía engañando a Zeus, hasta que éste finalmente lo castigó quitando el fuego a los humanos que Prometeo protegía. Como Prometeo no tenía miedo, subió al Olimpo y robó el fuego para devolvérselo a los humanos. Zeus volvió a enfadarse, y, a modo de castigo, encadenó a Prometeo en las montañas del Cáucaso y mandaba un águila a que le comiera el hígado; mas, al ser Prometeo inmortal, el castigo se repitió día tras día hasta que al final Heracles lo liberó matando al águila.

En cambio, la *Biblioteca mitológica,* atribuida a Apolodoro, recoge otra versión en la que dice que Prometeo fue el creador de los hombres, a quienes modeló con barro. Por último, tenemos la versión que recoge Platón en el diálogo *Protágoras*. Esta última versión es la que se toma como punto de partida en este artículo. En dicho mito se describe la creación del ser humano, en la que, debido a la torpeza de Epimeteo, el ser humano queda desprovisto de las cualidades que garantizan la supervivencia en la naturaleza.

Todo comenzó cuando los dioses decidieron utilizar el barro y el fuego para hacer a los mortales. Una vez moldeados, depositaron sobre los hermanos Prometeo y Epimeteo el reparto de las capacidades de forma conveniente. Epimeteo le pidió permiso a su hermano para que comenzara él con la repartición, y "a los unos les concedía la fuerza sin la rapidez, y a los más débiles los dotaba con la velocidad. A unos los armaba y a los que les daba una naturaleza inerme les proveía de alguna otra capacidad para su salvación" (321e). Y así, fue compensando las debilidades de unas especies con capacidades que los ayudarían a sobrevivir ante las leyes de la naturaleza, dando garras a los que podían ser fácilmente devorados, pieles robustas a los que podían resultar presas de temperaturas extremas, a los unos presas y a los otros frutos en los árboles… Mas, como Epimeteo no era del todo sabio, gastó todas las capacidades que debía repartir olvidándose del humano, y cuando llegó el turno de asignarle alguna característica que le ayudara a sobrevivir en la naturaleza, Epimeteo se dio cuenta de que el humano había quedado sin protección. Prometeo pronto se percató del error, y a toda prisa decidió robar el fuego y el arte a Hefesto y a Atenea, para ofrecérselos al hombre; por eso el hombre quedó emparentado con la divinidad. Una vez salieron todas las especies a la luz, los seres humanos seguían sin poder sobrevivir, porque entre ellos se mataban como fieras, hasta que finalmente Zeus les otorgó el sentido moral y la justicia, para que mediante la política el humano no sucumbiera. Por tanto, este mito retrata en un primer momento al humano (i) igualado o incluso inferior al resto de los animales, y a continuación (ii) superior debido a esa inferioridad, suplantando su fragilidad "natural" por la cultura.

Estos dos estadios de creación retratan al humano de manera muy dispar: mientras que en la primera fase el humano es fruto de la torpeza de Epimeteo, en la segunda el humano es el ser más cercano a la divinidad. Por lo tanto, el primer ensayo de hombre se sitúa más cerca de su condición animal que el segundo. No cabe duda que es la última descripción del hombre la que la tradición ha instaurado, entendiendo al

humano como el ser dotado de cultura, cercano a la divinidad y por tanto capaz de gestionar y controlar al resto de seres no-culturales.[2] Entre los autores que hablan de animalidad y que respaldan esa visión, tenemos, por citar algunos, a Gehlen o a Heidegger. No obstante, los recientes estudios sobre los derechos de los animales se alejan de la visión del humano dotado y premiado con la cultura, esto es, de un punto de vista especista, subrayando que los seres humanos también son animales, esto es, seres sintientes. Autores como Derrida, Nussbaum, Wolfe, Calarco y un largo etcétera han abordado el problema de la animalidad desde un punto de vista diferente al imperante. Si bien dichos autores no hacen una relectura explícita del mito prometeico antes citado, es cierto que puede hallarse cierto eco de aquel, como se expone más adelante.

De todas formas, no todo es consenso entre los autores que trabajan en el campo de la filosofía de la animalidad o de la naturaleza: aunque el discurso del ser humano como algo divino haya quedado obsoleto en dichos discursos, la problemática sigue centrándose en lo siguiente: ¿hasta qué punto el ser humano, por poseer lo que tradicionalmente se ha denominado *cultura*, puede intervenir en el mundo salvaje?[3]

El debate que se presenta es uno de los grandes debates dentro del ámbito de la filosofía de la naturaleza. En efecto, la disputa o, más bien, la incompatibilidad entre esos dos grandes discursos parece vertebrar la opinión pública y los movimientos sociales al respecto: para unos es totalmente inadmisible la intervención humana en el mundo *salvaje* y la consiguiente vulneración de los derechos individuales de los animales, mientras que para otros la regulación por parte del ser humano de un ecosistema prevalece ante los derechos individuales de los animales. Esto es, unos creen que el humano tiene capacidad y legitimidad para manipular el entorno animal (punto de vista ambientalista) y otros creen que el humano no es lo suficientemente inteligente ni está legitimado como para hacerlo (punto de vista animalista): los animales ya saben vivir bien sin nosotros; de ahí se desprende que no debemos "molestar". Estas dos grandes ideas, por supuesto, están respaldadas por una amplia y larga bibliografía respecto al tema, pero las últimas investigaciones comienzan a poner en duda la distinción entre medioambientalistas y animalistas. A continuación, se exponen muy en general las líneas principales que tensan la relación entre ambos colectivos.

El ser humano es como Epimeteo, pues se equivoca cuando interviene: discurso tradicional de los ART[4]

Epimeteo, tras pedir permiso a su hermano Prometeo, comienza a repartir las cualidades que cada especie tendrá cuando salga a la luz. Sin embargo, en el reparto

[2] Es cierto que el análisis se basa en la diferencia de esas dos visiones, pero deben evitarse malentendidos, pues el humano tiene tanto de uno como de otro: lo que se quiere recalcar es que el humano, para legitimar su acción política o ética, se alinea en mayor o menor medida con esos dos polos.

[3] Cuando hablamos de mundo salvaje no queremos decir espacios totalmente vírgenes, ya que el ser humano interviene de una manera u otra en todos los ecosistemas. Nos referimos a espacios en los que los animales viven en comunidad sin necesidad directa de la intervención humana. Más adelante se aborda el problema terminológico.

[4] *Animal Rights Theorists*

olvida darle al ser humano las cualidades para poder sobrevivir en el mundo salvaje. Epimeteo es alguien que no sabe lo suficiente como para modelar la naturaleza de modo equilibrado. De la misma manera que Epimeteo se equivoca cuando interviene en la naturaleza, muchos de los defensores del discurso tradicional de los derechos de los animales alegan que el humano también se equivoca al intervenir en la naturaleza porque no posee el conocimiento necesario. Mas para entender este punto de vista, conviene resumir a grandes rasgos lo que defienden los defensores tradicionales de los derechos de los animales.

Dentro de esa corriente, el discurso de Tom Regan representaría la vertiente más tradicional. Según el filósofo americano, tanto los seres humanos como los seres no-humanos son sujetos-de-una-vida (Regan 62), y por tanto, existe en todos ellos el derecho intrínseco a que sus derechos sean respetados. Todas las acciones de los agentes morales que sean dañinas y no respeten los derechos morales de cada individuo sujeto-de-una-vida deben ser erradicadas por completo. Este pensador de corte kantiano (si bien Kant donará derechos sólo a los seres racionales) basa en esa premisa toda su argumentación teórica.

Esta postura prima el individuo frente a la colectividad, afirmando que cada vida es única e irremplazable desde el momento en que llega al mundo, y que por tanto no es posible atentar contra ella en interés del agente moral, esto es, en interés del ser humano. La caza, la pesca, la regulación artificial de la población animal, el uso de animales para fines lúdicos o farmacéuticos son algunos de los ejemplos más paradigmáticos de intervención perniciosa humana dentro del mundo animal que el autor analiza en una de sus obras más conocidas, titulada *Jaulas Vacías*. Regan representa la voz de aquellos que creen que el mayor daño que los humanos originan a los animales consiste precisamente en ese impacto, y por tanto su tesis reside en la prohibición de dichas acciones. Esa prohibición desembocaría en una no-intervención en el mundo animal prohibiendo la caza, la pesca o el rapto de animales no domésticos con fines lúdicos.

> El objetivo [...] radica en defender a los animales salvajes en tanto que poseedores de derechos, proporcionándoles así la oportunidad de vivir su propia vida gracias a sus propios medios, lo mejor que ellos puedas, evitando la depredación humana demonidada "deporte".[5] (Regan cit. en Varner 113)

Ese *laissez-faire* (Palmer ctd. en Kymlicka y Donaldson, *Zoopolis* 159) o "let them be" que se desprende de este argumento es el sinónimo del deber negativo hacia los animales; el humano no debería intervenir en la comunidad de los animales salvajes y por tanto este autor aboga por la erradicación del contacto con dicho grupo.

Uno de los puntos en los cuales se apoyan los defensores de este *laissez-faire* o de la no-intervención consiste en que el humano carece de la capacidad cognoscitiva y técnica para gestionar y regular la naturaleza de manera no perjudicial, retomando ese primer estadio del hombre epimeteico, donde es retratado como uno más entre las

[5] The goal [...] is to defend wild animals in the possession of their rights, providing them with the opportunity to live their own life, by their own lights, as best as they can, spared that human predation that goes by the name of "sport". Esta cita y las siguientes citas han sido traducidas por la autora.

especies animales. Conocido como el argumento de la falibilidad, pone de relieve la mala gestión que el ser humano ha llevado a cabo al alterar los ecosistemas. Los autores de *Zoopolis*, al analizar dicho argumento que justifica la no-intervención, enumeran algunas de las catástrofes que han sido causadas en territorio americano, que son efectivamente los ejemplos que utilizan los defensores del "let them be" para justificar la ausencia de intervención. En una línea parecida, en sus libros y artículos, Peter Singer defiende que el humano debería abstenerse de intervenir en la naturaleza debido a las consecuencias que el humano desconoce.

> Los sistemas naturales son enormemente complejos, y lamentablemente, nuestra comprensión no alcanza para explicar y comprender el total funcionamiento de dichos sistemas. En estas condiciones, es probable que nuestra acción cause tanto daño como beneficio, y es muy posible que el daño causado sea incluso superior al beneficio causado.[6] (Donaldson y Kymlicka, Zoopolis 163)

En su artículo sobre el intervencionismo, Torres Aldave insiste en esa falta de conocimiento del humano para poder gestionar el ecosistema de manera "no dañina", ya que "los humanos apenas sabemos nada sobre las relaciones interdependientes que los ecosistemas (y las especies) mantienen entre sí" (87), y recalca la dificultad de definir lo dañino en la naturaleza.

Retomando el mito prometeico, los no-intervencionistas conciben al ser humano como un animal débil ante la naturaleza e incapaz de ordenarla según su raciocinio. Sin embargo, resulta arriesgado seguir este planteamiento, puesto que, si algún día el humano llegase a adquirir el conocimiento necesario para la gestión total de la naturaleza, su intervención podría dar lugar a un gran zoo planetario (Cochrane 139), donde el ser humano debería afrontar grandes retos prácticos y sostenibles.[7] Por otro lado, resulta claro que los ejemplos dados para justificar este argumento son tan arbitrarios como locales: las intervenciones en el hábitat han sido a veces perjudiciales, pero no todas ellas lo han sido. Los habitantes del medio rural como los guardas forestales dan prueba de que algunas de las intervenciones son beneficiosas no solo para el medio ambiente sino también para el propio animal (Montserrat Recoder 51).

Pero, como muchos de los autores más actuales acerca de esta problemática han recalcado (Horta; Kymlicka y Donaldson), el fundamental problema que se desprende de esta postura reside en que el planteamiento no tiene en cuenta toda la red de impacto que el humano ejerce sobre el mundo animal: si se lleva al extremo el discurso tradicional de los ART, que creen y abogan por la completa eliminación de la relación entre ser humano y animal salvaje, deberíamos dejar de intervenir en la cotidianidad de los animales no sólo erradicando la caza, la pesca o el rapto de animales para encerrarlos en un zoo, sino erradicando la entera red de influencias negativas que causa

[6] Natural systems are enormously complex, and our understanding is limited. Under these conditions, it is likely that our interventions will cause as much harm as good, and quite possibly a great deal more.

[7] A primera vista esta idea del zoo planetario resulta difícil de sostener, ya que los retos teóricos y sobre todo técnicos que plantea son de cuestionable resolución. Sin embargo, esta idea del "zoo" salvaje no es tan extraña en el territorio europeo, donde programas como la Red Natura 2000, la red de reservas naturales o parques naturales instauran un área donde la intervención humana queda coartada total o parcialmente.

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el humano, tomando medidas como la eliminación de las vías marítimas y aéreas, el derribo de los rascacielos o el retroceso en la invasión del territorio y la eliminación total de la polución y el cambio climático causados por la actividad humana.

El ser-humano es como Prometeo, pues ayuda a los indefensos: discurso tradicional medioambientalista

En el polo opuesto a la no-intervención encontramos la postura de varios teóricos medio-ambientalistas, como es el caso de Mark Sagoff, uno de los más importantes representantes de dicha postura, que afirmaba rotundamente lo siguiente:

> Los medio-ambientalistas no pueden ser liberadores de animales, así como los animalistas no pueden ser medio-ambientalistas... Las obligaciones morales para con la naturaleza no pueden ser esclarecidas o explicadas apelando a los derechos de los animales.[8] (Sagoff ctd. en Varner 98)

Esta cita recoge, una vez más, la hostilidad de los estudios medioambientalistas hacia los defensores de los derechos de los animales. Representante de la vertiente tradicional de los estudios del medioambiente, Sagoff no se cansa de recalcar la dicotomía radical que existe entre ambas teorías. Seguramente el ejemplo más paradigmático de esta controversia resida en la caza. Mientras que los medioambientalistas aceptan un tipo de caza "terapéutica" (Varner 100), la vertiente tradicional por los derechos de los animales la prohíbe de raíz; recordemos la postura defendida por Regan que prohíbe la caza en cualquiera de sus expresiones y objetivos (152).

Al principio puede resultar chocante que los defensores de la naturaleza consientan una actividad como la caza, pero hay que matizar que el ejercicio de la caza puede tener objetivos y motivaciones tan dispares que permite que incluso algunos animalistas legitimen esa actividad.[9] Los medioambientalistas, dice Varner, defenderían la caza terapéutica siempre que fuera imprescindible para el correcto funcionamiento del ecosistema. Esto también implica que la caza permite regular la población de las especies salvajes para evitar la malnutrición y la superpoblación o incluso para detener una plaga, y por tanto, para disminuir el sufrimiento de aquellos animales no-humanos que habitan el territorio salvaje. Por esta razón, algunos animalistas sí que aceptarán la caza terapéutica. Es el caso de Singer, como lo expone en *Liberación Animal,* ya que defiende un utilitarismo hedonista que se basa en producir el menor sufrimiento y el mayor bienestar, si para eso es necesario el uso de una pequeña dosis de sufrimiento en

[8] Environmentalists cannot be animal liberationists. Animal liberationists cannot be environmentalists... Moral obligations to nature cannot be enlightened or explained –one cannot even take the first step– by appealing to the rights of animals.

[9] Como apunta Varner en su libro *In Nature Interests?*, dentro de la caza pueden distinguirse tres diferentes tipologías; por un lado la terapéutica, diseñada y motivada para asegurar el bienestar de la especie, la integridad del ecosistema o ambas; por otro lado, la caza de subsistencia, aseguradora de alimento para los humanos que de otra manera no podrían subsistir; por último, la caza deportiva, que consistiría en caza motivada y mantenida por tradiciones culturales y religiosas, restablecedora de la historia nacional o evolutiva o la caza como simplemente manera de conseguir un trofeo.

comparación con la que se produciría sin la intervención humana. También Nussbaum defiende la intervención en el mundo salvaje, ya que según ella los animales son sujetos de derechos, y, por tanto, éstos deben ser defendidos.

La orientación kantiana de la propuesta de Regan parece chocar con esta postura, puesto que bajo ningún pretexto se pueden violar los derechos individuales de un sujeto-de-una-vida, aunque sea por el bien de la comunidad animal. Por tanto, si bien alguna de las corrientes animalistas acepta la intervención en el mundo salvaje, las posturas tradicionales se niegan a hacer uso de la técnica para controlar el territorio de dichos animales.

Según este punto de vista, el ser humano tiene algo de lo que carece el resto de las especies: la inteligencia necesaria para detectar errores en el funcionamiento del mundo natural, esto es, la capacidad de gestión política, en este caso, de una política medioambiental. La cultura, por tanto, confiere al humano la responsabilidad de intervenir en el mundo salvaje para que el ecosistema funcione como *debería*. Sin embargo, resulta problemático hablar de *deber* en la naturaleza. Por esto y por razones que a continuación se exponen, según los autores de *Zoopolis*, el argumento medioambientalista también parece inconsistente, o por lo menos inválido para la defensa de los derechos de los animales, ya que esa postura no tiene en cuenta que cada individuo, tanto humano como no-humano, es único e irremplazable, y por tanto no duda en acabar con ellos en pos de un hábitat sostenible. Además, dicen los autores y otros (Horta 14), raramente se llevaría a cabo una política de exterminio si en un territorio humano hubiese superpoblación. Esto es, a nadie se le ocurriría exterminar a humanos debido a la superpoblación en el territorio.

Por tanto, para los medioambientalistas, (incluso los holistas podrían entrar en esta clasificación), el humano tiene sabiduría superior al resto de animales y, en consecuencia, tiene el deber de regular la vida animal. Esta visión se aleja del hombre que moldeó Epimeteo y se acerca al hombre que hizo Prometeo, entendiéndolo superior al resto.

Estas dos posturas, a grandes rasgos, apuntan a dos visiones muy dispares: para unos el humano no debería intervenir por ignorancia y equidad, mientras que, para otros, éste debe intervenir gracias a su sabiduría y supremacía. Los primeros nos recuerdan al humano indefenso y animal, mientras que el segundo nos recuerda al humano dotado de cultura y superior a él. Mas, claro está, la fractura existente entre ambas visiones es más compleja y difícil de resolver. A continuación, se presenta un intento de unión de estas dos visiones: la propuesta hecha por Donaldson y Kymlicka en *Zoopolis*.

***Zoopolis*. ¿Una propuesta *hermanadora*?**

No cabe duda de que *Zoopolis* ha supuesto un cambio radical en los estudios de los derechos de los animales, puesto que ha logrado desplazar el debate del plano moral hacia una teoría política. No obstante, la sofisticación teórica que reluce en todas las

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páginas del libro no habría sido posible sin el previo despliegue teórico que la larga tradición de los estudios sobre los derechos de los animales ha desarrollado.

La atrevida propuesta que se presenta en *Zoopolis* abre una nueva vía en los estudios acerca del derecho de los animales. En efecto, como los propios autores afirman, la única manera para proteger a los animales de la explotación requiere alejarse de los discursos tradicionales de la ética del bienestar y de los discursos ecologistas para acercarse a nuevas lecturas de corte marcadamente político capaces de afrontar el tema de manera más completa.

Es sabido que la lucha por el derecho de los animales recorre gran parte de la literatura de la filosofía práctica, pero de todas las obras sobre el tema, según sus mismos autores y muchos otros, ninguna ha sido capaz de desestabilizar el *statu quo* y no ha llegado a ningún resultado. Una de las razones de esta inefectividad reside principalmente en que las herramientas teóricas utilizadas para defender la causa no resultaban ser eficaces, y, por tanto, muchos de los debates se limitaban a defender pequeñas medidas reformistas que poco ayudaban a un verdadero cambio efectivo (Cavalieri 17). En una línea similar, los autores arguyen que analizar y gestionar las relaciones interhumanas apelando a los derechos humanos resulta un elemento útil, pero al mismo tiempo insuficiente (al igual que ocurre en la realidad humana). La idea fundamental de *Zoopolis* es que una teoría que defienda el valor intrínseco de los animales individuales no sirve. Ellos no son únicamente individuos con derechos, ni tan sólo miembros de una especie en concreto, cada una con diferentes características biológicas, sino también miembros de comunidades políticas; muchos de ellos conviven en nuestras comunidades o cerca de ellas, y por ende son las relaciones que se tejen tanto comunitaria como intercomunitariamente las que vertebran las relaciones entre seres humanos y seres no-humanos. Por tanto, son esas diferentes relaciones que se establecen entre los animales y nuestras instituciones y prácticas políticas las que debemos estudiar y analizar en términos de comunidad, territorio y soberanía. Dichos términos ayudan a interpretar la realidad política de manera más ajustada a nuestros tiempos y a articular discursos teóricamente más completos y estratégicamente más eficaces.

Uno de los mayores problemas que detectan estos autores es que la relación con cada especie de animal es muy diferente. Esto es, no es lo mismo la relación que se entabla con los ratones, con los perros o con los elefantes.[10] La cercanía con unos animales es mayor que con otros, y por tanto también la compasión y el afecto hacia ellos varía. Por esta razón, los autores sugieren que es más provechoso abordar el tema no tanto desde una perspectiva moral, sino desde una explícita perspectiva política (Donaldson y Kymlicka, *Zoopolis* 12), ya que, si fuera por compasión, el maltrato sólo se erradicaría en aquellas especies que cohabitan con nosotros. Consiguientemente, en la manera de describir y nombrar las diferentes relaciones que el humano entabla con los

[10] Tampoco es la misma la relación que entablan ciertas comunidades de humanos con los animales; no es la misma la relación que entablan los inuits, las tribus del desierto africano, los norteamericanos o las comunidades rurales de montaña. Sin embargo, este matiz parece obviarse en el análisis que desarrollan los autores de *Zoopolis*.

seres no-humanos se plantean tres diferentes categorías: la de conciudadanos, la de soberanos y la de *denizens*, una palabra que cabría traducir por "habitantes", en contraste con "ciudadanos" (Tafalla 236).

La ciudadanía se concedería a aquellos animales que habitan en la misma comunidad que nosotros debido al proceso de domesticación que se lleva a cabo por el ser humano mismo: animales de compañía, animales de granja, animales para uso textil y farmacéutico o animales para fines terapéuticos son algunos ejemplos que deberían ser tratados como conciudadanos. Eso significa que los animales no podrían ser explotados. No obstante, sería aceptable el uso de ellos en tanto que resultase provechoso para el buen funcionamiento de la sociedad, como es el caso de los perros policía o los perros para invidentes.

En segundo lugar, existen esos animales que también habitan en territorios humanizados, pero que, sin embargo, no están domesticados. Es el caso de las palomas, los ratones, e incluso los zorros o los coyotes. Se trata de animales que durante años han sabido adaptarse al territorio humano y encuentran en él cobijo y alimentos y que sin duda fuera de ese hábitat perecerían. Por esta razón, no deben ser tratados como conciudadanos porque no responden al mismo tipo de relación que los animales domésticos, así que los autores les otorgan una *denizenship*, que cabría traducir como "condición de habitantes". Ese *status* intermedio significa que deben ser aceptados en nuestras comunidades y que no deben ser maltratados, pero tampoco tenemos más obligaciones hacia ellos.

En último lugar se encontrarían los animales salvajes, aquellos que habitan fuera de los límites de centros humanos y que además no necesitan el contacto con ellos para poder subsistir. Aquí, la tesis central de los autores es que los animales salvajes no muestran una inclinación a convivir con los humanos, y por ello deberíamos respetar esa actitud y no promover el contacto con ellos. Para proteger la forma de vida de estos animales, sin relación con nosotros, los autores demandan reconocer la soberanía de sus comunidades.

La discusión nacida, por ejemplo, del trato con los animales salvajes ha inundado la literatura y los eslóganes de los animalistas durante muchas décadas, dando lugar a grandes discusiones entre medioambientalistas, holistas, ecologistas, agroecologistas e incluso entre los propios defensores de los derechos de los animales, surgiendo la dicotomía en la que se centra el trabajo.[11] Sin embargo, los autores del libro se distancian de lo dicho hasta el momento y proponen otro tipo de vía de trabajo y acción.

La cuestión de los animales salvajes

El sexto capítulo del libro está dedicado a la relación que existe entre los animales salvajes y los seres humanos y a la soberanía que debería serles adjudicada. Tras una definición de lo que ellos entienden como animales salvajes, comienza un recorrido en el

[11] La agroecología es una disciplina científica relativamente nueva, que frente a la agronomía convencional se basa en la aplicación de los conceptos y principios de la ecología al diseño, desarrollo y gestión de sistemas agrícolas sostenibles.

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cual salen a colación diferentes argumentos que ellos acabarán, en gran medida, criticando, para finalmente defender que a las comunidades de animales salvajes se las debería tratar como comunidades soberanas. Los animales salvajes, a diferencia de los animales domésticos y los animales limítrofes, son aquellos que por un lado esquivan el contacto con los humanos y con los asentamientos humanos, y por otro lado los que no dependen de los humanos para asegurar su subsistencia (Donaldson y Kymlicka, *Zoopolis* 156). No obstante, esto no quiere decir que no tengan contacto con la actividad humana. Este contacto, que se da en menor medida que en las otras relaciones especificadas (animales domésticos y limítrofes), tiene consecuencias negativas en la vida de los animales hasta tal punto de condicionar y acabar con la vida de éstos. Los autores enumeran cuatro tipos de impacto humano, que serían los siguientes: 1) La caza, la pesca y el rapto de animales a fin de conducirlos a los zoos y circos; el uso de dichos animales como mascotas exóticas o a modo de trofeo; el uso de una parte de su cuerpo para el goce del humano; la muerte de animales como parte de los programas de gestión de la vida salvaje (o de un ecosistema concreto) y la experimentación en dichos animales en el nombre de la investigación científica. 2) La pérdida de hábitat de los animales salvajes debido a la expansión del territorio humanizado. 3) Daños excedentes (*spillover harms*) o dicho de otro modo, las numerosas maneras en las cuales las infraestructuras y las acciones humanas imponen riesgo para los animales, como por ejemplo las vías marítimas, los rascacielos, las autovías, la polución o el cambio climático. 4) Intervención positiva en dichas comunidades como el esfuerzo humano por asistir a animales heridos, ya debido a una catástrofe natural, ya debido a un exceso de la actividad humana en el territorio.[12]

Históricamente los ART se han centrado sobre todo en el primer impacto mencionado, obviando los tres restantes. Según ellos, la eliminación del tipo de impacto número uno (la caza, la pesca, y un largo etcétera) garantizaría el fin del sufrimiento entre los animales salvajes. Mas, como se acaba de demostrar, también otro tipo de actividad humana influye negativamente en la vida de los animales salvajes. Por el contrario, los defensores del bienestar y más concretamente los medioambientalistas defienden que la erradicación de dicho impacto no garantizaría el fin del sufrimiento, puesto que superpone el bienestar del animal al del ecosistema. Este hecho da cuenta de la complejidad que entraña el problema, ya que, para poder gestionar la relación entre animal y humano de manera más acertada, hay que tener en cuenta todo tipo de relación con los animales y no quedarse en aquellas que han pasado a constituir el corpus de la literatura "popular" de los defensores de animales.

De todas formas, el mayor ataque vertido a la luz de este debate no se reduce a criticar los argumentos tanto de un lado como del otro: más allá de eso, los autores instauran un nuevo sistema de análisis, y, por tanto, quedan superados, o desplazados en algún caso, los problemas teórico-prácticos que planteaban las corrientes tradicionales tanto de los animalistas como de los medioambientalistas. Tanto los argumentos a favor del no-intervencionismo en nombre de los derechos individuales como los argumentos a

[12] Evidentemente, este cuarto impacto resulta beneficioso para los animales.

favor del intervencionismo en nombre de una colectividad fallan en un mismo punto. Ambos discursos centran su atención en el impacto directo que los humanos ejercen sobre los animales salvajes. No obstante, como se ha enumerado al principio, los tipos de impacto negativo que los humanos ejercen sobre los animales no sólo son directos. Es más, la mayoría de los contactos con el mundo animal no residen en dicho impacto que se da a nivel global; a día de hoy uno de los factores más importante en lo que respecta a relaciones perjudiciales es la pérdida de territorio "salvaje" o las numerosas maneras en las cuales las infraestructuras y las acciones humanas imponen riesgo para los animales.

Al dar cuenta del amplio índice de impacto del humano, resulta poco plausible detener todo contacto con el mundo animal. Por otro lado, tampoco las medidas ecologistas sirven para analizar el complejo entramado que existe entre los humanos y los animales salvajes, puesto que no atienden a la vulnerabilidad de los individuos e interponen el ecosistema por encima de la individualidad. Pero, si estas dos fórmulas son defectuosas, ¿qué propuesta ayudaría a vehicular el discurso sobre los derechos de los animales salvajes?

La teoría política para los animales, basada en los derechos de grupo que proponen Donaldson y Kymlicka (*Zoopolis* 312), es muy parecida a la que el filósofo estadounidense John Rawls recoge en su libro *A Theory of Justice* acerca de las comunidades humanas. Dicha teoría reconoce que los animales no sólo tienen derechos universales individuales, sino que también poseen unos derechos especiales por ser miembros de una comunidad. Los autores no niegan que los animales tengan y deban serles reconocidos derechos morales individuales. Al igual que esos derechos individuales, los derechos comunitarios también ayudan a regir las relaciones entre diferentes sociedades. De aquí se sigue que todos los animales poseen el derecho a no ser dañados o matados en pos de nuestro beneficio, pero más allá de este derecho universal, el humano debe hacer una distinción de obligaciones y responsabilidades hacia los diferentes grupos de animales. La categoría que achacan al grupo de animales salvajes sería la soberanía, que textualmente sería lo siguiente:

> La soberanía protege intereses manteniendo formas valiosas de organización social ligadas a un territorio particular. De este modo, la soberanía protege a una comunidad contra la amenaza de conquista, colonización, desplazamiento y dominio extranjero. [...] Nosotros argumentamos que la asignación de soberanía a hábitats o ecorregiones multiespecíficos es la mejor manera de lograr este objetivo.[13] (Donaldson y Kymlicka, "A Defense" 151-152)

Si retomamos la disputa nacida a raíz de la relación con los animales salvajes, esto es, aquella en la cual unos se posicionaban a favor del intervencionismo mientras que los otros la rechazaban, ¿cómo debería entenderse la soberanía? ¿Debería ser prohibida la intervención porque viola los derechos soberanos de los animales salvajes? ¿Cabe aceptar algún tipo de intervención que ayude a los animales salvajes que tienen malnutrición o están al borde del peligro?

[13] Sovereignty protects interests in maintain¬ing valued forms of social organization tied to a particular territory against the threat of conquest, colonization, displacement and alien rule. [...] We argue that allocating sovereignty to multi-species habitats or eco-regions is the best way to achieve this purpose.

La respuesta que dan los autores es que, mientras la intervención no perturbe la manera de vivir de los animales, las intervenciones son aceptadas. La inviolabilidad de la manera de vivir comprende que se rechacen los cambios drásticos a los cuales los animales no están adaptados. Esto es, mientras el florecimiento de la especie esté asegurado, cualquier tipo de intervención queda permitida. El término "florecimiento", o *flourishment* en el original, lo inserta en el debate de los derechos de los animales la pensadora Martha Nussbaum (Donaldson y Kymlicka, *Zoopolis* 165), y según este argumento el florecimiento de los animales salvajes individuales no se puede dar al margen del de sus comunidades, por lo que respetar a estos animales exige respetar su territorio, y la mejor forma de hacerlo es reconocerlo como un territorio soberano que debemos renunciar a controlar, de manera que el humano no pueda intervenir en su organización social. Esta organización social se basa en la manera de vivir sus vidas conforme a su naturaleza. Sin embargo, este argumento del florecimiento no dice que haya que acabar con todo tipo de relación; como ocurre entre países soberanos, la ayuda y la comunicación son no solo viables sino necesarias.

Por tanto, parece que los autores aboguen por un intervencionismo moderado. Es responsabilidad del humano llevar a cabo medidas como las siguientes: actos de compasión a escala local (impulsados más bien por el afán de ayudar al débil en momentos de peligro), o ayudas para restaurar desequilibrios producidos por plagas o bacterias introducidas (o no) por la especie humana o para disminuir la degradación de la naturaleza causada por la actividad humana.

Resumiendo, del mismo modo que se alejan de los no-intervencionistas, también se alejan de los intervencionistas que no atienden a la individualidad o a los *hiperintervencionistas* como Cochrane, que postula una teoría en la cual debería otorgarse seguro médico a todas las especies de animales (Donaldson y Kymlicka, "A defense" 147). Al respecto de esta postura, los autores de *Zoopolis* aseguran que aquellas personas que ven al animal como pura vulnerabilidad no atienden a la naturaleza real de estos animales, ya que ellos han sido capaces de perpetuar su especie.

> Se centran en las formas en que los animales parecen funcionar menos competentemente que los humanos (por ejemplo, protegiendo a los miembros de la sociedad de la violencia o la inanición), pero ignoran las formas en que las comunidades de animales salvajes son más competentes que las sociedades humanas. Por donar un ejemplo, las sociedades humanas contemporáneas se basan en un modelo insostenible de crecimiento económico. [...] Por el contrario, las comunidades de animales salvajes hacen un trabajo sostenible, viviendo dentro de sus medios ecológicos, y dejando lo bueno y lo suficiente para las siguientes generaciones.[14] ("A defense" 157)

Por tanto, podría decirse que la postura defendida por los autores de *Zoopolis* se encuentra entre las dos posturas antes citadas. Por un lado, admite en el ser humano su

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[14] They focus on the ways in which animals seem to function less competently than humans (*e. g.,* in protecting members of society from violence or starvation), but ignore the ways in which wild animal communities are more competent than human societies. Contemporary human societies are based on an unsustainable model of economic growth. [....] Wild animal communities do a much better job of living within their ecological means, and leaving as good and enough for others.

equidad ante el resto de especies como seres sintientes y acepta su desconocimiento a la hora de dominar y gestionar el mundo salvaje, pero al mismo tiempo admite que tiene una postura privilegiada al ser un agente moral y por eso debe ayudar de manera controlada al resto de especies.

En el artículo "A Defense of Animal Citizens and Sovereigns", Kymlicka y Donaldson se posicionan claramente en contra de una intervención exagerada del humano, retomando un argumento que nos recuerda un mito tan antiguo como la propia filosofía. En él los autores criticaban el paternalismo desmesurado de propuestas como *Cosmozoopolis*, o aquellas posturas que intentan erradicar la depredación entre las propias especies a toda costa. Para apoyar esta postura, como se recoge en la cita anterior, los autores apuntan a la debilidad e incompetencia de la especie humana en comparación con otras especies, las cuales perviven en un mismo hábitat dejando para las siguientes generaciones lo suficiente. Esta imagen de un humano inferiormente caracterizado en comparación a los otros animales, parecido al que aparece en el *Protágoras*, fue utilizado también por el filósofo y antropólogo alemán Arnold Gehlen. Si bien corresponden a dos tradiciones filosóficas muy dispares, se pueden encontrar ecos de la teoría antropológica de Gehlen en los presupuestos de *Zoopolis*.

Es cierto que para Gehlen el humano es categóricamente diferente al animal, puesto que uno tiene espíritu y el otro no sólo carece de él, sino que su ser y su obrar se reducen a puro automatismo. Además, a Gehlen no le interesa encontrar los puntos en común con las demás especies, sino precisamente discernir las características propias e intrínsecas del humano. Tanto es así que, queriéndose alejar de los discursos evolucionistas y biologicistas, reivindicaba el uso de categorías propias y específicas del espíritu, "evitando aquellas provenientes del ámbito meramente animal" (Lombo 367). Es cierto también que en *Zoopolis* se da el camino inverso: los autores aplican los términos provenientes del estudio de la cultura, en este caso de los estudios sobre política, para aplicarlos al análisis del ámbito animal. Además, los autores parten de la base de que tanto los seres humanos como los no-humanos comparten una característica y es que ambos son seres sintientes, negando por completo cualquier tipo de automatismo en la conducta de los animales, basándose en las nuevas investigaciones etológicas que desmienten este presupuesto.[15]

Sin embargo, ambas teorías tienen un punto en común: tanto los autores de *Zoopolis* como Gehlen recalcan la desventaja o inferioridad del humano para sobrevivir (de manera sostenible, en opinión del planteamiento contemporáneo) en comparación

[15] Sin embargo, en la propuesta que lanzan los autores se hallan ciertos puntos que deben mejorarse. Para comenzar cabe decir que se centra mucho en la realidad estadounidense, centrando la discusión en problemas que para el lector o activista europeo resultan lejanos. Por otro lado, y relacionado con lo anterior, en la obra se echa en falta la voz que viene de la ruralidad o de espacios donde la relación entre humano y animal no se basa principalmente en la industria cárnica. En dichos espacios se dan problemas reales derivados del problema de la intervención o no-intervención, como es el caso del oso pardo o el urogallo en el Pirineo o el lobo en Asturias y en León. Es en esos casos donde realmente se está discutiendo y midiendo los beneficios de la intervención, mas tanto en la obra de Kymlicka y Donaldson y así como en muchas obras de autores animalistas, se echa en falta esa atención a esa realidad donde se debaten políticas intervencionistas.

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con la vida animal (Gehlen ctd. en Lombo 364). En el artículo de LEAP, para hacer contra a las posturas paternalistas que abogan por una hiper-intervención en el medio, hacen uso de ese mismo argumento, diciendo que en considerables ocasiones los animales salvajes demuestran una mayor competencia a la hora de perpetuar su propia especie, viviendo dentro de su medio ecológico y dejando los bienes suficientes para las próximas generaciones (Donaldson y Kymlicka, "A defense" 157).

Además, ambas teorías recalcan el carácter manipulador del medio que desde el principio el humano ha demostrado manejar (para contrarrestar su pobreza de especificidad). Los autores no niegan que el humano debiera dejar de intervenir en el medio, como pueden defender algunas posturas radicales del animalismo, pero sí que abogan por una limitación de ese impacto en el medio. La manera de corregir las expansiones desmesuradas que desembocan en catástrofes ecológicas y de evitar la disminución de la biodiversidad del planeta, según Kymlicka y Donaldson, es el uso de herramientas políticas, esto es, de elementos propiamente culturales y humanos. Por tanto, si a primera vista parecieran teorías muy alejadas tanto en el tiempo como en el contenido, vemos que ciertos aspectos de la antropología gehleniana siguen vigentes en el discurso contemporáneo de *Zoopolis*. El intervencionismo moderado por tanto, no sería más que una manifestación de la cultura.

Conclusiones

Partiendo de un mito de la Antigüedad, se ha intentado explicar una problemática actual. En este caso, Prometeo y Epimeteo nos han brindado la oportunidad de repensar dos posturas que conciben de manera diferente el lugar que el ser humano ocupa en la naturaleza y en concreto, la relación que debería tener con los animales salvajes.

Tradicionalmente, en los discursos de los principales defensores de la no-intervención o el *laissez-faire*—ligados a los defensores de los derechos de los animales—la característica principal de lo "humano" que se recalca como justificadora de su postura no es la inteligencia, sino más bien, lo contrario: su limitado conocimiento y su fragilidad ante la naturaleza: concepción que se asemeja al primer humano modelado por Epimeteo. Al contrario, los defensores del intervencionismo—ligados sobre todo a discursos ecologistas y medio-ambientalistas—legitiman su acción interventora apoyándose en la inteligencia y cultura, describiendo al ser humano como el ser que modela y "perfecciona" Prometeo. Estas dos posturas, una cercana a la imagen del hombre epimeteico y la otra al prometeico, tradicionalmente, han sido presentadas opuestas e incluso contradictorias, pero tanto los de un lado como los del otro han obviado ciertos matices que hacen que sus discursos pierdan consistencia argumentativa, o mejor dicho, su oposición no sea tan fuerte como se ha planteado.

Por un lado, si analizamos el discurso tradicional de los ART, defensores de la no-intervención, debe apuntarse a que la intervención humana no se limita a la caza y a la pesca, como gran parte de ellos supone; como apuntan los autores de *Zoopolis*, nuestro modo de vida modela el paisaje; la red de carreteras, el tráfico aéreo, la contaminación, la construcción de viviendas… Son las que realmente afectan e intervienen en los

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hábitats de los animales salvajes, y por ende, detener toda la red de intervención resultaría difícil de defender teóricamente y aún más difícil, ejecutarlo en la vida real. Además, la mayoría de argumentos y ejemplos que proponen presentan intervenciones que han resultado perniciosas para el ecosistema, habiendo un gran número de intervenciones que pueden respaldar lo contrario.

Por otro lado, los defensores de la intervención apuntan a que el humano posee una inteligencia y una cultura que le confiere cierta responsabilidad moral ante el mundo salvaje y por ende, debe actuar para salvaguardar las especies que enriquecen el ecosistema. El problema de la intervención, bajo el punto de vista animalista, reside en que aceptan el exterminio de especies si el ecosistema se ve afectado negativamente por ellas. Pero sobre todo, el problema de la intervención reside en medir su impacto.

La respuesta que ofrecen los autores de *Zoopolis* resulta válida, diciendo que, siendo irreal eliminar toda la intervención humana—sea buena o mala—debería abogarse por la intervención moderada, donde la soberanía animal fuera respetada, acercando así el discurso animalista al medioambientalista. Por ello, se cree que la propuesta de *Zoopolis* intenta fusionar las características de lo epimeteico y de lo prometeico, uniendo la fragilidad humana con la inteligencia.

Sin embargo, los problemas que se desprenden de la "intervención moderada" radican en que es realmente difícil medir lo benigno o maligno de nuestra intervención; a menudo, favoreciendo unas especies, desfavorecemos a otras. Además, muchas de las reivindicaciones surgidas en las últimas décadas, y sobre todo, los últimos años, surgen desde la urbe, ignorando la realidad de las comunidades que conviven con los animales salvajes, que es donde realmente padecen la intervención o la no-intervención· Sin duda, el análisis de un caso real ayudaría a discernir los desafíos que presenta esta "intervención moderada".

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"We're Going in for Natural Training": Athletics and Agriculture in Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon*

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Abstract

Jack London was both an athlete and an environmentalist, and in *The Valley of the Moon* (1913) he represents athletics not as a distraction from environmental issues but as the model for the types of exercise that modern humans must perform to establish a more sustainable relationship to the natural world. Writing what at times resembles a fictional training manual, I argue, London taps into his contemporaries' anxieties about human physical degeneration and their pervasive fascination with sports, fitness and physical performance. At the same time, London also uses his novel to address environmental degeneration head-on, valorizing early 20th-century agrarian practices designed to regenerate American agriculture and establish American society as a whole on a more ecologically sound basis. *The Valley of the Moon* merits ecocritical interest, I find, because London uses athletics as a template for thinking about the forms of "natural training" that humans must engage in if they wish to evolve into responsible managers of both their own bodies and the natural environment.

Keywords: Agriculture, askesis, athletics, environmental crisis, environmental reform, Jack London, Peter Sloterdijk.

Resumen

Jack London era tanto un atleta como un ecologista, y en *The Valley of the Moon* (1913) representa el atletismo no como una distracción de los problemas medioambientales sino como el modelo de los tipos de ejercicio que los humanos modernos deben realizar para establecer una relación más sostenible con el mundo natural. Escribiendo lo que a veces parece un manual de entrenamiento ficticio, London aprovecha las ansiedades de sus contemporáneos sobre la degeneración física humana y su fascinación dominante con los deportes, la forma física y el rendimiento físico. Al mismo tiempo, London también usa su novela para abordar directamente la degeneración ambiental, valorizando las prácticas agrarias de principios del siglo XX diseñadas para regenerar la agricultura estadounidense y establecer la sociedad estadounidense en su conjunto sobre una base más ecológica. Creo que *The Valley of the Moon* merece interés ecocrítico, porque London utiliza el atletismo como una plantilla para pensar en las formas de "entrenamiento natural" que los humanos deben adoptar si desean evolucionar en gerentes responsables tanto de sus propios cuerpos como del entorno natural.

Palabras clave: Agricultura, ascesis, atletismo, crisis medioambiental, reforma medioambiental, Jack London, Peter Sloterdijk.

Introduction

Reflecting upon recent history in his book *Body Sense: Gymnastics, Dance, Sport* (*Körpersinn. Gymnastik, Sport, Tanz* [1927]), the Swiss composer Wolfgang Graeser remarked that

> [s]omething new has appeared. It could be called a movement, a wave, a fashion, a passion, a new feeling for life; this is a reality that has inundated, pursued, inspired, reformed and influenced millions of people. . . . It had no name but was called by a hundred old names and a hundred new ones. . . Body culture, gymnastics, dance, cult dances, the new corporeality, the new physicality, the revival of the ideals of antiquity, the new gymnastics, physical exercise and hygiene, sport in all its incarnations such as those played in the nude, nudism, life reform, functional gymnastics, physical education, rhythmical exercise with all its countless expressions, and so on. . . . The entire Western world and its sphere of influence has been transformed by this strange new sensibility and way of life—from America to Australia, from Europe to Japan. The individual manifestations may be different, but essentially it is always the same thing. (683)

The first decades of the 20th century were the golden age of sports, a time when athletics pervaded western modernity as thoroughly as in classical antiquity, when "the ideal body for young men and—to a lesser degree—women was the body capable of, trained for, and physically shaped by sports" (Guttmann 186), and when popular and high-cultural artists began to fashion the modern genres of sports literature, culture and film (Green; Nielsen; Wedemeyer-Kolwe; Wilk; Zweininger-Bargielowska). Sports stars and fitness pioneers like the Prussian-British bodybuilder Eugen Sandow, the Danish ex-army lieutenant Jørgen Peter Müller, the German gymnast Hans Surén, the American exercise mogul Bernarr MacFadden, the Australian swimmer Annette Kellerman and the Lithuanian wrestler Georg Karl Julius Hackenschmid all touted body-cultural practices like nude gymnastics, cycling, weightlifting, martial arts, swimming, diving and Indian club swinging as roads to health, happiness and beauty. Modernity's "extraordinary [...] preoccupation with physicality" (Segel 1) can appear antithetical to environmental values, fetishizing human beauty and performance to the exclusion of non-human beings, and separating winners from losers in ways that run counter to ecological core values like cooperation, symbiosis and connectedness. Sports theorist John Bale articulates the widely-held position that "as a cultural and not a natural phenomenon, sport [...], at root, is anti-nature" (39). In this essay, however, I discuss a popular and influential 20th-century figure—the American writer Jack London—for whom athleticism and pro-environmental behavior went hand-in-hand

Jack London was an athlete, an environmentalist and "the highest-paid, best-known, and most popular writer in the world" (Stone 65). In *The Valley of the Moon*, which was first serialized in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in April-December 1913, London represents athletics not as a distraction from environmental issues, but as the model for the types of exercise that modern humans must perform to establish a more sustainable relationship to the natural world. Writing what at times resembles a fictional training manual, I first argue, London taps into his contemporaries' anxieties about human physical degeneration and their pervasive fascination with sports, fitness and all aspects of somatic prowess and performance. He depicts how vulnerable modern selves can be

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revitalized through various forms of physical discipline and exercise, and he makes a plea for spreading awareness of organized training methods beyond male members of the professional middle class.

In the second part of my essay, I go on to show how London also uses his novel to address environmental degeneration head-on, and especially how this concern with health and fitness leads him to valorize early 20th-century agrarian practices designed to regenerate American agriculture and establish American society as a whole on a more ecologically sound basis. *The Valley of the Moon* represents certain athletic activities and certain kinds of environmental reform as interrelated strategies for overcoming decadence, optimizing vitality, and becoming "faithful to the earth" (Nietzsche 6). Unlike some critics, I am less inclined to interpret London's late fiction as a psychological aberration or a betrayal of his political principles than I am interested in considering how such writing resonates with vital questions and challenges in our own age of intensified social and environmental crisis. To help me consider this, by way of conclusion, I briefly turn to the German philosopher and sports aficionado Peter Sloterdijk, who has emerged in his recent writings as a powerful environmentally-minded spokesman for the very type of *askesis*[1] that London advocated more than a century ago.

Physical Culture

Critics have discovered multifarious meanings in London's penultimate novel *The Valley of the Moon*, reading it as a proletarian novel, a regional novel, a picaresque romance, a road novel, a spiritual allegory, a race (or racist) polemic and a woman-centered *bildungsroman* (Kingman; Fine; Crow; Campbell; Kaufman, Furer; Reesman 245-257). Some have associated *The Valley of the Moon* with traditional American literary motifs such as pastoralism, agrarianism and anti-urbanism (Labor; Den Tandt 108-117; Shi; Bender). I interpret the novel as a body-centered narrative that is studded with references to contemporary sports stars and steeped in the lore of various athletic disciplines.

In the first part of the novel, set in Oakland, London offers a bleak assessment of 20th-century American youth's physical fortunes, presenting the modern industrial city as a harmful, degenerative and ultimately pathogenic environment. Nature and heredity have blessed the young working-class couple Billy Roberts (a teamster and ex-prizefighter) and Saxon Brown (a laundry worker) with good looks and strong physiques. A tireless worker and "good-looker" (37) with a taste for elegance and finery, Saxon has inherited the willpower and beauty of her female Anglo-Saxon ancestors, who fought their way across oceans and prairies:

> Hers was her mother's form. Physically, she was like her mother. Her grit, her ability to turn off work that was such an amazement to others, were her mother's. Just so had her

[1] In its original Greek context, as Michel Foucault obseves, the word *askesis* (ἄσκησις) simply meant exercise, as in training, practice, or development. Furthermore, Foucault points out that in the Greek context, the term always had a positive and productive meaning: Exercising meant perfecting oneself, developing one's capacities, realizing a higher form of existence, becoming who one truly is (34-35).

> mother been an amazement to her generation—her mother, the toy-like creature, the smallest and the youngest of the strapping pioneer brood, who nevertheless had mothered the brood. (40)

Meanwhile, Billy is said to combine "bulk and muscle" (22) with calm and poise, being "one of those rare individuals that radiate muscular grace through the ungraceful man-garments of civilization" (13). Having fought off many suitors, the two seem perfectly matched in fortitude and attractiveness, and after a short and somewhat artless courtship on Billy's part they are able to marry and set up a household in a small cottage behind a white picket fence.

From the beginning, however, Billy and Saxon's well-being is jeopardized by hostile factors including unsanitary living conditions, lack of nourishing food, unhealthy habits such as drinking and smoking, the incessant demands of the industrial workplace, and the stressful economic precariousness of working-class existence. Billy voices a keen sense of volatility and vulnerability already during one of the couple's first dates:

> "I guess you're hep to what a few more years in the laundry'll do to you. Take me. I'm sellin' my silk slow every day I work. See that little finger?" He shifted the reins to one hand for a moment and held up the free hand for inspection. "I can't straighten it like the others, an' it's growin'. I never put it out fightin'. The teamin's done it. That's silk gone across the counter, that's all. Ever see a old four-horse teamster's hands? They look like claws they're that crippled an' twisted." (68-69)

Saxon, too, confronts the possible outcome of proletarian life in the shape of her hysterical sister-in-law Sarah, a broken-spirited harridan who is worn down by domestic work and child bearing to become "middle-aged, lop-breasted, hair-tousled, her face lined with care and fat petulance" (6). The first, pessimistic part of London's novel dwells on the causes of mental and physical decline, exposing its protagonists to a protracted deterioration that almost leaves them dead. When an industrial conflict breaks out, the couple's friend Bert is killed and Bert's demoralized and destitute wife Mary, who is "suffering from nerves" (219), becomes a prostitute to survive. Out of work, Billy takes to drinking and fighting, becomes abusive of his wife, has his arms broken in a brawl, attacks the couple's innocent lodger and finally ends up in prison "a sick man" (181). Meanwhile Saxon fails to recover from a miscarriage brought on by watching a "massacre" of strikers and scabs. Left to her own devices, suffering from malnutrition, depression and a nervous "illness that she did not know as illness" (197), she puts herself at risk by wandering around the city scavenging for food and firewood. Thus, while Billy loses his self-respect and takes to abusing his body with alcohol, tobacco and late-night carousing, Saxon suffers inexplicable blackouts and begins to wonder whether "[h]er bodily health was as it should be" (197). Upon consulting her doctor, she learns that she is "run down, out of condition" (199).

In *The Valley of the Moon*, the human body is beset by a host of dangers. Throughout the novel's first half, as David Fine points out, London revisits the styles and themes of naturalist fiction, whose popularity had peaked some years earlier with novels by Emile Zola, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris and Upton Sinclair. London's

novel, however, is both pathography and recovery manual, having a cure as well as a diagnosis to convey. The second part of the narrative debunks naturalism's "pessimistic materialistic determinism" (Becker 35), as Billy and Saxon, breaking an inevitable downward spiral, abandon "Oakland the man-trap" (London, *Valley* 229) and set out on a romantic journey in search for "chickens and a place to grow vegetables" (236). Traversing a modern, post-pastoral and distinctly multi-ethnic California, the couple fantasize a new life as small-scale independent farmers in what they playfully call "The Valley of the Moon": a harmonious "middle landscape" (Marx 77) halfway between wilderness and civilization. Somewhat miraculously, their romanticism is vindicated when after a year of travelling, observation and learning they locate precisely such a place and such a life in London's own home county, whose Native American name "Sonoma" means "The Valley of the Moon."

London uses the "California visionary romance" (Crow 6) plot of the novel's second half to initiate his protagonists—and readers—to key forms of modern *askesis*: techniques, disciplines and practices by which he believed that modern people could overcome their conditioning, strengthen their immune system, and lead healthier and more fulfilling lives. As Saxon puts it,

> "[w]e've been brought up different, that's all. We've lived in cities all our lives. We know the city sounds and things, but we don't know the country ones. Our training has been unnatural, that's the whole thing in a nutshell. Now we're going in for natural training." (262).

As a crucial ingredient of this makeover, London demands that people "get . . . in shape" and "keep in condition" (51) through sports, fitness and what in the early 20th century was called "physical culture." An important episode in the second half takes the couple to Carmel on California's Pacific coast, where they spend a winter working out among a group of bohemian open-air fitness enthusiasts known collectively as the "Abelone Eaters":

> Down from the dark pines and across the sandhills ran a man, naked save for narrow trunks. He was smooth and rosy-skinned, cherubic-faced, with a thatch of curly yellow hair, but his body was hugely thewed as a Hercules.
> "Gee!—must be Sandow," Billy muttered low to Saxon.
> The runner passed them a dozen feet away, crossed the wet sand, never parsing, till the froth wash was to his knees while above him, ten feet at least, upreared a wash of overtopping water. Huge and powerful as his body had seemed, it was now white and fragile in the face of that imminent, great-handed buffet of the sea. But the stranger sprang to meet the blow, and, just when it seemed he must be crushed, he dived into the face of the breaker and disappeared. (297)

The Abelone Eaters group consists of middle-class male and female literati, intellectuals and academics: "athletes" (309) and "lighthearted young people" (315) who have turned their backs (at least temporarily) on the city to train their bodies and explore the pleasures of "simple living" (325). Prominent members include the Herculean Jim Hazard, a family father, author, football coach and "physical prodigy" (299) whom Billy first mistakes for the world-renowned German-born bodybuilder Eugen Sandow, and

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the college professor and "Iron Man" Pete Bideaux. Later the group's leader, the poet Mark Hall, makes his appearance wearing nothing but swimming trunks and tennis shoes:

> Saxon called to Billy, who was improvising a table from a wave-washed plank. She pointed seaward. On the far point of rocks, naked except for swimming trunks, stood a man. He was gazing toward them, and they could see his long mop of dark hair blown by the wind. As he started to climb the rocks landward Billy called Saxon's attention to the fact that the stranger wore tennis shoes. In a few minutes he dropped down from the rock to the beach and walked up to them.
> "Gosh!" Billy whispered to Saxon. "He's lean enough, but look at his muscles." (304)

In the Carmel section of *The Valley of the Moon*, London explores sports' powerful techniques of self-transformation and self-purification. In the early 20th century, Carmel was a well-known hub of countercultural activity and lifestyle experimentation (Star 239-287). London bases his athlete characters in part on real-life acquaintances and in part on well-known turn-of-the-century world-class athletes, fitness gurus, celebrity bodybuilders and professional strongmen like Sandow, George Hackenschmidt, Jim Jeffries and Frank Gotch, all of whom are referenced in the novel, and several of whom were also successful authors.[2] London's Carmel is a neo-pagan athletes' heterotopia, a permanent "training camp" (316) or Bernarr MacFadden-inspired "healthatorium," where "[e]verybody . . . seems to go in for physical culture" (304). Here Billy and Saxon encounter an Olympian race of half-naked men and women engaged in stunning feats of *autopoeisis*. Renouncing the complacency of ordinary life, the Abelone Eaters have devoted themselves to the pursuit of fitness, excellence and virtuosity—what the ancient Greeks called *arete* (ἀρετή)—within their chosen disciplines, including boxing, ocean swimming, rock climbing, weightlifting, Indian wrestling and caber toss.

London's novel pits "despisers of the body" (Nietzsche 22) against those who face up to physical existence.[3] Athletes and athletics fascinate Billy and Saxon (and London) because athletes shape, revitalize and enhance themselves through bodywork. Dumbbells, vegetarianism and open-air exercise saved MacFadden from muscular atrophy when he was at risk of becoming a "physical wreck" (qtd. Whorton 300). Claiming an analogous transformation, London's Jack Hall explains that "'[t]he doctors gave me up. My friends called me the sick rat, and the mangy poet and all that. Then I quit the city, came down to Carmel'" (307). The bodies of Hall, Hazard, Bideaux and their fellows become objects of desire, stimulating and directing Billy and Saxon's wish to make something (more) of themselves. Billy is no stranger to physical exercise, having boxed professionally from time to time to supplement his meagre wages. In Carmel, however, Billy becomes training partner to Hall and Hazard, exercising and competing in ways that often leave him "played out to exhaustion" (322). For example, when Billy is

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[2] Sandow, for example, was the author of several books including the immensely popular *Strength and How to Obtain It* (1897).

[3] London's relationship with Nietzsche was intense, complex and ambivalent, and in 1915 he wrote that "I have been more stimulated by Nietzsche than by any other writer in the world. At the same time, I have been an intellectual enemy to Nietzsche" (*Letters* 3: 1485).

defeated in a thrilling rock climbing contest, he devotes himself to rigorous training in order to improve his "beginner's" performance:

> "I ain't ashamed of admittin' I was scairt," Billy growled. "You're a regular goat, an' you sure got my goat half a dozen times. But I'm mad now. It's mostly trainin', an' I'm goin' to camp right here an' train till I can challenge you to a race out an' around an' back to the beach." (309)

Before long, he is able to fulfill his "sporting proposition" (320) of defeating Hall in a repeat race.

Women's participation in physical culture was controversial at London's time, but the female members of the Carmel circle are no less vigorous than their male counterparts, and one "strapping young amazon in a cross-saddle riding costume" (316) even bests Billy three times in a wrestling contest. Having always "exercised the various parts of her body" (118), Saxon, too, benefits from "natural training," and at the end of their stay her lithe physique earns her admiring comparisons to the Australian élite swimmer and pin-up model Annette Kellerman (334). London echoes Juvenal's phrase *mens sana in corpore sano* ("a healthy mind in a healthy body"), when he shows how training boosts resilience and confidence, building mental as well as physical strength. Thus, as a result of "swimmin' . . . boxin', wrestlin', runnin' an' jumpin' for the sport of it" (341), Billy and Saxon "fared better physically, materially, and spiritually; and all this was reflected in their features, in the carriage of their bodies" (334).

Permanent Agriculture

Besides being a "sports novel" (Oriard, *Dreaming* 6) documenting the cult of life, vitality, physical expression and "clean living" (Engs) that swept across Europe and North America in the early years of the 20th century, however, *The Valley of the Moon* also functions as an "environmental text" in which "human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation" (Buell 7). This is because another, equally important dimension as of Billy and Saxon's "natural training" program concerns their re-education as farmers, and especially their assimilation of new reformist agricultural techniques in response to what London and many others perceived as the threatening environmental collapse of modern America.

Saxon and Billy leave Oakland nourishing inchoate dreams of "makin' a go in the country" (312), but their utter lack of capital, contacts, theoretical knowledge and practical experience weaken their prospects of realizing "independent farming life" (278). Moreover, the couple's first hands-on experiences at a family-owned farm suggest that the days of successful agriculture are already in the past:

> Farm and farmer were old-fashioned. There was no intensive cultivation. There was too much land too little farmed. Everything was slipshod. House and barn and outbuildings were fast falling into ruin. The front yard was weed-grown. There was no vegetable garden. The small orchard was old, sickly, and neglected. The trees were twisted, spindling, and overgrown with a gray moss. The sons and daughters were away in the cities, Saxon found out. One daughter had married a doctor, the other was a teacher in the

> state normal school; one son was a locomotive engineer, the second was an architect, and the third was a police court reporter in San Francisco. (265)

London includes in his novel an outspoken critique of the monocultural farming practices of the "old type farmer," who is led by "stereotyped ways" that amount to "almost unthinkable . . . stupidity" (273). More specifically, observations made on the road and interchanges with informants who ventriloquize London's own views help Billy and Saxon grasp how California farmers, by failing to realize their historical situation and by refusing to consider the long-term effects of their practices, have exhausted soil fertility built up over millennia, caused enormous harm to biodiversity, and brought the ecosystem to the brink of collapse. In London's analysis, the abundance of space and land once available in the West has engendered a rapacious, speculative and exploitative "bonanza" (370) approach to the land, which is viewed as a disposable source of short-term capital gain rather than a durable asset to be protected and conserved. In the words of one of London's mouthpieces, the writer, war correspondent and farmer Jack Hastings,

> "The 'movers.' . . . lease, clean out and gut a place in several years, and then move on. They're not like the foreigners, the Chinese, and Japanese, and the rest. In the main they're a lazy, vagabond, poor-white sort, who do nothing else but skin the soil and move, skin the soil and move. . . .In three years they can gut enough out of somebody else's land to set themselves up for life. It is sacrilege, a veritable rape of the land; but what of it? It's the way of the United States." (348-349)

Disregarding signs of pervasive change and imminent crisis, London charges, American farmers have ignored the consequences of their actions and continue to farm as though new land were endlessly available. London implicates American slash-and-burn farmers in the rampant environmental destruction wrought by the pioneer spirit: "They destroyed everything—the Indians, the soil, the forests, just as they destroyed the buffalo and the passenger pigeon" (331-332). The abundance of "worked-out land" (370) and the multitude of failed or failing farms that dot the map of California signal a crisis that is both moral and epistemological. "Lazy" as well as "ignorant," American farmers lack both the strength and the knowledge to farm in the post-wilderness, post-frontier, multi-cultural and densely populated world of the new 20th century.

According to London, the forces that render the human body a "wreck" (168) also threaten to destroy the natural environment. Billy and Saxon are on a "quest" (219) for land that they can "love and care for and conserve" (349), however, and along their pilgrim's progress they also encounter several helpers who take the couple under their wings and train them in the up-to-date habits and techniques of modern-day small-scale farming. London's protagonists find an empowering role model, for example in Mr. Benson, a college-educated "up to date" and "sharp" (281) farmer who employs Billy to plow his field and lets the couple ride in his automobile. Benson is given to pessimistic harangues against his fellow American farmers, but he impresses the couple positively with his efficient and well run farm. Jack Hastings, too, has a record of "conserving the soil" by "draining and ditching to stop erosion and experimenting with pasture grasses"

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(349). And towards the end, when Billy and Saxon arrive in the Valley of the Moon, they are welcomed by the kindly Mr. and Mrs. Hale, who, acting as substitute parents to the orphaned couple, help them gain financial foothold and begin their own agricultural careers. Yet another benefactor figure, Mrs. Mortimer of San José, is a former librarian who has transcended her conventional bourgeois background, reinvented herself as a middle-aged single woman farmer and rebuilt a 20-acre "rattletrap ruin" (274) into a flourishing cottage industry combining agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and the production of "homemade jams and jellies" (271). Contemptuous of all received wisdom coming from "the old style American farmer" (272), Mrs. Mortimer has applied her impressive book learning to her new career, gleaning valuable knowledge from "agricultural reports and farm publications" (279). Making repeated appearances and interventions, she tutors her protégés in successful marketing strategies and the advantageous methods of diversified agricultural production.

Farming is the site of conflict between the "last human being[s]" (Nietzsche 22), who slavishly perpetuate already worn-out routines, and the "free spirits" (79) who risk everything on bold experiments to redeem the morass of 20th-century America. Mr. Benson, Mrs. Mortimer and the Hales are avant-garde prototypes of what London calls "the 'new' farmer" (*Valley* 398). More specifically, these characters practice forms of polyculture, or what turn-of-the-century agricultural reformers referred to as "permanent agriculture," that London derived from his extensive travels, his experiences as owner and manager of his "Beauty Ranch" near Glen Ellen, and his reading of agrarian reform writers like Edward J. Wickson, Piotr Kropotkin, Bolton Hall, J. Russell Smith, Cyril G. Hopkins and especially Franklin Hiram King, whose *Farmers of Forty Centuries; Or Permanent Agriculture in China, Korea and Japan* (1911) attracted him to Asian farmers' traditional agricultural methods and soil conservation techniques. The term "permanent agriculture" was coined roughly a century ago to describe forestry and farming practices that combated key issues of the day, especially erosion and degradation of farmland, by imitating the diversity of natural ecosystems and by ensuring that as many nutrients as possible were returned to the soil (Paull). To achieve these ends, permanent agriculturalists recommended techniques like composting, crop rotation, combination planting, water retention, resource recycling and the use of plant and animal wastes as fertilizer. London uses his novel to catalogue and promote many of these techniques, much as he advertises the potential benefits of various athletic disciplines. Thus, at key points of their California journey Billy and Saxon admire the Chinese practice of multicropping, which involves planting "two crops at one time on the same soil . . . radishes and carrots, two crops, sown at the same time" (340). Elsewhere they marvel at the Portuguese "trick" (248) of interspersing different crops within the same space – a method known to permanent agriculturalists as intercropping or alley cropping:

> "Look at that . . . Not an inch wasted. Where we got one thin crop, they get four fat crops. An' look at the way they crowd it – currants between the tree rows, beans between the currant rows, a row of beans close on each side of the trees, an' rows of beans along the ends of the tree rows." (250)

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At another moment, London lets Mr. Benson recommend the labor-intensive technique of terrace cultivation, practiced throughout Asia and the Mediterranean, which maximizes arable land in variable terrains and reduces soil erosion and water runoff:

> "First thing, in Japan, the terraced hillsides. Take a hill so steep you couldn't drive a horse up it. No bother to them. They terraced it – a stone wall, and good masonry, six feet high, a level terrace six feet wide; up and up, walls and terraces, the same thing all the way, straight into the air, walls upon walls, terraces upon terraces, until I've seen ten-foot walls built to make three-foot terraces, and twenty-foot walls for four or five feet of soil they could grow things on. And that soil, packed up the mountainsides in baskets on their backs!" (293)

The new century calls for new role models and for new practices in "building up the soil" (349) as well as in making the "body sweet and clean and beautiful" (280). Forming a loosely-knit network of visionaries, eccentrics, autodidacts and iconoclasts, characters like Mr. Benson, Mrs. Mortimer and the Hales practice modes of *askesis* that complement but go beyond those of "Mark Hall and his Carmel crowd" (350). London's privileged agricultural characters have all outgrown the wasteful, indifferent and destructive habits of the "old-style" American farmer. Rising above "dogmatic and prejudiced beliefs" (273), they have adopted a new and austere regimen and been reborn—or rather, given birth to themselves – as environmentally conscious stewards of the land. Towards the end of his life, London became engrossed in the project of building his Sonoma ranch into a "model farm" (Stone 280), hoping that he could "leave the land better for my having been" and "enable thirty or forty families to live happily on ground that was so impoverished that an average of three farmers went bankrupt on each of the five ranches I have run together" (*Letters* 1378). Similarly, in *The Valley of the Moon*, the Benson, Mortimer, Hale and similar farms are infused with a pedagogical *eros* that inspires love and the wish to imitate. "[M]odel[s] . . . for independent farming life" (278), these habitations lend substance and clarity to Saxon and Billy's hazy pastoral visions: "Saxon, revisioning the little bungalow they had just left, repeated absently: 'That's it—the way'" (280). By the end of the novel, Saxon and Billy's own farm in Sonoma is itself flourishing into a "model of orderliness and beauty" (376), providing a similar empowering template of "this new mode of life" (323).

Conclusion: "Join the Gym to Save the Planet"

Although he struggled against obesity, alcoholism and tobacco addiction, Jack London was an avid participant in boxing, fencing, short put, swimming, sailing, surfing, horseback riding and shooting. London collaborated with fitness entrepreneur Bernarr MacFadden, told an interviewer in 1905 that "if he had any religion it was physical culture" (qtd. Starr 211), and enjoyed few things more than letting himself be photographed striking muscular poses in athletic garb.[4] Labelled "the father of American sports fiction" (Oriard), London also figures as an "outdoorsman and environmentalist"

[4] Some of these photographs can be viewed at http://london.sonoma.edu/images/.

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(Dwyer 15), a "nature writer and conservationist" (Elder 708), who practiced a pioneering but financially unsuccessful form of sustainable agriculture at his "Beauty Ranch" in Sonoma Valley (Koster; Praetzellis and Praetzellis).

The Valley of the Moon is a sprawling, heterogeneous, generically hybrid and densely intertextual text that combines sports fiction, environmental protest tract, small-scale farm manual and therapeutic survival guide to modern life. The novel renounces collective mass mobilization through the tragic figures of Saxon's brother Tom and Billy's friend Bert, both union activists and socialist party members who have been taught to believe, erroneously, that progress and justice will follow if workers collectively confront "capital" (163). While some critics find that *The Valley of the Moon* harks back to the traditional themes of Jeffersonian agrarianism (Campbell 247), others argue that London's novel contains "ecological wisdom . . . decades ahead of his time" (Shi 103). In my reading, London's back-to-the-land novel merits ecocritical interest primarily because he uses athletics as a template for thinking about the forms of "natural training" that humans must engage in if they wish to evolve into responsible managers of their own bodies and their own "little acres" (244). Abandoning his previous role as agitator, London moves from socialism to somatism, revolution to evolution; he reinvents himself as ascetic critic of modern civilization and as healer, guru or coach guiding free-spirited readers toward healthier habits and more disciplined and nature-conscious ways of life.

Early 20th-century *askesis* is re-actualized and re-valorized, within the context of contemporary global crisis, by the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, who has recently begun to exert a powerful theoretical influence within the environmental humanities (Andersen; Bergthaller; Welters). Not unlike London, Sloterdijk is a prolific, complex and often contradictory writer who incites frequent controversies, counts Nietzsche as an important ancestor, is vitally engaged with sports, athletics and body culture, and takes environmental crisis very seriously. The provocative thesis of Sloterdijk's 2009 *You Must Change Your Life*, which takes its title from a sonnet by Rainer Maria Rilke, is that religion does not exist and never has existed. All that exist, Sloterdijk insists, are different forms of exercise or training, manifestations of what he calls "practicing humans" (78). Whether they are prompted by a master or impelled by individual ascetic ambitions, humans have always been engaged in self-disciplinary techniques of improvement and transformation. "[F]armers, workers, warriors, writers, yogis, athletes, rhetoricians, circus artistes, rhapsodists, scholars, instrumental virtuosos or models" (110): all have in common the fact that they are "human[s] in training" (110), "acrobats" (13) walking tightropes and performing deeds of near-impossible difficulty that amaze the rest of us and accelerate the transformation of the human being into something greater than him- or herself.

According to Sloterdijk, the athletic craze leading to the resurrection of the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896 marked an epochal change of human behavior, manifesting a "re-somatization or a de-spiritualization of asceticisms" (27), as self-formation was loosened from its economic underpinnings and metaphysical scaffoldings. In the last chapter of *You Must Change Your Life* and in related comments

and interviews, Sloterdijk links the history of *askesis* to the current ecological crisis. Noting that the "ascetic imperative" now resounds with increased insistence and gravity, he dwells on the "acrobatics" (*You Must* 47) that must be practiced if humanity is to survive on Earth:

> "You can see the catastrophe approaching. We face enormous challenges. We need to transform our entire civilization, the complete technology needs to be rebuilt. Fossil fuels are . . . a subterranean forest which has stopped growing, and which we only burn. That will disappear over the next hundred years. We must use technology to develop a different civilization . . . Without nuclear energy, without the old fossil fuels. The sooner we begin this transformation, the better. That's all in this new imperative. But you must change your life also has other components: one relates to sports, another to diet, another to our association with nature, yet another to agriculture." (Giesen [my translation])

Writing a form of "coach discourse" (*You Must* 28), Sloterdijk like London is concerned to valorize and synthesize different "anthropotechnic" practices that express what he calls "vertical tension"—that is, the impulse that drives people to transcend their limitations, take on daunting challenges, and seek a more perfect being-in-the-world. The extreme commitment of top athletes, Sloterdijk claims, mirror and inspire the equally extreme forms of "de-passivizing" (195) that we must each practice to their fullest potential to reduce our CO2 emissions, limit our ecological footprints, and transition to a low-energy and low-consumption lifestyle before it is too late. For Sloterdijk, who only half-jokingly calls on people to "join the gym to save the planet" (Giesen [my translation]), it is the professional Tour de France cyclist rather than the worker, the outlaw, the migrant, the soldier, the revolutionary, the artist or the astronaut who best embodies the utopian energies and hopeful prospects of modernity (Sloterdijk, "Tour de France"). Exercising fastidious economies of input and output, athletes have already metamorphosed into ascetic super-humans, and now the rest of humanity is summoned to climb "Mount Improbable" (*You Must* 118).

In an interview, Sloterdijk casts a backward glance and states that "[t]he 20th century ended with the realization that the revolutionaries were wrong and the life reformers were right" ("Ein Stecker" [my translation]). What writers like Nietzsche, Rilke and London understood, we might say, is that radical change cannot be engineered and imposed from above, and that the self-shaping human being remains the best—or indeed the only—source of hope. Today, we experience a drastically radicalized version of the crisis confronted by reformers approximately 100 years ago, as we find that we must realize a mode of life compatible with the existence and well-being of seven billion human co-citizens as well as countless non-human species and a severely endangered ecosystem. Realizing that the global crisis challenges individuals to change their lives in unprecedented ways and on unprecedented scales, as part of a still unimaginable "co-immunism," we must ever more urgently seek "the good habits of shared survival in daily exercises" (*You Must* 452). Innovative and convivial programs of "natural training" must be launched to shape human culture into a total work of art compatible with globalization and ecology.

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The Nature of Anxiety: Precarious City Lives in *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora*

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Abstract

Separated by more than fifty years, the novels *La piqueta* (1959) by Antonio Ferres and *La trabajadora* (2014) by Elvira Navarro parallel each other in location and theme. Ferres locates his novel in the *Chabolas* (shantytowns) of Madrid's southern periphery, specifically Orcasitas, in the late 1950s. Navarro's novel is set primarily in the working-class neighborhood of Aluche in 2011. Both novels critique the southern periphery of Madrid during times of restructuring and crisis through descriptions of and movement through landscapes that infuse, superimpose, and ultimately are confused with the body and mind of the protagonists. These movements through Madrid's center and periphery reveal incongruences between imagined landscapes and real lived spaces. The former, constructed through tropes and metaphors of the natural environment, serve as an anchor of communal and individual identity and become unmoored from the reality of actual lived spaces. This divorce between the ideals of the imagined landscape and the concerns of the real one provokes anxiety and a breakdown of community and self.

Keywords: Antonio Ferres, Elvira Navarro, housing crisis, social realism, Ecocriticism, Spain, crisis, urban theory, affect.

Resumen

Separados por más de cincuenta años, las novelas *La piqueta* de Antonio Ferres (1959) y *La trabajadora* de Elvira Navarro (2014) se parecen en situación geográfica y tema. Ferres localizó su novela en las chabolas madrileñas de Aluche a finales de los años 50, mientras Navarro ubicó la suya en el barrio periférico de Aluche en 2011. Ambas novelas critican la construcción de la periferia de Madrid durante épocas de crisis política y económica a través de descripciones de y movimientos por paisajes que se infunden, se superponen y se confunden con el cuerpo y mente de los protagonistas. Además, los movimientos entre los paisajes imaginados y los espacios reales ponen al descubierto las incongruencias entre ambos. El anterior se construye a través de los tropos y metáforas del mundo natural capaces de anclar la identidad individual y comunal. Cuando estas nociones del mundo imaginado se desamarran provoca una ansiedad y el desmoronamiento del ser y de la comunidad.

Palabras claves: Antonio Ferres, Elvira Navarro, desahucio, realismo social, ecocrítica, España, crisis, teoría urbana, afecto.

The action in Antonio Ferres's *La piqueta* (1959) and Elvira Navarro's *La trabajadora* (2014) takes place in adjoining neighborhoods in Madrid, and the novels

mirror each other in their construction of identity and dispossession in the urban periphery. In *La piqueta*, a community of Andalucian and Extremaduran immigrants awaits the pick-axe, which is coming to demolish their illegal shantytown. The action is set in post-war Madrid, mostly in the Orcasitas neighborhood on the southern margins of the city. Jumping forward more than fifty years to *La trabajadora*, the action takes place in a different neighborhood of the urban periphery, Aluche. The later novel centers on two women who live under the constant threat of the *desahucios* [evictions] which characterized post 2008 crisis Spain. Both novels build a critique of the exploitation of the outer districts of Madrid through descriptions of and movement through landscapes that infuse, superimpose, and ultimately are confused with the body and mind of the protagonists. These movements through Madrid's center and periphery reveal incongruences between actual lived spaces and imagined landscapes, where tropes and metaphors of the natural environment serve as anchors of communal and individual identity. The unmooring of these anchors from reality prompts anxiety and the breakdown of community and self.

In *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* the natural world is both foil and metaphor for affective experience. The landscape and the Spanish natural terrain are deployed in these texts in such a way that their destruction as poetic and idealized places is equal to the disintegration and collapse of national and economic projects. Bodies, landscapes, and cities are bound together by ideology and torn apart through crisis. Understanding how these two novels about evictions in Madrid employ the natural world in relation to individuals and communities opens a window onto how city, body, labor, and landscape are constructed for the benefit of ideologies, political or economic. Analysis of the creative tension within and between how the novels construct the "natural" and "built" environments shows that nature goes beyond mere metaphor. Shared notions of the landscape and the environment permeate, direct, and define affective responses to a city in economic and ecological decline. To this end, this essay will look at how *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* use literary social realism to explore Madrid in their respective time periods. Rather than seeking to fulfill a set of genre expectations, Ferres and Navarro use social realism as a tool to diagnose how crisis infects landscapes and those who inhabit it. The two novels capture their present moment to document how individuals and communities both shape and are shaped by their natural and built environments. In *La piqueta*, Ferres explores how the southern periphery of Madrid became an 'operational' landscape, open to the forces of 'accumulation by dispossession'—terms from Neil Brenner and David Harvey that will be defined in the coming paragraphs. Navarro's *La trabajadora* extends this critique to the Madrid of 2011, three years after the devastating economic collapse of 2008.

Social Realism, Ecocriticism and Urban Theory

Antonio Ferres was born in Madrid in 1924 and was one of the main authors of the social realist movement in Spain in the 1950s. His first novel, *Los vencidos* (1960), was censored by the Francoist government (1939-1975) and was not published in Spain

until 2005 (*el Cultural*). His second novel, *La piqueta*, which escaped censorship and was published in 1959, established his place within the social realists of the 1950s. Elvira Navarro was born in Huelva in 1978 and grew up in Valencia. She lives in Madrid and writes novels, literary criticism, blogs, and editorials in several online journals and newspapers. In 2010 *Granta* magazine named her as one of the twenty-two "Best Young Spanish Novelists." The Spanish magazine, *El Cultural*, followed in 2013 naming her a rising star in Spanish literature. While Ferres's career underwent a distinct evolution from the social realist movement in the late 1950s to the structural novel in the 1960s and 1970s, Navarro's literary style is harder to define. Her first novels, *La ciudad en invierno* (2007) and *La ciudad feliz* (2009), are coming-of-age narratives that take place in Valencia. *La trabajadora*, her first novel entirely set in Madrid, employs social realism in its focus on the lives and surroundings of the protagonists. In *La trabajadora*, the narrator anchors the story in the present to reflect the continuation of the processes started under Franco and continued through the transition that brought Spain to crisis.[1] Both Ferres and Navarro employ social realism to draw lines between text and context, to show how ideology literally builds space and acquiescence to hegemonic power structures.

In his seminal study, *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Post War Spain*, David Herzberger examines the social realists' recreation of the first decades of the dictatorship. While Franco legitimized a disastrous present through a mythological past, when Spain was a global empire fueled by National Catholicism, Ferres and other post-war writers of the 1940s and 1950s pushed back against this illusion and censorship by subversive depictions of what they saw. Although they focused on the day-to-day lives of people, as Herzberger notes, the authors did not create simplistic "representations" of a reality divorced from historical and political circumstances. Language itself became a tool to break down myth and time. Herzberger emphasizes that the social realists critiqued real issues of the dictatorship—rural isolation, the alienation of youth, starving fishermen—with a language "so deeply common, so utterly transparent, that we remain largely unaware of its presence even as we gather together meaning from what it says" (63). This language "in all its commonness" fuses history with a tension: "[i]t speaks against the myths of the Regime (conquest, liberation, heroism, and the like) in the language of the Regime, and in doing so lays bare the deceit of its own homogeneous discourse" (63). Herzberger understands social realism as working ironically "to demystify Spanish history" because "[i]t establishes a base for understanding the historical by positing a reality in the present that necessitates a past vastly divergent from the official one" (63). Both Ferres and Navarro employ language as described by Herzberger: while anchored in the present moment, a "common" and "transparent" language coalesces with history and landscape to produce a tension capable of disrupting political and economic myths.

[1] The question of genre in this text deserves its own study. Although *La trabajadora* tends towards social realism, the unreliability of the narrator and the meditative tone of the text make its genre hard to pin down. For an extended discussion of genre concerns in Navarro's previous novels, read Susan Divine, "Cityscapes and the *novela de autoformación*: Elvira Navarro in Valencia".

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Where *La piqueta* builds the critique of Franco and 1950s urban growth through a dynamic natural world aligned with the vulnerabilities of the working class, *La trabajadora* uses a deteriorating landscape as an affective mirror of the debilitating condition of the protagonist, Elisa. Both novels trace the process of urban development on the southern fringe of Madrid from a "natural" to a "built" and "rebuilt" environment. Through studying these two novels together, we can focus on how landscape is manipulated to benefit the power structure—first that of Franco, then that of post-crisis capitalism.

Land, City, and Identity

Gayana Jurkevich, in "Defining Castile in Literature and Art," locates the origin of key myths of landscape and nationality in Spain in the beginning of the twentieth century and the second generation of Krausistas. These were the first to "turn their attention" to the Spanish land:

> familiarity with and appreciation of the national landscape were considered indispensible since the prevailing belief held that a nation's *medio ambiente* shaped the indigenous population and its history, and could be held accountable for the current deplorable state of the Spanish nation. (57)

According to both Carlos Blanco Aguinaga in his seminal *La juventud del '98* (1970), and Roberta Johnson in *Gender and Nation in the Spanish Modernist Novel* (2003), for the Spanish modernists, to understand the landscape was to understand an "authentic" or "pure" Spanish identity (Johnson 64). In his rebuilding of the nation, both in terms of infrastructure and ideology, Franco used the rural land as a container of meaning embracing a glorious history and a *castizo* identity. When Franco espoused global capitalism in the 1950s and 1960s, landscape became cityscape and the myths of national identity had to likewise be shifted from the "natural" to the "urban."

Although urban theory is well-established in Hispanic literary criticism, the ecocritical turn is in a nascent stage. Peninsular Spanish literary scholars, such as Susan Larson, Matthew Feinberg, and Luis I. Prádanos have led the discussion on ecological concerns in literary and cultural studies. In a short but intriguing article co-written by Feinberg and Larson, the authors look at activism in real space. They focus on "places that capital seems to have 'refused'—a term that refers to a 'refusal' to invest both private and public resources, but also to the notion of city space itself as 'refuse' or 'trash'," and outline how architects and philosophers reimagine these spaces ecologically (117). In Prádanos's "Energy Humanities and Spanish Urban Cultural Studies: A Call for a Radical Convergence," the author pleads for a joining up of "energy humanities"[2] and urban cultural studies. Prádanos stresses that an ecocritical and urban cultural studies approach to literature should prompt questions such as "[w]here do the energy and nutrients that support urban infrastructures and characters (human or not) come

[2] Jennifer Wenzel defines the "energy humanities" as a field that wants to "understand the discrepancy between the everyday tedium of filling the gas tank and the sublimely discrepant timescales at work in fossil fuels" (31 qtd. in Prádanos).

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from?", as well as seek to expose the "geographies of extraction and exploitation that feed the neoliberal urban growth machine" (Prádanos unpublished manuscript).[3] In Ferres and Navarro, the answer to these questions is found in how the land and the human communities around it are constructed as operational landscapes.

As David Harvey asserts: the urban is a process (1996). Likewise, Nature is a process. The process of urbanisation is carefully pursued by the forces of capitalism in order to facilitate the accumulation of capital; that of natural change works through the forces of an ambivalent evolution on a time scale that is mostly beyond the lifespan of a human being. Urban theory, on the whole, looks at how economic systems build and structure the lived reality of cities. Literary scholars apply this to cultural and literary texts to understand how artists represent or oppose that process. Ecology, in general terms, encompasses the study of biological systems and the political movements to protect the environment from the consequences of industrial pollution and human impact. Cheryll Glotfelty broadly defines ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (xviii). Refining this description, in "La naturaleza no existe," Eric Swingedouw deconstructs nature as a concept in three vital ways. In agreement with Timothy Morton, he sees nature as a "floating signifier," then as a norm or law, and as a projection of repressed fantasies (42-43). Swingedouw critiques these as all essentially empty notions that have been and are employed to fulfill human philosophy, desires, and aspirations. Although nature is certainly used as metaphor and trope in the *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora*, learning to read ecologically includes learning to understand these rhetorical strategies and their affect on the reader, as well as treating nature as a physical reality.

Literary critic Lawrence Buell has written extensively about the evolution of ecocritism from the first wave in the 1990s to the last fifteen years. During this time, the scope of what qualifies a text to be the subject of ecocritical practice has been extended progressively.[4] Whereas initially only those texts with a mimetic view, or those that spoke directly of an ecological crisis, were deemed worthy of study, as ecocriticism developed, so did the geographies, cultures, and histories included under its umbrella. Texts about the evolution of landscapes and cities—such as the novels by Ferres and Navarro – are an important piece of a mosaic that helps scholars and readers understand not only the ecological or the urban, but how these processes intersect across space and time. To this end, Buell brings ecocriticism towards urban theory, pointing out how more recent theorists analyze how "postcolonial geographies and archives" are "sophisticating the conception of place and place attachment" (100). Likewise, David Harvey, in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1996), brings

[3] Prádanos edited a special edition of *Ecozona* on Transatlantic Iberian, Latin American, and Lusophone African Ecocriticism (Volume 8.1, 2017), and an edition of *Letras hispanas* with nine articles dedicated to ecocritisim in Spanish peninsular literature and film (Volume 13, 2017). He is currently editing a special edition of *The Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* likewise dedicated to ecocriticism in Spanish literature (expected 2019).

[4] For an extended discussion of ecocriticism as practice and theory, read Agymean, *Introducing Just Sustainabilities*; Arnold et al., "Forum on Literatures of the Environment"; Harvey, "Marxism, Metaphors, and Ecological Politics"; Heise, "Local Rock and Global Plastic"; Heise, "Martian Ecologies and the Future of Nature"; and Plumwood, "Inequality, Ecojustice and Ecological Rationality."

urban theory towards ecocriticism. He comments of both scientific and humanistic literature: "We have loaded upon nature, often without knowing it, in our science as in our poetry, much of the alternate desire for values to that implied by money" (163). First recognizing that revolutionary Marxist politics "appears to perpetuate rather than resolve" abuse of the land (120), Harvey tries to "bridge" the antagonism between socialist ideals and environmental stewardship by converting the discord into a "creative rather than a destructive tension" (121). For Harvey, to resolve and move beyond this issue, we must first understand that in capitalism nature is only valued in so far as it retains its ability to aid in the production of capital. Secondly, we must recognize that language creates and perpetuates our exploitative relationship with the natural world.

Stacy Alaimo emphasizes that part of environmental degradation today rests on the false dichotomy of urban/rural. It is a binary that not only works towards ecological disaster, but also is part of the patriarchal framework that aligns women with the land and permits the exploitation of both (5). As Roberta Johnson points out in the writings of Spanish modernists: "Unamuno and Azorín evoked specific regions via female identifications. When women are associated with a geographical region, their 'soul' blends into an eternal landscape" (36). The narrators of *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* are acutely aware of how this connection between land, city, and gender motivates and influences their female protagonists. Although much of feminist theory has been dedicated to "disentangling" woman from this alignment with nature that has kept her "outside the domain of human transcendence, rationality, subjectivity, and agency," it is time for a more productive engagement that "undertake[s] the transformation of gendered dualisms – nature/culture, body/mind, object/subject, resource/agency" (Alaimo 5). How the women in the two novels understand their relationship to space is built through established binaries that require landscapes and identities to be destabilized and reassembled as they form part of an operational landscape.

In his essay, *The Hinterland Urbanized*, Neil Brenner breaks down the dichotomy of "city /countryside, urban /rural, interior/exterior", in a particular type of creative destruction that "transforms non-city spaces into zones of high-intensity, large-scale, infrastructure—operational landscapes" (125). This is directly related to the need to make all space, but especially certain spaces in the periphery, *always-already* attentive to the needs of capitalist growth. Brenner calls on us to "visualize" and understand the "generally invisible webs of connection that link our urban way of life to the silent violence of accumulation by dispossession and environmental destruction in the world's hinterlands and operational landscapes" (126). Much of Brenner's analysis rests on Harvey's theory of accumulation by dispossession, a strategy of capitalism especially relevant during times of debt crisis – the precise context of *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora*—and how it is used to "reorganize internal social relations and production" (78). Simply put, in lieu of imperial expansion abroad, accumulation by dispossession is a sweeping destruction and re-appropriation of properties—intellectual, genetic, environmental, and cultural—from internal communities to central political and economic forces (75). What reading *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora* together illuminates,

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then, is the creation and evolution of this operational landscape in Madrid as well as the potential for resistance to accumulation by dispossession.

Landscape and subversion in Antonio Ferres

José B. Monleón echos Herzberger's discussion of social realism in his analysis of *La piqueta*. Monleón explains how Ferres critiques the idea of the "eternal Spain" and the injustices of the Franco era through an exploration of time and space: "se caracteriza por una recreación de lo que la 'España eterna' implicaba en cuanto medida del presente histórico" (149). Despite his criticism of the dictatorship in the novel, Ferres commented in a 2009 interview with the Spanish newspaper *El mundo* that the text suffered no cuts because the censors "[n]o captaron los símbolos" (no pg). Athough Ferres did not specify what these symbols were, this essay understands them to radiate from the natural world that serves, as Swingedouw explains, as a "normative power", where nature is invoked as a transcendental or universal organizer (42). While Swingedouw's analysis sees this use of nature as detrimental to our knowledge and interaction with both the natural world and with each other (43), in the case of Ferres's novel, it functions as the "norm" against which Franco's ideal Spain is measured and shown to be the antithesis of its own ideologies.

The story of *La piqueta* follows the romance between Maruja, living outside the city center, in Orcasitas, and Luis, from the urban core, in working-class Lavapiés. The third-person narrator primarily focuses on Maruja and her family who, like the others of the shantytown where they live, came from the poverty-stricken south and built their own homes in unofficial settlements on the southern periphery. The plot is driven forward by their anxiety and fear of being removed from their home. The official urbanization Orcasitas and other surrounding neighorhoods began in 1953 when the Comisaría de Ordenación Urbana [Commission of Urban Planning] realized that many of the middle and lower economic class homes that had been destroyed by the war were yet to be rebuilt which "dio lugar a un déficit inicial" [gave way to an initial deficit] (Leira, Gago, Solana 144). Although building had recommenced, it could not keep up with the demand, especially from immigrants from the south of Spain who had come to the capital city looking for more stable employment. (Leira, Gago, Solana 144). Much of the construction that took place on this land – the land where *La piqueta* is situated—was illegal, but it was overseen and regulated by "personajes carentes de escrúpulos, propietarios de un suelo situado en aquel momento en la periferia del continuo edificado, muchas veces calificado de zona verde, parcelan ilegalmente su suelo y venden o alquilan parcelas para la edificación de chabolas" (144). This is the moment that Franco began to define this area as an "operational landscape" that would produce capital for the central government. Land is a container of history, identity, ideology, and people, all of which must be exploited, destroyed, and rebuilt in order to maintain the dictatorship's progress towards financial solvency via spatial fixes. In Ferres's novel, the narrator does not pit those who lived in the shantytowns—the *chabolistas*—against the

dictatorship and this process. Instead, the land itself and, recalling Harvey, its "deep continuity" with the people is used as an ironic symbol.

Rather than openly questioning who has a right to the land—the *chabolistas* or the government –, the text approaches the issue through the myth of the Spanish landscape and the reality of a precarious economic situation. Maruja, the main protagonist, is first identified with the natural world and Spanish landscape, and then alienated from it because of Franco's urban planning. Recalling Roberta Johnson, female figures in modernism were closely associated with the "soul" of Spain where, "women are amorphous and indistinguishable from the landscape," while the men are connected to the manipulation of the land and with the city itself (43). The conscious repetition of this modernist narrative strategy in *La piqueta* is not a melancholic or nostalgic reference to an eternal Spain, as in the early twentieth century. Rather, the rural landscape as figurative and literal device permeates the core of the text and directs the reader's response to Franco's urban planning.

The plot of *La piqueta* begins at the end: the anxious, angry, and distraught community is waiting helplessly for the imminent demolition of their homes. In the opening dialogue, a group of boys express their anger through metaphors of war, "[c]uando vengan, los de arriba que avisen y nos tiramos al suelo, como en las guerras" (13). Extending the comparison, the narrator describes the space where they live as a prison, "[l]a calluja, entre las chabolas y los solares, parecía un redil, una extraña cárcel" (14). The community that lives there, however, is united and aligned, not as soldiers or prisoners of a dictatorship as these images may indicate, but as under a higher power of nature: "Todo el paisaje diríase estar estancado y quieto desde hacía mucho tiempo. La gente parecía haber empequeñecido bajo el peso de la luz, de la lámina pesada del cielo, haberse achicado, disminuido, conforme avanzaba el calor del día, el calor de la estación" (15). From this opening scene, the narrator shifts to the romance between Luis and Maruja. Framing the novel around Luis in *castizo* Lavapiés, and Maruja in the not-yet urbanized periphery of Orcasitas, the narrative intensifies the affective weight of the protagonists' situations as a way to subvert the government's exploitation of land and communities.

The narrator establishes the association between Maruja and the natural world in multiple ways. There are simple and direct examples: Maruja does not have a watch and looks to the sun to tell time (24). More compelling strategies align the land with the human body. Early in the text, Maruja and Luis walk through her neighborhood and the narrator describes the newly formed road like a scar, "[l]a calle estaba sin urbanizar; era como una zanja ancha, como una cicatriz entre las filas de casas pobres" (54). In another example, the natural world mirrors Maruja's emotions. As the young couple is getting to know each other, they are walking through these "scarred" streets and it begins to storm. Running through the rain to find cover, they hold hands and blush at each other's touch. In the commotion, Maruja reveals to Luis that her house will be demolished in less than two weeks. Perplexed and worried, Luis wonders why; she explains, "Dicen que salió una ley para que no hubiera más chabolas y que nosotros la hemos hecho después" (66). After this declaration, the narrator punctuates the affective weight of the

scene with a description of the landscape in the storm: "El cielo iba poniéndose más oscuro. El humo negro de las nubes ganaba, se extendía. Los truenos recorían el horizonte en lontananza. Los relámpangos encendían brillos en el campo" (66). This almost cinematographic cut from the conversation to the sounds and smells of a storm is a symbol of the turmoil and the fear of the reality of the situation that can be named, but not criticized: Franco's urban plan that was tearing apart human and ecological communities.

By aligning Maruja with the land and her suitor with the city, Ferres creates a relationship which reflects the urban/rural divide. Luis was born and raised in the working-class neighborhood of Lavapiés, in the centre of Madrid. Their movements through their respective neighborhoods—Orcasitas and Lavapiés—highlight the contrast between their respective spaces. Just after meeting each other, the couple are alone and pondering their future together. Maruja, both hopeful and fearful, walks at the edge of city and countryside. The narrator focuses on the sounds and sights that surround her: "Cantaban grillos. Oyó ruidos de latas en el vertedero y vio, huidiza, la sombra del perro que buscaba algo que comer entre las basuras" (47). When the focus shifts to Luis, contemplation of the rural is succeeded by active movement through the urban: "[a]ndaba solo por las calles, hasta cansarse; llegaba hasta los bulevares de la Ronda de Toledo, detrás de la fábrica de gas; a los solares donde había ido de chico, cuando era alumno del Grupo Escolar" (47). These movements through and between spaces, sights, sounds, and memories motivated by anxiety and fear are essential to how the narrator constructs his critique of the spatial inequalities created and perpetuated by Franco. They produce a vernacular map of the, as Joe Gerlach labels them, "mundane cartographies . . . of as yet untold micropolitics" that the dictatorship tried to silence (11). Moreover, since Franco used the rural land and its "humble" inhabitants as signifiers of Spain's immutable national identity, its destruction is consequently a destruction of his fascist ideals. Likewise, Maruja's fate is a powerful indictment of Franco's "traditional" and Catholic Spain.

Aurora G. Morcilla, in *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politic*, articulates precisely how Franco envisioned the relationship between religion, state, body, and economic imperatives, especially at the time of the novel's publication in 1959. As Morcilla writes: "National Catholicism intended to sustain and strengthen Spain's eternal mystic body politic. The members must assume their place and duty in the social and political order inaugurated by the new massive culture of consumption" (32). Men and women were the "appendages" of Fascism, and laws were created to promote marriage before the age of 25, an increase in birthrates, and "racial purity", which was analogous to the Castilian landscape (48). However, while the dictatorship relentlessly promoted the perpetuation of a "natural" (patriarchal) family, as central to Spanish identity, the concerns of capital outweighed those of family. The best example of this comes on the eve of the axe-men's destruction of Maruja's neighborhood, when the family unit must ultimately separate. Maruja's younger brother is sent to live with a different family, and, most ironically of all, Maruja and Luis end up

living together out of wedlock in the apartment he shares with his aunt in Lavapiés, a situation certainly anathema to Franco's ideal Spain.

While Ferres was writing against the conversion of the southern periphery into an operational landscape by Franco, its use as such has continued past the transition to democracy into the present. Noelia S. Garcia underlines the fact that in Navarro's 2014 novel, the fear and alienation as described in *La trabajadora* has its origin in the same economic and political milieu as in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Garcia recognizes how the city's southern periphery has been used as an operational landscape since the 1950s: "el chabolismo no llegó a desaparecer. Esta zona se convirtió en la cara negativa de la ciudad, pues sus condiciones de vida rompían con la imagen que se vendía. La tendencia fue a ocultarla, silenciarla y mantenerla apartada del resto de la urbe" (5). Navarro's rendering of women and anxiety in Madrid is built around the post-2008 economic restructuring and makes clear that the Spanish authorities' reaction to this crisis understood urban and green space as speculative, purely imagined potentialities that served the needs of capitalist reproduction.

The Body and the City in *La trabajadora*

La trabajadora responds to the economic crisis that began in 2008 with a narrative about two women struggling in Madrid in 2011. This is told primarily from the first-person perspective of Elisa. The reader witnesses the deterioration of the protagonist's mental health in a city suffering a severe economic decline. The novel is divided into three sections, the first, "Fabio," is Elisa's retelling of the mental breakdown and sexual escapades of her roommate, Susana, in Madrid of the 1980s. The second and largest part of the novel, "La trabajadora," is Elisa's own experiences and attempts at controlling her anxiety by running, walking, and, finally, use of medication. The third section, "Pesquisas," is one short chapter that recounts a conversation between Elisa and her psychologist. The final sentence concludes that her economic situation "se estabilizó en lo precario" as did her mental health (153). Through the experiences of two women and their mental illness, *La trabajadora* constructs an oppositional politics of the post-2008 crisis. This strategy is based in art—textual and visual—capable of unsettling the binaries of body/city, center/periphery and natural/constructed.

Elisa begins her first-person narration with "Mi situación económica no era buena" (45), which is the motivation for a move from an apartment in the center of Madrid, Tirso, to Aluche on its margins. As her paycheck dwindles even more, Elisa must take on a roommate, Susana. At first annoyed if not mildly hostile to their roommates, the women establish a fragile friendship that revolves around afternoon coffee and discussions of their work as artists. Susana works in multi-media, transforming maps of Madrid into unrecognizable space by simply shifting buildings.[5] Elisa is a writer and an independent contractor who edits for a publishing company. This is also on the brink of

[5] For a discussion of how this art form is capable of expressing political resistance, read Larson, "Trash as Theme and Aesthetic in Elvira Navarro's *La trabajadora*."

collapse and, because of its own precarious economic position, gives her less and less work.

Elisa's position as narrator serves multiple purposes in the novel. She tells the story of her life, but she also relates the stories of her roommate in the 1980s, her boss Carmentxu through the 1990s, and her attempt to decipher the edited memoirs of a post-war widow who suffers from Parkinsons. Elisa documents women's work inside and outside of the commodified labor market through different time periods and under different economic structures. In this way, her labor as editor and writer transcends market forces to become both therapy and resistance. However, what is most relevant to the present analysis is how Susana and Elisa's bodies trace lines of crisis while walking or running through Madrid and Aluche.

Both in their own time periods, Susana in the 1980s, and Elisa in 2011, the women walk the city as a way to recuperate mental stability. Rather than regaining equilibrium, city and body are merged: the body with the cartography of capitalism, the city with the veins and neurological lines of human anxiety. Elisa's movements through Madrid create an itinerary of anxiety, a map of collapse, and a metaphor for the body of the city, its nerves as frayed as Elisa's. This creates a vernacular map of Madrid that questions the rationality of capitalism through various "performances" of crisis (Brenner 24). The body/city metaphor unlocks or triggers a series of what Elizabeth Grosz calls "potentialities" (508) between "congruent counterparts", where the urban is "made over and over into the simulacrum of the body" and the body, conversely, "is transformed, 'citified,' urbanized" (507). As Grosz argues, "the city is an active force in constituting bodies" and it "always leaves its traces on the subject's corporeality" (512). Elisa's corporeal crisis is spurned, not only by the city itself, but also by the realization how much her identity was tied to a myth of Madrid's economic solvency. The move from the illusion of a stable urban center (Tirso) to the reality of a chaotic urban periphery (Aluche) required her to accommodate her identity to the new space. Moreover, because this periphery operates as a site to feed the center, landscape and community must be acutely responsive to the needs of capitalism, constantly reforming themselves with the ebbs and flows of creative destruction.

Already anxious about her economic situation, Elisa is overcome by the realization that the Madrid she thought she lived in is not the same as the one she is experiencing. She finds solace for her internal isolation externally in cityscapes that reflect her own mental state: "Durante un mes estuve llegando a Eugenia de Montijo, a un parque desde el que podía observar cómo echaban abajo la Antigua cárcel, ante cuyas piedras me quedaba un buen rato, pues aquella desolación me resultaba consoladora" (47). The Carabanchel prison was built in the 1940s during the dictatorship. In 2011 it was being torn down as part of the post-2008 economic crisis restructuring. In her visits there, Elisa associates her own disintegration with that of Franco's crumbling legacy. This identification does not signal historical alliance, rather recognition of the relationship between her body and the economy's manipulation of space. As time goes on, Elisa becomes aware of the magnitude of the city's decline:

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> No ignoraba la existencia de viviendas sin permiso de habitabilidad debido a irregularidades, y que había muchos pisos a medio construir porque faltaba el dinero. Siempre pensé que estos proyectos fracasados estaban en mitad de páramos, o a unos reglamentarios kilómetros de la línea de la costa. No imaginaba que tal cosa sucediera en la cuidad. (76-77)

This acknowledgement that the "new" national economic crisis is not only limited to the coast but is part of Madrid is devastating, and exacerbates her own material struggles. Her anxiety increases to the point of her having panic attacks in public spaces. Objects take on facets of what Stacy Alaimo in *Bodily Natures* describes as a "trans-corporeality." In general terms, trans-corporeality is a way to visualize the varied networks that exist between modes of thought, fleshy bodies, the environment, and the constructed world (3). Alaimo specifically analyzes "particular moments of confusion and contestation that occur when individuals and collectives must contend not only with the materiality of their very selves but with the often invisibly hazardous landscapes of risk society, which require scientific mediation" (17). These moments of confusion between body and city or body and object are at the center of Navarro's critique of Madrid.

Elisa comes to understand her precarious economic and mental situation as aligned with the disordered urban landscape. This is perhaps most clearly articulated in Chapter 9, where Elisa recounts a series of panic attacks. It begins in the street with "una suerte de pálpito, un presentimiento desbocado un desbarajuste absoluto de mi sistema nervioso" (83). The shuttering of businesses she previously patronized sets off a neurological response: "los negocios clausurados, pensé, eran detalles mínimos de una organización cuyo corazón aún latía a pleno rendimiento, y no debía alarmarme" (83). The city's heart, like her own, was beating at full speed. One day on the bus, Elisa is witness to urban landscape defined by blight. Suddenly people's faces become morphed into a "lectura distinta y torcida" that reminds her of monsters (84). These thoughts, visual realities, and mental deformations culminate in a panic attack: "[t]raté de hablar. La sangre no llegaba a mis extremidades" (84). She worries and thinks that she's crazy: "Pensé que estaba loca. Me lo formulé diez, veinte veces. Caminé. El movimiento me hería. Los coches con sus zumbidos lacerantes. Las voces de quienes chalaban en los portales, altas y crispadas" (84). She returns to her apartment and paces the rooms, pausing in each space to observe objects such as the beds, the oven, the old table, and the bookshelves heavy with books, and thinks, "[l]as cosas desprendían una existencia pesada que me abrumaba" (84). She first self-medicates with alcohol. But as the panic attacks persist, she tries out various anti-anxiety medicines (trankimazines, lexatines), and is injected with tranquilizers that cause her to sleep for 16 hours (86-88). Susana, in an attempt to make her roommate feel better, checks out Elisa's only published book from the library and brings it home. Rather than improve her mood, "[a]hora todos los objetos, incluido mi libro, despedían un aura de vivos en otra dimensión. Yo ya tenía bastante con esos otros objetos" (88). These trans-corporeal objects, places, and lines have suddenly become active agents in her "desmoronamiento" (88). However, through drugs and writing, she begins to find "orden en el desbarajuste," reconciling the city she

thought she knew with "la ciudad de crecimiento descontrolado, voraz, exorbitante, pobre" (104).

Integral to her mental compromise between imagined space and preformed cityscape are the paintings of Spanish artist Antonio López García. In the initial move to Aluche, Elisa was told that the view from her window was the same as a landscape painted by López. Elisa commented, disappointedly, that the painting "no concordaba con lo que yo veía desde la ventana" (45). Following this incidental description of place, her meditations on the paintings by López become a leitmotif of the relationship between affective and physical space. Lopez García began painting intimate and realist portraits of Madrid in the 1960s. As with literary social realism, in visual realism, language and time go hand-in-hand. Benjamin Fraser notes in his monograph on the famed artist that "gazing upon Antonio López's painted urban landscapes, we simultaneously confront both the limitations of spatial representation and the inescapable reality of time" (3).

Although the López painting bears no visual resemblance to Elisa's lived reality, she reconciles her place in the city via how the painter communicates a sense of place. Later in the novel, Elisa works in the library and is reflecting on those affected by the "fraude de las cooperativas, de las calles céntricas cuyos edificios estaban vacios, de las urbanizaciones a medio construir, hasta hacía muy poco no había habido protestas" (78). Despite these tragedies and revolutions, from her distant vantage point, the city "permanecía más o menos igual" (78) and she observes "desde sus palaciegos ventanales la densidad soleada del aire, lo que se podía barruntar frente a la M – 30 y la M – 40" (78). However, in this place that is both a location and a mental state, the city seems like a memory, "a un puro recuerdo, y también a una impresión general de la soledad, como si los edificios estuvieran deshabitados o los ocupara el desierto…" (78). These ideas take her back to López and his paintings with their

> exactitud delirante, de cuajo echado a la existencia. La ciudad parecía congelada, pero no por el frío, sino por la luz y el calor. . . La soledad de los edificios erguidos, la precariedad tan eficaz con la que se multiplicaban unas cuantas formas, como las amebas y otros organismos cuando un rayo fecundó los océanos, hacía que la vista borrara la vida, y todo funcionaba con un revés de ese origen, pues la tierra se resecaba. (78)

In Fraser's analysis, the landscapes of Madrid are described not as

> mere static images to be admired passively. Instead, they are catalysts that move us to reflect actively upon our contemporary urban world. Ultimately, those who view his urban scenes are pushed to reconcile this contemplative, artistic space with their own concrete, lived, everyday spaces. (2)

Elisa reflects and finds a world in opposition to itself, an unreality that exists only in the imagination. In this way, Elvira Navarro's text, like López's paintings, recreates these landscapes of Madrid as a way for the reader to experience the destabilization of a series of binaries, especially that of perception and reality, in the post-2008 Spanish economy.

Eventually the anti-anxiety medication allows Elisa to return to her journeys through the city without fear of panic attacks. Her alienation, now mitigated through

drugs, allows for a different observation of the city. While wandering near the hospital Doce de Octubre, Elisa begins to arrive at a realignment of the real and imagined city:

> No eran muchos, desde luego, lo que no impidió que retornara la agobiante, por inverosímil, idea de que había movimientos de carácter subterráneo capaces de modificar el escenario mental que yo tenía de la ciudad, y también el que leía en los periódicos o veía en la televisión y en Internet. Se trataba de una idea difusa, o más bien de una simple y desvaída intuición que me inquietaba. Su certeza equivalía a descubrir que éramos marcianos, el sueño de alguien, o un programa informático cuyas reglas cambiaban de un día para otro. Por otra parte, los gitanos y las familias desahuciadas llevaban décadas habitando casas vacías. . . (118).

Ultimately, in order to find her place in Madrid, she has to imagine herself as from another world. She has to understand the city and her place in it, not as a member of a community or movement, but as an alien. The “Martians” in the city are defined by the nature of the land they inhabit, but they also define the nature of the city, precariously located as they are between their value as laborers and their inconvenience as tenants in operational landscapes where at any time they can become non-human “trash” and be removed. *La trabajadora* reduces the official map of the city to the process of the city itself: accumulation by dispossession. The novel consequently elevates the “natural” corporeal reaction of Elisa to a metaphor capable of finding lines of resistance. The “irrational” body superimposed on the lines and contours of a “rational” Madrid in crisis evokes the unnatural imposition and disorder of capitalism. In this way, Navarro’s questioning and unsettling of binaries on the official map of Madrid opens a space for an ecological practice denuding narrative of its rhetorical devices.

Towards a conclusion

In both *La piqueta* and *La trabajadora*, the entrenched metaphors of landscape as representative of the feminine and the tropes of female mental fragility work ironically. Each narrative is driven forward by the emotional tides of individuals who grapple with their new condition as “placeless” and “refuse” in the city. No matter how different the agent causing the exploitation—dictatorship or crisis capitalism—these novels read together trace the evolution of a project to maintain the periphery as a geography that exploits both the natural environment and the people. The language of social realism unmasks urban alienation and dehumanization—especially as it relates to women—not as a mental weakness. Instead, the novels reveal a continuity of exploitation of human and natural communities in the landscape of Madrid. Ferres and Navarro document the injustices of accumulation by dispossession, and ultimately, the anxiety of their protagonists becomes the place from which the women recuperate a sense of identity. While Ferres ends his story in pessimistic anguish—what else was possible in the late 1950s?—Navarro’s novel ends with an optimism mediated (and mitigated) by Elisa’s writing and her use of medication.

It has not been easy to do justice to the literary aspects of these novels within a narrow definition of the concerns of ecocriticism, to walk the critical line between open-

minded exploration of a cultural product and examination of it as a representation of ecological crisis. I suspect that this difficulty arises from the necessity of an "unthinking" that must take place to view those stylistic qualities of the text associated with the environment—location and metaphors—as essential elements that structure the author and reader's understanding of material and social culture. Teasing out these differences and similarities in how two novels treat what remains of the natural environment and landscape opens space for a much-needed conversation. It is one that must include the need to reclaim the city from neoliberal machinations, and ensure that there is a still a city to inhabit. David Harvey writes, "[t]he preservation or construction of a sense of place is then an active moment in the passage from memory to hope, from past to future. And the reconstruction of places can reveal hidden memories that hold out the prospects for different futures" (*Justice* 306). In preserving the memory of the shanty-towns in the moment of their destruction, Ferres's novel holds out hope for a better and different outcome. Navarro records the history of the city and its vulnerable inhabitants as they undergo the most severe economic crisis since the Civil War. This paper has sought to contribute to what Alaimo has declared the project of ecocriticism: "to develop modes of analysis that [...] reveal the environmental traces within all texts" (8). In this sense, it is only a beginning—a proposal for an understanding of the metaphorical and affective drives of how space is conceptualized and understood, not only in texts where ecological concerns are explicitly stated as the intent of the text, but also in cultural products where material realities collide and make space for critique and re-imagination.

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Editorial

Creative Writing and Art
Mythology and Ecocriticism: A Natural Encounter

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The relationships between myths and the nonhuman world have always been characterized by ambivalence. As Francisco Molina Moreno and Imelda Martin Junquera, the two guest editors of this issue of *Ecozon@*, note in their introduction, mythical narratives reflect concerns for a lost harmony with the natural environment as often as they express the will to subdue it. Yet, this ambivalence is not accidental: it belongs to the very structure of mythical thought, beginning with what Da Silva calls the "conflicting meanings" of the term "myth" itself (103). As Adorno pointed out, the discordant quality of myths has always "been obscure and enlightening at one and the same time" (xiv), exerting a strong influence on human societies by revealing what is hidden as much as hiding (via fiction) what is promised to be disclosed. Paraphrasing Heidegger, we might say that myths can be read as the primitive representation of that "unconcealment" (*aletheia*) that it is not truth and full disclosure but still opens a "clearing" (*Lichtung*) for the appearance of things in the world. The ambivalence of myths is thus meant to display what escapes our immediate comprehension as well as to illustrate the tension between our epistemological finitude and the broader—and to some extent undiscernible—world to which we belong.

This interpretation of myth is particularly compelling for those narratives that indeed portray the origins of human society in their foundational interactions with nonhuman nature. An archetypical example is the story of the two Titan brothers, Prometheus and Epimetheus. As is well known, Prometheus stole fire from the Olympian gods and gave it to humans. His gesture was not appreciated by Zeus, and Prometheus was sentenced to eternal torment for his transgression. Yet, such a dreadful destiny did not hinder his becoming the symbol of human technological striving and "one of the most enduring and successful stories that men have told each other about themselves and their origin" (Ferrarin 293). Less popular is the reason behind his rebellious gesture: as narrated in several classic sources, Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus were given the task of populating the earth, supplying all creatures with their various qualities, such as swiftness, cunning, strength, fur, and wings. However, Epimetheus quickly equipped the nonhuman animals with the whole supply of gifts allotted for the task, leaving Prometheus' masterpiece, humankind, completely helpless. Hence,

Prometheus stole fire to arm the humans, implicitly giving them control over nature and sparking technological development and civilization. From the perspective of ecocriticism, the myth of Prometheus does not thus inspire hubris, but displays both our biological inferiority vis-à-vis nonhuman creatures and what happens when, focusing too much on our alleged superiority, we do not accept our place within the larger ecology of beings.

In selecting both the material for the Creative Writing and Art section and the cover image for this issue of *Ecozon@* devoted to "Mythology and Ecocriticism," I tried to draw on a similar "unconcealing" ambivalence. This is the case, for instance, with *Prometheus Delivered*, the installation by Thomas Feuerstein that opens this section of the journal and from which the cover image of this issue is taken. In this work, Feuerstein stages a tension between what is immediately visible and what is the true acting subject by means of a fascinating laboratory of bubbling bioreactors, mysterious fluids, pumps and endless tubes which wind around a sculpture, a replica of Nicolas-Sébastien Adam's *Prometheus Bound* (1762). As the artist points out in his introductory statement, while Prometheus appears to be the hero, the true, miraculous protagonists of this installation are instead stone-eating (chemolithoautotrophic) bacteria who are decomposing the statue. These bacteria convert the marble into plaster and, in a further complex transformation, they themselves become the food of human liver cells. The cycle of destruction and re-creation inherent in the Prometheus myth is thus replicated in a biochemical process, whereas human hepatocytes grow in a bioreactor and finally form a new three-dimensional liver sculpture. Through this fascinating process, Feuerstein's installation not only gives us "a glimpse into a time to come in which human beings no longer subsist on animals and plants, but possibly on their own body cells," but also alludes to the destiny of Prometheus, tortured by the eagle (as the myth goes) as well as trapped by the very technology he gave to humans. As a true contemporary myth, "Prometheus delivered" thus *unconceals* what is not immediately visible, both as bacteria and as the hendiadic relationship between Prometheus and Epimetheus. Although the latter is not mentioned in Feuerstein's work, the bioreactor at the core of the whole installation cannot but remind us of Epimetheus's wife, Pandora, and of her box containing all manner of misery and evil as punishment for human hubris. This time, though, the new Pandora's box represented by Feuerstein's biochemical reactor does not contain everything terrible that humankind can possibly imagine, but rather the agents of the gradual decomposition of the statuesque and anthropocentric myth of Prometheus. The classically-beautiful but soon-to-be-destroyed statue of Prometheus that is on the cover of this issue of *Ecozon@* is thus *not* a celebration of the anthropocentric myths we have managed to tell ourselves. Instead, it is a symbol of the abilities Epimetheus gave to nonhuman creatures, and, as such, it ambivalently represents an opening toward a poetic and technological approach to myths more attuned to the nonhuman agency of the environment.

Yet, given the etymological close connections between myth and story-telling, it should come as no surprise that most of the works in the Creative Writing and Art section of this issue of *Ecozon@* are literary rather than visual. The second contribution

is in fact a poem, "Venus and Jupiter," written by Deborah Fleming. Fleming is Professor of English at Ashland University in Ohio (USA) and the editor and director of the Ashland Poetry Press. She has published two collections of poetry, two chapbooks, one novel, and four volumes of scholarship on Yeats, Synge, and Jeffers. "Venus and Jupiter" plays on the ambivalence of the two mythical names in the title of the poem, referring to both divinities and planets. The poem thus reminds us of the human naming of the world as well as of a cosmological understanding of time that both exceeds and encompasses humankind. The erotic miracle of regeneration with which Fleming ends the poem recalls one of the major themes of this issue of *Ecozon@*: the idea that today myths can be both an ancient opening toward a new beginning and a reminder of a harmonic order of nature that is greater than our anthropocentric concerns.

Fleming's poem is followed by a short play by Catherine M. Lord, entitled "My Tempest: Or How to Manifest with Myths." Lord is a tenured Lecturer in the Media and Culture Department of the University of Amsterdam, as well as a playwright and director. As a scholar, she has published in the areas of literature, film, adaptation studies, critical theory and practice-based research. Currently, Lord is focusing on ecocriticism and film, preparing a book on planetary ecology, climate change and media. Her creative work for *Ecozon@* refers to one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, but diverges markedly from its plot. As Lord writes in her introductory statement, in "My Tempest" Caliban is in fact both a young woman and a mythical figure who, in 2018, is dealing with her adoptive father Prospero. In Lord's rewriting of the story, Caliban discovers that Prospero killed her mother Sycorax through the ecological forces that have protected Sycorax's mythical spirit, i.e. the trees of Prospero's Island. The trees draw Caliban over to the forbidden side of the Isle, and they teach Caliban about her mother. From both Prospero's science of manifestation and Sycorax's magic preserved in the trees, Caliban conjures a storm to evict Prospero and Miranda. When they go off to work for Monsanto-Bayer, Caliban stays to protect the Island and thus becomes a true ecocritical hero.

Another young woman and mythical figure, Arachne, implicitly lies at the core of the fourth contribution. Written by Allyson Mary Whipple—an MFA candidate at the University of Texas at El Paso and the author of two chapbooks, most recently *Come Into the World Like That* (Five Oaks Press, 2016), "No Ordinary Spider" is a hybrid essay that moves between fiction and nonfiction to braid the author's observations of a garden spider along with references to biology, ecology, and literature. As she writes in her statement, Whipple's story "explores arachnophobia, and discusses the ways in which close encounters with even small aspects of the natural world can allow people to overcome fear, and to have greater respect for the world around them." Although the name Arachne is never mentioned and the narrator explicitly claims to "know better than to name wild animals," the spider at the center of this piece embodies a numinous and gendered presence (the nonhuman animal is both always referred as "she" and mysteriously "auspicious") which determines a positive identification between the narrator and the girl who challenged Athena and was therefore transformed into a spider. As the human creature observes her nonhuman counterpart, she overcomes her

fears and learns, too, how to weave a text(ile) that combines feminist empowerment and nonhuman agency.

The Creative Writing Arts section of this issue of *Ecozon@* devoted to "Mythology and Ecocriticism" ends with a different, masculine myth, as represented by Norbert Kovacs' short story "A Son in His Father's Forest." Kovacs lives and writes in Hartford, Connecticut. His stories have appeared or soon will appear in *Westview*, *Foliate Oak*, *Squawk Back*, *Corvus Review*, and *No Extra Words*. The plot of "A Son in His Father's Forest" is quite linear: a man explores the woods where his late father had once enjoyed walking. Yet, the story actually deals with a question of human dwelling that lies at the heart of several myths: how is our material and emotional "attachment to the land" transmitted from one generation to another? In fact, as the son in Kovacs' story soon understands that he does not have the same loving knowledge of the forest, that he is not guided by the forest itself as his father was, he also wonders whether he might get lost trying to find his way through it. Nonetheless he goes into the *silva*, and, in the process, he both realizes that "he had missed something his parent had known of the wood" and gains his own comprehension of the natural environment. As in a proper myth, this ambivalent comprehension is indeed made of loss and light as it combines awareness of one's ignorance and a suggestion to experience first-hand "the trees, the stream, the rock."

I began my introduction by mentioning how the strength of myths lies in their ambivalence, in their capacity to display in front of us a tension between what we can know and handle, and what is (and should stay) beyond our grasp, both epistemologically and materially. As Patsy Callaghan has stated, myths can dramatize our striving toward ecological humility, toward accepting "the idea that any way of seeing is also a way of not seeing," that no human seeing and interpreting and re-presenting "can be comprehensive enough" (82-83). From this perspective, all the contributions in the Creative Writing and Art of this issue of *Ecozon@* display a similar attitude: they "unconceal" today's myths of human and nonhuman ecological resistance, showing that our true comprehension lies in a world that we inhabit but that also exceeds our representation and control.

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Prometheus Delivered

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Prometheus Delivered 1

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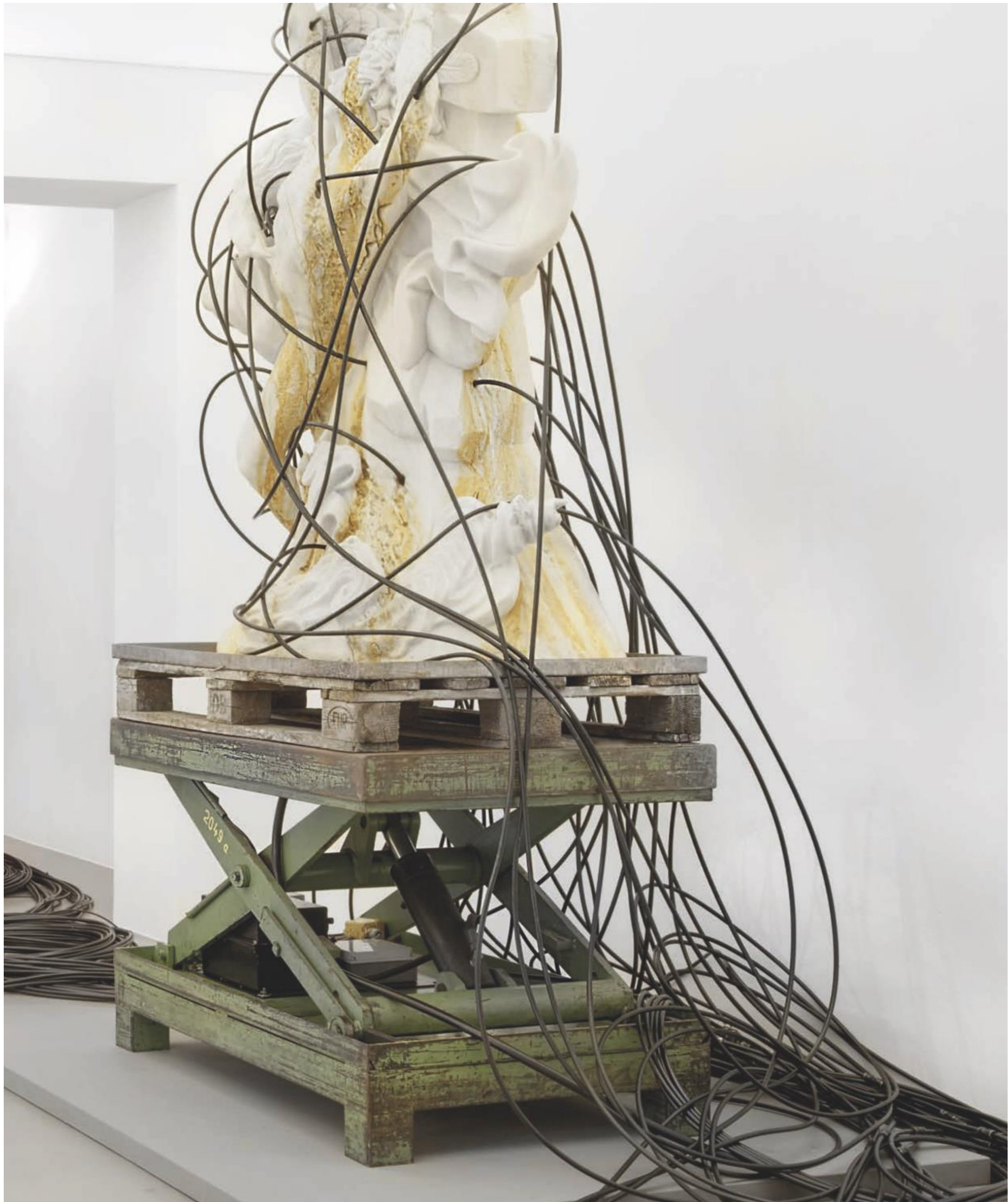
Prometheus Delivered 2



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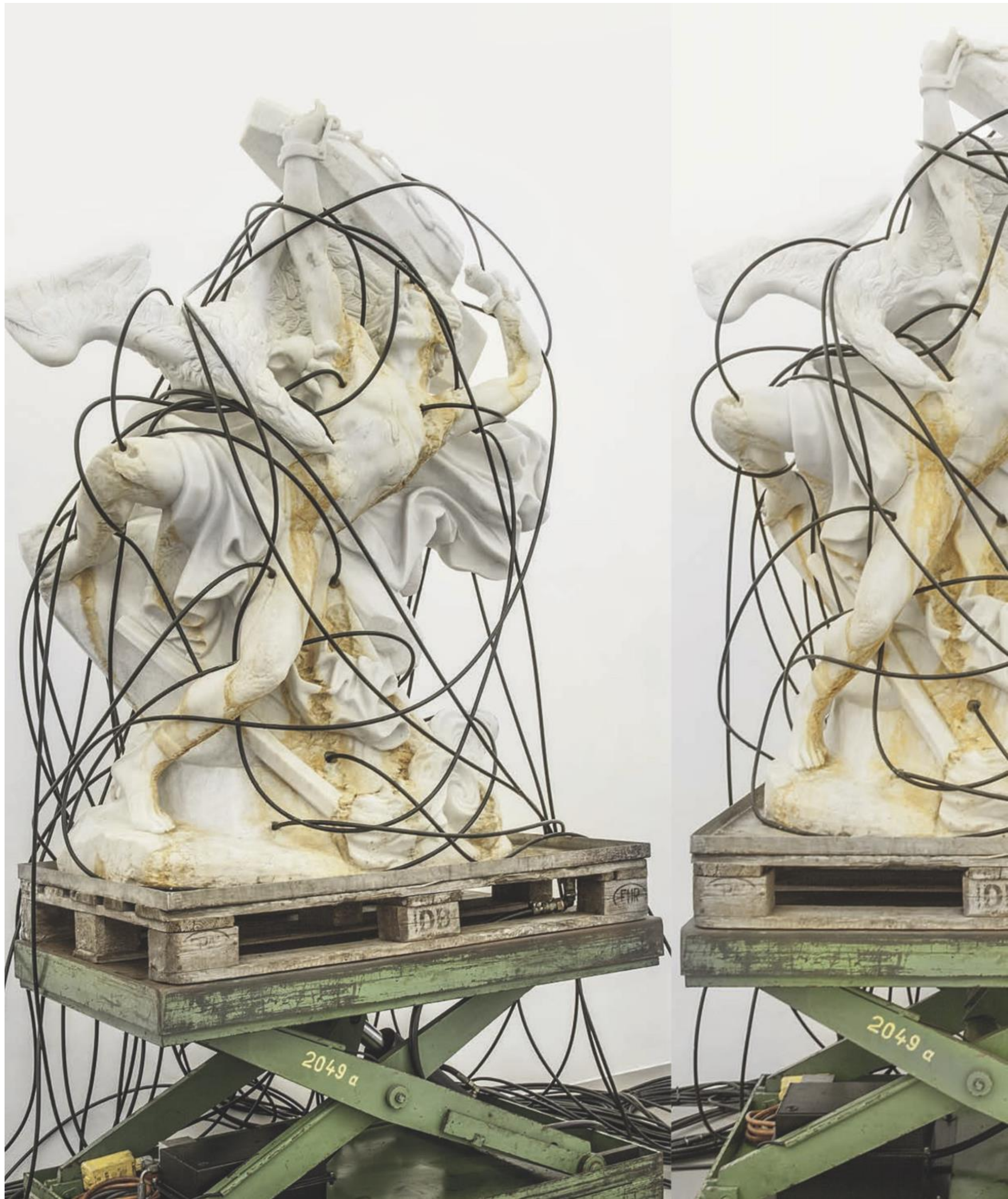
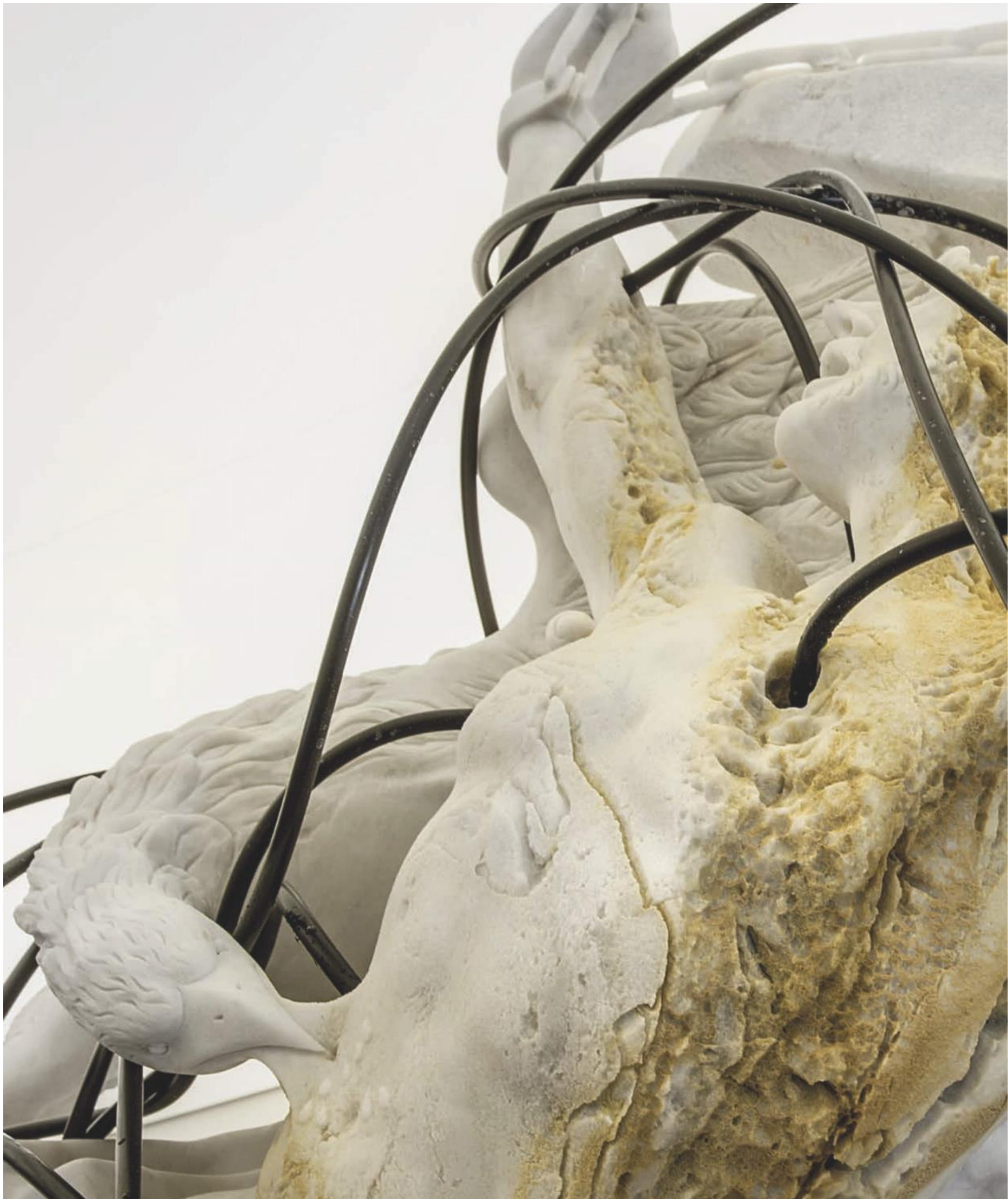


Prometheus Delivered 4



Prometheus Delivered 5

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POEMS

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Venus and Jupiter

In evening's cobalt hue
The sun averts his glance
Behind the western hill; two
Planets begin their airy dance–
Venus, queen of heaven,
And Jupiter, her king,
Ten thousand times her size
And brighter, though appearing
Smaller, dimmer, so far
His circumnavigation
Sails around the sun.

Thirteen months apart
They will begin anew,
At times so close the old star-
Gazers in their wise
Pronouncements told the birth
Of beauty, love, or war
From god and woman
Trysting on the earth.

And here is the old moon
Cradling the new in its arms,
Patiently watching for that true
Miracle, rebirth of the sun.

Woman Sweeping at Boudhanath

Kathmandu

Tibetan woman bending from the waist,
dark eyes fixed upon her task,
to sweep the cobbled walkway
circling the great white stupa,
sweeping with a hand brush made of sticks,
her bronze face corrugated
with uncounted seasons of wind and sun,
dressed in her brown Tibetan robe and apron,
her hair bound in a green scarf.

As monks chant and troop
in their saffron and purple robes,
past the prayer wheels turning,
under the line of fluttering flags,
below the Buddha's enormous eyes,
she sweeps the dust of the feet of pilgrims
with the slow patience of a god.

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My Tempest: Or How to Materialise a Myth

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'...' indicates when the character pauses to search for thoughts or takes a natural pause in speaking.
Dramatis Personae
Caliban: *a woman in her late twenties.*
An Island. Now.
Caliban
When I woke screaming under the dark moon,
He brought me berries with water;
He made a cat's cradle of seaweed,
To rock me to sleep;
He taught me the language of quasars and black holes and took me on his back.
Summoning the vapours of volcanoes for my childhood fevers,
Tsunamis he conjured with his magic staff,
Unfurled their size like globes,
As Miranda and I beheld them spent
Towards the Afrik coast.
"I create our gods and spirits" he taught,
"Through them I harness my power."
To the rocks and waves he spoke,
As the trees answered back,
While I eaves-dropped on their colloquy,
And heard the truth rustle through their roots:
"Are not the gods and spirits real?"
...
That was when he told me.
That he had saved me from traffickers.
That a girl like me could not imagine the horrors,
From which he had spared me,
What devils men and women could be,
And how many of my kind had been washed up upon beaches,
Starved over mountain passes,
Crowded into tents,
Kidnapped by gangs,
"So be grateful."
Gratitude, he said, meant know that there are lines,

Never to be crossed.
He told me never to leave this side of the Isle,
For on the other side,
There was a forest;
That there lurked traffickers,
And a wicked witch called Sycorax,
Who sold young women for gold,
To those who promised a better life,
In the West.
And when I dreamt at night of this witch,
And saw her twirling robes,
And spindle legs,

The world crushing me,
The world falling in on me,
Crib'd, cabined, confined,
Gratitude, he said
Would cure my mental health challenges.
That carrying wood and cleaning grates and washing his magician's alchemical flasks on
Zero-hour contracts,
Was the best NLP.
That cooking their food and washing their feet and ironing Miranda's mermaid's coats,
That cleaning, sorting, planting, chopping, cooking until my hands were chewed into
claws, That all this
Unpaid overtime with no holiday pay nor sickness benefits,
That all this,
Would save me
From over-thinking.
...
And know that it was in Miranda's blood to
Write, compose, sing, create,
And to do courses in
Shur Ecuadorian Shamanism,
Mindfulness,
Manifestation,
Magic,
With a naturalness which could not be mine.
That there is always dignity in work,
Even if it means my feet stabbed by the needles of rock pools,
My hands burned by the stings of scorpions,
All because he loves his barbecue surprise,
Whilst he insisted that I should be vegan.
And that I should never compare myself to others

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Meaning, Miranda.
That I should always say "I am enough" and neurologically speaking,
For he, Prospero, had been the victim of his brother Antonio's jealousy,
And exiled with his books and instruments of magic,
Floating on the Abyss,
Until he found our home
This Isle,
He, Prospero, would tolerate no jealously.
...
Which is when I rescued Miranda's sketch book from the waves.
...
Smudgy charcoal.
Trees,
Trees.
From the other side.
....
She had crossed over
To sketch them?
That forbidden place,
Of trees and Sycorax,
Of traffickers in search of produce
For the markets of Libya and Nigeria and London?
…
Had they not kidnapped ... Miranda? ...
I traced her path,
The days she wandered off,
Always returning untouched,
From that forbidden place,
Forbid to me,
Trees.
Across the smudged sketch book,
My finger traced
In her amateur lines,
Something of my own:
Onyx,
Barnacled hair,
Dragon's teeth for arms and legs
Decked in the Moorish dress
Of mermaid's shawls,
Sycorax?
Sycorax friend or foe?
…

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I do have some friends.
Rocks, sea spray, snakes and beetles,
Cockroaches, rats and lizards,
And I conjure them to a meeting,
For information, and I say: "You know?"
And in concert they say:
"Go."
"But I'd die" I whisper back,
"Go or you will die," they say.
Then on raven's wings
To the forest beyond,
To its edge of cool and discord,
To its heart of green and blood.
Terror and longing.
Sycorax, I whisper,
Sycorax, I call.
Sycorax, here I am.
Come and take me, bleed me,
Sycorax, I am yours.
...
Birds gather in arches that make a black rimmed heart in the red sky,
Sycorax.
Sycorax, I hear the trees whisper.
Sycorax, I hear the birds sing.
In your blood,
Sycorax you know,
You have known her all your life,
In the murmur between waves,
Like the language lovers use,
You know
And never dared to speak
Sycorax,
For she is everywhere yet nowhere,
Not corporeal
But within you.
...
He had killed her.
Prospero.
Matricide.
Murderer.
....
I stay in the trees and feed on beetles and the world's last clean seaweed,

I touch the trees and hear their spells,
For he had killed his rival
And she is my blood.
“Think it and it shall be” I heard Prospero mutter from his manuscripts, He taught me his language,
And my profit in’t,
Is to manifest this magic world of mine.
...
Then in my mind’s eye I see the storm, the waves, the force of hurricanes for days and days,
This way the hurricanes come:
Upon the rocks crash pirate ships and a plane with the CIA,
A Russian oligarch lost in a helicopter,
With his ear I’ll do and do,
Until these trees transport my thoughts,
As the CIA seize Prospero and the terror-struck Miranda.
...
This Isle is Mine.
....
Turtles, ravens and a visiting Whale,
The Shark who has lived for 500 years,
Have all told me,
That Prospero works for Monsanto
And that Miranda is in PR.
...
And I Caliban,
Queen of this Isle,
Will guard my Mother’s limbs and sacred lineaments,
Her birds, beetles and lizards all,
Her brood of dragons
And cauldron of winds,
I will guard them to the Death,
And here, I will practice this my craft
To Mastery.
For when the loggers come,
I shall meet them with such storms,
There ne’re will human creature walk this place, This Isle is Mine by Sycorax my Mother,
My Isle,
My Earth,
My Tempests.

No Ordinary Spider

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Arigope aurantia

She arrives on July 20th.

I come outside to water my mint, and a web nearly two feet across reveals itself to me. The zipper running up the middle announces her identity. Although I've never seen an *Arigope aurantia* with my own eyes, I've encountered enough photos to recognize her.

She is almost as big as my thumb, and though I know she means me no harm, her size makes me nervous. The fear comes from more than just her size; she is the black and yellow of the wasps that have terrorized the corners of my roof, gone so far as to build nests in my mailbox, every year.

Yet she also intrigues me. The more I remind myself she can't hurt me, that she won't even try as long as I keep my distance, the more curious I become. She does not reciprocate, though. Despite the fact that I'm separated from her by at least eighteen inches of greenery, the second she deems me too close, she shakes the web so as to scare me off. The old adage: "An animal is more afraid of you than you are of it."

My bedroom, as it turns out, is a better place for watching. The windows run all the way to the floor, so I can crouch at the foot of my bed and stare without disturbing her. Behind the glass, I'm closer than I could ever get through the bushes. With only eight inches between us, I can see how the yellow and black stripes on her abdomen look soft, even inviting. I imagine that if I were able to run my finger across her body, the texture would be the smooth but slightly stiff feel of crushed velvet.

The summer she spins her web between a patch of helmet flowers and my bedroom window is the third summer I have lived at the house in East Austin. It is the only summer I have not had a wasp problem.

People ask if I have named her. I know better than to name wild animals. I already know how this story is going to end.

Egg Sacs

The first egg sac appears August 24th. I come into my bedroom mid-morning to see it clinging to my window, secured by a thick layer of silk.

I feel as though I have been given a gift, though I know how this story is going to end.

The sac is the size of my eye, the shape of a gargantuan tear, mostly tan, with bits of darker brown and black. It occupies my attention for days on end. I have never seen an egg sac in real life, much less four feet from my bed.

The second egg sac appears September 12th. In a way, this one is more a surprise than the first. I never thought a spider would lay more than one egg sac. Yet here it is, nearly blending in with the faded brown paint on the side of the house, covered in sticky webbing.

On October 6th, I return from walking the dog, and as I look into the yard to make sure she's still there, I notice the web is empty. Fearing she's dead (even though I've known all along how this story is going to end), I hurry to my bedroom window, where I can get a better angle of the web. My fear becomes exhilaration when I realize she is on the window, putting a protective web around the third egg sac, just a few inches below the first one.

If I hadn't been so groggy upon waking, I might have noticed her making the sac itself.

As I park myself on the bedroom floor to watch her, I notice how hard she works. I think she must be tired, and then wonder if I'm anthropomorphizing her. But the egg sac is wider than she is; certainly she had to expend a great deal of energy to make it. Plus, a window is not necessarily an ideal surface. During the thirty minutes I spend watching her, I notice how frequently she struggles to grip the glass, to get secure footing. Her legs thrash and flail, and I wish there was anything I could do to help. Of course, she has a mission, and she will not be deterred. The tiny spider does not need the assistance of my huge, ungainly hands.

I wonder if this is how all mothers feel sometimes: suspended from a strong but thin rope, scrambling to find purchase on a dirty pane of glass.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Arachnophobia is one of the most common phobias in the world. It comes in third, behind fear of public speaking (glossophobia), and fear of death (necrophobia). 30.5% of the United States population fears spiders. Arachnophobia outranks the fear of the dark (achluophobia), heights (acrophobia), social situations (sociophobia), flying (aerophobia), closed spaces (claustrophobia), open spaces (agoraphobia), and thunder and lightning (brontophobia). I learn that my own fear of spiders is fairly mild. Apparently, those with fears deeper than mine will avoid the outdoors or ritualistically check bedding and shoes to ensure no spiders are lying in wait. Some cannot watch television shows or movies with spiders in them.

I wonder how these people get through Halloween.

For those whose arachnophobia is so debilitating that it interferes with daily life, a therapist can help. Changing thought patterns, mild exposure to the phobia, and systemic desensitization are all options.

All I have to do is sit at a window and watch her weave.

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All I have to do is get too close to the web and see how she shakes the silk to scare you off. See how she doesn't attack. See how she just wants to be left in peace, to eat other bugs and to lay eggs, to survive.

Gasteracantha cancriformis

Two years before my *Arigope* arrives, I move to the house in East Austin. The day after I settle in, I sign divorce papers. Though the entire process only took six months, I feel as though I have aged five years.

A week before the move, I turned thirty. My friend gave me a free-standing hammock with a shade canopy as a combination birthday/housewarming/divorce present. I have the hammock set up in the middle of my yard before I bother to finish unpacking books, clothes, or kitchen supplies.

The hammock becomes my favorite part of the house. The dog and I go out there every morning and, if the mosquitos aren't too thick, in the evening. I drink tea and read while he chases squirrels.

Two months after setting up the hammock, I come out one morning to discover that a tiny spider has woven a web between two of the poles holding up the shade structure. Thanks to Google I'm able to identify her as a spiny orb weaver (*Gasteracantha cancriformis*).

Though I have never been religious, in my heart, I've always held some innate sense of superstition. I am certain her presence is an auspicious one, though I'm not sure what she could possibly signify.

Sadly, the poles of a hammock shade structure turn out to be an inopportune place for a small spider to build a web. She stays with me all of two weeks. The one day, desperate for a squirrel, the dog jumps off the hammock and tears through the web.

The spider rightly realizes my hammock is not a safe space. I do not see her again. When I realize she is gone and not coming back, I cannot help but cry at my sense of loss. I feel that the universe had offered me a gift, and I failed to care for the treasure properly.

Feeding

I cannot watch a film in which a dog dies. If any animal is harmed during a scene, I have to look away. I feel guilty when I destroy a wasp nest. My heart is so soft I cannot even bring myself to kill a cockroach.

Yet I love to watch my spider kill and eat her prey.

She primarily eats bees and butterflies, and so I think I should feel at least a little guilty, given the ongoing threat to pollinator populations. But all I have is awe when a honeybee, heavy with pollen, slams into her web. Within 30 seconds, she has the creature immobilized and wrapped up. Sometimes she eats it on the spot, but often, she leaves the corpse for later.

Butterflies provide the most entertainment. My yard contains smaller species: Carolina satyr (*Hermeuptychia sosybius*), checkered white (*Pontia protodice*), and ceraunus blue (*Hemiargus ceraunus*). Still, they're bigger than honeybees, and put up more of a fight.

One afternoon, a ceraunus blue gets caught, and takes nearly a minute to subdue. It thrashes its wings in hopes of breaking free of the sticky silk, in hopes of intimidating the spider, but she is undeterred. Through my bedroom window, I am close enough that I can see her fangs descend. When she bites the butterfly, it looks almost intimate, almost kind. This must be what the kiss of death looks like. Eventually, the wings slow down, and then stop entirely. Once the butterfly is paralyzed for good, the spider finishes wrapping it up in a tiny shroud, then hauls it to the center of the web to feast.

Exterminators

"Get an exterminator. They like to hang around your house rafters and they are not fun in your house! They multiply like crazy."

"You do realize, these egg sacs become spiders by the hundreds?"

"They are creepy as hell!"

"KILL IT WITH FIRE."

As though a garden spider would actually want to get in the house. Poised between the helmet flowers and the bedroom window, my spider has ready access to bees, wasps, crickets, and butterflies. Many mornings, she has to pause halfway through a meal to kill and wrap another creature that has gotten stuck in her web. If for some reason she got into the house, she would just want to get back outside. There's no space where she could actually build a web, and even if she managed to do so, there isn't a steady stream of food passing by. She would have to contend with the dog, who would see her as some sort of toy.

The attic wouldn't be much better. Maybe she could hang a web there, but certainly the spaced lacks the ready access to pollinators buzzing around flowers. The only thing living up there, as far as I can tell, are the rats my landlord continually fails to exterminate.

I don't trust that the people my roommate hires to mow the lawn will respect my spider. That they'll try to get rid of her out of fear or misunderstanding. I buy a lawnmower and start cutting the grass myself.

Venomous Spiders

No matter how frightening spiders might seem, there are only three species that are actually harmful to humans: black widow (*Latrodectus*), brown widow (*Latrodectus geometricus*), and brown recluse (*Loxosceles reclusa*). Fortunately, they all have distinctive appearances. The black widow is most commonly known, with the telltale red hourglass standing out in contrast to the black abdomen. The brown widow has a similar red marking, but a tan body, the head and legs like milk chocolate and the abdomen like

cream, and along its back orange and black markings that resemble scales in pattern if not in texture. Finally, the brown recluse, with an unmarked body, but its coloring and long legs obvious to anyone it encounters.

If you take the time to commit their images to memory, you will have an easier time around safe spiders. No orbweaver or jumping spider, no house spider or cobweb spider or wolf spider, not even the large and hairy tarantula, resembles the three deadly ones. If you look at a spider and don't see the telltale colors or markings, you can remind yourself it means you no harm. If it's in your house, perhaps you'll work up the courage to scoop it up and set it free rather than kill it. If it's in your garden, you might even be willing to let the spider coexist, and it will thrive on all the pests that would otherwise plague you.

A year and a half before my marriage fell apart, I discovered a brown recluse in our downstairs half-bath. We kept the cleaning supplies under the sink. Since we hardly ever cleaned, and since the full bath upstairs was much more comfortable, we could easily go an entire month, if not longer, without going in. One morning, though, I decided enough was enough with the grime in the upstairs bathroom, and went in search of toilet bowl cleaner. When I went into the half-bath and turned on the lights, there was a brown spider sitting on the mirror. Its abdomen and legs were acorn-brown, and the head had an amber tone. I had never seen spider legs that long. At the time, they seemed the length of coffee stirrers.

Cleaning could wait. I turned the light off, closed the door, stuffed the gap between the door and the floor with trash bags, and went searching online to see whether or not my worst fears were true. The images of brown recluse spiders on my screen were all dead-ringers for the creature in my bathroom.

I went upstairs where my husband was still dozing.

"There's a brown recluse in the downstairs bathroom."

He opened his eyes, but turned so his back was toward me. "So?"

"So what are you going to do about it," I asked him.

I stood in the doorframe watching him, until a few minutes later he got up, sighed, put on his winter gloves, went downstairs, and killed it.

Four years almost to the day, I cannot decide what to make of that moment. It smacks of feminist hypocrisy, of being equal in all things except pest control. It smacks of being a sitcom caricature, the nagging wife who won't let the poor husband sleep in on Sunday because there is a chore to be done.

But while I can castigate myself for being an obnoxious wife and a bad feminist, I also see it as one of the many warning signs of the impending divorce I refused to acknowledge. The spider was dangerous. I did not love him enough anymore to risk killing it myself. I would not put my safety on the line for him.

Weaving

My spider works in the morning. I read that she is supposed to weave at night, but my spider is no insomniac. (Though I always hope to catch her in the act of eating

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the web, I never do.) Her work usually begins within an hour of sunrise; she has started the process by the time the dog and I return from our morning walk. Indoors, I go about my morning routine, and come back outside with coffee about 90 minutes later. At that point, she's usually about three-quarters of the way finished with the process.

I used to meditate with my eyes closed, but now, I have lost interest in dark contemplation. Instead, I sit in the grass and focus on her, the way she reaches each agile leg out to grasp established strands. Though I know she weighs only a few ounces, if that, she seems so heavy in proportion to the thin threads that deploy from her body and drape with precise geometry.

The moment I always wait for is the finishing touch, when she weaves the zipper (known also as the stabilimentum) up through the middle of the web. I assume for some time that this zipper provides stability for the web, but as I read more to try to understand the mystery of her, I learn that the purpose of the stabilimentum is up for debate. However, my hypothesis is decidedly incorrect, disproved before I was even born. Instead, the discussion revolves around the stabilimentum being used to attract mates, or to make the spider appear larger, or to camouflage the web.

I have never known anything so innately as this spider knows how to weave a web. I cannot build myself a home using instinct. I have never learned to trap and kill my own food. Anything I do with any sense of grace has been practiced a thousand hours. Anything I seem to understand at a glance has been learned, often painfully, often a dozen times.

Natural Remedies

Apparently, the best deterrent to spiders in one's home is to keep a clean and tidy house. Repair ripped screens. Caulk up the cracks. Trim your plants. Make sure you don't have flies buzzing around. Defend your territory.

Given the habits of my twenties, there's no surprise that a brown recluse once took refuge in my bathroom. However, given the state of the house in East Austin, I am surprised I don't have more of a problem. Though I've improved my personal cleaning abilities, the landlord is content to let the house fall into ruin. Cracked foundation. Leaky roof. Warped windows and doors.

If you do not want to fill your home and yard with pesticides, the Internet is full of helpful suggestions for natural pest control that may or may not actually work. I am doubtful that horse chestnuts will accomplish much of anything. Catnip apparently does the job, as do various essential oils. I admit, I rarely see spiders in houses with cats, though that might be due to the fact that the cats usually enjoy killing pests of all kinds. Vinegar is supposedly a deterrent, though the jury is out on which kind. Tobacco is another on the list.

You can also trap spiders, if you so desire. For those of us who don't mind seeing dead and dying creatures, there are sticky traps, in which the spiders will get caught, and of course eventually starve to death, unless you smash them first. Or, if you don't have it in your heart to kill the spider, there are instructions on YouTube to make a

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Spider Rifle, which sucks the arachnid up and allows you to dispose of it outside still alive.

These days, when I see them in the house, I just let them be. They don't come into the house that often, and they're always tiny. I'm always afraid that I'll injure the spider trying to get it outside. And no, my house isn't overrun. I've never seen a full-blown web indoors. You can call me lazy. You can call me a bleeding heart. I would just rather let a creature be than bother it.

Charlotte

According to my mother, when I was in second grade and my teacher read the class *Charlotte's Web*, Mrs. Gresko had me read aloud the chapter in which Charlotte dies, because she could not keep herself from crying. I have no memory of this ever happening, though I know I didn't cry when my mother read the book to me the year before. I was not nearly as sentimental at seven as I am at thirty-two. Charlotte was a fictional character in a novel. The only person I had lost was my grandmother, and my mind saw a clear division between her death and the passing of a talking spider in a book.

On the night of Sunday, October 9th, I come home after being away for the weekend and am greeted by an empty space between the bushes and the window. The three egg sacs remain safely attached to the window and the siding, but both web and spider are gone.

I cry for two days. Between bouts of tears, I chastise myself for sobbing over the death of a spider, a creature I had the good sense to not even name, because of course she was going to die at the end of the summer. An arachnid that didn't particularly care for my presence, either. My window was merely a safe space with an ideal prey population.

The week after she dies, I re-read *Charlotte's Web*, and I start crying well before Charlotte even dies.

As children, we are told fables and fairy tales to learn lessons. Yet even if we are lucky enough to read *Charlotte's Web* as children, it seems one of the lessons in the book has a hard time sticking. We may retain the lesson about friendship, about sacrifice, but we forget that, for the most part, spiders are a beneficial species. Charlotte reminds us of that in the beginning, when she asks Wilbur, "do you realize that if I didn't catch bugs and eat them, bugs would multiply and get so numerous that they'd destroy they earth, wipe out everything?" How easy, it seems, to forget that the creatures which scare us so are keeping the flies and the wasps at bay, that they protect us from pestilence.

Not long before Charlotte dies, Wilbur proclaims, "To think that when I first met you, I thought you were cruel and bloodthirsty!" This seems a common assumption with every spider a human meets. In truth, I spent nearly two years training myself out of my own fear. Even I had forgotten the lessons of what had been my favorite childhood story. Two years, between the brown recluse in the bathroom and the arrival of the

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Gasteracantha cancriformi, for me to learn to be unafraid of the elegant fangs and the spindly legs.

Autumn deepens. The egg sacs won't hatch until spring. Now I wait.

A Son in His Father's Forest

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The father was sixty-five and a widower. He had winter-white hair, a full beard, and a sturdy body when he moved into the old colonial near the woods' edge. While his health lasted, the old man had walked daily in the five acres of woodland that he owned by his home and the forest beyond it. He went as far as a set of great hills and streams that he knew of miles from the house. He talked about the trips when his son came to visit. The son, who was thirty and in good health, had hiked with his father when younger and still did by himself. He had lived near the man in the same Connecticut town his whole life, until his parent had decided to move to the colonial in the far off hamlet. The old man had visited the woods by it only once with a friend who had since died, but it had decided him to stay. "The place has so much for me," the man had explained to his son. "All of this nature." The father had hiked the land by his new home often, even when he became ill. He said getting the fresh air built up his strength. He hiked it up to the day he fell struggling to rise from bed. Though impaired with sclerosis, the father never said a word to his son to suggest he regretted living by the forest on a long, lonely road far from any people in a town.

Soon, the old man could venture only to the end of his five acres before he had to stop, the illness making it too hard for him to go on. He saw no more of the forest now than he did from his living room window. The son, when he heard about the man's debility, suggested that he might move into a nursing home before his sclerosis caused him any serious injury. "Maybe somewhere closer our old town so I could visit you easier?" he said to lead him. The father laughed, shaking, and said no. "I can't leave the woods now. The thought of them is what keeps me going. They give me a sort of vigor I wouldn't choose giving up." The son had not imagined his father's attachment to the land might be like this. He relented on the idea of the convalescent home.

The son made regular visits to the homebound man, whose back twisted worse by the month. During these visits, his parent talked of the places he had seen in the nearby forest the last few years. Once he related the trip where he discovered a basin of land green with ferns. Tall trees had lined the heights above where he stood surveying it. "I was closed off from the world there," he said, his eyes focusing in the distance. "The place was like my own realm. I loved it." He told his son another time about coming to an open spot in the wood with few trees. He encountered several red maples near its borders. "I had to stop and look at them," he explained, excited. "They were just like a fire." Of all the places that he encountered, the father seemed best to like the mountain that lay several miles to the west. He had hiked there often. "The view there took in everything, the woods, the town, all in one. The sky overhead when it was clear held

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more than I could see." The father had sketched for his son how to go to the mountain. It had been a long but easy hike west, he said, through the open forest then to a level height; he had followed this until the earth grew uneven and led him to the small mountain with the view. "The idea of that mountain view has kept me on this land," he said leaning importantly toward his son. "Once visiting it I felt I was bound here. I had to walk to it when I could. Now I can't, I feel I should keep as close by the place as I can. One doesn't get to live by places like those just anywhere."

The son, listening, imagined the land the old man had crossed and thought that some day he might hike the same forest and see the same things. However, more immediate events claimed and prevented him then and in the next years. He had to take his kids to weekend baseball games, go on trips into town with his wife, repair broken items of his house. The hike in the forest near his father's always was pushed ahead until he forgot about it.

Then the father, age seventy, died from his long illness. The son came to see to the man's house soon after. When he had gone through the rooms and packed several of their items, he went onto the land that his father owned and walked it. The birches on it were yellow and the maples red with autumn and the son strolled amid them. He recalled his idea for the view hike as he came to the end of his father's property and met the forest. The son pictured his father crossing into the wood on its yellowed, browning mat of leaves. He spotted maples far in the forest and looked long on their hard, wrinkled forms as if he might read their bark. He moved from the woods' edge back toward his father's house for it had grown late, but the idea of the forest remained with him. He had meant to return home after reaching the house but decided now that he would do the hike. He no longer would delay: it was time now he was at the place and soon might be leaving it. He phoned his wife to tell her his plan then settled in for the night.

In the quiet of his father's living room, the man considered that he had only the casual sketch his parent had given of the way through the woods to the mountain, not the exact route. The elder had never marked his trail because his knowledge of the land had been enough to guide him. The son wondered if he could traverse the place as well as his father or even would reach the mountain view just heeding the sketch. He reminded himself, however, that he was a good hiker and had hiked with his father as a boy and an adult. He could pick the route his father must have taken and follow it. He would have something very like the man's experience of the place when he went, he told himself.

#

In the morning, the son ventured into the forest from his father's land going west at a steady pace. The going seemed easy at first. He walked over level ground. However, he came soon to a throng of young maples and birches. He walked past one tree, then another, but found several in his way. Going farther either left or right, he knew he would run into even more. He would have to weave through all of them to advance. He thought his father would not have gone on a path like this, so returned through the woods toward the house. He took a more northerly way from there. He reached open,

flat woods with maples set widely apart. The earth here was matted, pale and brown, and the trees tall, their high dark trunks lifting long branches over him. He could see much farther than he had in many parts of his father's land. The son reflected that his father would have liked to walk through this open spot. The man had felt he owned less crowded spaces. He moved easier and thought himself freer in them. The son walked north then west.

As he crossed the open forest, the son passed yellow birches and red maples. They were tall, thick but not fat with age. Their brown, cragged limbs showed pale in the autumn sunlight. He walked over the flat, browning mat of forest floor that lay free of rock or root and saw the woods stretch before him. In the treetops, he heard warblers sing, quiet, and sing again. He continued on until he reached a tall beech. The beech was larger than the other trees he had passed, its trunk thick with three dark, grey rings each five or six feet apart. Each ring was wider than his hand when he spread it. The son thought his father would have noticed the beech. The man stopped for unusual things in the woods. He would notice other things in the land that he else would not have then, asters, a wren, else too by the way for him to have cared for. The beech felt a good point to turn finally, the son thought and hiked west.

The son walked and found the open forest become less. He passed into dark, heavy shade. Inside it many mountain laurel shrubs bulked with bent, squared branches that cut off any easy view through the woods. Thin, bladelike maples crowded around. The open land had evaporated, and the son wove through many, thin trees to advance. He could find many routes through them, he knew, but none straight as earlier. He realized he would have to pick his way. He felt it a problem until he considered he could walk without a clear path if he had a good idea of where he would wind up. His father had not worried about detours in the woods either. The elder told him once that he had crossed a clearing that was not in his way just to see some wild pogonias. The father claimed that it would not have been worth walking on to miss them though he would have gone on faster. He added he had liked the flowers the more for it as well. The son continued weaving through the trees. He came to a laurel shrub whose trunk was shaped into waves; in more than one spot it strangely had bent square. The laurel's skinny leaves were dark green, close to a spruce's color. He broke off a leaf and slipped it into his breast pocket to remember his walk by later.

The son went on farther. Great gaps emerged in the cover and he was again in open forest. The son walked the flat land straight on, passing maples, then hickories, then more wooded land. The land kept level for a good half mile and he wondered if he might have passed the rise his father had said would lead toward the mountain. He walked looking for hills in the distance. He quickened his step and heard the dry leaves break and crackle under him. Around him the land rose slowly. The earth became exposed and brown and he saw many large rocks that stuck from its top. The rock was a dark blue-black, a mix of granite, basalt, and feldspar. It stood from the earth in bulges as if forced up, its top, hard and jagged. The son walked by some of the rock that jutted ledge-like from the earth, then a squat group of rocks jagged on their tops. The rocks

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were well fixed at their bases in the earth. He passed them and followed the slope of land up until he reached level forest.

He walked through a small ravine and reached a second great rise. The rise, wide enough that he could not see its top, had a steep face. He started up it to a dark maple. He touched the long, vertical wrinkles in its trunk, his fingers jumping over the hard knobs and edges. In the fork of the roots, he discovered a white wood aster only an inch tall. The flower looked very small beside his boot. He went next to a brown-bodied oak. Its wrinkled skin had fissures deep enough to fit an acorn inside. Fallen twigs that resembled crooked, old fingers sat on the ground nearby amid pale leaves. Across the trunk, the son saw a deep, white gash nine or ten inches long near the height of his chest. The son thought someone must have made it; the cut was that clean and straight. He wondered if his father had. The elder had been strong enough before he quitted hiking and tall enough to reach that high. His father had carried a pocketknife that he could have used at the ready. The son tried to imagine why the man would have cut the tree. He did not suppose his father had meant to mark a trail: the man had never marked his trail anywhere as he remembered. He considered if the man might have been checking that his knife was sharp. He thought this possible but the cut more than was needed to find out. His father might have made a smaller one lower down as well and more easily. The son could not say finally why his father did it, but he thought the mark a sign the man had passed there.

He continued along the rise. The daylight showed stronger through a break in the woods ahead. The land flattened and narrowed there as it passed among high-grown shrubs. His father had favored such level places. The son remembered when the two of them had hiked a broad, rocky country to an open wood. His father had been too glad to reach the easy land and quit struggling to walk. He had smiled as they went on. The son veered left and passed through the break onto the flatter land. Past the tall bushes came a small lift in the terrain like a low hill; it stood three or four times his height. White daylight showed at the top in a short strip. He climbed the small rise of land, his eye on the light, and reached its top. He saw the terrain below him in an open sweep. In it were a few browning oaks, their lobed leaves yet to fall; beyond these, tall slender pines touched by sun, their shed needles fine, red, and orange on the earth. Patchy shrubs hugged the few spots of bare ground. The little rock was granite, low and flat. The son descended to the bottom of the land. He walked from there to a second small rise of earth that he climbed with easy, eager steps. From the height, a new sweep of forest showed to him. He saw tall, white pines and oaks spread wider than in the section of land he had left. Among the shadows, logs crumbled on the earth, their pulp spilling. At a good distance, pumpkin orange lichens crowded the grey brush. The son thought he could pass through this land without difficulty. His father had told him that if he viewed the whole of a place first, it was easier to walk in person. The son descended the hill and walked through the open tracts he had seen above. He circled a fallen pine and went through a gap in the oaks. He walked and reached a new rise. He climbed it quickly and descended a short way over yellowed needles that softened his steps. He walked toward a new height and took broad strides onto its steep face. He hiked past spruces, their

forms taller and darker, their boughs longer than he had seen elsewhere. He drew long, full breaths of the cool air. The daylight spread white high overhead. He rejoined the great rise he had branched from earlier and went west as his father had gone.

Hiking through a green stretch of the woodland, the son reached a dense thicket of thorn bushes. The twisted bushes, gray after losing their leaves, had grown high and close together. Thorns studded every loop and bend of their growth like teeth. To avoid them, the son circled the thicket and hiked for the heights above it. He passed tall black birches and brown oaks that threw a heavy shade around him. After a short distance, the son came to a new bush thicket. The thicket spread far and was denser than the earlier. He made a new, longer circle around it than the first, again met the woods, and continued his ascent. The rise in the land steepened and he drew harder breaths walking it. He climbed much in a short distance. He arrived then at a third thicket, low, dense, and gray. The son considered he could hike still higher to go around or through it but that neither choice would make for easy hiking. He already had gone a distance to avoid the first groups of bushes. In realizing it, he knew his father could not have gone here on the easy way that he had claimed. He had passed elsewhere. The son reflected on this feeling he had missed something his parent had known of the wood. He had not and, it seemed, would not have the man's experience going onward. However, the son told himself he had seen trees, rocks, birds much as his parent must have. He had hiked the open land and the forest as the old man had done. The son believed the hike good as he had taken it, too; in fact, nothing about the passage itself made him feel it any worse than his parent may have seen. He did not suppose then his father would claim he had missed anything that he, the elder, had not experienced himself. The man had said people go through things differently. There did not have to be any wrong if someone had. The son seized a bent stick from the ground. He raised it and swiped at the bunched bushes before him. The bushes' thorn-clad arms fell to his sides and he stepped through the thicket bending it down with his boots. The thorns nicked his hands and lodged in his plaid shirt and denims as he pushed forward. He emerged in an open space and hiked to a wooded plateau.

The son went a short distance and arrived at a section of woods strewn with fallen and tilted trees. They were many kinds, maple, oak, hickory; they had been very tall when they stood. A birch, choked with lichens, had leaned forward and lodged in an oak right before him. A fat maple with unraveling bark stretched on the ground between the upturned roots of the birch and the oak. The son crouched into the small space beneath the leaning birch. He raised a hand onto a lichen-spotted part of the trunk to be sure not to strike his back or his head, stepped over the maple beneath him, and cleared it. He proceeded into an opening of new bush and grass and came to a huge pine lying flat on the ground. The pine had lost its needles; its limbs, some sixty feet distant, stuck out dark and dead, more than one limb smashed when the evergreen had fallen. The son sat on the waist-high stretch of pine and swiveled his legs onto its other side. He crossed some low grass and reached a fallen hickory amid dead leaves. The once tall standing hickory had burst open with rot and spilled its pulp on the earth. He walked through the gap in the trunk where the rot had crumbled away.

Soon, the son reached a shaded wood where there was a wide stream. The stream had thigh-deep water flowing from the north. The son saw several points on it had rocks that would let someone partly or fully cross. A few yards away, a line of gray wedge-like rocks crossed the stream. These had only small gaps between them but they were too narrow for stepping. The son decided to cross by the rocks in the short cascade beside him. These were the closest and best rocks he saw. The son stepped on the rounded stone nearest him and found it shake. He crouched and balanced on it. When steady, he raised a leg toward the next rock beside him and tried to gain a foothold. The rock was angular and steep with a slit on top like a U. He inserted his foot one way then another in it, before he stepped scrambling atop it. He grasped the rock with both his hands as he brought his other leg forward onto the spot. The stream went churning white through the cascade around him and chilled his bent limbs. The water moved quickly, as if alive, jumping over the rocks ahead. He stepped carefully over these rocks and reached the far bank.

The land past the grassed stream bank was a mud field. The field spread to either side in long, earthen bulges and dips. The son stepped into the thick mud, his boot pressing through to the top of its toe. The mud caked the boot and he walked pulling hard as he went. He came to a patch of field where a tuft of tall grass grew on a clump of holding earth inches above the mud. He stepped hard to get a footing and squashed the clump so that the grass sank and did not right again. He heaved again into the mud and stalked toward a log of white birch. He reached for a bone-like branch on the dead wood to pull himself forward. He leaned too far and knocked his leg hard on it. He quickly grasped the birch wood with both hands to avoid pitching forward. Part of his shin hurt for hitting it but he had no other damage. He maneuvered over the birch wood and slogged through more of the mud. He went west toward lindens that bore still green, heart-shaped leaves beside tall, hedge-like bushes. The brown earth beneath this growth was firm and dry, and he walked onto it. Marginal ferns crowded the land there. He went on, spying the mud field from the bushes on the right. He walked until the ferns thinned and the mud field came before him again. He entered upon it once more. Brown, clouded water seeped up from the ground with his steps. The thin mud beneath the water was slippery and he crossed it, wobbling. In short order, he came to a maple trunk lying on the ground. He grasped one of its branches to pull himself ahead as he had tried with the birch wood earlier. The old, dark trunk was hollow with rot and turned as he tugged. He let go of it. The trunk made a long, low creak and settled onto a side choked with mildew. The son continued. The mud dried and hardened under him and he emerged into open forest.

The son went only a quarter mile on firm land when there came a broad steep hill on his left and he knew it for the start of the mountain that his father had climbed. He had reached it, he realized, by a different way than his father had taken. The thought made the son happy. He started up the hill that rose parallel to him. He hiked into a patch of wood into which the sun sent light shafts. When the breeze touched the maples around him, yellow and orange leaves fell twirling through the air. Soon he had reached hemlocks much darker than in the forest below. Norway spruces with dim tops and

drooping limbs towered near the sky. The very tall firs he passed stood thick with bunched boughs. The pines towered above him; their boughs shot out straight at a great height near the sun. They were majestic evergreens, great with growth, he thought. He passed in the gaps among them and hiked the land farther.

The land leveled. The son walked through tall pines darker and sturdier than he had passed. He knew he must be nearing the view but did not know where it could be. He turned to a wall of dark trees behind which a shaded thicket extended far ahead. He went there with a quickened step and crossed the place. He went head on through gaps in the hemlocks where cobwebs stretched. He walked through these and wiped them from his face. The thicket ended and he found himself at the edge of the mountain wood. A natural path under the needles hooked left and he followed it. He arrived at a small hollow before a low, wide hill. The top of the hill stood black against the wide sky. There, spruces held very still, needled fingers down in the air. The light between the spruces shone before him. He walked across the hollow and climbed the short hill. He knew there would be some view and that it must be his father's. He had nothing to prove it but knew he was right.

The son made the top of the hill and faced below. Beneath him was the side of the mountain and the town past it. Red and yellow maples colored the land. With the distance, their heads had shrunk to tufts, cut in dark, uneven breaks. The pines stood dark and thin beside them. Among their limbs were hollows and gaps that snaked like a maze to bind the scene. The forest thinned near the town and broke among the houses. Past the town were rounded hills that had the haze of distance above them. The son looked from the mountainside to the many trees to the sky and smiled. Yes, he thought, this is all I believed it would be. The trees, the stream, the rock. Father had seen it all in his time living here as I have today. I have known the wood with him today.

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Book Review: Chad Weidner, *The Green Ghost: William Burroughs and the Ecological Mind* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 200 pp.

Since ecocriticism on the works of the Beat Generation only tends to address the poetry of Gary Snyder and a few others, Chad Weidner's *Green Ghost: William Burroughs and the Ecological Mind* has as its main goal a reconsideration of Burroughs' body of work in an ecocritical light. Weidner readily admits that this is a monumental task for two reasons: ecocriticism often emphasizes a type of nature writing that Burroughs is not know for; and previous criticism on Burroughs' canon does not outwardly lend itself to an ecocritical reading. But much like Burroughs's own eclectic, complex aesthetic, the field of ecocriticism has blossomed into a multifaceted, diverse arena in recent years, growing out of conservationist movements and taking on issues of climate change, the anthropocene, anti-industrialism, animal and plant studies, nonhuman agency, back-to-nature movements, not to mention cross-disciplinary lenses (queer ecocriticism, ecofeminism, environmental justice, environmental humanities, etc.). So why not take on Burroughs' unruly and often composite archive in this context?

A fraught and controversial figure within the Beat Generation, Burroughs occupies a space of critical veneration usually reserved for those scholars brave enough to take on his experimental style and provocative subject matter. Weidner proves he has done this critical work but now wants to complicate Burroughs' literary legacy by reclaiming him as a writer of the "ecological mind"—not a "traditional" nature writer, necessarily, but one immersed in a conservationist, ecological ecocritical, and a biocentric/ deep ecological ethos. These three ecocritical frames, Weidner explains, explore the ways humans interact with the natural world in general as well as with specific bioregions and ecosystems—both metaphorical and real. A large part of Burroughs' ecological project is the notion that the human imagination cannot fully explain or explore the "biotic sphere," a deep ecological view that unseats human authority over the nonhuman world in favor of regarding humans as part of a larger, global, ecosystem (4-5). Reflective of Burroughs' problematic and fraught relationship to the literary canon and to theoretical frames at large, application of these ecocritical theories do not fit seamlessly within a unified ecocritical vision, but, to my mind, the whole point of ecocriticism is to explore the various ways we inhabit and imagine the world around us. Burroughs' worlds and prose are permeable, chaotic, aberrant, fragmentary, and often terrifying, and that is what makes them worthy of contemporary ecocritical examination.

After identifying four phases of Burroughs' writing—from the early texts (*Junkie* and *Queer*) to his most popular, subversive works (*Naked Lunch*, namely) through the experimental works written in the cut-up style to his later, more linearly conventional

narratives—Weidner notes that the readings of Burroughs' work often identified and analyzed in previous critics' works and biographies are multifaceted but ultimately miss the ecological tendencies within his canon. Seeing a "green anarchism" reminiscent of Thoreau's literary and political work, Weidner argues for a reading of Burroughs' canon that not only does not ignore his tendency towards using violent means to achieve an ideological end (his brief description of Burroughs' obsession with guns and the militia movements is particular interesting here) but also acknowledges his encounters with the frontier, the primitive, and the pastoral. All these elements emphasize how Burroughs "was drawn to the ideas of the past as a way to improve the future" (17). What Weidner ultimately proves, however, is that examining Burroughs' subject matter is just as much about an ecological imagination as is the material landscape of the texts themselves.

Throughout the six chapters of literary analysis, which are roughly chronological, Weidner invokes such current ecocritical keywords as: toxic discourse, the trash aesthetic, biopiracy, ecoterrorism, animal studies, and apocalyptic thinking. The most effective descriptive phrase comes in Chapter Four with "the Dada Compost Grinder." Utilizing Dada ecopoetics and the trash aesthetic, Weidner makes an apt case for the "cultural cannibalism" and "literary sabotage" of the *Nova* trilogy, written in Burroughs' famed cut-up style. The narrative encourages readers to literally cut-up the world around them, not just material objects but also the conventions of language in order "to contaminate the public discourse with what can be considered a destabilizing virus" (68). The *Nova* trilogy is composed of the discarded, raw material of existing texts, resulting in "a textual ecology, an inanimate textual organism that reacts, contracts, and moves based on reader involvement" (72). Dada ecopoetics, besides destabilizing language and cultivating new texts from rubbish, include a "trash aesthetic as rich compost for creative rebirth that goes beyond human agency" (160). This sentence, to me, essentially sums up Burroughs' entire aesthetic, and Weidner makes sense of which many readers through the decades have not been able.

Further, Weidner coins the term "the Toxic Human" early in his book to examine the junkie characters in Burroughs' first novels as well as the most famous one, *Naked Lunch*, arguing that "the modern toxic condition is a form of contemporary ecological identity that challenges stereotypical environmental views" (27). The novels reveal the presence of toxins in the form of "an alien agent that takes hold of, damages, and pollutes the human body" so that the Toxic Human becomes almost a parable or metaphor for inhabiting the modern toxic world (23). There seems to be no escape from toxicity, no matter where it comes from, and Weidner notes that Burroughs most powerful encounter with environmental thinking in these early works comes from the idea that everybody is worthy of healing and wellness. But the "junkie universe," since it is a modern, urban, toxic environment, is always already apocalyptic, and the "Toxic Human is rather a fact and a present form of human existence" since "modernity engenders both the toxic body and a sense of inevitable doom that accompanies apocalyptic thinking" (35).

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But apart from the chemical toxins of *Naked Lunch*, the "quest for the ultimate natural drug" in *The Yage Letters* reveals "radical techniques for reality transformation" (accompanied by mention of the West's exploitation of the environments in the developing world), which makes the fragmentation within the narrative parallel the fragmentation of the readers' experience. In these cut-up style novels, Burroughs encourages a radical reading practice that forces the reader to engage with the text in innovative and unexpected ways. Weidner argues that Burroughs' style in these montage works are actually apt for the "radical ambiguity" of "expressing both increasing isolation from the natural world and the fragmentation of the human consciousness in an increasingly uncertain age" (63). Part of this uncertainty also relies on the deep ecological idea that the human imagination simply cannot comprehend nor process the entire complexity of the nonhuman world. These limitations, that make the knowability of the nonhuman world impossible—whether it is through encounters with nonhuman animals, including companion species and those lost through mass extinction, the invention of the pastoral, or the general anti-industrial turn of the Beat Generation—also make redemption ultimately impossible. An ecological apocalypse, then, is inevitable. Burroughs seems to oscillate between despair and hope for humanity throughout his career, and he is, along with humanity in general, I would argue (at least in this ecological vision), is "an eternally ethereal green ghost," susceptible, fragile, and vulnerable even as he inhabits a world he seemingly and falsely rules (1).

The whole book manages to feel, in the spirit of Burroughs' literature, simultaneously experimental and sure-footed in its application of theory, making one wonder why more has not been written about Burroughs' "ecological mind." While I am no fan of Burroughs any longer, this book has come close to convincing me to revisit his work in this light. Additionally, Weidner's secondary goal to make a case for extending and expanding our ecological readings of midcentury texts takes on an appropriate urgency about apocalyptic and anti-human thinking that is all over ecocriticism at the moment. There is not merely one way for humans to interact with or experience ecologies and environments, and the more often we are reminded of this, the better.

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Gabriele Dürbeck, Urte Stobbe, Hubert Zapf, Evi Zemanek (eds.): *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture* (London: Lexington Books, 2017), 449 pp.

The volume *Ecological Thought in German Literature and Culture* offers a survey of recent ecocritical research into German-speaking culture, thus telling the manifold history of the evolution of ecological thought. In their introduction, editors Gabriele Dürbeck, Urte Stobbe, Hubert Zapf and Evi Zemanek, all renowned scholars in ecocriticism, address two opposite but interrelated tendencies in the field of ecocritical studies: on the one hand, it is marked by increasing globalisation and transnationality of thought, and, on the other, by a growing awareness of the diversity of contributions by different and distinct cultural traditions to ecological knowledge. Understanding these tendencies as "equally valid and mutually complementary", they base their study on the acknowledgement that the co-agency of both is fundamental for ecocultural scholarship, as "both the recognition of inevitable connectivity and of irreducible diversity is mandatory in assessing the relation between different ecological knowledge cultures." (xiv) Focusing on one such knowledge culture, their aim is to present an overview of major developments and manifestations of the evolution of ecological thought in German-speaking culture.

The interdisciplinary contributions by the 26 authors are grouped into five sections: *Proto-Ecological Thought*, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, (part I), *Theoretical Approaches* (part II), an *Environmental History in Germany* from the late nineteenth century to the present (part III), several *Ecocritical Case Studies of German Literature* (part IV) and, enlarging the scope towards the end, *Ecological Visions in Painting, Music, Film and Land Art* (part V). This structure allows readers to draw illuminating connections between the individual fields in which ecological thought evolves or even to use the volume as a reference book. Opening part I, Anke Kramer sketches how the concept of the four elements, one of the earliest predecessors of ecological theory, found its way from Greek antiquity through Paracelsus during the German Renaissance to play "a decisive role in the emergence of romantic, and especially fantastic, literature" (Kramer 11). In the following chapters, some of the most important thinkers of the Goethezeit are presented in their ecological dimension: From Heather I. Sullivan's exemplary readings of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, *Zur Farbenlehre* and *Faust I* and *II* emerges an understanding of Goethe's conceptualisation of human–nature relationships as one marked by "inextricable *interdependence*" (Sullivan 17). Kate Rigby's reading of Herder is an important contribution to the "prehistory of biosemiotcs", pointing out that the roots of this concept reach back to the eighteenth century (Rigby, 32). Berbeli Wanning reveals "astonishing parallels" between Novalis' and Schelling's conceptions of the complex nature–poetry and mind–matter

relationship so central to romantic thought and the ideas of contemporary New Materialism (Wanning 58). Part I closes with Caroline Schaumann's analysis of the environmental critique of Alexander von Humboldt, which elaborates on Humboldt's insights into men's destructive influence on a global scale—a critique which "pointed ahead to some key environmental challenges of the Anthropocene" (Schaumann 65).

Four of the essays in part II deal with thinkers who contributed to the evolution of ecological thought in the past hundred years. Silvio Vietta, for example, reads Heidegger's criticism of "Seinsvergessenheit" as a metaphysical ecological criticism directed at an occidental mode of thought; Timo Müller shows how the critical theory of the Frankfurt School left its mark on ecological aesthetics, environmental ethics and constructivist ecocriticism; and Benjamin Bühler compares the risk theories of Luhmann, Ewald and Beck and sketches their development towards a theory of global ecological risk. A contribution to a critique of ecology is made by Hannes Bergthaller, who, based on Luhmann's *Theory of Social Systems*, explains and criticizes some biases of ecological thought and points toward a rethinking of the idea of 'ecological crisis' "in terms of an ecological climacteric—that is to say, as signs of a permanent, irreversible change in the conditions of life" (Bergthaller 130). From these essays emerges the picture of a rich tradition of explicit ecological theory—which extends into present discourse, as can be seen in two essays, which develop theoretical approaches of their own: Angelika Krebs presents her threefold model of the "eudemonic intrinsic value of nature" as a contribution to the ethics and aesthetics of landscape (Krebs 103) and Hubert Zapf explains the deconstructive and reconstructive "function of literature as an ecological force within culture" in terms of his well-known triadic functional model of literature as cultural ecology (Zapf 153).

Part III demonstrates how far not only the philosophical and literary tradition of ecological thought, but also the political and scientific engagement with environmental issues reaches back in German history. Martin Bemmann draws a picture of the scientific and social discourse on the damages of forests by industrial pollution in the Kaiserreich. Looking yet further back in history, François Walter provides an overview of the development of catastrophism and the research on risks and disasters. Richard Hölzl's essay on "Environmentalism in Germany since 1900" gives proof of an astonishing plurality of environmentalist movements, which he sees, however, as being reduced to an "environmental mainstreaming" since the turn of the millenium (Hölzl 224). The crucial role of "substance stories" ("Stoffgeschichten" in German) for environmental history is illuminated by Jens Soentgen, who also offers an approach to their poetics. Werner Konold's contribution stands out in this section, as it seeks to provide more concrete guidelines for environmental policy-making: drawing on an analysis of different forms of cultural landscapes and their histories, he develops a list of requirements for a "[w]ell understood homeland and cultural landscape stewardship", that is, he uses insights in environmental history for the benefit of current ecological practice (Konold 209).

Part IV focuses on the emergence of a strand in Post-World-War II German literature which strongly engages with environmental issues and ecological theory.

Wolfgang Lückel explores the "bunker as the locus of the doomsday" in readings of Dürrenmatt's *Der Winterkrieg in Tibet*, Horx's *Es geht voran. Ein Ernstfall-Roman* and Grass' *Die Rättin* (Lückel 315). Urte Stobbe analyses how Christa Wolf addresses environmental issues in her novel *Störfall* by setting it against the backdrop of several of Grimms' fairy tales, thus also introducing into her narrative the Grimms' texts' specific view of nature. Evi Zemanek compares the elemental poetry of Franz Josef Czernin and Ulrike Draesner, concluding that in "contemporary elemental poetry, the dichotomy of mind and matter, and of nature and culture respectively, is deconstructed in acts of communication, in which the human subject is replaced by autonomous and indifferent elements" (Zemanek 292). Gabriele Dürbeck tells a brief history of climate change and disaster narration in German literature. In her readings of Trojanow's *EisTau*, Frisch's *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän*, Schätzing's *Der Schwarm* and Fleck's *Das Tahiti-Projekt*, she shows how climate change and environmental disasters are translated into poetic form in very different ways, concluding, however, that despite all differences, these narratives "share an implicit conversation with contemporary environmental sciences and ecological thinking and interest in the ethical dilemmas posed by the ecological crisis" (Dürbeck 341). Jakob C. Heller and Axel Goodbody trace the thread of ecological thought further back in German literary history. Heller explores in his readings of bucolic poetry, especially from members of the *Pegenesischer Blumenorden*, a meta-poetical dimension which marks it as a "genre of utmost importance for cultural ecology" (Heller 252). With a more general approach, Goodbody tells the history of German ecopoetry from *Naturlyrik* to *Ökolyrik* and *Lyrik im Anthropozän*, thus mirroring the development of ecological thought sketched in this book within the history of ecopoetry. It is remarkable that the brief history of ecologically concerned German-speaking literature portrayed by these six case studies includes many aspects which could also be discussed as parts of an early anthropocenic literature.

In part V an interesting addition to this literary perspective is offered by Matthias Hurst in his survey of ecological thought in German film, in which he shows its presence in feature films as well as in small screen production throughout the twentieth century. The other chapters of part V give outlooks into the arts' engagement with ecological issues: Nils Büttner broadly sketches the development of landscape painting from its origins in the fifteenth century to the present; the importance of immediate experience of nature for the work and life of Beethoven is portrayed by Aaron S. Allen; finally, Udo Weilacher shows how German landscape architecture earned its "renown of setting the highest standards in terms of ecology and environmental protection" by discovering American Land Art as a source of inspiration, thus finding a way out of the apparent incompatibility of art and ecology (Weilacher 407).

As a whole, the volume offers refreshingly new points of view on familiar subjects of German cultural history. It integrates them with less known aspects into a polyphonic history of ecological thought in German literature and culture—never losing sight of the theoretical field of international ecocriticism. The wide variety of the addressed issues might overwhelm readers, but it may also motivate them to further explore a field of research which still has many blank spots. One can read *Ecological Thought in German*

Literature and Culture as a major contribution to the cultural history of the Anthropocene—a history which, for the most part, has yet to be written.

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Mission Statement

This journal of ecocriticism, founded in 2010, is a joint initiative of GIECO (Ecocritical Research Group in Spain) and EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) and is published by the University of Alcalá as of 2014. 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.

Contributions, which are subject to double-blind peer review, are accepted in five languages, in order to increase visibility and broaden the participation of scholars who are not part of the English-speaking world. *Ecozon@* publishes original research articles, in addition to creative writing, visual arts and book reviews. Publication is open to scholars 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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