anglistica aion

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

UniorPress

Anglistica AION
an interdisciplinary journal

A peer-reviewed journal, published twice a year by Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"

ISSN: 2035-8504

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Napoli n. 63 del 5 novembre 2013

Vol. 19, issue 2 (2015)

Wastelands.
Eco-narratives in Contemporary Cultures in English

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Re-habilitation

Oriana Palusci and Héliane Ventura

Introduction

The topic of this issue is inspired first of all by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, an iconic poem published in 1922, and by a 20th-century literary and cultural tradition in English dealing with apocalyptic landscapes, dystopian nightmares, chronicles of a present/future world in disarray. Recently the waste land theme has been developed by Zygmunt Bauman in *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (2003). *Waste Land* is also the name of a 2010 social documentary based on the lives of garbage pickers in Rio de Janeiro, where Vik Muniz creates art out of recycled materials, and of a science fiction video game, set in a post-apocalyptic America.

Although this is a very contemporary cultural question, one should remember that the British colonial past was strengthened by removal of human waste. For instance, the dumping of convicts first in the American colonies and later, after their independence, to Australia, where about 140,000 criminals were literally dumped to an antipodean world in the first half of the 19th century.

In the new millennium, man-made waste pollutes Planet Earth in a number of dangerous ways, suffice it to mention the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, or The Trash Vortex, an "island" of trash built by the waste of the great urban spaces of the world. Located near the Midway Atoll, the size of Texas, and progressively expanding, the tonnes of marine debris, containing non-biodegradable plastic, are contaminating the waters, endangering marine life and birds, and thus human life.

Nowadays, waste plays an intriguing role in the contemporary Western consciousness in an age in which eco-narratives increasingly denounce the collapse of the natural order and engage with a sustainable response to the wasting of human beings and of natural resources. Waste generates an ethics of responsibility based on the probing of the evil deeds of industrial and technological civilizations.

In the age of consumerism, descriptions of the environment littered by human activities and man-made objects keep reappearing throughout literature. One of the most emblematic examples of a yard transformed into a dump can be found in a collection of short stories by Alice Munro entitled *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*:

> She looked out from the shade at all the things that were around the yard.
>
> A dented delivery truck with both headlights gone and the name on the side painted out. A baby's stroller that the dogs had chewed the seat out of, a load of firewood dumped but not stacked, a pile of huge tires, a great number

Anglistica AION 19.2 (2015), 1-4 ISSN: 2035-8504
doi: 10.19231/angl-aion.201521

> of plastic jugs and some oil cans and pieces of old lumber and a couple of orange plastic tarpaulins crumpled up by the wall of the shed. In the shed itself there was a heavy GM truck and a small beat-up Mazda truck and a garden tractor, as well as implements whole or broken and loose wheels, handles, rods that would be useful or not useful depending on the uses you could imagine. What a lot of things people could find themselves in charge of. As she had been in charge of all those photographs, official letters, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, a thousand categories that she had devised and was putting on disk when she had to go into chemo and everything got taken away. It might end up being thrown out. As all this might, if Matt died.[1]

[1] Alice Munro, "Floating Bridge", in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), 70-71.

To evoke all the junk that sits in backyards and constitute so many domestic wastelands, Munro resorts to a paradox that is worth pondering because of its ethical ramifications. She suggests that we are in charge of discards. She simultaneously highlights the opposite acts of getting rid of objects and of collecting them: those that spill out of indoor domestic enclosures are strewn outdoors around the house for there is no way of discarding the discarded. It keeps popping up again around, outside, beyond the safety of our domestic haunts.

To name discards, Munro resorts to the art of the catalogue based on list making, an art generally considered to belong to the traditional rhetorical devices directly inherited from Antiquity. In epic poetry, the most famous epic catalogue is to be found in Book Two of Homer's *Iliad* with the catalogue of ships about to depart for the city of Troy. One can also think of the list made up of the names of high ranking individuals such as the famous list of the Nereids equally to be found in the *Iliad* (XVII, 29-49).

The poetics of Modernism in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) emphasises the fragmentation and loss of a universal meaning eroding the experience of everyday life. Otherwise, as Virginia Woolf repeats more than once in *Between the Acts* (1941), "scraps, orts and fragments".[2]

[2] Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1992), 169, 170, 173, 194.

Instead of providing a mythographic enumeration of characters, or of the boats which transport them, Munro juxtaposes abject objects, the lowest of the low, domestic discards, and she endows them with a mock epic dimension. She transforms the detritus, the waste from our consumer society into the material of her stories and she collects them in a time-honoured poetic form. By so doing, she transforms herself into the figure of the ragman or ragwoman collecting the detritus of society and salvaging what has been spurned.

The figure of the ragman has been the object of a romantic interest which started with Baudelaire writing poems to pay homage to the garbage collectors in Paris in the 19th century. "Le vin des chiffoniers" (The wine of Ragmen) for example is a moving rehabilitation of the down trodden and the outcast who spend their days rummaging through the stench and decomposition of what

nobody wants to pay attention to. In the book he dedicated to the poet, Walter Benjamin highlighted the visionary role played by the humble ragman in terms of his salvaging of the past to provide an understanding of the present. Of the ragman, as Baudelaire described him, Benjamin said:

> 'This is a man in charge of picking up the litter of a day in the capital. Everything the big city rejected, everything it lost, everything it spurned, everything it broke, he lists, he collects. He peruses the archives of debauchery, the shambles of discards. He sorts out and his choice is intelligent; he picks up, the way a miser gathers his treasure, the garbage which chewed again by the divinity of Industry will become useful objects or desirable objects.' This description is nothing but a long metaphor of the poet's behaviour as Baudelaire's contemplates it. Whether ragman or poet, discards are dear to their hearts.[3]

[3] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: Un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme* (Paris: Payot, 2002), 126 [translation ours].

Of course, also 19th-century fiction exploits the figure of the ragman, or the Golden Dustman (Nicodemus Boffin) in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), in which Victorian culture is plagued, along the banks of the Thames, by huge heaps of trash and worthless objects. Another great writer, Margaret Laurence, re-located the Golden Dustman to the Canadian prairies by creating the humble, but providential character of Christie Logan in *The Diviners* (1975). The scavenger and the foster father of the protagonist, Christie explores the "Nuisance Grounds" in search of individual and family secrets. This garbage collector is endowed with "the gift of the garbage-telling".[4]

[4] Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (London: Virago Press, 1989), 61.

Anyhow, we should also bear in mind that in the postmodern novel the figure of the garbage collector can be updated to a waste management executive, as happens with the protagonist Nick Shay in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997), a novel centred upon the key issue of garbage in its many forms – consumer waste, nuclear waste, human waste – in an American society busy discarding waste deep in the ground.

Waste deserves not to be discarded but probed into as meticulously as possible. According to Benjamin, discards are the traces through which the metaphysical ragman recomposes the past and glimpses at what has not yet happened. In that sense the ragman is very much akin to the poet: this is a metaphorical equation upon which Baudelaire's work is grounded.

It is also a metaphorical equation we mean to suggest for this volume which provides an investigation of wastelands across the world from methodological perspectives ranging from eco-linguistics, eco-feminism, ecocriticism, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, visual arts and media studies.

Inspired by Benjamin who elevated the ragman's gesture to the rank of a sociological methodology, we have searched the rags and detritus from five

continents and provided a wide panorama of wastelands with contributions from Canadian, French and Italian scholars.

The articles here collected are put together following three interrelated key issues: “Human Waste”, “Dumping Grounds” and “Re-habilitation”, which analyse the existence of real and the creation of fictional contemporary wastelands, establishing a debate on possible solutions. They give an account of the loss of humanity and the human waste that is to be found in such diverse places as the megalopolis of the United States (Elena Lamberti), the fictional slums of Carpentaria in Australia, and the real ones in Mumbai in India (Carmen Concilio), or the Olympic Waste in London (Catherine Lanone), or in the backwoods of Canada (Oriana Palusci, Eleonora Sasso), or next to schoolyards in Ontario (Héliane Ventura), or else in the African deforested jungle (Françoise Besson).

These articles bring to the fore the environmental exploitation of nature in connection to the exploitation of racial others such as the poor, robots, and women on far away dystopian planets (Vanessa Leonardi) or they focus on the violence of heteronormativity perpetrated on queer bodies in Jamaica (Emilio Amideo).

They address the environmental question and more specifically the question of the possible creation of waste worlds after such a catastrophe as the 1984 Bhopal disaster (Esterino Adami) as represented in Indian short stories.

These articles investigate geographical waste worlds in literature but also in the visual arts and architecture, focusing on “an ecology of heritage” (Shelley Hornstein). They also question language and perform ecocritical discourse analysis (Mirko Casagranda) or examine the environmental discourse of the UK government (Stefania D’Avanzo).

To the wasting of natural resources and of human/non-human beings, this volume means to oppose the irreducible power of words and of writing back. To waste, it opposes salvaging and the continuance of life: it asserts the necessity to live in order to tell the tale and to transform a dystopian landscape into a new verdant utopia.

Elena Lamberti

Don DeLillo's *Cosmopolis*. Modern Outcasts and an Old Barbershop

Abstract: In Don De Lillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003), Eric Packer is a young multi-billionaire who inhabits a homogenising landscape turning individuals into urban waste. Driving safely across New York City into his white stretch limo, he has replaced both his body and personality with hyperreal and luxurious simulacra; he inhabits a self-referential cosmos reflecting a polis where human beings are discarded as active and sensible actors. However, Eric seems ready to renounce his luxurious but aseptic reality and to return to a more human condition; in this novel, an old barbershop becomes the point of departure to restore humanity and fight back the overwhelming urban wasteland.

Eric's journey back to his truer self is doomed to fail, as he will be killed by his alter ego, Benno Levin. A former employee of Eric, Benno was first demoted then fired by Eric. The two characters are therefore presented as the two sides of the same coin, in fact two self-made outcasts of globalization: they are both playing a role in the new e-capitalism, they are both responsible for what they have become and must face the consequences. Their final epiphany is here turned into a nemesis that translates into their final loss, their final defeat. There is no way out of globalised capitalism.

Keywords: *DeLillo, human waste, non-places, globalized capitalism, American literature*

> I've never liked thinking back, going back in time, reviewing the day or the week or the life. To crush and gut. To eviscerate. Power works best when there's no memory attached.
> (Eric Packer, *Cosmopolis*)

Capitalist entropy, delusional escapes

Cosmopolis (2003) is neither Don DeLillo's most celebrated novel, nor it is his best one: the magic which follows our 'suspension of disbelief' is not easily achieved when reading this novel, as the writer adopts a (sometimes perfunctory) style which makes the reader too aware of his/her very act of reading. Yet, being a novel that engages us in the exploration of some tenets of our actuality, *Cosmopolis* can be considered as a useful novel, or, better, as a novel which might help us to navigate the new global world in its making. The main character, Eric Packer is a young multi-billionaire who inhabits (and contributes to create) a homogenizing landscape turning individuals who do not conform to it into urban waste at an accelerated pace. Driving across New York

City into his white stretch limo, he has replaced both his body and personality with hyperreal simulacra: inside the luxurious car, decorated with Carrara marble ("from the quarries where Michelangelo stood half a millennium ago, touching the tip of his finger to the starry white stone" 22),[1] a series of sophisticated monitors and screens create a self-referential cosmos reflecting a polis where human beings are cast-off as active and sensible actors.

All through this urban novel and as an unconscious Odysseus, Eric moves towards his Ithaca, the place where he once belonged; in the novel, that place takes the shape of an old barbershop, itself a discarded place in a city which lives fully in the high tech present, annihilating time and history. Old pieces of furniture, detritus and holes in the floor stand for a lost civilization, memorabilia of a not too far past, too soon thrown away. Inevitably, Eric's journey towards such a counter-scenario becomes an exploration of his outer and inner reality, that which does not conduce to a happy end. After all, Eric's journey takes place on a day in April in the year 2000 and, as we know from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, April cannot but be the cruelest month even at the dawn of a new century.

Manmade fragments and ruins are still components of the otherwise sophisticated mechanical and electronic prevailing landscape of Don De Lillo's New York, in turn mirroring the unemotional life of the main character, as well as of his entourage. Similarly, the city crowd flows from place to place performing collective rites which are only apparently comforting and truly shared ones; they look more as trashy rituals unveiling a (wittily and artificially induced and staged) collective hypnosis. Once more, the crowd of De Lillo's *Cosmopolis* reminds us of the crowd flowing over London bridge in Eliot's famous poem, and New York looks here as a hyperreal city, in fact a modern version of Eliot's 'unreal' one. Hence, also in De Lillo's world, the human sensorium needs to be salvaged, and individual identities need to be rescued from their final self-induced destruction. In the novel, memorialization is suggested as the key that might conduce to preserve (if not recycle) humanity; at the same time, memorialization implies to die as a non-human and, inevitably, it proves to be a dangerous choice for someone who is the by-product of the empowering but hyperreal world. As Eric warns us, "power works best when there's no memory attached" (184). Eric must therefore choose if to erase his unique history and live forever in a blank, timeless cocoon; or if to rescue his humanity but be rejected by his own capitalist world. Each of these choices implies a defeat; the novel does not seem to suggest a third possibility, nor a happier conclusion.

All through the novel, the way he acts and thinks makes the reader aware of how Eric is, in fact, trying to go back to his human status so to bring new life to his "frozen heart" (198); however he will not be able to fully control that

[1] All references are from Don De Lillo, *Cosmopolis* (New York: Scribner Paperback, 2004). Inspirational sources for this article, among others, were: David Cowart, *Don DeLillo – The Physics of Language* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002); Elise Martucci, *The Environmental Unconscious in the Fiction of Don DeLillo* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Henry Veggian, *Understanding Don DeLillo* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014).

process as he thinks he can. His nemesis will come in the shape of a modern outcast, one of Eric's first demoted then discarded employee, Benno Levin alias Richard Sheets, who is following a similar search, even though he is starting from a different point in history; by killing Eric, Benno-Richard, too, aspires to change from human waste to a human condition. Readers discover Eric's death halfway through the novel when reading the first of Benno Levin's confessions, in fact a sort of preview into Eric's future. However, the details of the dramatic confrontation between Eric and Benno are strategically unveiled only in the final pages of the novel, through a theatrical crosstalk that sees Eric and Benno taking turns as hero and villain. Precisely because the reader already knows how it is going to end (Benno killing Eric), that dialogue becomes crucial not to progress with the story, but to apprehend what is the bleak truth that Eric has discovered while dying; inevitably, that dialogue ascends to a pseudo-philosophical investigation of our present time and societal organization. As a matter of fact, through that dialogue, we realize, with Eric, that the reverse process (going back to a human status) is perhaps no longer possible, as "there is no outside" (90) to capitalism – here understood as "a specter haunting the world" (89), reducing individuals – all individuals – into operative spare parts and servo-mechanism of 'the system'. Loneliness and human discard are here exposed as pillars of such a sad cosmopolis, and hatred is what both generates and emanates from them. By contemplating and by carefully listening to Benno Levin, Eric understands that nothing will change after his own death; he understands that, even though he will survive to Eric, Benno's life will continue to be wasted. As Vija Kinski, Eric's chief of theory, explains to her boss, all individuals are given a precise role that must be played against the overwhelming and triumphant capitalist scenario. Even those who rebel, even those who protest are part of the same scheme; they are not the grave-diggers of capitalism, they are 'the free market itself. These people are a fantasy generated by the market. They don't exist outside the market. There is nowhere they can go to be on the outside. There is no outside" (90). Therefore, Benno, too, is the free market itself; he, too, does not exist outside the market. Unavoidably following this fact, together with Benno, we begin to ask ourselves a truly disturbing question: who will we hate when there is no one left? Which illusions will we cultivate to cope with the overwhelming capitalist entropy?

It is not by chance that, in recent years, De Lillo's novel attracted David Cronenberg's attention as a novel dealing with some uncanny aspects of our consumerist society. Cronenberg's 2012 movie, of the same name, visualizes DeLillo's urban setting as if it were a dystopic and surreal reality, in turn exploring the hidden pathologies of the human modern condition, that which, back in the Nineties, J.G. Ballard defined as "the marriage of reason and nightmare that has dominated the 20th century".[2] Consistently, Cronenberg's

[2] J.G. Ballard, Preface to *Crash* (London: Vintage, 1995), 4. In 1996 Cronenberg adapted Ballard's novel, *Crash*, in a controversial movie which was awarded the Jury's Special Award at Cannes for "it's audacity and innovation".

adaptation turns *Cosmopolis* into the exploration of how the "great twin leitmotifs of the 20th century – sex and paranoia"[3] remain also as leitmotifs of the 21st century. They continue to preside over the daily lives of human beings who are more and more robot-like, anaffective though not repressed, and who inhabit a world where: 'Thermo-nuclear weapons systems and soft-drinks commercials coexist in an overlit realm ruled by advertising and pseudo-events, science and pornography".[4] It is the new anthropological world of the 'non-places', as per Marc Augé's famous definition of a supermodernity which is self-contained and which results in a profound alteration of human awareness and sensibility;[5] something which makes organic life obsolete and turns solitude into the new prevailing human condition. Yet, published in the new century, DeLillo's novel takes that speculation a step further and seems to suggest that the very ideas of *supermodernity* and *non-places* are now being reversed into the opposite of their original meaning, in turn triggering another, even more disturbing, anthropological revolution.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux, introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1992).

What Augé defined as non-places are now to be reconsidered as the *new places* defining the habitat of today's humanity; therefore, they have to be reexamined as the new anthropological spaces reflecting a different collective, trans-national – and inevitably uncanny – human (in fact post-human) identity. The non-places theorized in the Nineties as transitional spaces (planes, cars, roads, airports), or as spaces of services (outlets, shopping malls), or as temporary spaces for either people or goods (waiting rooms, deposits) have now become places inhabited in more permanent ways, inevitably changing the way people perceive themselves. In many parts of the world, even the refugee camps, once considered as non-places given their transitory status, have now become places where people live on an almost permanent basis; they are places where people are forced together, places where people are born and die, places where traumatic memories and identities are now shared, formed and consolidated. They have become permanent places for discarded people, that is for all those people whose 'place' cannot be found outside of 'non-places'. Following a similar path, in De Lillo's novel cars, roads and commercial sites are turned from non-places into places: No longer they are simply backgrounds for stories and people in transit; instead, they become real habitats molding people's stories, relations, and personalities. In a challenging way, in De Lillo's novel, houses are no longer *domus*, nor they are *genus loci*, but places of solitude lacking affection, whereas roads and cars become meeting places where to establish a new *human* (or post-human) world. All the traditional symbols of a sympathetic and sensible humanity are here turned into blank and aseptic containers discarded of humanity, which consequently becomes both waste and wasted.

By so doing, *Cosmopolis* stages the side effects that the global, or better the globalized reality (the 21st-century phase of the capitalist induced entropy) is having on its inhabitants, somehow suspended in between simulacra and simulations. De Lillo's postmodern city seems to embed the point of non-return of a decaying Western civilization, so much so, that DeLillo might have written a 'post-mortem' novel, where post-modernity combines with the survival of a hyperreal – either anaffective or demoted – post-human species. Inevitably, the very title of the novel sounds iconic: in *Cosmopolis*, New York is now beyond the 'world city' and has become a self-referential and imploded (entropic) microcosm, where bored individuals form an indifferent collectivity which finds its meaning in artificial commodities, mass rituals and extreme sensations, often mortal ones (both metaphorically and physically so).

Physics and metaphysics of the world-waste-machine

In 2003, *Cosmopolis* was well received, though not over celebrated, by the international press and literary community. At the dawn of the new century, the author presented to the reader an urban landscape dominated by a toxic interplay of mechanical and electronic technologies; a world where individuals are the content of an exceeding media and economic habitat of which they appear to be ordinarily unconscious servomechanisms.

The novel opens with the detailed description of the luxurious penthouse of the young main character, Eric Packer: it consists of forty-eight rooms richly decorated with priceless works of art. Thus, the novel starts in a place traditionally associated to one's own identity, presented as standing on the top of the *vertical city*, where the idea of 'vertical' integrates social hierarchy. Eric's tower is:

> the tallest residential tower in the world, a commonplace oblong whose only statement was its size. It had the kind of banality that reveals itself over time as being truly brutal. He liked it for this reason. He liked to stand and look at it when he felt this way. He felt wary, drowsy and insubstantial.... The tower gave him strength and depth. (8-9)

With its 'banality', a term which resounds with anonymity and conformity, Eric's penthouse perfectly matches both his "wary, drowsy and insubstantial" being, and his 'habitat'; in fact a society whose depth and strength, just like Eric's, are stated through ephemeral symbols. Readers are therefore immediately made aware of how out of proportions that 'place' is, especially considered that Eric lives in it alone; also, they soon realize that Eric's penthouse has lost all what would normally define it as an identity place (it is, in fact, a 'commonplace'). It is a place mirroring a system, a life style and not

an individual. Rooms are decorated with media and stylish commodities that are status symbols but have no personality; many monitors are always on, as they analyze and keep constant track of the international financial markets. The expensive works of art in the house are on display as symbols of power and not for aesthetic pleasure: "He liked paintings that his guests did not know how to look at. The white paintings were unknowable to many, knife-applied slabs of mucoid color. The work was all the more dangerous for not being new. There's no more danger in the new". (8) Hence, Eric's apartment is conceived as a 'container' where uncanny objects and information accumulate, an icy space also filled with nervousness. Readers soon discover that Eric is restless and spends most of his nights not sleeping but exercising, trying to stimulate his body so to somehow 'feel it'. At night, he cannot but confront himself; he uses poetry to find both meaning and introspection. When reading, he escapes into a more intimate and private space that nonetheless remains a solitary one:

> He tried to read his way into sleep but only grew more wakeful. He read science and poetry. He liked spare poems sited minutely in white space, ranks of alphabetic strokes burnt into paper. Poems made him conscious of his breathing. A poem bared the moment to things he was not normally prepared to notice. (5)

However, what is here introduced as an inner journey triggering both physical and metaphysical awareness is returned to a more ephemeral and therefore ineffectual action later in the novel; we will soon discover, in fact, that Eric chooses poetry based on its length.

> He stood in the poetry alcove at the Gotham Book Mart, leafing through chapbooks. He browsed lean books always half a fingerbreadth or less, choosing poems to read based on length and width. He looked for poems of four, five, six lines. (66)

Eric searches depth through brevity and small surfaces ("A surface separates inside from out and belongs no less to one than the other. He'd thought about surfaces in the shower once" [9]) and his act of reading becomes in fact an elusive, suspended act performed within an overwhelming space dominated by silences, artificial communications, and financial ephemeral fluxes. Originality and creativity are no longer part of Eric's world; commonplaces and banality are.

As a result, the reader is not surprised to discover that, most of the time, Eric is bored and restless. He never looks satisfied or pleased, and he is in constant search for new challenges, for new reasons to be. He is and feels alone: "There was no friend he loved enough to harrow with a call. What was there to say? It

was a matter of silences, not words" (5). His anaffective solitude is shared by all those who inhabit Eric's world, including his chief collaborators and his young, super rich and super bored poet-wife, Elise Shifrin. The couple does not live together and their recent marriage is introduced in terms of an 'accord' or an 'understanding' to complete each other's 'fiction':

> They'd married in the shroud of [an] unspoken accord. They needed the final term in the series. She was rich, he was rich; she was heir-apparent, he was self-made; she was cultured, he was ruthless; she was brittle, he was strong; she was gifted, he was brilliant; she was beautiful. This was the core of their understanding, the thing they needed to believe before they could be a couple. (72)

No wonder that Eric does not recognize her when he perceives her from his limo:

> He glanced out the one-way window to his left. It took him a moment to understand that he knew the woman in the rear seat of the taxi that lay adjacent. She was his wife of twenty-two days, Elise Shifrin, a poet who had right of blood to the fabulous Shifrin banking fortune of Europe and the world. (15)

No wonder that they share the same incapability to feel; only, they reveal it in opposite, though complementary ways. While Elise eats almost nothing and feels no desire for food, Eric looks voracious and each time he meets her, he takes her to a restaurant. However, he does not enjoy what he eats, he ingurgitates and dominates food. Similarly, when he makes love to his several lovers, he displays the same voracious – sometimes cerebrally so – attitude and always leads the action; but no real joy, no deep pleasure is ever revealed.

Eric's self-assurance matches his lack of affectivity and rests both in his being in control, and in his own restlessness, as the latter induces him to find new ways to challenge himself and his collaborators. Hence, it does not come as a surprise to the reader the fact that, from the very beginning of the novel, Eric is facing a dangerous and self-induced challenge: he has invested all his patrimony on the fall of the yen, but the yen continues to raise. Eric is risking everything, his status and his prosperity, because in a system based on money, to loose one's own capital equals to disappear, to annihilate oneself and be rejected by that very system; it equals to become waste. However, Eric does not look to be too worried; on the contrary, he seems to get more excited the more the situation degenerates. He trusts his own wit and power of observation of the financial waves: there must be a way to chart the yen, so much so he cannot but succeed. He will not. What instead comes as a surprise to the reader is the fact that, in the middle of what looks like an ultimate struggle, Eric decides to do

something that looks incongruous: he wants a haircut and wants to have it at his old barbershop.

> His chief of security liked the car for its anonymity. Long white limousines had become the most unnoticed vehicles in the city. He was waiting in the sidewalk now, Torval, bald and no-necked, a man whose head seems removable for maintenance.
>
> "Where?" he said.
>
> "I want a haircut."
>
> "The president's in town."
>
> "We don't care. We need a haircut. We need to go crosstown."
>
> "You will hit traffic that speaks in quarter inches."
>
> "Just so I know". Which president are we talking about?"
>
> "United States. Barriers will be set up," he said. "Entire streets deleted from the map" (10-11)

The real story starts from that instant and unfolds through an urban landscape whose topography matches not only the social landscape, but also the main character's evolving metaphysics. Barriers keep people either in or out, streets are deleted from the map and so are those who are outside both barriers and limos. When Eric enters his white stretch limo to cross the wasted landscape and to reach the barbershop at the other side of the city, he is not fully aware that it is a much more complex journey he is in fact undertaking. His awareness will come gradually: what he experiences from that moment will take him from his timeless self-assurance to a questioning and time-determined present. Even though he seems to like the process, Eric will not survive it.

All people in Eric's team try to persuade him to get a haircut somewhere else, closer to where he lives and works. Nobody will succeed:

> Shiner [Eric's chief of technology] said, "Any special reason we're in the car instead of the office?"
>
> ...
>
> "We're in the car because I need a haircut."
>
> "Have the barber got to the office. Get your haircut there. Or have the barber come to the car. Get your haircut and go to the office."
>
> "A haircut has what. Associations. Calendar on the wall. Mirrors everywhere. There's no barber chair here. Nothing swivels but the spycam" (14-15)

Similarly, Eric's bodyguard cautions him on all the dangers he will meet: no matter his young age, Eric is under constantly life-threatening circumstances. He is hated by many people who see him as the symbol of the new speculative capitalism, which, by producing 'capital' for few instead than 'jobs' for many, turns people into spare parts and objects easy to be discarded. During his

journey Eric will be attacked by real protesters, who are symbolically disseminating rats in the classy part of New York City and who vandalize symbols of capitalism (banks and limos), and by the ludicrous André Petrescu, "the pastry assassin" whose mission worldwide is "To sabotage power and wealth" (142).

In addition, that very day New York is barricaded due to a series of events (including, as said, the visit of the President of the United States), a situation that makes driving even more complicated. Careless of the circumstances, Eric insists because to cut his hair becomes here a ritual that has 'associations': he wants to perform it in the same old place, the old barbershop where his father used to take him as a child, before he became the rich and successful man he now is. While fighting a mortal game in the computer-generated world of financial fluxes, Eric drives back to his roots no matter how difficult that may appear. Crossing the city is compared to the crossing of hell, New York being presented as a jungle full of potential dangers for Eric; and yet, the greatest danger is hidden within Eric himself. To drive back to one's own origins proves to be much more dangerous than to bet on the financial market; it proves to be the only and real ultimate challenge, as the individual is asked to go through an inner and disruptive (in fact deadly) journey himself.

The old barbershop is here offered as a 'real place', as per Augé's original understanding; it embeds memories, stories and relationships, it embeds time and its passing. Hence, it embeds not only associations but also individual and collective responsibilities. Because of that, it inevitably looks 'out of place' in a society where successful individuals are emotionless and inhabit non-places. It is located at the antipodes of Eric's penthouse, in a shabby part of town made of rows of old brick tenements. In this neglected part of the city, Eric's father was born; hence, the barbershop has intimate and private 'associations' for Eric. What in Eric's new life would be perceived as waste and garbage, in that part of town and inside the barbershop is instead framed as a shelter of meaningful memorabilia. Old pieces of furniture, holes recalling where things once were, the same storytelling narrated by Anthony Adubato, the old barber, are more than traces of the past: they are Eric's consciousness, his human roots and traces, his only means of salvation, if only he could comprehend and accept them truly. They are, in fact, all symbols of that distinctive personality that makes each human being unique and not just a consumerist banal cliché. They are there to nourish Eric's inner self, just like the poems he reads at night, but in a much deeper way. But Eric, who is now used to small surfaces, will not be able to fully cope with the metaphysical weight of that place. Even though he finally rests for a while lulled by Anthony's stories, all of the sudden he feels the urge to run away:

> In time the voices became a single vowel sound and this would be the medium of his escape, a breathy passage out of the long pall of wakefulness that had marked so many nights. He began to fade, to drop away, and felt a question trembling in the dark somewhere.
>
> What can be simpler than falling asleep? ... He confided in them. It felt good to trust someone.
>
> ...
>
> After a while he threw off the cape. He couldn't sit here anymore. He burst from the chair, knocking back the drink in a whiskey swing.... "I need to leave. I don't know how come. That's how come" (165-169)

Eric leaves with his hair half cut, he leaves Anthony's job (and his own inner journey) half way. When that happens, readers have the right to become suspicious and think that, perhaps, Eric is lying to himself and knows 'how' that come more than he wishes to admit to himself: in that 'old place' which stands as a 'non-place' in his stylish billionaire life, he has started to behave in a different, more human and sympathetic way. While there, he not only trusts the barber, but also respects his driver, someone who did not exist as a person for him until then. He has also begun to notice these people's physicality, therefore acknowledging their presence; he becomes interested in their life stories, therefore acknowledging their existence. He feels the comfort of resting with them. He feels the pleasure of going back in time. Unescapably, remembering his past makes him question his present, something which risks to undermine the very essence of capitalist power (a power that "works best when there's no memory attached"); to question means to doubt, it means to start to look at things in a different way. For Eric, though, it means to risk to be either demoted or even discarded by his own system.

As John Ralston Saul wrote: "In a society of ideological believers, nothing is more ridiculous than the individual who doubts and does not conform".[6] Not only is it ridiculous, but it is also very alienating and dangerous; it implies to challenge not a financial flow within Eric's hyperreal world, but the founding credo of that very world itself. It implies to lose lucidity and, therefore, the capacity to control and predict actions. When Eric starts to doubt his ability to trace the hidden pattern which guides the yen unusual market movement, his chief of theory reminds him that doubts do not belong to their reality:

> "Doubt. What is doubt? You don't believe in doubt. You've told me this. Computer power eliminates doubt. All doubt rises from past experience. But the past is disappearing. We used to know the past but not the future. This is changing" – she said – "We need a new theory of time" (86)

When she says so, readers begin to realize that Eric is in danger not because someone is threating his life for what he represents, nor is he in danger because

[6] John Ralston Saul, *The Unconscious Civilisation* (Toronto: Anansi, 1995), 20.

he is losing his financial wealth; he is in danger because he doubts, he is in danger because he is revealing a poisoning weakness. To doubt means to think of the present through past experience and that is a deadly limit in a world dominated by computer power, by cyborg 'nowness'. Hence, for Eric the real danger comes from his strange and obstinate will to have a haircut at the old barbershop precisely because both that place and Eric's decision have 'associations'. Eric has started a hazardous retrieval of the past, therefore triggering uncertainty.

To retrieve the past, to remember is an act which might give power back to the individual. As said, Eric tries to run away from that awareness which is full of consequences; but it is too late, because once that the journey has started, he can no longer look at his reality in the same way. Suddenly, he develops an interest in people's life stories; before reaching the barbershop, he did not care because to give people a 'history' would make them 'disappear' (104-105). Until then, people in Eric's entourage are defined through their roles and tasks, not through their physicality and personal stories. Eric does not look into their eyes ("He did not look at Shiner [Eric's chief of technology] anymore. He hadn't looked in three years. Once you'd look, there was nothing else to know. You'd know his bone marrow in a beaker" [111-12]). He knows nothing about their real lives ("She [Vija Kinski, chief of theory] was a voice with a body as afterthought, a wry smile that sailed through heavy traffic. Give her a history and she'd disappear" [105]). He even kills Torval, his chief of security, impromptu and discards him as he discards the mortal weapon while some kids are playing basketball in the background: "He gave them a casual hand signal indicating they ought to continue their game. Nothing so meaningful had happened that they were required to stop playing" (146). But in the barbershop, he starts to listen to Antony's stories, he listens carefully to the intimate dialogue between the barber and Ibrahim, Eric's driver, and even interferes:

> The driver was a mild figure in a suit and tie, sitting with cake in his outstretched hand, and his comments were clearly personal, extending beyond this city, these streets, the circumstances under discussion.
>
> "What happened to your eye," Antony said, "that is got all twisted that way?"
>
> "I can see. I can drive, I pass their test."
>
> "Because both my brothers were fight trainers years ago. But I never seen a thing like that."
>
> Ibrahim looked away. He would not submit to the tide of memory and emotion. Maybe he felt allegiance to his history. It is one thing to speak around an experience, use it as a reference and analogy. But to detail the hellish thing itself, to strangers who will nod and forget, this must seem a betrayal of his pain.

> "You were beaten and tortured," Eric said. "An army coup. Or the secret police. Or they thought they'd executed you. Fired a shot in your face. Left you for dead. Or the rebels. Overrunning the capital. Seizing government people at random. Slamming rifles butts into faces at random."
>
> He spoke quietly. There was a faint sheen of perspiration on Ibrahim's face. (168)

Eric is now truly interested in Ibrahim's past, but this time it is the driver who does not want to give his memories away to strangers who will then forget it and you with it (give people a history and make them disappear). Ibrahim's determination touches Eric, who does not want to disappoint the man and who begins to respect if not the man, for sure the story behind the man, the 'associations' that his twisted eye preserves. Eric respects those associations just like he respects the stories preserved by each hole, by each missing piece of furniture in the old barbershops: "He tried to read the man's ravaged eye, the bloodshot strip beneath the hooded lid. He respected the eye. There was a story there, a brooding folklore of time and fate" (170).

However, in Eric's real world – in fact the world of financial liquid flows – true empathy leads to a renewed and deeper solitude because it turns newness into an obsolete idea and retrieves time as a tangible and linear concept. Inevitably, by doubting, Eric becomes more and more alienated and alone. Leaving the barbershop, he begins to experience a new form of solitude: earlier in the novel, his solitude was part of the frozen world he had created for himself and inhabited. At the end of his journey, instead, Eric's solitude is a truly existential one that has developed through all the different experiences he has gone through. It is a more human sentiment that even makes him feel remorse, empathy and love.

As soon as Eric begins to accept his growing awareness of both people and people's feelings and stories, he tries to share it with his affiliated, but to no avail; to them, his confession sounds odd, reveals an inconsistency and it confirms Eric's eccentricity. To his wife Elise, his intimate confession sounds boring; she responds in a skeptical way:

> "But I'm feeling a change. I'm making a change. Did you look at the menu? They have green tea ice cream. This is something you might like. People change. I know what's important now."
>
> "That's such a boring thing to say. Please."
>
> "I know what's important now."
>
> "All right. But note that skeptical tone," she said. "What's important now?"
>
> "To be aware of what's around me. To understand another person's situation, another person's feelings. To know, in short, what's important" (121)

Eric truly means it. From now, he will truly start to reconsider his relation with Elise and will learn he loves her; inevitably, "the instant he knew he loved her, she slipped down his body and out of his arms" (178). By triggering doubts and by developing real and deep feelings, Eric shifts from the role of a 'superman' who leads and controls nowness and the invisible world of financial fluxes, to the role of a 'normal man', who cannot but be discarded by that very world. Ironically, the shift and the elimination will be marked and achieved through the meeting with a 21st-century outcast, Benno/Richard.

Imploded market fantasies, genuine human waste

Eric and Benno are, in fact, complementary parts of the same system, pseudo enemies whose presence determines the persistence of cyber capitalism in the 21st century; their existence and their juxtaposition are essential to the preservation of a *status quo* that gives them both the illusion to play a role and change or affect reality. Consequently, their final meeting becomes a cruel epiphany that makes the reader fully appreciate both characters' delusional life-philosophy. As said, they come together following two metaphorically opposite roads: Eric is a self-made man and has gone from the street level to the top penthouse, moving from hell to paradise, whereas Benno has suffered many reversals. He once had a job and a family, and he "struggled to love and provide" (55). He once was assistant professor of computer application and left to make his million. He started to work for Eric's company, then:

> They said I [Benno] had problems of normalcy and they demoted me to lesser currencies. I became a minor technical element in the firm, a technical fact.... And I accepted this. Then they let me go without notice or severance package. And I accepted this. (60)

When he meets Eric face to face, Benno is a man who leaves "at the end of earth philosophically" (57), he has moved from paradise to hell. He leaves in an abandoned and miserable building, collects things from local sidewalks, and has made a life for himself through discarded items because "What people discard could make a nation". Benno, too, is alone and an alienated, discarded man missing sympathetic contact, but his solitude is self-imposed. Even though once he passively accepted decisions imposed on him, Benno was never truly fit for the system. He tried and failed ("You wanted me to be a helpless robot soldier but all I could be was helpless" [195]). Paradoxically, to acknowledge his failure and to decide to leave alone and at the margins of society is a form of rebellion that might even lead him to a truly human condition; to refuse to

conform and live through commonplaces might, in fact, free Benno. However, his rebellion is doomed to fail because, both as a failure and as a survivor, Benno perceives himself only in relation to the system, which in his mind takes the form of Eric. As he confesses, he needs to kill Eric because Eric failed him. Benno no longer has a role in the system and blames the system even though he himself played a part in his own discharge. He does not want to listen to Eric telling him that he has "to ask [himself] whose fault this is" (194). Benno is, in fact, part of the same system and to blame the latter inevitably means to also blame himself. Through Benno's confessions, the reader understands that Benno is a man made of cliché, too, and a prisoner of his stereotypically middle-class values and mind; his desires are, in fact, commodified commonplaces. Benno wants to feel "like a writer with his cigarettes" (61), he plans "to make a public act of [his] life" (149) through the pages he will write. The 21st century imploded capitalism is determining also Benno's most intimate illusion, as he thinks he is now living his life 'offline'; but he is not, because there is no outside to the world of cyber-economy.

Benno and Eric are two self-made outcasts of globalization doomed to meet at the end of their individual journeys, when they reach together a sort of purgatory level and must face their ultimate truth. Their epiphany becomes also a nemesis and translates into a final loss, a final defeat, as they are both deprived of what they have come to appreciate as their possible salvific way out. Benno will lose his conscious memory, the effective logic behind his will to be different from all other discarded individuals; he is overwhelmed by the revelation, loses lucidity and will not even remember why he had to kill Eric:

> I am working on this journal while a man lies dead ten feet away. I wonder about this. Twelve feet away.... All through the day I became more convinced I could not do it. Then I did it. Now I have to remember why. (61)

As a counter-step, Eric will lose his physical life the moment he retrieves his life memories, and fully understands the profound meaning of his past associations. While talking to Benno, Eric mechanically shoots his own hand and is brought back to his tangible existence. Soon after, he feels "an enormous remorseful awareness" thinking of his chief of security dead on the asphalt and of "others down the years, hazy and nameless" (196). Eric's excruciating awareness of the finite human existence extends through the feeling of pain in his own body. His pains interferes "with his immortality ... He'd come to know himself through his pain" (207).

Eric is ready to die when he retrieves his human condition through his wounded body and is ready to leave the metaphysical and post human world of 'cyber-capitalism', which nonetheless will survive him. Hence, contrary to what

Benno thinks, killing Eric does not free him, nor does it affect the system; instead and paradoxically, it turns himself into a prisoner of his own self-induced mental disorder:

> I am ashamed every day, and more ashamed the next. But I will spend the rest of my life in this space writing these notes, this journal, recording my acts and reflections, finding some honor, some worth at the bottom of things. I want ten thousand pages that will stop the world.
>
> Allow me to speak. I'm susceptible to global strains of illness. (151-52)

In fact, Eric's death preserves the system because by killing him, Benno eliminates the buggy element within that system, as he kills an individual who doubts and no longer conforms. The revelation becomes grotesque when the 'two separate systems', Eric and Benno, meet and try miserably to link, as they discover they share the same physical, invisible imperfection: their prostate is 'asymmetric'. Their inner bodies contain a harmless anomaly that does not alter the system as a whole, unless it grows into a perceptible obsession. However, if properly understood that anomaly might even lead to salvation, to accept diversity and doubt as tools to overcome hyperreality for real. Instead, Eric perceives that invisible anomaly only as an incongruity until Benno reveals its insightful irony to him:

> "You should have listened to your prostate."
>
> "What?"
>
> "You tried to predict movements in the yen by drawing on patterns from nature.... You made this form of analysis horribly and sadistically precise. But you forgot something along the way."
>
> "What?"
>
> "The importance of the lopsided, the thing that's skewed a little. You were looking for balance, beautiful balance, equal parts, equal sides.... But you should have been tracking the yen in its tics and quirks. The little quirk. The misshape."
>
> "The misweave."
>
> "That's where the answer was, in your body, in your prostate" (200)

Benno's revelation finally makes sense to Eric who can now link his murderer's philosophy to what his physical pain is revealing to him; but he is now too tired and can't but end his life as a renewed 'human superhero', that is as a humanly conscious outcast:

> His murder, Richard Sheets, sits facing him. He has lost interest in the man. His hand contains the pain of his life, all of it, emotional and other, and he closes his eyes one more time. This is not the end. He is dead inside the

> crystal of his watch but still alive in original space, waiting for the shot to sound. (209)

The same epiphany proves to be mortal for Benno, too. His 'charting sense' leads him to his self-annihilation. His body is alive, but all his actions are now suspended in a timeless zone located inside his mind. Killing Eric has deprived Benno of his confrontational normalcy; it has turned his journey into a suspended and alienating condition that mirrors his existential loneliness as a human discard now deprived of an enemy to blame and pursue:

> There are great themes running through my mind. The themes of loneliness and human discard. The theme of who do I hate when there's no one left. (58)

> I understand for the first time, now, this minute, that all the thinking and writing in the world will not describe what I felt in the awful moment when I fired the gun and saw him fall. So what is left that's worth the telling? (61)

Benno and Eric both bet against a system that is out of human control and they inevitably lose when they find each other again as human beings. They cannot but be discarded as soon as they begin to understand each other truly, by sharing associations and by conveying an emotional meaning to those associations. They run fast down to the state of human waste discarded by an overwhelming cyber economy. They fulfill their role as fantasies "generated by the market". In fact, they cannot exist outside the market. Can we?

Carmen Concilio

Waste Lands and Human Waste in Postcolonial Texts. Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* and Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

Abstract: In this paper I would like to provide an eco-aware and human-rights-aware exploration of the literary representations of two communities who live on a dumping ground, at the margin of society, and who end up being considered as disposable as the garbage they live among. The first case is the novel *Carpentaria* (2006) by Alexis Wright, where a community of Australian Aborigines live off the rubbish dump of the town of Desperance, in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The second case is the Annawadi community of the notorious Mumbai slum, just outside the International Airport precinct, portrayed by the American journalist Katherine Boo in the novel *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012). Both Aborigines and Annawadians live of garbage picking, recycling, sorting, selling and trading. Yet, in spite of the little profit they might make, or right because of that, they end up arrested, beaten up, and even brutally murdered. Both the Foucauldian categories of control and punishment and Bauman's theories of "waste" assimilate those people to garbage itself, transforming them into a residual existence: invisible, undesired, marginalized and refused.

Keywords: *waste, 'human as waste', environmental humanities, Aborigines, Slamabai, 'deep-democracy'*

"We no longer have ready-made answers to such fundamental questions as: What is the relationship between the quality of persons on the one hand and material wealth, poverty, hunger and disease on the other?"[1] In his essay, "Democracy as a Community of Life*",* Achille Mbembe questions our contemporary world and asks if material conditions of life still determine and affect the very nature of human beings. In other words, if history, social status and economic wealth can influence the ethical principles of single individuals as well as of entire communities.

[1] Achille Mbembe, "Democracy as a Community of Life", *The Johnannesburg Salon* 4 (2011), 5.

The philosopher, sociologist and political scientist Achille Mbembe writes from a country, South Africa, which, by turning apartheid into law, installed "a privileged mechanism for turning black life into *waste* – a race doomed to wretchedness, degradation, abjection and servitude".[2] The end of the apartheid regime has by no means meant the erasure of this phenomenon. On the contrary, Mbembe detects the permanence or even a new insurgence of such a-symmetry, to the point that "Today, questions concerning the place of race in capitalism and capitalism's intrinsic capacity to generate *'the human' as waste* are being raised anew, at a time when radical shifts can be observed in the way neo-liberalism operates".[3]

[2] Ibid., 6.

[3] Ibid.

Although Mbembe analyses the situation of present-day Africa, his words also describe other realities. For instance, when he writes that "both the logic of privatization and that of extraction are underpinned and buttressed by various processes of militarization",[4] one cannot but think of India and of the on-going internecine warfare between the federal army with the help of paramilitary forces and the adivasi, or so-called tribals, for the control of natural resources, namely forests, water and minerals. This racialised war constructs the "tribals" either as backward savages and non-citizens, or as most dangerous terrorists (Maoists, or Naxalites), thus allowing the police forces to act violently by setting villages on fire in the forests, arresting, torturing and raping women as happened in the so-called operation "Green Hunt".[5]

Furthermore, Mbembe detects a major weakness in the capitalist system, or neo-liberal capitalism: "where access to wage labour is still a − remote − possibility, it is more and more embedded in a logic of disposability".[6] These two paradigms, that is, communities dispossessed of their natural resources, and disposability of jobless people are particularly relevant to the discussion and analysis of two novels which are centred around "the human as waste": *Carpentaria* (2006), by the Australian writer Alexis Wright and *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012), by the American journalist Katherine Boo.

Carpentaria is an epic reconstruction of the life of a community of Aborigines in the region of the Gulf of Carpentaria, in North-West Queensland, Australia. It goes without saying that in spite of their millenary presence on – and deep knowledge of – that land, they live at the margins of the (fictional) white town of Desperance. "For the reader it is an ironic reminder of the town of Esperance in Western Australia. Esperance was supposedly named by French explorers who took shelter there during a storm in 1792 but in 2007 it was hit by a violent storm which caused significant flooding which destroyed hundreds of homes and washed away part of the highway linking it to Perth".[7]

More precisely, Aborigines live off the dumping ground of the whites. Angel Day and Norm Phantom, two of the main protagonists in *Carpentaria*, chose the spot for their house for "all she had to do was walk across the road to the rubbish dump, and there she could get anything her heart desired – *for free*. She thought the dump was magnificent, as anyone dirt poor would.... she ended up with an igloo made of rubbish".[8] This short presentation of the humble shack in which Angel and Norm live shows the new philosophy of recycling that seems to characterize Aboriginal thinking, thus creating an anti-capitalistic and anti-consumeristic philosophy and a consequently consistent ecosophic behaviour.

This situation immediately calls to one's mind the Leonia of Calvino's *Invisible Cities,* quoted by Zygmunt Bauman in his introduction to *Wasted Lives* (2004). Leonia is a city which produces tons of indestructible garbage every day, for Leonians are obsessed with what is "new" and pathologically enjoy

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Arundhati Roy, *Walking with the Comrades* (New York: Penguin, 2011), and Graham Huggan and Hellen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 44-51.

[6] Mbembe, "Democracy as a Community of Life", 6.

[7] Susan Barrett, "'This Land Is Me': Indigenous Australian Story-telling and Ecological Knowledge", *ELOHI,* 3 (2013), 32.

[8] Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (Artarmon, NSW: Giramondo, 2006), 15. All references are to this edition, quoted as *C*.

"expelling and discarding".[9] Similarly, they are paranoid with hygienic measures including "cleansing themselves of a recurrent impurity".[10] This seems exactly the portrait of the white citizens of Desperance, obsessed with the impurity of the *blackfella* and with their need to throw away their belongings.

Thus, Angel Day uses recycled materials ("it was nothing for her to walk back and forth to the dump two dozen times a day to cart back pieces of sheet iron, jerry cans, bits of car bodies, pieces of rope, logs, plastic, discarded curtains and old clothing" [*C*, 15]), because she is "dirt poor" and because she has them "for free". But also because she lives according to an alternative system of beliefs, habits and practices, completely opposite to the consumerist and capitalist ones. Therefore, she envisions her own aesthetics out of the recycled rubbish ("The structure of the house was a tribute to far-off monuments representing noteworthy moments in history" [*C*, 12]). The one drawback in this situation is that Angel Day engenders envy among her community for all the riches she is accumulating ("tins and pickle bottles of nails, screws, bolts" [*C*, 16]), and anger for the "contagion" she gets from contact with the whites: "This led them to say privately that she had acquired a disease from making her life out of living in other people's rubbish. Who knew what kind of lurgies lurked in white trash? The dump was full of disease. And the pricklebush said, *If she had any sense, she ought to stay right away from the rubbish dump*. It was of no benefit to anyone if she had magical powers to make her more like the white people" (*C*, 16).

Although the dumping ground is not described as toxic, it ends up intoxicating the community anyway, since a comic, mock-epic fight breaks out between Angel and another Aboriginal woman over the statue of a Madonna, which causes the community to split into two opposing factions. On one lucky Monday morning, among the steaming leftovers, badly smelling under the first sunrays, Angel finds first a huge pile of children's story books, the foundation bricks of western culture (Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Peter Pan, *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*). Then she finds a "large black mantelpiece clock with a cracked glass cover", and she hides it in her sacks so as not to be accused of stealing it from the Uptown: "To live without it was a betrayal of the future she was already imagining in which the Phantom children would be going to school on time. No one in the Phantom family would be guessing the time anymore from where the sun sat in the sky" (*C*, 22). The clock is one of the symbols of western civilization in the colonies, for it signals the schedule of imported daily tasks and routines that regulate and discipline the life in the colony of both colonisers and colonised. It is in sheer contrast with Wright's challenges "to convey the Indigenous sense of time as a continuum rather than a linear process, something which is important as a way of showing that humans have always and will always be linked to the land".[11]

[9] See Chiara Giobergia, "A Path through a Landscape of Waste", *Ri-cognizioni*, 2.3 (2015), 225-237.

[10] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 1.

[11] Barrett, "'This Land Is Me'", 35.

Thus the clock becomes to Angel a potent symbol of whiteness. Later on Angel finds the discarded statue of a Madonna and takes it home, not before having fought verbally and physically over its ownership with her opponent. Angel then restores the statue not by giving it back its lost splendour, but painting it with colourful strokes and making it a black Madonna, an indigenized and aboriginal-like icon.

The fight between the two women soon involves the whole community and two factions openly give way to a real war that sends half of the community to live on the East side of Desperance. The two sides will be at war for ever. The East siders will even be complicit in the Mine's violent security system, turning their unemployment into a medium for exerting power and control. This shows exactly that material conditions can change human beings to the point of making them lose hope in their own community. Divisions among the black communities have always been a sign of weakness; the impossibility to fight with one voice for a common goal has decreed the political defeat of many a battle fought in the name of human rights.

Waste is a motif in the novel. But what is striking is that most of the waste and of the wreckage are the products of white society and white lifestyle: "Some Aboriginals were seen pushing up into Uptown itself – abandoned car bodies to live in. You could see Aboriginals living in them behind the fences at the end of their backyards even" (*C*, 33). Some of the inhabitants of the car wrecks are three children who are considered by the whole of Uptown as petrol sniffers and good-for-nothing.

Car wrecks are the second example mentioned by Bauman in his essay: "Used cars, cars declared used up and so no longer wanted, were squeezed by gigantic presses into neat metal boxes. 'But those metal boxes did not vanish from the world... They probably melt down the crushed metal to make iron and new steel for new cars, and thus rubbish is transformed into new rubbish, only slightly increased in quantity".[12] In Desperance there are not even the infrastructures to dispose of car wrecks, nor is it possible to mend cars by substituting exhausted parts, so they remain there, dotting the landscape with their rusted carcasses, as a monument to Western wasted civilization.

[12] Bauman, *Wasted Lives*, 4.

When a man is found dead in the Uptown, the three little children are immediately suspected and accused of murder. Gordy, a security guard to patrol and safeguard the paranoid citizens of Desperance, indeed dies under mysterious circumstances. The result is the immediate arrest of the three innocent boys:

> those little Pricklebush boys, the petrol sniffers, were arrested and taken to a shimmering silver, green, gold and red tinsel-decorated jail. Tristrum

> Fishman, Junior Fishman Luke, Aaron Ho Kum. Three little boys. There was a roar for those three little boys, saying, 'They got their just deserts'.
>
> They were left there, locked up in town's jail, known as Truthful's planetarium, neglected amongst crowded foliage of the *jarrbikala*'s strappy and viney tropical indoor oasis, feeling like they were starting to rot. (*C*, 311-311)

Quite soon it becomes clear that from being dwellers amongst rubbish and waste, these three children are considered to be outsiders, parasites, killers, human waste. Aged twelve, eleven and ten, not being claimed back by their families, they are considered as disposable.

> Together, when they had been left alone, when sure no one was listening, they huddled in a corner spinning out in a whirl of raw-felt fear, clawing into each other, believing they were not humans. Often, they spoke about how they thought they were being kept like lizards in a zoo.... Spinning on their addiction and sudden withdrawal, they interpreted 'just deserves', as the impending time when Truthful would molest them. (*C*, 313)

Thruthful is the policemen in town, he is in charge of the jail, which he has transformed into a green-house and together with mayor Bruiser maintain order by performing acts of open racism through violence and rape. Their names are, of course, symbolic. Truthful pursues the truth by any means, while Bruiser is one who causes "bruises" to any Aborigines, particularly women, under his jurisdiction:

> It was unfortunate for them they were incoherently high on petrol, glue, metho, or whatever cocktail had been their last meal, when Truthful and Bruiser found them.... Like potatoes, the boys just hit the floor and stayed where they fell.
>
> Manhandling was proving to be pretty fruitless exercise, as Truthful was quick to discover. He suddenly stopped throwing the boys around. A cop had to remember his duty. Truthful noticed how abstract their blood looked, as it dripped down from the clean walls and onto the clean concrete floor. A sickening image of cattle being slaughtered flashed across his mind ... now, he finds, they are starting to look as though they had been put through a mincing machine.... Hey! Come on Bruse, this is not getting us anywhere.... If there was a Death in Custody.... (*C*, 333-334)

Violence erupts as expected and quite predictably. Only, the policeman seems to regret his complicity and would like to avoid an inquest about Death in Custody, of which Aborigines are accounted for suffering the most in Australia. These children are clearly considered less than human:

> The policeman watched helplessly as Bruiser hauled up one of the boys, holding him at face level, while his spit sprayed into the boy's face as he spoke.... He looked into the boy's face, which was only inches away from his own, and found it was blank. So, with his other hand rolled into a fist, he rammed it into the boy's stomach and sent him flying. Truthful saw the boy land, slammed into the far wall, where he fell into a crumpled heap.... Thump! Crash! Another kid went flying past the cop.... The cop dragged each of the boys inside to the cell and locked them in. (*C*, 336)

This episode of incredible and gratuitous violence is even more hateful for the boys are clearly undernourished, fragile and confused. The reason why they sniff chemicals is that they need to sedate their hunger, it is not merely a criminal act. They are unable to defend themselves either verbally or physically against the gigantic, blind rage of the Mayor. Asymmetry of power and strength is the least one can observe in this brutal performance, when State authorities turn into torturers, embodying the function of "control and punishment" in Foucauldian terms. This is how Law is performed, rather than interpreted, by white authorities. It is clear that it is the exact opposite of the Law intended in aboriginal terms:

> in Alexis Wright's *Carpenteria*, set in northern Australia ... such forces [rivers and serpents] are concentrated in the Law, in an Aboriginal conception of the Law. This, reverting to Rabasa's appropriation of philosophy "considered in Indigenous terms", and returning also to Derrida specifically, would be a "law of originary sociability". And it is these forces which, in the novel's culmination, regeneratively sweep away in a cyclonic flood the artefacts of imperial exploitation along with its operatives, the "Law-breakers".[13]

[13] Peter Fitzpatrick, "Necessary Fictions: Indigenous Claims and the Humanity of Rights" (London: Birkbeck College, University of London, 2010), 17-18.

The episode that stigmatizes the human as waste reminds us, among various possible examples, of a similar image connected to the holocaust and the Nazis' persecutions of the Jews in Anne Michael's novel *The Winter Vault* (2009), where the author narrates the total devastation of the Warsaw ghetto and its dwellers' persecution. Here she describes a moment when German soldiers send children flying in the air and shoot them to their death. Both situations insist on how small, fragile and weightless children are easily disposable and vulnerable in their innocence and total lack of historical responsibility for what happens around them. But, above all, in both cases the only reason for their killing is racial prejudice.

Achille Mbembe reminds us that in Foucault's terms "racism is above all a technology aimed at permitting the exercise of biopower, 'that old sovereign right of death'. "In the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death and to make possible the murderous functions

of the state. It is, he says, the condition for the acceptability of putting to death".[14]

A similar image was presented at the TRC hearings in South Africa. Reports say that a black boy was sent flying and smashing against the floor and beaten to death by the body guards of Winnie Mandela, the so-called Mandela United Football Club. Again, asymmetry between the subjects involved and the hyperbolic disproportion of the accusation, whatever the kids did wrong, remains as a degeneration in the South African liberation struggle. Even more hideous is the fact that in that case racism was not the cause of the assault, for it all happened within the black community of Soweto around 1989.[15] Here, too, the political and moral dilemmas of a whole country are stigmatized exactly in the terms Mbembe is posing by questioning ethics within communities where the violence imposed from outside, namely the whites, generates violence inside the community itself, in this case the blacks. Mandela reports facts in these terms:

> Political violence also had its tragic side. As the violence in Soweto intensified, my wife permitted a group of young men to act as her bodyguards as she moved around the township. These young men were untrained and undisciplined and became involved in activities that were unbecoming to a liberation struggle. Winnie subsequently became legally entangled in the trial of one of her bodyguards who was convicted of murdering a young comrade. This situation was deeply disconcerting to me, for such a scandal only served to divide the movement at a time when unity was essential. I wholly supported my wife and maintained that while she had shown poor judgment, she was innocent of any serious charges.[16]

It is also to avoid such an easy equation between human and waste that South Africa has tried to reconstruct itself according to new social models and utopias:

> The post-apartheid State fostered a normative project with the aim of achieving justice through reconciliation, equality through economic redress, democracy through the transformation of the law and the restoration of a variety of rights, including the right to a dignified life. This normative project was enshrined in a utopian Constitution that attempts to establish a new relationship between law and society on the one hand and law and life on the other, while equating democracy and the political itself with the ethical and the just. This Constitution's underlying principle is *ubuntu* or *human mutuality*. It promises a transcendence of the old politics of racial difference and an affirmation of *shared humanity*....
>
> Underpinning the Constitution is the hope that, after centuries of attempts by white power to contain blacks, South Africa could become the speech-act of a certain way of *being-in-common* rather than *side by side*.[17]

[14] Mbembe, "Necropolitics", trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture*, 15.1 (2003), 17.

[15] "The first thing that I did to Stompie was to hold him on both sides.... throw him up in the air and let him fall freely on to the ground. And Mommy was sitting and watching us. He was tortured so severely that at one stage I could see that he would ultimately die. We kicked him like a ball". Antjie Krog, *The Country of My Skull* (New York: Random House, 2010), 376.

[16] Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995).

[17] Mbembe, "Democracy as a Community of Life", 6.

A similar utopia is the one pointed at by Derrida: "a law that has not yet presented itself in the West, at the Western border, except briefly, before immediately disappearing".[18] Moreover, as Peter Fitzpatrick notices, Elizabeth Anker further observes of the post-apartheid nation that "the status of human rights in South Africa has often been read to betoken a prognosis for the global future of the human rights paradigm".[19]

[18] Fitzpatrick, "Necessary Fictions", 18.

[19] Ibid., 5.

Similar solutions are to be expected also in Australia, where Alexis Wright claims that Aborigines are still considered as "a problem to be solved" by the Government. The city of Desperance is but the fictional site of the real racial conflicts Aborigines were subjected to in the Seventies and Eighties.

Another sign of the lack of solidarity and of the divisions between the two communities of Aborigines in Carpentaria is the destiny of Kevin, the youngest of the Phantom's brothers. Kevin was a most promising student at school, while completely unable to complete any manual task because of his slimness and clumsiness: "Kevin could have been the brains of the family.... 'What kind of consolation is that for a brainy boy, being rendered a mental retard?'" (*C*, 104) Yet, allured by easy money he goes to work at the local Mine, but on the very first day he has a terrible accident. He is severely burnt and remains mentally retarded forever:

> He went down the mine on the day he got the job and came out burnt and broken like barbecued spare ribs. He heard the ancestor's voice when an explosion with fiery rocks went flying at him – left, right and centre. The boy they dragged out of the crush had been rendered an idiot and it was plain as day no prayers would undo the damage. (*C*, 109)

Once he has become the village fool, he is chased at night by a group of "self-acclaimed tough guys gang, from the other side of town" (*C*, 111), drunk youngsters on a jeep with the spotter light on as if for kangaroo hunting. The second time this happens, he is assaulted, his hands are tied and a sack is put on his head by KKK's-like men. He is left on the side of the road maimed, with his bones broken and hardly breathing:

> Whenever he regained consciousness, it was to feel the thud of being struck with something heavy. He heard his bones break with a pain that forced him to open his shock-sealed lips, and call out through the muffling bag to his father.… He was being skinned alive, pulled behind the car, its exhaust fumes choking his breath. (*C*, 344)

His final flight to a far away hospital stands for the defeat of an entire community to safeguard their own members, particularly those weakest and the

most needy. The lack of humanity among Aborigines is such that Kevin's aggressors might well have been his own cousins.

There is then a more referential way to discuss waste, real waste, on the part of Alexis Wright, when she deliberately shows how whites disperse and disseminate solid and toxic waste all around the place, without any respect for nature, the environment and specific ecosystems. The Gulf of Carpentaria where the city of Desperance stands is a hybrid space where salty water from the sea often comes inland and mixes up with the clean water of the river and the lagoons of its delta. It is a territory of dry clay for most of the dry season, then subject to floodings and hurricanes, beating rains and strong winds, in the humid season. In this complex natural ecosystem where land and water exist within an unstable balance, due to ebb and flow, and above all due to tempests, plastic waste is often the remains of white men's activity.

Elias Smith, a mysterious character pushed on shore from the sea by a storm, has been saved by a polystyrene fruit box floating at sea, with a bit of fruit still left inside to eat. Something similar happens to Will Phantom, the young Aboriginal eco-activist, whose main concern is to boycott the new mining pipes and pumps, to the point of being considered a terrorist and being chased by both the local and the federal police. It is through Will that the novel "practises what might be described as a form of anti-corporate indigenous ecologism".[20] At the end of the novel, a providential, final and apocalyptic cyclone hits Desperance to its total annihilation and to wash away its injustice. As one more Biblical plague, similarly, a devastating fire, lit by the Aborigines' need for justice, destroys the infrastructure of the Mining Company. Both the fire and the final cyclone are symbols of destruction and possible regeneration.[21]

The fire thus destroys the mine but importantly the Aboriginal characters recognise it not just as the end of the mine but as the start of a "new beginning" for fire in Australia is life-giving – certain plants, such as banksias, will only germinate after their seeds have been burnt in a bushfire and heated to temperatures above 400°C.[22]

In the meanwhile, Will throws himself in the receding, turbulent sea-water to go in search of his wife and his son, whom – he knows by dreaming them safe – are somewhere in the middle of the tempest. While at sea:

> It was there, during the night, that Will was washed onto a wet, slippery object. He did not know what he held on to in the darkness but it kept him afloat.... He struggled out of the water, by clawing into the slipperiness, and climbing, not knowing if he was crawling onto the body of a sea serpent.... He imagined the new island stretching for many kilometres.... The clouds broke, the new moon shone its halo of peace. Relieved for such an absolution of light, he looked down to find he had been dumped onto an extraordinary floating island of rubbish. (*C*, 493)

[20] Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism,* 130.

[21] See Kate Rigby, "Dancing With Disaster", *Australian Humanities Review*, 46 (May 2009); Barrett, "'This Land Is Me'".

[22] Barrett, "'This Land Is Me'", 36.

Thus, paradoxically, Will saves his life thanks to this artificial island made of rubbish dumped at sea, encroached with vegetal and biological life, with birds' nests, plastic and wood and much more. This floating Robinsonian wreck is in sheer contrast with the natural islands of the sandy archipelago where the rest of Will's family had reunited, after the tempest had calmed down. On an island, family reunions are possible after the great chaos and order is finally re-established as in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Alexis Wright is a critical voice speaking in defence of the environment and the Ocean polluted by what is by now notorious as "Great Pacific garbage patch", or "Pacific trash vortex". That is, immense floating islands of suspended and microscopic plastic particles, debris and chemicals dispersed in the water, but not in a solid structure, which currents entrap in vortexes. In contrast, the island of plastic presented by Alexis Wright in Carpentaria is solid and indestructible. Susan Barrett provides a more symbolic reading of the island of garbage in her comment:

> Will's arrival on the island can be read as a symbolic parallel of the arrival of the whites in Australia but unlike the whites, who immediately tried to exploit the land, Will is initially interested in maintaining the balance on the island and every night he stays awake "to sing the Fishman's ceremonial song cycles". Eventually, however, solitude weighs on his mind and he longs for rescue, wondering "would the discoverers call the sole inhabitant on his sinking oasis: a native?"[23]

[23] Ibid.

The Gulf of Carpentaria is represented in the novel as polluted by plastic containers, and plastic bottles, leftover from mining activities, and wrecks of mechanical machinery disseminated in the desert. This insistence on toxic waste and material pollution of the environment caused by the whites is again in sharp contrast with the worshipping attitude the Aborigines have towards Nature and Mother Earth due to their cosmogonic, all-inclusive and holistic philosophy.

There is another community of people who lives on a dumping ground by recycling waste and rubbish, exactly like the Pricklebush Aborigines of Alexis Wright. It is the community of squatters and slum dwellers in the Slum of Annawadi, in contemporary Mumbai portrayed by Katherine Boo in *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2014).[24] Her writing is not proper fiction, for she lived there for a while, gathering life-stories as sociologists or anthropologists do. And this sociological intent lays behind Alexis Wright's narrative, which derives from firsthand experience of life in an Aboriginal community and from listening to "the Law" and the yarns of the old chiefs.

[24] Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (New York: Random House, 2014). All references are to this edition, quoted as *BF*.

Annawadi is a real slum grown between Mumbai airport and the city: here Muslim and Hindu families live a life of struggle off a dumping ground. Abdul's family, for instance, "had been buying and selling to recyclers the

things that richer people threw away" (Prologue *BF,* ix). Almost two dozen families live in shacks, on the rim of a vast pool of sewage:

> Here, in the thriving western suburbs of the Indian financial capital, three thousand people had packed into, or on top of, 355 huts. It was a continual coming-and-going of migrants from all over India – Hindus mainly, from all manner of castes and subcastes.... a place booby-trapped with contentions, new and ancient.... For Annawadi was also magnificently positioned for a trafficker in rich peoples' garbage. (*BF*, xii)

Abdul has to look for a hiding place, since the police is after him, for he is charged with setting fire to his neighbour, a crippled woman, who actually set herself on fire in order to obtain a reward. The only safe place Abdul can think of is his shack, a storeroom full of garbage to be sorted and sold. His residence among rubbish, now that he is considered a criminal, once more establishes an easy equation between humans and waste. After all, Annawadians know perfectly well their condition: "squatter settlements looked like villages that had been airdropped into gaps between elegant modernities", and Abdul's brother thinks: "everything around us is roses. And we are the shit inbetween" (*BF*, xii).

Annawadi as well as all other slums in India and in the urban area of Mumbai best embody Achille Mbembe's observation on "spaces of vulnerability", for the slum is exactly such a type of space: "Today, this logic of waste is particularly dramatized by the dilemmas of unemployment and disposability, survival and subsistence, and the expansion in every arena of everyday life of spaces of vulnerability".[25]

Slums, like townships in South Africa, are places where severe oppression and poverty are experienced on a racial and class basis.[26] Similarly, as Fanon was writing and as Mbembe rehearses the "colonial city" is "a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other".[27] In this case, sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not.[28] In contrast, Arjun Appadurai provides examples of virtuous democratic spirit among slum dwellers in his essay: "Cosmopolitanism from Below: Some Ethical Lessons from the Slums of Mumbai" (2011). He describes the actions of the Alliance, a triad of slum based organizations, that have managed to create a net of information, opportunities and services in order to become a credible negotiating partner to local authorities with the aim of improving the life conditions of slum dwellers. This cooperative system, which struggles for the rights of the slums, has proven successful and has become a model for international aid organisations.

Appadurai is not necessarily optimistic about life in the slums, where he

[25] Mbembe, "Democracy as a Community of Life", 7.

[26] Ibid., 26.

[27] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 37-39.

[28] Mbembe, "Necropolitics", trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture,* 15.1 (2003), 27.

defines slum dwellers as "citizens without a city" and as "toilers", that is daily hard workers, who cannot be counted either as proletariat, or working class or labouring class. Moreover he sees this type of associations as a self-balanced system of control:

> For, as Alliance leaders are the first to admit, the poor are not immune from greed, conflict and jealousy and there are always slum families who are prepared to lie or cheat to advance themselves in the context of crisis or new opportunities. Such problems are resolved by informal mechanisms in which the testimony of neighbours is utterly decisive, since the social life of slums is in fact characterized by an almost complete lack of privacy.[29]

[29] Arjun Appadurai, "Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics", *Environment and Urbanization,* 13.2 (October 2001), 35.

What happens in the Annawadi of Katherine Boo's novel is exactly such an explosion of greed, conflict, jealousy, lies and cheating attitudes. The cripple woman sets herself on fire just out of jealousy towards her neighbours, who gained a relative economic growth over the years, to the point of slightly improving their shack. The woman just wants to extort money out of their family, but she dies while in hospital for an incurable infection. Her accusation however has become part of the police's plan to squeeze money from the family. Thus, once arrested, father and son are brutally beaten up and the ruin of their activity as rubbish pickers and sellers is decreed. As in the previous novel, they are equated by corrupted State authorities to waste, wasted humans.

In Annawadi most of the male, adult characters, fathers and husbands, are crippled or disabled and they cannot work anymore. Most of their health conditions are due to the dangerous and toxic jobs they used to do as garbage pickers, to bad hygienic conditions and lack of money to be cured. Thus, males become parasites, unproductive and dependent on the work of women. Women end up prostituting themselves, as is the case of Fatima, the one-legged woman and with Asha, the slum-lady befriended with corrupt politicians of the Shiv Sena Party, and the ones who live in the brothel of Annawadi. They become entrepreneurs of both legal and illegal practices. Children and young adults are mainly the bread-winners for their crowded families. These young people are adventurous and become more and more daring, overcoming boundaries, and walls, even private properties and the airport premises in order to look for discarded plastic and metal to re-sell, while children pursue their own opportunities off the track, in order to gather garbage in unattended places:

> Some of the taximen tossed their cups and bottles over a low stone wall behind the food stand. On the other side of the wall, seventy feet down, was the Mithi River − actually, a concrete sluice where the river had been redirected as the airport enlarged. The drivers probably liked to imagine their garbage hitting the water and floating away, but Sunil had climbed the wall and discovered a narrow ledge on the other side, five feet down. By some

> trick of wind in the sluice, trash tossed over the wall tended to blow back and settle on this sliver of concrete. It was a space on which a small boy could balance. (*BF*, 38)

It is close to the airport that one young man is left maimed and dead after a long agony, for hours, in the guts, before the police carts him away. Another had been murdered but the case is hushed under a ridiculous diagnosis: "irrecoverable illness", at fifteen (*BF*, 168). Nobody will ever come to claim the corpse for burial or to ask to open an inquest: "The following morning, Kalu lay outside Air India's red-and-white gates: a shirtless corpse with a grown-out Saman Khan haircut, crumpled behind a flowering hedge" (*BF*, 165).

A young boy, Sanjay, aged sixteen, was deeply shaken and he was crying like a child for he had seen his friend Kalu surrounded by a gang of men and now he fears he would be tracked down by them and beaten up or even killed for what he saw. His only choice is to flee Annawadi and once he reaches the far away slum of Dharavi, where his mum and sister live, he commits suicide by swallowing rat poison. Before dying he confesses to his beloved sister that he had seen "a group of men swarm Kalu all at once. 'They killed my friend,' he kept repeating. 'Just threw him off.' Like he was garbage" (*BF*, 170).

Once again the explicit equation of garbage pickers with waste, the fact that their life is valueless, their death is not recorded in the figures of the city casualties and accidents are all particularly meaningful here. Death is the only choice for Meena, too, back in Annawadi. She had fallen in love with a boy, but her family had already promised her to a man in a village. She is frequently beaten up by her violent father and brother and kept almost a prisoner in her shack. She, too, swallows rat poison. Garbage and death amongst garbage, like rats, seems a contagion in Annawadi. The community is completely disrupted by all that happens. Their aspiration was simply to improve their life conditions, while to Abdul it was enough "to be recognized as better than the dirty water in which he lived" (*BF*, 220).

Necropolitics and necropowers are at work here and they create topographies of cruelty and the "spatiality for a social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*", for whom the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred.[30]

[30] Mbembe, "Necropolitics", 40.

Tolerance, solidarity, or even grass-root organizations are completely absent from Annawadi. Annawadians fight for survival, one at the expenses of the others, and thus even the possibility "to aspire" is denied to them;

> in 2010 or 2011, the airport slums would start being razed.... But plans were well underway. A small part of the cleared acreage would be used to serve the expanding airport, and the rest would be leased on the open market. In

> place of thirty-odd slums, there would be more hotels, shopping malls, office complexes, perhaps a theme park.
>
> The airport clearance would roughly follow the state's slum-redevelopment scheme. Under it, private developers were granted rights to build on slum land only if they agreed to construct apartments for those slumdwellers who could prove they'd lived in their huts since 1995 or 2000, depending on the slum. Corruption in the scheme was endemic; organized crime syndicates had become major players (*BF*, 224).

Annawadi eventually will be cleared up: "The bulldozers of the airport authority began to move across the periphery of Annawadi.... the sewage lake that had brought dengue fever and malaria to the slum was filled in, its expanse in preparation for some new development" (*BF*, 233). This is what happens in Carpentaria, too, not because of the authorities, in spite of people asking to do so: "Why couldn't we just? Bulldoze the crap out of those camps, flatten the lot?" (*C*, 36). Only nature can undo what has been done by man, thus a final hurricane sweeps away the city of Desperance. Both communities of squatters are an "eyesore" to the uptown people and city authorities:

> What was unfolding in Mumbai was unfolding elsewhere, too. In the age of global market capitalism, hopes and grievances were narrowly conceived, which blunted a sense of common predicament. Poor people didn't unite; they competed ferociously amongst themselves for gains as slender as they were provisional. And this undercity strife created only the faintest ripple in the fabric of the society at large. The gates of the rich, occasionally rattled, remained unbreached. The politicians held forth on the idle class. The poor took down one another, and the world's great, unequal cities soldiered on in relative peace. (*BF*, 237)

Katherine Boo is evidently quite pessimistic about the type of society and lack of solidarity that characterizes a slum like Annawadi. This view is in deep contrast with Appadurai's experience of Mumbai slums as places where what he calls "deep democracy" is a common practice and where federation easily takes place:

> "deep democracy" suggests roots, anchors, intimacy, proximity and locality; and these are important associations.... They are about such traditional democratic desiderata as inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability, as articulated within an activist formation. But I want to suggest that the lateral reach of such movements − their efforts to build international networks or coalitions of some durability with their counterparts across national boundaries is also a part of their "depth".
>
> This lateral or horizontal dimension, which I have touched upon in terms of the activities of Shack/Slum Dwellers International, seeks direct collaborations and exchanges between poor communities themselves, based

> on the "will to federate". But what gives this cross-national politics its depth is not just its circulatory logic of spreading ideas of savings, housing, citizenship and participation, "without borders" and outside the direct reach of state or market régimes. Depth is also to be located in the fact that, where successful, the spread of this model produces poor communities able to engage in partnerships with more powerful agencies − urban, regional, national and multilateral − that purport to be concerned with poverty and with citizenship....
>
> This form of deep democracy, the vertical fulcrum of a democracy without borders, cannot be assumed to be automatic, easy or immune to setbacks. Like all serious exercises in democratic practice, it is not automatically reproductive. It has particular conditions of possibility and conditions under which it grows weak or corrupt. The study of these conditions – which include such contingencies as leadership, morale, flexibility and material enablement – requires many more case studies of specific movements and organizations. For those concerned with poverty and citizenship, we can begin by recalling that one crucial condition of possibility for deep democracy is the ability to meet emergency with patience.[31]

[31] Appadurai, "Deep Democracy", 42-43.

This is definitely not the case in Annawadi, where activism is not encouraged, where youths are doomed to prison, flight and death, where aspirations and hopes are crashed by corrupt politicians and egotistic practices. The "right to aspire" of which Appadurai speaks in his writings on Mumbai slums seems not to take roots in Annawadi. Similarly, it does not take roots in the communities of Aboriginals in *Carpentaria*, where Will as an eco-activist is an isolated heroic figure, till the very last moment when he finds unexpected support from the fringes of his community. Yet, Katherine Boo's pessimistic view brings one back full circle to the beginning, to the material conditions of life as de-humanizing factors, which Mbembe had started questioning:

> What appeared to be indifference to other people's suffering had a good deal to do with conditions that had sabotaged their [young people] innate capacity for moral action.
>
> In places where government priorities and market imperatives create a world so capricious that to help a neighbour is to risk your ability to feed your family, and sometimes even your own liberty, the idea of the mutually supportive poor community is demolished. The poor blame one another for the choices of governments and markets, and we who are not poor are ready to blame the poor just as harshly. (*BF*, *Author's note* 254)

Vanessa Leonardi

Wastelands and Wasted Lives in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*

Abstract: This work investigates Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) in order to show how the author questions the environmental exploitation of nature in connection to the exploitation of racial others, such as the poor, robots and women. The analysis is carried out in terms of ecofeminist theories and environmental justice conceptualisations. Winterson's novel focuses on exploitative systems that devalue nature and socially underprivileged humans who have greater risks of exposition to environmentally degraded spaces. In her novel, waste is caused by careless and greedy human activities, which undervalue both the importance of the environment as well as the role and survival of other people. For the purpose of this work, the focus of this textual analysis is on the wasting of natural resources and of human/nonhuman beings.

Keywords: *eco-narrative, dystopia, environmental justice, ecological modernisation, wasted lives, degradation*

The Stone Gods (2007)

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* is a post-apocalyptic, ecofeminist, dystopian novel describing three non-linear worlds in which government and society take on strong masculine roles that damage both people and their surrounding environment. By providing redemptive models and alternatives, Winterson's novel confirms the dystopian corrective function of idealized societies. *The Stone Gods* was labelled as a feminist critical dystopia, which, to a certain degree, hides a utopia within its structure:

> For many contemporary women writers, the use of utopian and/or dystopian elements has become a preferred mode of interrogating current systems of oppression and violence while offering visions of resistance and possible (future) alternatives ... Jeanette Winterson's recent foray into utopian/dystopian narrative presents a polemical critique of our present self-destructive impulses (via environmental and genocidal disasters) alongside a poetic elegy for an unrecoverable (pastoral) past while articulating the utopian dream of a redeemable future. As such, *The Stone Gods* (2007) is a relevant example of critical dystopia....[1]

Although men have largely dominated the dystopian genre, feminist dystopian novels have been around for a long time as many scholars have aptly pointed out.[2] One of the oldest examples is *The Last Man* written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in 1826. Furthermore, two other novels, written a

[1] Hope Jennings, "'A Repeating World': Redeeming the Past and Future in the Utopian Dystopia of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*", *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, 27.2 (Fall 2010), 132-133.

[2] Sarah Lefanu, *Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1989); Frances Bartkowski, *Feminist Utopias* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Lucie Armitt, ed., *Where No Man Has Gone Before: Women and Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Marleen S. Barr, *Alien to Femininity: Speculative Fiction and Feminist Theory* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987).

century later, described a dystopian society ruled by men, in which women were reduced to their biological functions: *Man's World* by Charlotte Haldane (1927) and *Swastika Night* by Katharine Burdekin (1937). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Winterson is not a writer in the field of dystopias, as her previous novels are mainly written from feminist and postmodernist perspectives. She recurs to the genre in order to explore several topics, ranging from social to ecological issues, leading to the world destruction. *The Stone Gods* creates alternative communities of humans and robots that actively challenge and oppose the dominant (patriarchal) ruling system. Indeed, as Franková asserts:

> Winterson's dystopia resonates both with Lyotard's theorizing 'techno-scientists' as authoritarian and with ecologists' critique of the loss of unity of humans and nature. What is more, Winterson joins the contemporary ethical ecological debate head on, undisguised by the dystopian fantasy. On the contrary, her experimental, postmodern treatment of time, in this dystopia time permeable through millennia and interplanetary space, aids the urgency of her arguments by reinforcing the repetitiveness of human hubris and folly.[3]

[3] Milada Franková, "Dystopian Transformations: Post-Cold War Dystopian Writing by Women", *Brno Studies in English,* 39.1 (2013), 221.

The Stone Gods explores and challenges several hierarchical dualisms such as dominant/subordinate, men/women, human/nature through a focus on human and environmental waste. When Winterson was asked whether her novel was a political and ecological piece of writing, she claimed that:

> I have said many times that I believe our time to be unique in the history of the world. Either we face our environmental challenges now, or many of us will perish, and much of what we cherish in civilisation will be destroyed. I am sorry to sound apocalyptic, but this is what I believe. *Stone Gods* isn't a pamphlet or a docu-drama or even a call to arms, it is first and foremost a work of fiction, but I am sure that change of any kind starts in the self, not in the State, and I am sure that when we challenge ourselves imaginatively, we then use that challenge in our lives. I want *The Stone Gods* to be a prompt, but most of all, a place of possibility.[4]

[4] Jeanette Winterson quoted in Susana Onega, "The Trauma Paradigm and the Ethics of Affect in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*", in Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau, eds., *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 275.

The Stone Gods is the first and only work of science fiction written by Winterson so far. Although many critics seem not to consider it as science fiction, Winterson herself declared that:

> People say to me, 'so is *The Stone Gods* science fiction?' Well, it is fiction, and it has science in it, and it is set (mostly) in the future, but the labels are meaningless. I can't see the point of labelling a book like a pre-packed supermarket meal. There are books worth reading and books not worth reading. That's all.[5]

[5] Https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2009/jan/28/science-fiction-genre, accessed 2 July 2014.

Even if Winterson objects to labels, her novel makes use of a number of recognisable technicalities of the SF genre.[6] First of all, settings (in the future, in space, on a different or alternative world, in a different universe or dimension); secondly, non-human characters (e.g. robots); thirdly, references to science and technology (e.g. to scientific theories and technological advances, imagining or describing the consequences of both scientific and technological developments); fourthly, dystopia; fifthly, allegory (reference to distant locations, such as Easter Island).

The Stone Gods consists of three seemingly independent narratives reaching a time span over several centuries. The first chapter compares the condition of the dying planet Orbus with the new Planet Blue. The second chapter is set in the 18th century and explores how humans sacrifice nature for their meaningless cultural practices, the third and the fourth chapters focus on differences between the industrial Tech City and its alternative old-fashioned Wreck City.

The Stone Gods takes its title from the Easter Island statues[7] and this reference invites us to consider the wider point of humans not learning from their mistakes. It is a clear reference to the anthropogenic destruction of the ecology of Easter Island and the resulting death of its civilization. Easter Island, indeed, is systematically damaged for illogical reasons to the point it is no longer habitable and it becomes a wasteland. In Winterson's novel, the stories are interconnected by the common theme of human greed and irresponsible economic and anti-ecological behaviour that reduce both disadvantaged people and over-exploited environments to waste.

The Stone Gods explores a variety of topics, including technology, scientific advancement, global warming, pollution, capitalism, colonisation and war. However, the most important topic is that of the danger of technology and its devastating consequences of the wasting of natural resources and human beings. Winterson criticises the way in which humanity has become reliant on technology as, despite making life easier for humans, it reduces, in the end, both people and their surrounding environment to degradation. Her novel deals with the representation of destruction, degradation and waste in every chapter. Indeed, Winterson herself acknowledged that "I was heading towards a gigantic break down when I wrote this book. There is a death at the end of each section".[8]

Technology vs. Environment: Waste, Wastelands and Wasted Lives

The first chapter of the novel introduces readers to the dying planet Orbus. On this planet there is an advanced technological society characterised by body perfection, sexual freedom, no aging, no government, corporation control and *Robo Sapiens*. Planet Orbus was essentially destroyed and reduced to a

[6] For further reading on the SF genre, see Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, eds., *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Marleen S. Barr, ed., *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism* (Lanham, DM: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

[7] Easter Island (*Isla de Pascua* in Spanish and *Rapa Nui* in Polynesian) is located between Chile's west coast and Tahiti in the South Pacific Ocean. This Island is famous for its enigmatic giant stone statues or *Moai* whose oversized heads, carved centuries ago, reflect the history of the dramatic rise and fall of the most isolated Polynesian culture.

[8] Http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/book/the-stone-gods/, accessed 3 July 2014.

wasteland because of human greed that led to its exploitation and destruction. This reference is clear when Billie and her boss, Manfred, talk about the planet: "But Orbus is dying." "Orbus is not dying. Orbus is evolving in a way that is hostile to human life." "OK, so it's the planet's fault. We didn't do anything, did we? Just fucked it to death and kicked it when it wouldn't get up".[9]

[9] Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 10. All further references to this edition.

Technology was not sensibly used as it only represented a means of gaining more and more wealth in the hands of few powerful people. These powerful people are the ones who then decide to leave and find, or colonise, another planet in the hope for a better future. The discovery of Planet Blue represents, indeed, a new opportunity to start again. However, Winterson questions the idea of space colonisation, thus highlighting the ecological and cultural consequences of conquering other countries or spaces. On the one hand, she criticises the ruling power hegemony, on the other, she offers us alternative spaces (and communities), which can resist and oppose the dominant ruling power.

Winterson attempts to show that no matter how hard mankind tries to live in harmony with the surrounding environment, it will always end up in the same way, that is "either we kill each other or we kill the planet or both. We'd destroy the lot rather than make it work" (240). These themes of perpetual and recurring degradation and destruction are showed through the example of the two human civilisations that, despite being sixty-five million years apart, are virtually the same.

The Stone Gods exemplifies Winterson's vision of technology. Despite the utopian merits of considering technology as a means of progress and civilisation, she suggests that in the end, technology turns out to be a repressive tool in the hands of those who control it and it may ultimately damage both people and the environment.

As stated above, throughout the novel, Winterson seems to promote environmental justice in a variety of ways. For instance, the author makes several references to the role of ecological modernisation, which is often bound to nationalist discourses based on a regional sense of superiority. Ecological modernisation is the interplay of ecology and economy whose environmental practices are aimed at attempting to calculate and prevent potential harm rather than clean it up later. This theory is bound to nationalist discourses that presume a regional sense of superiority, which leads to claims of ownership over natural resources. Ecological modernisation can be applied as a theoretical concept to analyse those changes to the central institutions deemed necessary to solve ecological crisis and, from a more pragmatic perspective, as a political programme to redirect environmental policymaking.[10] According to David Harvey, however, ecological modernisation is a "discourse that can rather too easily be corrupted into yet another discursive representation of dominant forms

[10] For further reading, see Joseph Murphy, "Ecological Modernisation", *Geoforum,* 31 (2000), 1-8.

of economic power" and it can also "be conveniently used to make claims on behalf of major governments and corporations for their exclusive and technologically advanced management of all the world's resources".[11] This is exactly what happens in Winterson's novel where we find discourses of nationalism and regionalism interweaved with the environmental discourse of ecological modernisation.

[11] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 382.

An example of how Winterson engages on discourses of ecological modernisation is through Manfred's justification of the Central Power in claiming that "[t]he Central Power is trying to live responsibly on a crowded planet, and that bunch are still scanning the skies for God, and draining the last drops of oil out of the ground. They can go to Hell" (7-8). Manfred's statement implies a sense of superiority and provides hints to the construction of 'otherness'. This is more clearly evident when later on Manfred calls people from the other regions (the SinoMosco Pact and the Eastern Caliphate) "out-of-control lunatics" uninterested in global responsibility (31). In other words, the Central Power is the only party interested in ecological modernisation that leaves the 'other' regions to out-dated modes of living. This sense of superiority reinforces their sense of nationalism through the achievement of ecological modernisation, which, in Winterson's opinion, cannot be successful unless it takes into account the true principles of environmental justice.

In this part of the novel, the concept of the wasting of human beings and of the environment is very clear. The over-exploitation of natural resources has made Central Power richer and more powerful, thus allowing them to finance the space mission to find a new planet to colonise and, eventually, exploit. When Central Power finally finds it, they announce the determination to leave the poor Eastern Caliphate and SinoMosco Pact on the dying planet:

> This is a great day for science. The last hundred years have been hell. The doomsters and the environmentalists kept telling us we were as good as dead and, hey presto, not only do we find a new planet, but it is perfect for new life. This time, we'll be more careful. This time we will learn from our mistakes. The new planet will be home to the universe's first advanced civilization. It will be a democracy ... because whatever we say in public, the Eastern Caliphate isn't going to be allowed within a yatto-mile of the place. We'll shoot 'em down before they land. No, we won't shoot them down, because the President of the Central Power has just announced a new world programme of No War. We will not shoot down the Eastern Caliphate, we will robustly repel them.The way the thinking is going in private, we'll leave this run-down rotting planet to the Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact, and they can bomb each other to paste while the peace-loving folks of the Central Power ship civilization to the new world. (31)

Although the concept of waste generates an ethics of responsibility, this is not the case for the Central Power, which besides exploiting the environment and racial others (including the poor), charge the Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact for the depletion of the planet. Billie, however, replies that the waste of the planet is the Central Power's fault and that others are only following what they did first. Furthermore, when Spike joins in the conversation and claims that it is too late to care for the planet, Manfred angrily answers:

> 'It is never too late!' ... 'That's delusional, depressive and anti-science. We have the best weather-shield in the world. We have slowed global warming. We have stabilized emissions. We have drained rising sea levels, we have replanted forests, we have synthesized food, ending centuries of harmful farming practices,' he glares at me again, 'we have neutralized acid rain, we have permanent refrigeration around the ice-caps, we no longer use oil, gasoline or petroleum derivatives. What more do you want?'. (24)

Spike simply replies that she does not want anything as she is a robot. This statement reinforces the idea that the degradation and exploitation of the planet was carried out by humans for human greed.

The Central Power's superiority also recalls discourses of imperialism and hegemony. In *The Stone Gods*, characters belong to a constructed hierarchy on the basis of their economic class status, which determines who has access to the new planet. Power relations are clearly evident in the way the Central Power leads the negotiation for the colonisation of the new planet and one of the most striking examples can be seen in their speech when they assert that:

> The new planet offers us the opportunity to do things differently. We've had a lot of brilliant successes here on Orbus – well, we are the success story of the universe, aren't we? ... But we have taken a few wrong turnings. Made a few mistakes. We have limited natural resources at our disposal, and a rising population that is by no means in agreement as to how our world as a whole should share out these remaining resources. Conflict is likely. A new planet means that we can begin to redistribute ourselves. It will mean a better quality of life for everyone − the ones who leave and the ones who stay. (4-5)

This statement is a clear example of how a utopian image is used to justify colonisation by highlighting a bright new future to the masses and avoid opposition towards the mission. Furthermore, to avoid any accusation of potential violence associated with the colonisation mission, the Central Power states that "[m]onsters will be humanely destroyed, with the possible exception of scientific capture of one or two types for the Zooeum" (5). The extermination of local inhabitants, no matter whether they are human or nonhuman, as long as they can be hostile to modern 'civilised' life, is generally accepted as necessary

for the survival of the superior species, that is a certain white Western capitalist society. Moreover, the term 'monsters' refers to the dinosaurs that inhabit the planet. This is an example of how Winterson deals with discourses of animal rights and environment, thus denoting the negative effects of colonisation. It is strange to find the two words 'humanely destroyed' together as if the local (colonised) inhabitants of the new planet (dinosaurs) will benefit from this human colonisation and some of them, indeed, will be granted living for humans' entertainment purposes. As Gerrard notes, zoos "distort our perception of animals" and serve the function of "a spectacle of imperial or neocolonial power".[12] This message is also clearly exemplified through Spike's statement that "[t]here are many kinds of life. Humans always assumed that theirs was the only kind that mattered. That's how you destroyed your planet" (65-66). The implications of such a statement should not be underestimated, as it implies a critique of environmental justice through anthropocentrism, which could either include humans only or also nonhumans.

[12] Greg Gerrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 150.

Winterson's critique of imperialism and its impact on both people and their surrounding environment can also be viewed through her choice of the narrator's name, *Billie Crusoe.* There is an overt reference to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, where the dualism between human and nature is explored. Among the many interpretations of the meaning of Defoe's story, Louis James acknowledges that:

> The modern shift from a romantic view of Crusoe to a hostile reassessment of Defoe's story began as early as 1857, when Marx in the *Grundisse* pointed out that although Crusoe had been taken as a model of the return to a 'natural' life, the story was, in fact, in stark opposition to the basic state of mankind, which is a communal one. Crusoe's acquisitive individualism pits him against any ideal of a natural community. Instead of being in communion with nature, Crusoe wishes to possess and exploit his environment.[13]

[13] Louis James, "Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective Views", in Lieve Spaas and Brian Stimpson, eds., *Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 4.

In line with Defoe's character, Crusoe, Winterson's novel provides us with a hint to the system of global capitalism, which creates an unequal distribution of wealth and environmental degradation deeply affecting the lower or poor classes. In this respect, there is an interesting passage in her novel when Manfred claims:

> We need infrastructure, buildings, services. If I'm going to live on a different planet, I want to do it properly. I want shops and hospitals. I'm not a pioneer. I like city life, like everyone likes city life. The Central Power believes that the biggest obstacle to mass migration will be setting up the infrastructure in time. We can't go back to the Bog Ages. (32)

It is clear from this passage that nobody seems to like the idea of living on a

new planet without the entire commercial and industrial infrastructure they are used to on their own planet. This idea, however, is voiced by the Central Power, or in other words, by those 'capitalists' who are used to power, infrastructure and all the wealthy resources and cannot live without them. Winterson, therefore, shows us the irony hiding behind these people who are eager to bring with them an advanced capitalist system onto the new planet, without considering the fact that they have been driven out from their own planet and are looking for a new place to live due to the capitalist system's consequences in the first place. The question is what would happen to the 'others' or poor people living in the other areas? As Manfred himself claimed above, "[t]hey can go to Hell" (8). What Winterson is therefore suggesting is that nothing will change on the new planet, history will be repeating itself again, thus perpetuating those binary distinctions between rich (colonisers) and poor (colonised), between human and nonhuman beings, between the capitalist bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In terms of critique of Capitalism, Winterson offers an additional instance in the final part of the novel, The Wreck City, when the character Friday tells Billie that they had not given up oil before "in the rich West ... because India and China were never going to do it till they'd drained every drop. They had a right to industrialize – they weren't going to go to hand-wringing classes about the planet" (165). However, India and China followed, eventually, the industrial model of the West, as the capitalist economy demanded it. Winterson goes on describing the effects of capitalism on the environment ad on the impossibility of promoting an eco-capitalism as a form of alternative capitalism able to foster a healthy environment.

Industrial capitalism, however, has not exclusive responsibility for the destruction of the environment; as Winterson implies, there are also some historical modes of production which recall a pre-capitalist power struggle as described in the Easter Island chapter. The narrator here is called Billy, now turned into a male shipmate on Captain Cook's vessel, stranded on a desolate island where he meets Spikkers, a native islander, who explains to him that trees on the island were chopped down and made into wooden sledges in order to transport material used by the natives to build stone idols. Billy witnesses the final act of destruction of this island when "[t]he Natives appear to be making procession towards some totem or obelisk, except that it is fringed. By use of my small telescope I discover, to my great surprise, that it is a tree, standing alone" (100-101). At the beginning Billy cannot understand why people are destroying what he feels they may need the most, but then he realises that "the labouring of the Stone Gods had been the sole purpose of the island's society" (108) and trees were therefore needed to make the wooden foundations for their idols and float the Stone Gods along the shore. In this case, therefore, capitalism cannot be blamed for the denigration of the environment, as there are so many

other issues to take into account when investigating and assessing the reasons for the destruction of our surrounding environment. In this chapter, Winterson criticises cultural practices as being irrational and disastrous to human survival by claiming that cultural priorities are rational in the current context but they may prove to be irrational at later stages. The deforestation of Easter Island is a way for Winterson to show how the disruption of ecological balance is caused by careless human activities. As more and more trees were cut, soil erosion led to decreased crops, birds fled, turtles died, food became scarce, tribal conflicts intensified into civil war. Moreover, instead of saving the environment around them, the natives, in the end, also destroy their statues out of frustration. Easter Island is another example of a wasteland and wasted lives caused by human greed, irrationality and careless activities. In other words, Easter Island is used as a metaphor for 'ecological death'.

Although there are many instances throughout the novel of human and environmental wasting, the chapter dealing with Wreck City is probably one of the best examples in this respect. The post-nuclear Wreck City is undoubtedly the "slum" or "the pocked and pitted scar tissue of bomb wreckage" (98). Winterson shows her readers a clear binary between Tech and Wreck, between wealthy and a technologically advanced society and the outcast, between the perfect environment and the wasteland. "Wreck City is a No Zone – no insurance, no assistance, no welfare, no police. It's not forbidden to go there, but if you do, and if you get damaged or murdered or robbed or raped, it's at your own risk" (98). Hegemony and power relations are implied in this binary division between these two different identities, as also exemplified in the following lines:

> A spokesman from MORE- *Justice* told reporters that it was time to take a tougher approach to No-Zone activities. "It's just a den of thieves," he said. "We left them alone while we were rebuilding our own infrastructure, but there is now no reason why anyone should be living outside Tech City. We have offered jobs and accommodation to anyone in the No Zone – an offer we still extend. This will be day one of a seven-day amnesty for any No-Zone inhabitants to come forward and live within the wider community of their fellow citizens. After that, we're going in." (101-102)

Wreck City symbolises an alternative society where people can live in freedom without any kind of rules, laws and imposition. Tolerance is the key concept in this city, which, paradoxically, from a place of exclusion becomes a place of inclusion by gathering together the 'others', all those people excluded by the MORE corporation. People living in Wreck City are people who need to be eliminated; there is no intention to integrate them in the 'official' city (Tech City). They are considered and treated as waste to be trashed and forgotten

about. In the end, indeed, MORE conducts a military raid to attack Wreck City and manages to kill many people, including the narrator Billie.

The situation of people living in the Dead Forest is even worse.[14] The Dead Forest is not simply a dead natural area, it is another interesting metaphor used by Winterson to refer to the wasting of human beings and natural resources and it is characterised by degradation and destruction which combine concerns of the natural sphere (waste of the environment) with the human sphere (waste of human beings). The Dead Forest is one of the Tech City's biggest secrets. It is extremely radioactive and is inhabited by toxic mutants, who were expected to die but their bodies have survived the interaction, mutating into something else:

> They were the bomb-damage, the enemy collateral, the ground-kill, blood-poisoned, lung-punctured, lymph-swollen, skin like dirty tissue paper, yellow eyes, weal-bodied, frog-mottled, pustules oozing thick stuff, mucus faces, bald, scarred, scared, alive, human. They bred, crawled out their term, curled up like ferns, died where they lay, on radioactive soil. Some could speak, and spat blood, each word made out of a blood vessel. They were vessels of a kind, carriers of disease and degeneration, a new generation of humans made out of the hatred of others. (125)

The Dead Forest and people living in it have been disposed to the margins like rubbish dumped into the marginalized society. They are the unwanted and exploited products of a technologically advanced society where only few, rich and powerful people deserve to live in. In other words, "[i]f you can't nuke your dissidents, the next best thing is to let the degraded land poison them" (104). These people are fed by helicopters and readers can easily juxtapose this image with that of food aid dropped by helicopters from wealthier countries or from private organizations to the poorest countries and people in the world.

Besides the wasting of natural resources and of human beings, Winterson also includes a few instances of how nonhumans are also created and exploited to satisfy human greed and they are finally disposed of when they are no longer useful or needed. In Chapter One, Spike is considered to be a commodity built for a space mission and she has to be "switched off" or killed after the completion of her task so that the data that she has collected cannot be transmitted to rivalling sides. "It's policy; all information-sensitive robots are dismantled after mission, so that their data cannot be accessed by hostile forces. She's been across the universe, and now she's going to the recycling unit. The great thing about robots, even these Robo *sapiens*, is that nobody feels sorry for them. They are only machines" (9). Spike is another victim of the system, just like animals, disadvantaged people and degraded environments. Once exploited and useless, they are just waste, nothing else.

[14] Winterson's section on the Dead Forest recalls Ursula K. LeGuin's *The World for World is Forest* (1976). This work describes the conflict between the forest-dwelling natives of the planet Athshe and the Terran colonists who exploit and abuse them and their environment.

Finally, focus is laid upon another minority group, women, who in Winterson's ecofeminist approach bear a direct connection with their surrounding environment. Her novel, in this respect, resembles other feminist dystopias in that it does not only address the destiny of individual characters, but it explores the structure of the whole ruling system to determine the origin(s) and causes of both dys- and utopian visions, in line with Melzer's opinion according to whom "[science fiction female writers] create explicit political narratives that do not just center on an individual's subjectivity but address *systems* that shape our world: social, technological, economic, and political systems".[15] This means that in feminist dystopias, and in *The Stone Gods*, women are portrayed as either victims or active opponents of the ruling system in stark contrast to the dominant and destructive nature of men. Women, as also suggested by Winterson in her novel, through their common sense, sensitive nature and emotions are the only ones who truly care about the environment around them and are therefore the ones able to save the planet and restore the natural order.

[15] Patricia Melzer, *Alien Constructions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 179.

In ecofeminist theory, only women feel sorry for the destruction of the environment and ask for forgiveness from nature that is believed to be something animate. In line with this theory, Winterson provides readers with several examples throughout the novel. In the first part of the novel, for instance, the protagonist, Billie Crusoe, expresses all of her regrets and sorrows for having destroyed Planet Blue, as it had previously occurred with Orbus, by claiming:

> Out of the window, where it's going dark, I can see the laser-projection of Planet Blue. She needs us like a bed needs bedbugs. 'I'm sorry,' I say, to the planet that can't hear me. And I wish she could sail through space, unfurling her white clouds to solar winds, and find a new orbit, empty of direction, where we cannot go, and where we will never find her, and where the sea, clean as a beginning, will wash away any trace of humankind. (22)

In the second chapter of the novel, readers learn from the very first lines that Easter Island is a patriarchal society when Winterson writes that "we slithered rope-wise into the scoop of a boat, and rowed towards the shore of fine sand where upwards of a hundred men, no women or children, awaited us" (97). She asserts that people living on this island do not seem to care about the damage to their own environment and only women attempt to prevent the local chiefs from putting down the last tree:

> A great cry goes up round the tree and what appears to be a dispute. Women, and this my first sight of them, are grouped against the men, mayhap as a part of the ritual, but one of the women is lying the length of her body against the

> tree, and wailing so strong that I can hear it from my Warren. A male figure, wearing a headdress of bird feathers, strikes the woman, and at this signal, for so I interpret it, all the women standing by are struck at by the males and driven away, as you would drive off a chatter of monkeys. The men alone remain at the site and, to my surprise, two of the strongest in build step forward to fell the Palm. (101)

Men, however, seem to be deaf and blind to their desperate cries and after beating women up, they collectively take the tree down. Winterson, therefore, seems to suggest that only women could feel a sense of responsibility and affection towards the environment which contrasts with men's strength and destructive reason.[16] From an ecofeminist perspective, therefore, women are silenced and the environment is destroyed, thus implying a double defeat. Finally, women ask for forgiveness from nature in the last part of the novel, in line with ecofeminist theory, as exemplified in the following passage:

> Wreck City had twenty alternative communities ranging from the 1960s Free Love and Cadillacs, to a group of women-only Vegans looking for the next cruelty-free planet. 'They're playing at the party tonight,' she said. 'Chic X.' 'Chic X? A band?' 'Lesbian Vegans. Dinosaur-friendly. Some of them have already been to Mexico to say sorry.' 'Mexico? I'm not sure I'm following this...' 'Where they found the crater – in Chicxulub, a.k.a. Sulphur City. It's where the asteroid hit sixty-five million years ago – up goes the sulphur, down comes the snow. Ice age – out go the dinosaurs, in come the humans, give or take a few apes.' 'Simple as that?' She nodded. 'Life is much simpler than we like to admit'. (174)

The female characters keep on playing an important role in the final part of the novel, when a group of them decide to found an 'alternative community' in Wreck City to protest against the authority of their families as well as that of Central Power and MORE. This women's alternative solution, which rejects the high-tech and artificial way of life, clearly stands for the ecofeminist solution to the ecological crisis and it is undoubtedly another example of woman-nature bond at the core of both ecofeminism as well as Winterson's novel. These women create an alternative community, which embraces 'difference' by offering people an alternative society as a new "way of organizing human relations in which beginning with the most fundamental difference in our species – the difference between female and male-diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority".[17] The ultimate goal of this alternative group of women is to challenge any form of domination in an attempt to reach, promote and develop equality.

In her ecofeminist approach, Winterson includes all the minority and silenced groups in her novel, no matter whether they are human or nonhuman,

[16] For further reading on feminist utopian writing, see the following texts: Oriana Palusci, *Terra di lei: l'immaginario femminile tra utopia e fantascienza* (Pescara: Tracce 1990); Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool U. P., 1999); Judith A. Little, *Feminist Philosophy and Science Fiction: Utopias and Dystopias* (New York: Prometheus books, 2007).

[17] Riane Eisler, "The Gaia Tradition and the Partnership Future: An Ecofeminist Manifesto", in Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein, eds., *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Book, 1990), 28.

but they have the right to hold a position and to express their own opinion, which is too often unheard and not welcome by those in power. In this regard, for instance, when Billie interviews Spike, the robot chosen to go on a space mission to Planet Blue, she is willing to have all the details on this new planet including animal life and vegetation but her boss is not interested and tells Billie to "[a]sk her when we can start relocating.... We want the human story" (30). In other words, through this statement, Winterson offers her readers an opportunity to see how men's selfishness and anthropocentrism led to the destruction of the Planet Orbus in the first place and, to a certain extent, as history will be repeating again, what will lead to other future destructions, no matter the place where these people live.

In *The Stone Gods,* Winterson provides the readers with several cases of wasting of human beings as a result of scientific and technological advances, which have taken the issue of sexuality to the extreme. Planet Orbus, for instance, has gone so far that everybody can be young and beautiful forever, thus leading to sexual deviations, such as sex with young children. In this respect, there is a passage in which Billie has to deal with Mrs Pink McMurphy who wants to be genetically reversed to the age of twelve to revive her husband's sexual interest. Although this is possible on their planet, Billie tries to persuade her not to do it. All her efforts are hopeless as Mrs McMurphy is willing to comply with her husband's paedophilic desires and asserts "[y]'know, I'd be fucked up and miserable anyway – and if I'm going to be fucked up and miserable, I'd rather be young, fucked up and miserable. Who wants to be depressed and have skin that looks like fried onions?" (70). In other words, Winterson seems to suggest that there exist an important gap between the promises of technology and what it actually delivers and this progress in technology, as in the case of planet Orbus, might increase the divergence between men and women. Furthermore, people from the Central Power are not only characterized by their perverse sexual preferences, but they also have a growing inclination towards homosexuality. Traditional sexual intercourses between men and women are, indeed, sidelined by scientific discoveries because people "don't breed in the womb anymore"(20) and "most [human beings] were born outside the womb"(55). In other words, Winterson seems to diminish the role of heterosexuality in favour of a naturalization of homosexuality. Winterson's transgender attitude and the ecofeminist idea of biodiversity are perfectly exemplified in the same-sex relationship between the two main characters. For instance, in the first part of the novel, Billie (woman) falls in love with Spike (female-shaped robo sapiens) and she claims that:

> We made love by our fire, watching the snow shape the entrance to the cave. When I touch her, my fingers don't question what she is. My body knows

> who she is. The strange thing about strangers is that they are unknown and known. There is a pattern to her, a shape I understand, a private geometry that numbers mine. She is a maze where I got lost years ago, and now find the way out. She is the missing map. She is the place that I am. She is a stranger. She is the strange that I am beginning to love (88).

What Winterson suggests in this passage is that Billie falls in love with the 'other' and this removal of 'otherness' echoes one of the most essential beliefs of the ecofeminist theory according to which the Universe is rich in biodiversity and its members should be respected and treated equally. Another example is found in the second part of the novel where Spikkers and Billy's (both male characters) relationship becomes more and more intimate and it gradually develops into mutual love, care and understanding, thus emphasizing the universality of human experience. Winterson's aim is to disrupt not only the hetero-normative system but also the social construct of the male and female identity by claiming that "[t]ruth tell, anywhere is a life, once there is a love" (138). In her novel, it is homosexual love, freed from prejudice and system requirements that led to individual redemption. This kind of love is not opposed by society but it becomes victim of the devastating colonisation and civilisation processes that ultimately destroy the human kind as well as the environment.

Winterson, in her novel, offers a wide range of redemptive models and alternatives to the most common hierarchical dualisms such as dominant/subordinate, human/nature, and men/women, which are able to resist and challenge the traditionally male-biased and male-supported society.

Concluding Remarks

The Stone Gods is a novel dealing with several binary divides by challenging institutional, environmental and gender discourses. The notion of *waste* in Winterson's novel refers both to the environment, which is repeatedly exploited and reduced to a wasteland and to human beings who are forgotten by society and treated as waste.

Winterson's dystopian futuristic novel provides readers with an interesting picture of environmental destruction in multiple contexts in which several discourses of nationalism, capitalism, imperialism, androcentrism and anthropocentrism help readers understand how power relations are perpetuated in history and how people keep on making the same mistakes over and over again. In other words, Winterson suggests that the new world only turns out to be a repetition of the old one. In her novel, Winterson deliberately disrupts power relations to show readers how the environment and the minority groups (including women as well as nonhumans) are those that are discriminated the most by powerful people and institutions.

Winterson dwells on how technology and scientific advancements are the main cause or catalyst to the destruction of both environments and underprivileged people. In her vision, the progress and conveniences brought about by science and technology are overshadowed by the destruction they have eventually caused both to human beings as well as their surrounding environment. Technology and scientific advancements have led to massive destruction and depletion of both natural resources and human beings. Planet Orbus is wasted away and is reduced to a wasteland; despite the abundance of natural resources, Easter Island is depleted and wasted by careless human activities; the promising Planet Blue is characterized by chaos, war and waste of both natural resources and human beings.

Destruction, degradation and waste seem to be the final result of human greed, no matter the place and no matter the time. Billie is disappointed about her own world and by staring at the sky, once again, she dreams of another escape and wonders: "If we found another planet, we could leave everything behind, start again, be safe. It would be different, wouldn't it? Another chance" (128). Nevertheless, as readers learn at the end of *The Stone Gods*, another escape would be pointless as things would not be different because people would make the same mistakes over and over again. It would only be another place to colonise and exploit until it would be reduced to another wasteland.

Emilio Amideo

Thomas Glave's Queer Eco-phenomenology

Abstract: Contrary to the colonial fantasy which sees the 'new world' as the reproduction of a utopian garden of Eden, the Caribbean has often represented a sort of wasteland for its own inhabitants, and this not only because of the history of Colonialism and more recently Neo-colonialism, but also because of the enforcement of institutionalised practices like heteronormativity. Drawing on second wave Ecocriticism, particularly on Eco-phenomenology and on Queer Ecology, this paper intends to explore the way in which the contemporary Jamaican writer Thomas Glave articulates an alternative to the violence of heteronormativity in the Caribbean (specifically in Jamaica, where homosexuality is still illegal) by turning to the natural world linked to the Caribbean land- and seascape. Drawing on the aquatic imagery offered by the Caribbean Sea, both in "Whose Caribbean?" (2005) and in "Jamaican, Octopus" (2013) Glave emphasises the creative, (re)productive potential of sexual pleasure and fluidity in order to resist the discourse that does not only link queer existence and (non-reproductive sexual) practices with 'waste', but that also 'justifies' the violence perpetrated on queer bodies in Jamaica. The exploration of the 'queer' figure of the octopus, for example, enables Glave to advance what I term a queer eco-phenomenology through which he finds a language that, by voicing the violence of the queer experience and the 'unspeakability' of queer desire in the Caribbean, discloses the empowering potential for militant change.

Keywords: *abjection*, *Caribbean*, *ecocriticism*, *human waste*, *queer-ecology, Thomas Glave*

Caribbean Queer Heterotopia

> Instead of seeing the landscape as a passive thing, to be manipulated, to have your formulae imposed upon it, we entered into a dialogue with it.
> (Wilson Harris, *The Radical Imagination*)

In 2008 the American writer of Jamaican descent (or 'Jamerican' as he likes to define himself)[1] Thomas Glave published *Our Caribbean*: a ground-breaking anthology of lesbian and gay narratives from the Caribbean. In the introduction to the volume, Glave recalls the obstacles that he encountered in finding a publisher for the manuscript which was considered too "narrow" in topic to be valuable for the publishing market:

> What, I wondered, did they [some American publishers] in their continental North American worlds – context rife with spurious images and conjuring of the *Caribbean as a fetishized "paradise" for tourists* – really know about our lives? The Caribbean, as packaged globally for tourists, purposely obscures quotidian (and often poor) Antillean lives – existences rendered as of scant importance beyond obsequious servitude in the generally consumer-directed

[1] See Thomas Glave, "Between Jamaica(n) and (North) America(n): Convergent (Divergent) Territories", in *Words to Our Now: Imagination and Dissent* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 90-115, 91.

> packaging. Lesbian and gay lives generally do not enter into this truncated representation at all, unless they surface in some momentary wink of sexual tourism.[2]

[2] Glave, ed., *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles* (Durham: Duke U. P., 2008), 4 [emphasis mine].

In today's consumer-oriented capitalist society, as Glave's words suggest, the legacy of Western colonialist constructions of the Caribbean as a utopian paradise remains dominant. This neo-colonial construction overshadows the everyday lives and struggles not only of poor people, but also of queer people whose existences are considered of scarce importance.

The attribution of a lower value to certain lives seems to point to the understanding of queer people, not only in some Caribbean countries but also within the context of any heteronormative system, as human waste:

> There are many ways in which queer existence and practices are culturally coupled with waste. Gay men's lives, for instance, are often posited as "wasted," because by wasting their seed in non-procreative sexual practices, they waste the fatherly inheritance and break the clan's lineage – not unlike the biblical prodigal son who "scattered his substance, living riotously".[3]

[3] Thomasz Sikora, "Queer/Waste", in Tadeusz Rachwał, ed., *Rubbish, Waste and Litter: Culture and Its Refuse/al* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SWPS Academica, 2008), 378.

Coupled with waste, the lives of queer people are not only considered 'worthless' or 'defective' (which are synonyms of waste) but can also face vicious aggressions causing, in certain circumstances, severe injuries and even death. This is particularly true in Jamaica where homosexuality is still illegal and punishable with up to ten years of imprisonment sometimes inclusive of hard labour. Forced to live into a sort of psychological wasteland – as a way of life that is spiritually and emotionally arid and unsatisfying – queer people in Jamaica, as *Human Rights First* reports, face violence and discrimination also at a material level as physical aggressions and unequal access to housing, employment, and healthcare are part of their daily lives.[4] As documented by the *Jamaican Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals, and Gays* (J-FLAG) – a human rights organisation of which Glave is a founding member – between 2009 and 2012 there were 231 reports of discrimination and violence based on gender identity and/or sexual orientation in Jamaica, an estimate which leaves aside many more cases of unreported violence for fear of revenge.[5]

[4] Human Rights First, "'The World as It Should Be': Advancing the Human Rights of LGBT People in Jamaica" (updated July 2015), http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRF-Jamaica-Report-final.pdf, accessed 7 September 2015.

[5] Ibid.

The violence resulting from the widespread homophobia in Jamaica is nothing more than the exacerbation of the constitution of queer people as abject within heteronormative systems. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben's concept of 'bare life' in *Homo Sacer* (1995) and in particular on how the exclusion of the *homo sacer* from citizenship is necessary to define the unity of the *polis*,[6] Christopher Schmidt affirms:

[6] See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford U. P., 1998 [1995]).

> Even in the contemporary moment, state sovereignty over the reproductive

> lives of its citizens depends on some excrescence of "bare life," such that state-sanctioned ideologies of heterosexuality and the production of family life have – until perhaps very recently – depended on the denial of rights to homosexuals in order to define the "rightness" of heterosexual marriage.[7]

[7] Christopher Schmidt, *The Poetics of Waste: Queer Excess in Stein, Ashbury, Schuyler and Goldsmith* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 162.

The vilification, and subsequent abjection, of queer people is therefore instrumental to the consolidation of heterosexuality as the norm in society. In *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (1980) the Bulgarian linguist, philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva uses the term 'abjection' in order to define the processes of exclusion and boundary setting involved in subject formation.[8] For Kristeva, abjection refers to the human reactions of horror, nausea, and so on, caused by a breakdown in meaning when facing the loss of distinction between the subject and the object, or between the self and the other.[9] The permeability of the body represented by its fluids (e.g. faeces, blood, sweat, sperm), and especially the decomposition inherent in the corpse, epitomise the abject for Kristeva:

[8] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, Columbia U. P., 1982 [1980]).

[9] See Dino Felluga, "Modules on Kristeva: On the Abject", *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory* (Purdue University, 2011), http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/kristevaabject.html, accessed 9 May 2015.

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death – a flat encephalograph, for instance – I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border.[10]

[10] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror,* 3.

Through a casting off of the abject, which is neither subject nor object, the 'I' establishes and consolidates the contours of its own subjectivity in order to emerge. As Kristeva stresses: "[i]t is ... not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite".[11] It is exactly through the transgression of the borders that regulate heteronormative behaviour that queer people (but the same is true for women and black people in the context of sexist and racist systems respectively) become abject: as they are excluded from the social body, "discharged as excrement"[12] or, literally, human waste. Since the abject represents that something which threatens the 'order', its casting off is therefore essential for the consolidation of hegemonic identities and, as Judith Butler suggests drawing on Iris Marion Young, instrumental in understanding sexism, homophobia, and racism: "[t]he repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an "expulsion" followed by a "repulsion" that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation".[13] Similarly, as Darieck Scott maintains in his *Extravagant Abjection* (2010), where he draws both on

[11] Ibid., 4.

[12] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990]), 169.

[13] Ibid., 170. See also Iris Marion Young, "Abjection and Oppression: Dynamics of Unconscious Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia", in Arleen B. Dallery et al., eds., *Crisis in Continental Philosophy* (Albany, SUNY Press, 1990), 201-214.

Kristeva's concept of the abject and on Frantz Fanon's discussion on how blackness functions in Western cultures as a repository for fears about sexuality, in Western racialised heteropatriarchy black people, and especially black queer people, learn to live in and as abjection.[14]

In the tension between the utopian representation of the Caribbean as a "fetishized "paradise" for tourists"[15] and the rather dystopian consideration of queer people as human waste within the context of homophobia in Jamaica, Glave imagines in his writing a diversity of responses in which strongly opposed elements co-exist: a 'heterotopia', to say it with Michel Foucault, that is an ensemble of all the real places, sometimes counter-sites, within a culture that are "simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted".[16] Places of this kind" says Foucault, "are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality", they are, like the mirror, at once absolutely real and unreal.[17] In order to give voice to the queer experience in the Caribbean and to shed light on how the history of the region has contributed to shape it, Glave presents a Caribbean 'queer' heterotopia, where "both real and imagined social and political elements are experienced together, in a complex dialogue",[18] by turning to the Caribbean landscape in "Whose Caribbean? An Allegory, in Part" (2005) and to the aquatic imagery in "Jamaican, Octopus" (2013). In their interrelation not only of the material embodied experience and the imagination but also of the human and the natural world, both meditations[19] enable Glave to create an eco-phenomenology, that is "a study of the interrelationship between organism and world in its metaphysical and axiological dimensions".[20] He then uses this eco-phenomenology not only to register the violence on queer bodies in Jamaica but above all to expresses the capacity of queer people in the Caribbean to build up from the pain in order to re-create worlds in which to belong.

Voicing the Unsayable

> The sea. The sea has locked them up. The sea is History.
> (Derek Walcott, *The Sea is History*)

If on the textual surface, "Jamaican, Octopus", as the author himself suggests, represents Glave's attempt to come to terms with his many selves (i.e. writer, artist, political activist, intellectual),[21] on a deeper level it encapsulates his struggle to reconcile his being Jamaican and queer in order to "tell the story not yet written, that must be written" (*JO*, 94). This unwritten, and unwriteable, story will become clearer as Glave's text, and my exploration of it, evolves, but for the moment let us consider why – as he tries very hard to move, "even swim, sentence by sentence" (*JO*, 92) through his text – Glave decides to

[14] See Darieck Scott, *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination* (New York: New York U. P., 2010).

[15] Glave, ed., *Our Caribbean*, 4.

[16] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias", trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture/Movement/Continuité* (October 1984 [1967]), 3.

[17] Ivi.

[18] Elaine Savory, "Utopia, Dystopia and Caribbean Heterotopia: Writing/Reading the Small Island", *New Literature Review*, 47-48 (2011), 35.

[19] I use the term 'meditation' in order to emphasise the hybridity of these texts in which Glave interweaves the speculative philosophical form (typical of essay writing) with the expression of intimate personal feeling. See Anthony Levi, "Meditation", in Tracy Chevalier, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Essay* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), 550-551.

[20] Charles S. Brown, and Ted Toadvine, "Eco-Phenomenology: An Introduction" in Charles S. Brown and Ted Toadvine, eds., *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), xi-xxi, xiii.

[21] See Glave, "Jamaican, Octopus" in *Among the Bloodpeople. Politics and Flesh* (New York: Akashic Books, 2013), 91-105, 91-92. From now on quoted '*JO*' in the text.

embody a sea creature, and an octopus at that:

> Octopus? But yes. The idea, or rather reality, of myself as an octopus ... emerged earlier this year as a more or less private joke with a friend; a joke with (as that friend understood it) a distinctly erotic center well-rooted in manifestations of a sort of intimate "queerness" ... between us ... experienced not so much as frank desire but rather as intimate and tacit understanding between us of our discreet and generally verbally unexpressed, most secret desires. (*JO*, 91)

In a private joke with a friend, the figure of the octopus emerges as something symbolising an intimate, and verbally unexpressed, queer desire. The subtlety of this desire, understood tacitly and experienced secretly (as if underwater), becomes the *leitmotiv* of Glave's meditation.

> And so, toward exploration of a kind – my own non-linear journey into a sort of interior – I must consider octopuses. Queer creatures. And mutable. Mutable in form, to a degree, and size, although not, unlike some other sea creatures, mutable in gender; creatures that possess the ability to change shape ... and color (and so ... avoid detection), and that regularly seek ... invisibility by way of camouflage ... they seek to remain unseen, or at least largely often unrecognizable as octopuses. (*JO*, 92)

Octopuses' capacity of remaining unseen by camouflaging in order to avoid danger and death, their moving underneath the water surface (read under the radar), their living in an environment which seems to be mainly populated by other species (i.e. fish, crabs, sharks) and in which nothing else quite like themselves exists, all point to a parallelism with the life of queer people in Jamaica. For, like octopuses, queer people in Jamaica have to remain unseen, their behaviour pass for heteronormative, lest they face criminal persecution, homophobic violence, even death. But, exactly like octopuses, they indeed exist, they might go under different names – 'queer', for example, is a very contested term in the Caribbean and in the Afro-diasporic cultures, as it is usually associated with white, male, upper class individuals – but they retain their place, albeit complicatedly negotiated, in Jamaican society.[22] As Glave sustains in a 2014 interview: "(i)t may not be acceptable in Jamaica for a man to kiss another man on the road – as it still isn't in many parts of the US and the UK – but it could be OK to receive a man discretely in your home; it depends on the contracts you have with those with whom your life interacts".[23] The reference here, as Glave explains, is to the social contract that structures Jamaican culture and that revolves around the development of a particular form of kinship or social network that allows Jamaicans to collectively survive and help each other in the absence of social services, or other adverse conditions. It

[22] My use of the term 'queer' does not only reflect the political praxis of challenging (hetero)normativity but is also aligned with Glave's own view and work. See Glave, ed., *Our Caribbean,* 8-9 and Glave, "Whose Caribbean? An Allegory, in Part", in *Words to Our Now*, 43-58, 245-246 [note 3]. From now on quoted '*WC*' in the text.

[23] Glave interviewed by Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell in *The Queer Caribbean Speaks: Interviews with Writers, Artists, and Activist*s (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 33-59, 43.

is this emphasis on collective, reciprocal and relational aspects that characterises, in Glave's words, Jamaica as a "'We' society, as opposed to an 'I' one".[24] Opposing the limiting perspective which sees Jamaica only as a homophobic place, Glave presents in his work the complexity and the ambiguity of the country where familial ties, or other types of social kinships (i.e. 'play uncles', 'play aunties'), may prevent homophobic outbreaks, and where material wealth may buy some privacy, and therefore keep violence and anti-homosexual law enforcement relatively at bay. It is in this sense that the title of Glave's meditation – "Jamaican, Octopus" – has to be intended: as a complex negotiation between two collective forms of identification, one national (Jamaican) the other sexual (octopus as queer), typographically separated by a comma. If, on the one hand, the comma signifies the impossibility of being both Jamaican and queer, on the other hand the small pause or caesura that it represents delineates a possibility, albeit deferred and/or secretly taking place, of a co-articulation.

[24] Ibid.

Among the characteristics that connect Caribbean queer people with octopuses, Glave mentions also the threat represented by the octopuses' mating exercise (both male and female octopuses die within a few months after mating) which seems to refer to HIV and AIDS that continue to claim many lives especially among man who have sex with men in some Caribbean countries, with Jamaica sadly in the lead.[25] Another characteristic is the presence of melanin both in the octopus' ink and in people's skin. Used as a defence strategy, the ink released by the octopus to confuse the enemy and escape is possibly used by Glave to hint at what Édouard Glissant has termed the "right to opacity",[26] particularly to the expression he uses in *Le discourse antillais* (1981): "the welcome opaqueness, through which the other escapes me".[27] The right to opacity is, in fact, a defence against understanding in a hierarchical and objectifying way which resists the 'transparency' required by the Humanist tradition of the Western *cogito* to safeguard the Other's difference, and represents therefore the opacity that Glave seeks in the underwater world that he conjures up. What particularly strikes Glave's interest is, nevertheless, octopuses' ability to perform autotomy. From the Greek *auto-* 'self-' and *tome* 'severing', the term refers to a self-amputation involving a discard of one or more of the animal appendages, usually used during mating or as a form of self-defence when confronted with dangerous situations (i.e. to elude the grasp of the predator or to distract it in order to escape). In Glave's parallelism, the octopus' physical dismemberment seems to hint at the physical violence and emotional loss that queer people in Jamaica experience on a daily basis and that Glave poignantly expresses at the end of the open letter that in 2008 he addressed to Bruce Golding, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica:

[25] See "HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean", *AVERT: AVERTing HIV and AIDS*, https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/caribbean, accessed 17 May 2015.

[26] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997 [1990]), 189.

[27] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. by J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: U. P. of Virginia, 1989 [1981]), 162, cit. in Celia M. Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: U. P. of Virginia 1999), 18-19.

> And if indeed I am murdered in Jamaica sometime in the future for being homosexual, please do make sure to tell my mother how sorry – how very sorry – you are, and will always be. She will need to hear it. With my face slashed wide open by a machete and my genitals undoubtedly cut off and shoved down my throat – the way our despised murdered are often found in open gullies and roadsides, the way too many believed to be homosexual have been discovered in the past – I will not be able to tell her.[28]

[28] Glave, "An Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Jamaica (June 2008)", in *Among the Bloodpeople*, 35.

The hideous image of the lynching of queer bodies, which often involves a castration uncannily evoking the not so old lynching of black males, is re-signified by Glave not only by somehow attaching agency to the octopus' mutilation (which, albeit due to force majeure, is self-imposed and envisages the later regeneration of the lost appendage), but especially through what he witnesses via his submersion, his venturing, in the shape of an octopus, into what he cannot name, but so skilfully conjures up:

> into the waves, the waters, into the blue and green depths of what would become my deeper venturing into–into–
> Was the–*is* the–"____" at the end of that preceding sentence unspeakable? Unwriteable? Whether it was or not, whether it is today or not, an empty space remains there. (*JO*, 96)

In order to find a language to express the unsayable – a difficult task, typographically marked by ellipsis, elisions and dashes – Glave has to turn to water, and to the Caribbean Sea in particular: the sea of his ancestors or what he has always known "personally and primordially as the Sea of We" (*JO*, 95). In those ancestral waters, Glave conjures up the time when, a twelve year old boy, he drowned for the first time led into the depths by an elderly man-octopus whose skin had the "shifting tones of primordial sand, light to dark to light" (*JO*, 95); an experience that irrevocably altered his life and that marked the beginning of his journey into a "kind of queerness" (*JO*, 95). By "swimming in the blue realm of (hopefully) fathomless imagining" (*JO*, 94) – here memory and imagination cross-fertilise each other – Glave conjures up what he witnessed at the bottom of the sea: a group of jubilant men who appear to be of all ages and that, completely undressed, execute sets of somersaults that occasionally stir the sand at the bottom of the sea. At the end of each set of somersaults, these "more-or-less men" (*JO*, 99) – because, recalling Glissant's right to opacity, he maintains: "it isn't always easy beneath the sea to know for certain what exactly men should look like" (*JO*, 98) – engage in autotomy, just like an octopus would:

> upon the groups' completion of the final somersault in the set, each more-or-less man's penis detached, apparently painlessly and with no trauma or

> surprise, in the hand of the man next to him, who simply raised the detached (and still fully erect) penis to his mouth, where he kissed it, then squeezed it gently. He then placed it very carefully and with the gravest precision firmly between his buttocks ... Thus all of these more-or-less men continued their cavortings, postsomersaults, in a penis-less state. (*JO*, 220 [note 2])

This scene, whose description Glave confines to a note as if emphasising once more its inexpressibility, re-inscribes the severance of the genital organs in order to deprive it of its violent nature by linking it to octopuses' mating exercises. In a sort of meticulous ritual that celebrates the 'love that does not dare speak its name', its desire, yearnings, mutuality, Glave manages to give voice to it – literally 'speak its name' – at the bottom of the sea, where dreaming happens and the strict categories of identification ruling above the waves become blurred: "I dreamt often beneath the sea, but rarely on land, at least not until I departed Jamaica" (*JO*, 103). In a penis-less state which figuratively hints at the abolishment of the legacy of patriarchy, the more-or-less men are jubilant, we learn, because they each possess what Glave refers to as a 'pussy': "(depending on your geographical origin) manpussy or man's pussy, or whatever else so many above the waves might choose to call it" (*JO*, 99-100). As a "*site of pleasure*", this 'pussy' has nothing to do with the dark opened space left by the detached penis, but resides "out of sight between their [the men's] tightly clenched buttocks ... and for all anyone knows, ... elsewhere still" (*JO*, 100).

Glave conjures up and openly writes about the unmentionable, the most hated and feared thing in patriarchal cultures:

> a womanish thing, as in a womanish man: a man who has a "pussy" instead of a _____ (please fill in the blank); a man who does not necessarily put above all else his cock, and opts instead, as many men do, to be plunged: to be bored through well into the depths of his previously unknown and unknowable, unspeakable pussy. (*JO*, 102-03)

The association of anal penetration among gay men with women's sexual passivity represents a long-standing preoccupation and fear in a number of patriarchal societies, in which, as Leo Bersani argues, "*(t)o be penetrated is to abdicate power*".[29] Bersani draws on Michel Foucault's discussion on how in Ancient Greek culture, because of the isomorphism between sexual and social relations, civic authority was incompatible with sexual passivity. In other words, social and sexual relations were structured according to the same dichotomous hierarchies opposing dominant and subordinate, active and passive, and so on, with the first set occupying the positive side of the divide, so that "in sexual behaviour there was one role that was intrinsically honourable

[29] Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", in Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996 [1987]), 212.

and valorized without question: the one that consisted in being active, in dominating, in penetrating, in asserting one's superiority".[30]

Considering that 'passive' anal sex is disregarded even in cultures that do not consider sexual relations between men as unnatural or sinful,[31] it results that being the receptive partner in an anal intercourse means embodying the position of the abject. Drawing on Mary Douglas' work *Purity and Danger* (1966),[32] Butler explains that – since the margins of all systems are considered vulnerable and, through their permeability, dangerous, and considering the body of the individual as a synecdoche for the social body – anal and oral sex among men, via a symbolic and material penetration of the borders of the subject, transgress, and therefore threaten, the hegemonic hetoronormative order that gives rise to the Western *cogito*.[33]

"If the rectum is the grave", maintains Bersani with reference to male-to-male anal intercourse, "in which the masculine ideal (an ideal shared – differently – by men *and* women) of proud subjectivity is buried, then it should be celebrated for its very potential for death".[34] The possibility of such practice to provoke a shattering of the identity, of self-dismissal, should be celebrated, according to the theorist, for its potential to deconstruct a patriarchal system largely based on masculinist domination and could be thought of, therefore, as "our primary hygienic practice of nonviolence".[35] The masculinist fear of losing power, as the base for misogynist and homophobic violence, is exacerbated in Jamaica, reminds Glave, by the country's traumatising history of slavery that has had a strong impact on the understanding of masculinity:

> It seems plausible to assume that at the present-day end of such a history, our bodies would be – are – very fraught subjects that also spent centuries as objects, or at least as beast of burden that could also be sexually, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually abused. Take all of that ... and imagine how Jamaican masculinity must have been influenced by this history and reality. Look at how men in Jamaica today, across social classes, perform their masculinity – how and from whom they learn it, and the ways that, as is the case everywhere, sexism and misogyny go hand in glove with masculine supremacy, and with homophobia.[36]

The erasure of part of the history of slavery (e. g. the sexual exploitation and rape of enslaved black men by white men, homosexuality, etc.), as Darieck Scott reminds us, has served to secure not only white heterosexual identity (while also saving it from guilt), but also black male identity, through a denial that renders more abstract the notion of lost or stolen manhood.[37] In other words, if for "black people in general, but for black men in particular, the abject is *like* the feminine ... that is, to be abjected is to be feminized",[38] then the disavowal of a forced (rape and/or castration) or chosen (homosexuality) 'feminisation' becomes an instrument to recast an image of unchallenged

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of the History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [1984]), 215.

[31] See Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", 212.

[32] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1966]).

[33] See Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 168.

[34] Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?", 222.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Glave interviewed by Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell in *The Queer Caribbean Speaks,* 40.

[37] Scott, *Extravagant Abjection*, 149.

[38] Ibid., 18.

autonomous selfhood (necessarily masculine and epitomised by the Phallus as the symbol of patriarchal authority) in the face of racism and exploitation.

Jamaican standards of masculinity, together with the widespread idea that homosexuality was something foreign to the country and antithetic to black skin, inevitably influenced also Glave in his growing up between New York (USA) and Kingston (Jamaica). As a child he remembers being loathed by many people, to include members of his family, because of his 'failing' to fit into the mould of the 'Black man' or the 'Black Caribbean man', being perceived, instead, as "faggot-ish" or "unmanly".[39] He explains how the dissociation of homosexuality from black skin, as well as the stereotypical linking of black skin with virility and sexual potency, and on the contrary of lighter skin with effeminacy and sexual ambiguity, are all a legacy of "plantation mythologies", whose constructed knowledge has been naturalised and transmitted in history.[40]

[39] Glave interviewed by Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell in *The Queer Caribbean Speaks*, 45.

[40] Ivi.

Towards a Queer Eco-phenomenology

> ...true democracy, as fragile as the most endangered of ecosystems, requires respect for and attendance to not only its ideal and aims, but also its scrupulous, honourable practice.
> (Thomas Glave, "Whose Caribbean?")

Since modern understandings of sexuality and race are naturalised by being grounded in biological discourses (e.g. Linnaeus' plant taxonomies in his 1735 *Systema Naturae* developed into sexualised and racialised systems of human categorisation),[41] in both "Jamaican, Octopus" and "Whose Caribbean?" Glave offers an alternative paradigm to rethink the biosocial construction of the natural world. In this gesture, he follows in the footsteps of a previous generation of Caribbean writers who turned to "non-human nature as a source of both cultural and linguistic regeneration".[42] As DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley have highlighted in the introduction to their edited collection *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (2005), in the Caribbean the history of transplantation (of people, plants, animals, pathogens, etc.) has contributed to the development of an environmental ethic connected to a peculiar sense of place.[43] This environmental ethic brought Caribbean writers to refuse the simple depiction of the natural world (privileged by the white settlers) and to emphasise, instead, the strong relationship between landscape/seascape and power.[44] In this context it is not only important to consider the specific relationship to the natural world that colonialism produced (e.g. the plantation as a site of violence and exploitation), but also, and especially, the emergence of other sites – mountain ranges, mangrove swamps, provision grounds, etc. – that, by embodying the slaves' resistance to the plantocracy, created alternative (and

[41] See Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992); Elizabeth DeLoughrey et al., eds., *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 6-7; DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2011), 10-12.

[42] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Ecocriticism: The Politics of Place", in Alison Donnell and Michael A. Bucknor, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 267.

[43] See DeLoughrey et al., eds., *Caribbean Literature and the Environment,* 2-3.

[44] Ibid., 4.

oppositional) communities.[45] Through his figurative underwater community of men-octopus Glave draws on this tradition in order to develop what Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson name a queer ecology (which Glave also entrenches into the body's phenomenological dimension: a queer eco-phenomenology), that is a critical analysis of the interrelations between nature and sexuality as they exist and are produced "institutionally, scientifically, politically, poetically, and ethically" in order to engender a sexual politics that encompasses these discourses to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of sexuality (and nature).[46] If, for example, wilderness is usually highly heterosexualised and heterosexuality becomes naturalised so that all non-reproductive sexualities appear as deviant,[47] Glave turns to the water to express a sexual fluidity that conjures up a sort of primordial hermaphroditism deeply embedded in nature.

[45] See Anissa Janine Wardi, *Water and the African American Memory: An Ecocritical Perspective* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), especially the third chapter.

[46] Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, eds., *Queer Ecologies. Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 2010), 5.

[47] Ibid., 3-4; 7.

Influenced by his fascination for the presence of hermaphroditism in a number of African deities,[48] he populates both texts with characters whose sexualities are complex and ambiguous, from the octopus-men with their 'man-pussies' and the "older woman" with her "time-toughened penis-cock ... heavy hoary balls and all" in "Jamaican, Octopus" (105), to the dreaming child "that was both female and male" and whose bodily features are strongly interwoven with the Caribbean landscape in "Whose Caribbean?":

[48] Glave interviewed by Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell in *The Queer Caribbean Speaks*, 55.

> AND SO IT CAME TO PASS THAT UPON THAT TIME, NOT SO long ago, in that part of the world, there lived a child who dreamed.... The child – let us know him/her as "S/He" – possessed a slender penis of startlingly delicate green, the truest color of the sea that s/he had always loved... as s/he also possessed a pair of luminous blue breasts the tone of the purest skies.... Nipples did not grow at the end of the child's breasts, but rather berries the inflamed color of hibiscus in its most passionate surrender to the sunset and dawns that for millennia had washed over that place. The child also possessed a vagina and uterus, which ... produced at least twice or three time per year ... a race of brazen dolphins – creatures the fierce color of the sun.... The child dreamed; again, nothing unusual in what would come to be known by some as a region of dreamers. S/He dreamed of tamarinds, of course, and star-apples and green mangoes that, eventually rendered senseless by the day's stunning heat, plunged from their trees to ooze their fragrant juices along the largely still unexplored inner paths of her/his thighs. (*WC*, 43-44)

The child that Glave conjures up opposes the culturally created masculine/feminine strict duality to emphasise the multiplicity and ambiguity that originates in nature. Her/his body assumes the forms and colours of the Caribbean, so much as to become its allegory; even the eroticism of her/his dreaming is conveyed through a metaphorical reference to ripe local fruit: either indigenous as the star apple, or imported during the colonial period, like tamarinds and mangoes. The natural landscape of this (partial) allegory of the

Caribbean soon becomes populated with violent images of a faded, but not vanished, colonial past. Between memories of the Middle Passage ("tormented hands outstretched, at last vanished forever beneath the night-blackened waves") and of unsympathetic plantation sceneries ("shrugging mountains, and cane. Always cane. Field upon field of it, whispering. Muttering"), the child is nevertheless able to evoke hope, even joy, as the "plummeting stars" provide "a last flash of hope... to condemned slaves" (*WC*, 44). The heterotopic presence of the child moves then to contemporary Caribbean sceneries of unstable economy, inadequate housing and health care, unemployment, sexual exploitation, and homophobia.

The child's ubiquity and atemporality gives her/him a magical, extraordinary aura: s/he "must have been some sort of god/dess" says Glave (*WC*, 48). A god/dess or the embodiment of the *hieros gamos* as Gloria Anzaldúa poignantly argues in a passage of *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) with reference to non-heteronormative sexualities:

> Maimed, mad, and sexually different people were believed to possess supernatural powers by primal cultures' magico-religious thinking. For them, abnormality was the price a person had to pay for her or his inborn extraordinary gift. There is something compelling about being both male and female, about having an entry into both worlds. Contrary to some psychiatric tenets, half and halfs are not suffering from a confusion of sexual identity, or even from a confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other. It claims that human nature is limited and cannot evolve into something better. But I, like other queer people, am two in one body, both male and female. I am the embodiment of the *hieros gamos*: the coming together of opposite qualities within.[49]

[49] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 19.

Both male and female, the 'extra-ordinary' child intimates an evolution of the common conception of the human while pursuing a very ordinary desire: "out of waves and centuries of un-voicedness, complete despair ... s/he yearns for two things only: to be loved, of course, and to be safe" (*WC*, 45). The child's presence and longing, already an allegory of the (queer) Caribbean, becomes embodied, Glave suggests, in the work of the activists like himself with the J-FLAG, who against all odds continue to dream, to fight for equality in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and in the world. In Jamaican patois he exhorts the Caribbean queers to "stop de foolishness and get past de fear and get on wid making a place fi weself inna dis ya country", because now they have a choice, that is to join the company of dreamers "who have survived and, for all I know, just might, beneath their sensible tropical clothes, sport blue breasts and green penises and uteruses filled beyond capacity with cavorting baby dolphins" (*WC*, 48).

His choice of the patois responds to the attempt to find a language for the expression of a queer desire, that would encapsulate the past and present struggles of the Caribbean people and therefore bear a strong political valence: a sort of 'nation language' as theorised by the Barbadian poet and theorist Edward Kamau Brathwaite.[50] Brathwaite's 'nation language' – as an underground language that, brought to the Caribbean by the African slaves, continued to evolve over time through its use by, among the others, calypsonians, storytellers, and poets – inspires Glave in his search for a new language that could express his desire for change. In other words, as Brathwaite denounced the profound colonial influence of standard English in Caribbean education and institutional life resulting in a loss of "syllabic intelligence"[51] to express experiences unique to the Caribbean (the famous expression "the hurricane does not roar in pentameters"),[52] so Glave tries to find a language to say the unsayable within the context of a homophobic system, trying to approximate the natural, environmental and bodily experience proper of the 'nation language':

> this *total expression* comes about because people be in the open air, because people live in conditions of poverty ('unhouselled') because they come from a historical experience where they had to rely on their very *breath* rather than on paraphernalia like books and museums and machines. They had to depend on *immanence*, the power within themselves, rather than the technology outside themselves.[53]

The importance of the immanent experience, of the very breath, guides Glave's meditations as he draws on the characteristics of the 'nation language' (e.g. the influence of noise and rhythm, and of the oral collective tradition in meaning making),[54] to create a sort of *continuum* in which meaning is achieved through the relational contribution of the community. And in fact "Jamaican, Octopus" opens with an epigraph by Brathwaite – "the unity is submarine" – which implies a sense of shared experience across time and space that reflects not only Jamaica's kinship and social networks but also the real and imaginary underwater (queer) comm-unity of men-octopus. Through his submersion into the Sea of We, Glave seeks to remove his "I-ness" – again the tendency is to shatter the subjectivity – in order to connect to this *continuum*: "As the writer, I am not "I": in this ideal world, the world of blue and shadow and octopuses ... I become nothing and nobody, as the voices and the people, and the cephalopods, emerge" (*JO,* 94). Glave's submersion is a figurative descent not only into his innermost self but also, and especially, into a collective past of struggles (both black and queer) that enables him to imagine new forms of the human, that is to say to reimagine life outside of the paradigm embodied by the Western idea of "Man" as a theological-philosophical concept grounded in anti-black,

[50] See Kamau Brathwaite, "From History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry", in Dohra Ahmad, ed., *Rotten English: A Literary Anthology* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2007), 458-468.

[51] Ibid., 462.

[52] Ibid., 464.

[53] Ibid., 467.

[54] As noise contributes to meaning, Glave has to recur to typographical expedients to express the loss of meaning in the transposition from oral to written text.

misogynist, homophobic and colonialist/imperialist logics.[55] His submersion seems to recall Stacy Alaimo's invitation in "New Materialism, Old Humanism" (2011):

> Submersing ourselves, descending rather than transcending, is essential lest our tendencies toward human exceptionalism prevent us from recognizing that, like our hermaphroditic, aquatic evolutionary ancestor, we dwell within and as part of a dynamic, intra-active, emergent, material world that demands new forms of ethical thought and practice.[56]

Glave's ability to "slip more comfortably into [his] other skin, or skins, flesh and fleshes, of octopus" (*JO,* 91) allows him to express the unsayable, and to do so through a submersion rather than a transcendence, as suggested by Alaimo's words which are mindful also of Glave's interest in the creative potential offered by a speculation around hermaphroditism.[57] Glave is capable of connecting to nature while retaining the materiality of the body, therefore positing himself against the all rational master (and masculinist) narrative of the Western *cogito* with its refusal of the complications, risks and vulnerabilities associated to the material world and the corporeal. His eco-phenomenology resists "the tyranny of the scientific as the solely accepted model of the real"[58] to plunge into the "subaqueous depths where the most uninhibited imagining begins" (*JO,* 94).

The descent into the abyss of creative imagination, while retaining the lived reality of the embodied experience, represents thus a sort of ritual, an ablution, "*a blessing... but also often a trial*" (*JO,* 96), that he feels compelled to repeat every time he is with a lover when, removing himself from the lover's embrace, he dashes to a sink or a bathtub, fills it with warm water, and breathe it as if in drowning to the lover's disbelief or terror. In this gesture, as he fills his lungs with the water where his lover has previously washed himself or in which he has perhaps urinated, he abjects himself, again by blurring the contours of his own subjectivity through an incorporation of the other's fluids. Recalling Kristeva's abjection, the reaction of the lover is necessarily one of horror: "after drowning yourself in his waters, he [the lover] regarded you with such open-eyed terror; indeed, with such a horror, as if you were a creature from the beyond (which in fact you were and are)" (*JO,* 98). As a creature of the beyond, whose porous intra-species boundaries put into question the concept of the human itself,[59] Glave submerses himself in order not only to conjure up the smell and touch of octopuses but also to remember the many times in which he, and others like him, have drowned:

> We have drowned innumerable times and have returned with the sea and so

[55] See Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument", *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3 (Fall 2003), 257-337.

[56] Stacy Alaimo, "New Materialisms, Old Humanisms, or, Following the Submersible", *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 19.4 (December 2011), 283.

[57] Alaimo's reference to hermaphroditism in the quotation reflects Charles Darwin's tracing back of human origins to an aquatic organism that possessed both sexes, and especially to the re-appropriation of this concept by feminist and queer theorists. See Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca: Cornell U. P., 2000).

[58] Timothy Clark, "Phenomenology", in Greg Garrard, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2014), 288.

[59] See DeLoughrey, "Ordinary Futures: Interspecies Worldings in the Anthropocene", in DeLoughrey et al., eds., *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 363.

> much more in our lungs and in all our secret, not yet eviscerated or automatized places; returned to the places and times in which, in spite of our drowning and certain need to drown in the future, so much, for each of us in so many different ways, still remains possible (*JO,* 104).

Conclusion: To Breathe in Water

> ... activism will occasionally begin in dreams, provided that it moves onward from them into definite action.
> (Thomas Glave, "Whose Caribbean?")

It is clear that the dreaming dimension evoked by Glave throughout both meditations has an important militant aspect, as the dream, the imaginary – the epigraph of this section suggests – becomes a resource to think about the actual change to bring about in reality. His queer eco-phenomenology – which through the lenses of a queer politics embedded in the flesh considers ecological matters as deeply interwoven with issues of biopolitics – has the "potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space" that call into question institutionalised heteronormative practices.[60] Not only does Glave render evident to the reader the wasteland in which queer people in Jamaica are forced to live in, but he embodies the abject itself. If queer sexualities are abjected because, by transgressing strict dualities, they threaten the stability of the Western *cogito* (white heterosexual bourgeois male), Glave embraces the abject exactly for its disruptive capacity: the dissolving of the male/female divide and of the unified subjectivity. In this respect, Glave is aligned with the queer diasporic tradition of the Caribbean which highlights the importance of complex and fluid sexual practices that do not claim stable identities, but rather emphasise the prevalence of 'becoming' over 'being'. As Rinaldo Walcott sustains in "Queer Returns" (2009) where he discusses the articulation of a diasporic queer politics: "sexual practices both multiple and varied, do not require a manageable identity for their practice.... The ethics of the situation calls for rights without identity claims, a much more difficult set of politics to actualize".[61] This practice is typical of global south queers who "continue to keep sexuality in flux, often offering some of the most provocative ways of re-imagining ... sexual minority practices ... and ... politics".[62] Glave's provocative re-imagining and re-setting of sexual practices and desiring bodies opposes the heteronormative (and its mirroring homonormative) attempt to police and eventually erase such practices. His poetics is inevitably informed by a geographical (diaspora) and a sexual (queer) displacement. It involves what Sara Ahmed describes as "processes of disorientation and reorientation".[63] In other words, both the experience of migration and that of being queer – that is to say of inhabiting a body that "does not extend the shape of this world, as a

[60] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York U. P., 2005), 2.

[61] Rinaldo Walcott, "Queer Returns: Human Rights, the Anglo-Caribbean and Diaspora Politics", *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, 3 (2009), 15.

[62] Ibid., 14.

[63] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke U.P., 2006), 9.

world organized around the form of the heterosexual couple"[64] – involve the acquisition of a new perspective on reality, as the body adapts to new surroundings and the world takes on a "new shape and makes new impressions".[65] Glave shares his experience in both meditations and critically uses the imagination in order to find a site for the articulation of an alternative reality. Hence the Sea of We, through which he swims in the shape of an octopus, represents the Caribbean (queer) heterotopia mentioned at the beginning on this paper – at the same time the real Caribbean Sea and the imaginative primordial sea of his ancestors – and so does the body of the dreaming child whose contours are enmeshed with the Caribbean landscape. They both empower Glave in the expression and restoration of an alternative historiography of suppressed queer desire, that challenges hegemonic accounts (colonialist, homophobic, etc.) and that simultaneously belongs to him and to the collective memory:

[64] Ibid., 19.

[65] Ibid.

> Since it is the nature, so to speak, of colonial power to suppress the history of their own violence, the land and even the ocean become all the more crucial as recuperative sites of postcolonial historiography. ... This makes the process of conservation and sustainability all the more ontologically powerful, because a gesture of destruction against land and sea, then, simultaneously becomes an act of violence against collective memory.[66]

[66] DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies,* 8.

Through the sea and the Caribbean landscape then, Glave recovers hidden and silenced stories. In other words, empowered by his journey through the sea, his voice becomes many voices that openly speak of desire, yearning and love, against the "autocratic silence" that, meant to erase, is imposed upon queer people in Jamaica and engenders their social death and annihilation.[67] As Glave claims in "Jamaican, Octopus", it is exactly his surviving "in octopus skin" (*JO*, 103) – read in queer skin – that enables him to imagine and write about the unthinkable, the unspeakable, that is nevertheless grounded in real experiences:

[67] Glave interviewed by Kofi Omoniyi Sylvanus Campbell in *The Queer Caribbean Speaks*, 47. See also Glave, "Again, A Book of Dreams (Reflections on Our Caribbean)", in *Among the Bloodpeople*, 76-77.

> The sort of facts that make octopuses and melanin-filled ink possible; that make evisceration, automatization, and public beheading possible; that make possible a man desperate to consume the closest water within reach finally unconcerned about drinking all of the water out of his lover's dirt-ringed bathtub or unwashed kitchen sink; that man drowning as he drinks, knowing all the while that his drinking is as possible, and sometimes as necessary, as drowning. (*JO*, 104)

In a context rife with homophobic violence, like the Jamaican one where evisceration and public beheadings remain a reality, the rehabilitation by black queer people of their own bodies is not only legitimate, but absolutely necessary. If in the wasteland that they are forced to inhabit, even a basic

physical function like breathing can be difficult (metaphorically suggesting the possibility of death by drowning), then the re-writing, the re-signification of violent experiences can offer a possibility to re-imagine life otherwise. To breathe in water, to drown, can therefore signify to fill one's lungs with History, and especially with histories, and to empower oneself in order to find a language to express the unsayable. Believing in the "possibilities and surprises of language that, like desire, desire both vilified and celebrated, becomes fluid, protean, and capable of constant reinvention",[68] in his constant and exhausting (but very necessary) interrogation of history, in the closing lines Glave is finally able to 'hear' the sea, so he throws his head back "as if maybe drowning, in order to feel, and breathe, and *breathe* and listen" (*JO*, 105).

[68] Glave, "Between Jamaica(n) and (North) America(n)", 112.

Héliane Ventura

Broken Words and Stolen Land in Alice Munro's "White Dump". Synchronizing the Personal, the Political, and the Mythical

Abstract: Through the elucidation of the numerous intertextual and intermedial references which are more or less clandestinely strewn throughout the story "White Dump", this paper intends to show that Alice Munro proposes a politicized and indigenized version of an adultery in the middle-class in Canada in the 20th century as well as an anthropological and metaphysical reflection on the meaning of a dump which is ambiguously and subversively centred around the concepts of tinsel and treasure, treason and loyalty as well as salvaging, rehabilitating and transmitting.

Keywords: *opera, fictionalizing history, politicizing fiction, Aboriginal*

"White Dump" is the last story of Munro's sixth collection entitled *The Progress of Love* (1986).[1] Like the story entitled "Open Secrets" from the eponymous collection (*Open Secrets,* 1995), "White Dump" provides an initial oxymoron, that is to say "a figure of style which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect, as in Lamb's celebrated remark: 'I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief'".[2] A dump is a place where rubbish is thrown into: it is generally associated with dirt and impurity. When paired with the colour white, it becomes extremely incongruous because it conjoins what is generally disjointed, white being the colour of cleanliness if not holiness. The conjunction of disjointed elements is one of the major tricks Munro resorts to in order to construct a fictional universe characterized by its ambivalent and paradoxical nature. This trick often conceals another one, which is also linked with misplacement or displacement: the trick of metonymy through which something is substituted for something else which, together with the more obvious oxymoron, draws our attention to the fact that the title of this story might be a densely polysemic and multivalent signifier demanding to be explored attentively. Through the elucidation of the numerous intertextual and intermedial references which are more or less clandestinely strewn throughout the story, this paper intends to show that Munro proposes an anthropological and metaphysical reflection on the meaning of a dump which is ambiguously and subversively centered around the concepts of tinsel and treasure, treason and loyalty as well as salvaging, transmitting and rehabilitating.

[1] Alice Munro, *The Progress of Love* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986). All further references to this edition, with page numbers, are to be found in the body of the text.

[2] John Anthony Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London: Penguin, 1979), 471.

The title of the story 'White Dump" is explicitly a reference to a heap of candy: vanilla icing, and nuts, and hardened marshmallow globs that the biscuit factory dumped into the backyard next to the playground where Isabel, one of the female protagonists, went to school. It constitutes an ambiguous memory from childhood which rehabilitates dump by turning it into a place of original delight. It is also a tantalizing notion which highlights the abjection of ambivalence. Isabel is a grown up woman who happens to be Sophie Vogelsang's first daughter in law and Denise's mother. She is the one who brought about the divorce between Laurence Vogelsang and herself because of her passionate love affair with a neighbouring pilot. Isabel is responsible for breaking the marriage vows and sullying the relationship both with her husband and her lover whom she eventually gave money to. Through the metaphor of the yummy heap of candy Isabel could not resist when she was a child, Munro strikingly renews the parable of Original Sin. Isabel did not bite into the forbidden apple, she licked vanilla icing dumped on the ground when she was a child and committed unrepentant adultery when she was a young adult.

Interesting as this revisitation of the Biblical story may appear, one cannot remain content with this literal understanding of the title. In her typically allusive scenarios Munro extends the personal into the political because white dump can also be understood as metaphorically referring to the strategies white colonizers used in order to dispossess the native population of their lands. They dumped goods of little value into the hands of Aboriginal people in exchange for land and 'white dump' might thus become metaphorically associated with temptation and deception as exerted by white settlers against the ancient denizens of the North American continent.

Such an interpretation is borne out by the otherwise unexplainable presence of Aboriginal people in the story. The references to original inhabitants are not explicit. Nowhere in "White Dump" does Munro speak of First Nations but this is the description she gives of young people around the lake at the time when the grandmother, Sophie, is having her early morning swim in the lake:

> Two boys and a girl. All three had long hair, waist-length or nearly so, though one of the boys wore his combed back into a ponytail. The ponytailed boy had a beard and wore dark glasses, and a suit jacket with no shirt underneath. The other boy wore only jeans. He had some chains or necklaces, perhaps feathers, dangling down on his thin brown chest. The girl was fat and gypsyish, with a long red skirt and a bandanna tied across her forehead. (290-291)

With this description of the young people trespassing on Sophie's property Munro is politicising and indigenizing her apparently "white" middle-class story. The allusion to the long-haired boys with feathers around their neck and

the gypsyish girl is a covert designation of the characters as Natives which throws light on the action they engage in. They have spotted Sophie having her swim in the nude and they take advantage of her being in the lake to get hold of her bathrobe and tear it into pieces. This act of robbery, which looks gratuitous, becomes motivated if we consider that these three characters are young First Nation offenders. They tear Sophie bathrobe and dispossess her of her vestments as a symbolic retaliation, because they themselves have been dispossessed of the land which was theirs in the first place.

Thus, the paradoxical white dump alluded to in the story, that is to say the heap of candy poured onto the ground for the children's delight, superficially refers to the sugary hill of the character's childhood memories but it is also an emblem of irresistible temptation which acquires overtones of moral equivocation and can be linked to the greed of colonizers and the ensuing theft of the land.

The story develops in a special place, a log-house built by Laurence's ancestor Augustus Vogelsang, a German immigrant to Canada. It is a family house which has been transmitted from the grandfather, Augustus, to the daughter, Sophie, to the son, Laurence, and will probably be passed on to the granddaughter Denise. Lawrence and his second wife, Magda, now live permanently in this revamped cottage and they provide hospitality to Denise during the summer time as Sophie used to provide hospitality to Laurence and Isabel when Denise was a child. The log house by the lake built by the ancestor is the original place of delight where Denise keeps coming back year after year, because this is where she led a privileged and carefree childhood. Yet the story begins with a description of the house which is far from positive: "There was no light in the house, so there was no color. There was no attempt. So dreary, I couldn't believe" (273). Through Magda's eyes, the log house, before she herself redecorated it, was a colourless dump. It was indeed a white dump, a settler's rough and rustic log house which replaced the long houses of native inhabitants and which Magda transforms into a stylish cottage decorated with the sham window panels imitating stain glass that her husband Laurence so successfully manufactures.

With this cottage by the lake ("ma cabane au Canada" as sung by Line Renaud), Munro builds an ambivalent configuration, which is simultaneously "white" and supposedly pristine but obviously inauthentic and spurious. It was set up on the land of a wronged and dispossessed people and it advertises its counterfeit nature through the trappings of its revamping. The significance of this family abode is densified and rendered even more complex through the insertion of apparently casual references which are to be heeded. Magda, Laurence's second wife, is depicted in the act of singing a song, a song which

acquires the dimension of a *mise en abyme*. "Magda is in the kitchen making the salad. She is humming a tune from an opera. 'Home to our Mountains'" (288).

Although the reference remains unacknowledged, or precisely because it is not made explicit, it requires from the reader to be pinpointed more precisely. The tune alluded to is taken from an opera by Verdi called "Il Trovatore" (1853). It occurs at the very end of the opera, just before the main protagonist, Manrico the bard, is executed; he is in a prison cell with the woman he believes to be his mother and attempts to console and reassure her. The woman, a gypsy called Azucena, sings a song about the return home and the joy and peace to be found in the primitive mountain life. She sings this song just before she herself is burnt on a pyre for having stolen the Conte di Luna's son and raised him as her own son, calling him Manrico.

This song constitutes a moment of wishful thinking, of escapism, it is an enclave of peace restored and happiness found again, a timeless moment, or a moment arrested before the final catastrophe. It is a song within an opera within a story which is being offered to the reader in a semi-clandestine manner, because only the opera-goer, the reader with knowledge of what the tune is about, can decipher the allusion and understand the type of relationship that may exist between the story and the opera. For there is necessarily a relationship with the main plot.

In the opera as in the story there is an attempt to find the original place of delight, to find the enchanted garden, to return to the safety of the place that matters, to return home or to return to what Yves Bonnefoy calls the "vrai lieu", the veritable place.[3] In "Il Trovatore", the mountains represent the shelter that Azucena wants to find back but instead of finding peace in the mountains, she will burn on the funeral pyre. In Munro's story the log house by the lake is at the same time the dump and the original paradise where the family tries to find back its unity, but Isabel has divorced Laurence and cannot return to a home which is no longer hers and Denise's brother, Peter, no longer sets foot in the house where he spent his childhood holidays.

By setting up an original paradise which is also a white dump, Munro provides an emblem of ambivalence which refuses the simplification of binaries and the rigidity of Manichean polarities. The story picks up the theme of homecoming only to stage-direct illusions of innocence and purity linked with a paradise that is out of reach or cannot be regained, possibly because it has been unlawfully appropriated.

Munro discreetly historicizes her fictional scenario and she even goes as far as turning personal and national history into myth through the recourse to allusions to Nordic Mythology. We know that Munro delights in tricks that she plays on the reader. She resorts to cryptograms or cyphers and she expects the

[3] See for instance the poem by Bonnefoy entitled "Vrai lieu". Yves Bonnefoy, "Vrai lieu", *Du Mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1953).

reader to decipher the allusion that has been casually or apparently innocently made.

The last allusion in the story which is also the last lines of the volume is partially cyphered because it is given in the original Norse language with a bracketed translation underneath:

> Seinat er at segia;
> Sva er nu radit.
> (it is too late to talk of this now: it has been decided.) (309)

In a very cunning or teasing fashion, Munro refrains from giving her sources. She does not reveal the origin of the quotation. She reveals and she conceals at the same time. She sends her reader on a quest for stories which is a quest for knowledge. This quotation is taken from the Lay of Atli, Norse Atlakvida, a heroic poem in the Norse Poetic Edda,[4] Second lay, stanza 29. It is spoken by Gudrun just before her brothers visit Atli at his court and are killed by him. It speaks of determinism: the only liberty that man can enjoy is that of accepting his fate.

[4] Ursula Dronke, *The Poetic Edda Vol. 2 Mythological Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

Earlier in the story Munro provides a summary of the Lay of Atli, without indicating its relationship with the final sentence of the story. She thus dissimulates a connection that she simultaneously takes pain to establish and she finally leaves the reader responsible for establishing the connection between the different sequences in the story. This is the summary that Isabel provides: "In those old poems she reads, said Isabel, you know these old Icelandic poems, there is the most terrible gore and hacking people up - women particularly, one slitting her own kids' throats and mixing the blood in her husband's wine. I read that. And then Sophie is such a pacifist and Socialist, isn't it strange?" (281).

This summary encapsulates the scenario of the *Lay of Atli,* in which Gudrun is presented as a figure of revenge and a cruel manipulator who works stage by stage to obtain reparation for the killing of her first husband, the hero Sigurdt and the son she has had with him. She will be driven to stage-direct the killing of her brothers, Gunnar and Hogni and she will give her children to eat to her own husband, Atli, before setting fire to his castle and throwing herself into the fire with him.

We can now perceive the mirror structure between the allusions to the "Lay of Atli" and "Il Trovatore" by Verdi. In Verdi's opera, a gypsy, Azucena, wants to take her revenge on the man who has burnt her mother and she means to throw the man's son into the fire but, by mistake, she throws her own son onto the pyre. In the "Lay of Atli", Gudrun gives her children to eat to her husband.

Both stories hinge on female passion, on female dementia, on female revenge. Both stories present women as filicides: self-destructive murderesses of their own children.

Munro's story takes up the theme of female passion, female suffering, and female violence but she attempts to turn the table entirely. Instead of stage-directing the destructiveness of passion, she suggests the possibility of altering the course of destruction by proposing strategies of reparation and rehabilitation. Denise, Sophie's granddaughter, runs a women's center in Toronto where beaten women are provided with a shelter and she returns every summer to the log-house which is the home where she spent all the summers of her childhood. She comes back to this shelter to visit her father and to try and experience again the delight she experienced there as a child. This is where we begin to understand the relationship between "Il Trovatore" by Verdi first performed in 1853, the "Lay of Atli" sung by an anonymous skaldic poet in the 12th century and the story written by Munro in the 20th century. The attempt to find the original place of delight, to find the enchanted garden, is what all three stories tell us through a threefold variation. In "Il Trovatore," the mountains represent the shelter that Azucena want to find back. In Munro, the log house by the lake built by the ancestor is the original place of delight. To understand where the original place of delight is in the "Lay of Atli", we need to take into account still another story that Munro clandestinely and dizzyingly encapsulates in her own story.

The "Lay of Atli" is an older variant of the tale of slaughter and revenge that is the subject of the German epic *Nibelungenlied. It* has been famously reinterpreted in operatic from by Wagner in his tetralogy that comprises, *The Rhinegold*, *The Walkyrie*, *Siegfried* and *The Dusk of the Gods*. In this magnum opus, one finds a particular magic mountain encircled by a ring of fire where Brunhilde, the Walkyrie has been committed by her father, the god of gods, Wotan or Odin. Siegfried will find this magic mountain and will deliver the maiden with whom he will fall in love, exchange vows, and enjoy sexual gratification. The magic mountain encircled by fire becomes the shelter where Siegfried and Brunhilde consummate their love. The reason why Siegfried has been able to find the place where Brunhilde was concealed is that, when tasting the blood of the dragon he killed, he became capable of understanding the song of birds and it is under the birds' guidance that he arrives at the place where Brunhilde offers herself to him.

Munro playfully reminds the reader of the episode simply by calling the German ancestor who built the log-house by the lake: Vogelsang which means birdsong. Her allusive strategy is duplicitous. She drops clues, she teases the reader into picking up the clues to understand the rhyzomatic deployment of the story. From Azucena's mountains, to Denise's log-house by the lake, via

Brunhilde's fire encircled rock, she devises a place which acquires the status of *ur*-place, the foundational place of origins.

But at the same time as she represents this place as "the veritable space" of Bonnefoy's poetry or "the land of heart's desire" to pick up the title of Yeats' drama,[5] she undercuts and delegitimizes this construction by contemplating it as a dump. Munro engages in a discretly citational practice, a practice Antoine Compagnon equates to second hand double dealing,[6] through which the competence of the reader is being tested. She establishes a correspondence between the gypsy's condemnation to burn on a pyre in Verdi's "Il Trovatore" and the genocide of First Nations at the time of the colonisation of Canada and she also establishes a correspondence between the "Lay of Atli" and the history of Canada. She means for the reader to synchronize the historical theft of the land by the European colonizers in the 16th century with the mythical stories of the theft of gold from the Poetic Edda and the German epic of the Middle Ages.

"The Lay of Atli" which is an older variant of the *Nibelung* Tales is about King Atli wanting to learn the secret of the treasure of Gunnar and Hogni, the Niflungar Hoard. The *Nibelung* Tales are about the treasure of the Burgundian Kings, a story which has been taken up by Wagner in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1848). The "Lay of Atli" like the *Nibelung* Tales denounces man's cupidity, the greed that justifies murder, plunder, torture, the very same greed that had led adventurers and conquerors to venture across the Atlantic and settle in the new found lands of the Americas. Through her synchronization of Augustus Vogelsang's colonisation of a part of Lake Huron and of the "Lay of Atli", Munro performs a very ambivalent political act. On the one hand she clearly points in the direction of canonical stories of greed to suggest an equation between mythical stories and historical journeys. She historicizes fiction and fictionalizes history but she also equates the journey of Augustus Vogelsang to the journey of Sigurdt or Siegfried towards the flame encircled rock where Brunnhilde has been held captive. By calling the German ancestor who built the log house on Lake Huron Augustus Vogelsang, Munro reminds her readers of the journey that Sigurdt undertook in order to be united to Brunhilde. This journey to the flame encircled rock under the guidance of birdsongs is a journey to the enchanted garden, the place of delight which Sigurdt longs for, it is also the place where vows will be exchanged. But the vows will not be kept and Sigurdt will not marry Brunnhilde. He will marry Gudrun. In similar fashion the colonizers will make promises and sign treaties with the native populations and they will not keep their word. They will ruthlessly dispossess Aboriginal people.

In both the opera and the short story, this original place of delight and peace becomes the contested site of perjury. In the other opera that Munro alludes to, "Il Trovatore" by Verdi, it is also perjury and forswearing that lead to

[5] William Butler Yeats, *The Land of Heart's Desire* (Rockville, Maryland: Wildside Press, 2005 [1894]).

[6] Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

Manrico's death. The young Conte di Luna had promised Leonora that the young bard would be safe and sound and it was on the condition that his life was preserved that Leonora accepted to marry the Conte di Luna. In spite of his oath, the Conte di Luna had Manrico arrested and executed in front of Azucena, who then revealed Manrico's true identity. Manrico is not Azucena's son. He is the Conte di Luna's brother and the Conte has turned into his brother's murderer. In *Genesis* 4.9, Cain says to the Lord "Am I my brother's keeper"? The theme of the fratricidal brother is a theme that Munro keeps harping on from story to story and it is taken up in "White Dump" with a political and indigenized inflection. The colonizers murdered the native population and turned the enchanted garden into a white dump because they forego the ethic responsibility they had towards their brothers and stole the land which was not theirs.

Through the process of apparently casual citations of "Il Trovatore" by Verdi and of the "Nibelung Ring" by Wagner via the the "Lay of Atli", the story makes room for other scenarios within its own scenario. It synchronizes an adultery in the middle class in the second half of the 20th century in Canada to Siegfried's betrayal of Brunhilde in the Germanic Middle Ages and it equates the breaking of the oath between a man and a woman to the breach of promise that the colonizers were guilty of when they settled in Canada. Munro moves from the personal to the mythical to the historical. She historicizes fiction and she fictionalizes history by collapsing the frontiers between the private and the public, the intimate and the political, everyday life and legends.

She constructs a relationship of co-presence between a heroic poem from the Middle-Ages revisited in an opera in the 19th century and a text from the 20th century. She also builds rhyzomatic relationships with another opera by a 19th century Italian composer who borrowed a play from a Spanish Romantic playwright, to extend her web of references both temporally and spatially. She stealthily appropriates a dizzying wealth of intertextual and intermedial relationship to generate a story about displacement, discontinuity and the illusion of home coming through the lives of three successive generations of women who have inhabited the same place. Sophie, a formidable professor of Scandinavian literature, is a single mother who raised her only son with an unbroken spirit despite the fact that the father was a married man who failed to take responsibility for his adultery, her daughter-in-law, Isabel, is a divorcee who broke the marriage vows to embark on a life of passionate and transient relationships and her own daughter, Denise, is an unmarried woman who runs a Woman's Center in Toronto dedicated to the care of broken and battered women. These three women exemplify three types of ambiguities which revolve around a breach of promise they themselves were victim of or responsible for,

in their respective domestic lives or the lives of those they took responsibility for. In an uncanny fashion, Munro juxtaposes the broken vows of domestic life to the breach of promise in national history and legendary epics better to demonstrate human frailty and the taint of spurious dealings but she does not condemn one to a wasteland or the abyss of an unclaimed dump. She creates an ambiguously "white" dump which is to be equated simultaneously with the delights and the pitfalls of "Dear Life".[7]

[7] Alice Munro, *Dear Life* (New York: Knopf, 2012).

Catherine Lanone

Planning Future Ruins. *Ghost Milk* by Iain Sinclair and the Olympic Waste Land

Abstract: Going against the grain of Olympic celebrations, Iain Sinclair warned against the disastrous consequences of the Grand Project in *Ghost Milk*. Instead of the promised regeneration, he could only foresee waste, contamination and the erasure of local culture, while predicting that the brand new Olympic superstructure would soon turn into ruins. Sinclair documents the legacy of a lost place, mourning the annihilation of sheds and familiar haunts. Sinclair engages with modern art, pitting Kapoor against Gormley, to demystify the Olympic epic. He maps the failure of other significant grand projects and former Olympic parks, using psychogeographic drift and the motif of the Northwest Passage, to articulate dissent.

Keywords: *decontamination, Iain Sinclair, London Olympics, Northwest Passage, psychogeography, urban wasteland*

In 2012, Danny Boyle won worldwide applause for the spectacular opening ceremony he designed for the London Olympic Games; he staged a brief history of Britain, leading from England's green and pleasant land to giant chimney stacks and industrial fires, switching to the NHS, pop culture and the Queen leaping from the sky with James Bond – a humorous blend of iconic elements showing Britain as a community, born from the past and looking to the future. But writer Iain Sinclair offered a very different version of the Olympic plot in his 2011 *Ghost Milk*: *Recent Adventures Among the Future Ruins of London on the Eve of the Olympics*, a book published on the eve of national celebration.[1] For Sinclair, far from improving or regenerating East London, the Grand Project encapsulated a trend of retro-futurism that would soon prove extremely damaging. For him, the Olympics were not to transform and glorify a lost area of London but to turn it, on the contrary, into a cultural wasteland doomed to inevitable decay. Musing on those "future ruins", he offered psychogeographic[2] drift as the only possible counter-discourse, a practice expressing dissent.

Ghost Milk is a powerful book because it transmutes genuine anger into a meditation on place and meaning. Running against the grain of pride and a sense of national unity, the mock epic title offers a pastiche of narratives of exploration and adventure stories, to pit past and present against the ghost of the future. Sinclair probes into the ruined structures he can see lurking beneath the brand new architecture (the Olympic stadium and infrastructure were still being built when the book was published). On the white cover of *Ghost Milk*, a tiny Olympic flame comes to dot the Y, while the black letters seem already

[1] Iain Sinclair, *Ghost Milk: Recent Adventures Among the Future Ruins of London on the Eve of the Olympics* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011). All further references are to this edition with the page indicated in the body of the text.

[2] Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2010).

fissured, ready to collapse, commemorating what Sinclair already presented, even before the games had actually taken place, as the dilapidated fragments of a shattered area, rubble, residue, wreckage.

Official discourse claims to retrieve and restore "areas of neglect and desolation".[3] For Sinclair, the cultural historian of his own liminal area, this post-industrial borderland might actually be seen as a kind of postmodern Arcadia, with the water margins of the Lea Valley and the garden lots (to which Sinclair dedicated *Ghost Milk, "*In Memory of the Huts of the Manor Garden Allotments"). In the 2009 film Iain Sinclair made with Emily Richardson, *Memo Mori*, he lingers on the poetics of neglect pervading those small sheds "scrambled together from detritus", "wonderful accidents" growing from "random material", fitting together bits of wood and abandoned car parts, "turning windows into roofs, or doors into floors",[4] an argument which recalls Thomson's "rubbish theory"[5] and the recycling of used goods, transforming them to create new value. For Sinclair the sheds are surprisingly moving and intensely human, each a portrait of its owner. They make "a wasteland into a kind of Arcadia", soon to become a stadium and media concession. Recording the empty sheds with their roses and flowers – before they are erased to make way for the perimeter fences of the Olympics – Sinclair sees them as a human reservoir of the spirit of the place, "parodies of the country cottage, all within the most polluted strip of the city", "desert island survival structures".[6] For him, the Lea Valley has slowly created its own human eco-system, recycling past waste, whereas the Grand Plan, the future computer-enhanced spectacle of a landscape, will only re-vamp the area to condemn it to far worse decay, stripped of all intimacy. From the start of *Ghost Milk*, Sinclair warns about "myopic blunders" as the gaze is led "past the watercress beds that became the car park of Tesco superstore, to the cranes, mud mountains, and skeletal hoop of the Olympic stadium" (12). The skeleton image ties in with the elegiac dimension of *Memo Mori*. For though the contractors did promise that nothing would change, Sinclair repeatedly asks how what has vanished may return, convinced that the Olympics are to seal the disappearance of local wilderness and ritual gardening.

Mistrusting regeneration as a strategic business plan, Sinclair is above all wary of public policies of decontamination (supposedly clearing asbestos and other pollutants). Much of the anger in *Ghost Milk* engages with the actual dispersal of radioactive material, the residue from luminous watch dials that had been buried on the site of manufacture, as was attested by documented evidence. Once the contractors started to bore holes, such residue was released as a radioactive dust that spread through the water-tables, poisoning the river Lea with high levels of thorium. The "big vision" of political elites is debunked in *Ghost Milk* as short-sighted propaganda.

[3] The expression is taken from an early protest against development, long before the Olympics; Iain Sinclair, "A Hit of Rus in Urbe", *The London Review of Books* (27 June 2002), http://www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n12/iain-sinclair/a-hit-of-rus-in-urbe, accessed 9 March 2015.

[4] Emily Richardson and Iain Sinclair, *Memo Mori*, 2009: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuClVcl3GXg, accessed 9 March 2015.

[5] Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1979).

[6] Memo Mori. Emily Richardson & Iain Sinclair.

For the Games are a flickering mirage that will last but a summer. Even more than *London Orbital* and Sinclair's circumnavigation of the M25, *Ghost Milk* is a deliberately anachronistic book of dissent (or to use Rancière's concept, *dissensus*), rebelling against the enforced "partition of the perceptible",[7] where the greatest good for the greatest number overrules the opposition of the local people. The book unravels what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence",[8] exemplified by the blue fence locking up the area, erected against terrorism and forbidding access to once familiar places, an instance of customized paranoia for Sinclair, since the terrorist threat is bred by the prospect of the Games. For the writer is concerned with the local community, rather than the spurious national unity begotten by the Games. He knows that his words cannot prevail, that local opposition cannot win against the media (hence his weariness when confronting time and again Tessa Jowell[9] on TV). *Ghost Milk* returns to psychogeography, walking and writing as a means of protest. The book plays on key images, such as the anti-pastoral spectral milk (the juice of virtual logic or "embalming fluid" [338]) and the Northwest Passage, which Sinclair displaces with ironic zest.

[7] See Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics,* trans. by Stephen Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010) and *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

[8] Pierre Bourdieu, *La Domination masculine* (Paris: Seuil, 1988).

[9] Tessa Jowell, a Labour MP, was a member of the Blair and Brown Cabinets, and Minister for the Olympics until 2010 and then Shadow Minister for the Olympics and Shadow Minister for London until September 2012.

The image of the Northwest Passage has long been associated with psychogeography, as an extract from "Open up the Northwest Passage", a text published by the *London Psychogeographical Association* in 1993[10] (which quotes the 1963 Situationist International declaration) shows:

> It is a matter of finding, of opening up, the 'Northwest Passage' towards a new revolution that cannot tolerate masses of performers, a revolution that must surge over the central terrain which until now has been sheltered from revolutionary upheavals: the conquest of everyday life.[11]

[10] The *London Psychogeographical Association* was reborn in the 1990s, and Sinclair actively participated in the beginning.

[11] Stewart Home, *Mind Invaders* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1997), 13.

Drift aims to bridge social gaps, to create a form of counter-culture, "an anti-Euclidean opposition that will rekindle the fires of revolt with the matchsticks of metaphor".[12] The manifesto revisits the historical quest for the fabled Northwest Passage, which in the early 19th century was supposed to offer a shortcut to China and trade across the Arctic.

[12] Ibid, 136.

The image also harks back to De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater* (a tutelary figure acknowledged by both Guy Debord – the French theoretician of psychogeography – and Sinclair):

> and seeking ambitiously searching for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and head-lands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphynx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares ... I could almost have believed at times, that I must be the discoverer of some of these *terrae incognitae*, and doubted, whether they had been laid on the modern charts of London.[13]

[13] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* (Oxford: Oxford U. P.,1998 [1821]), 47-48.

De Quincey was thus the first master of drift, walking in "a blur of perpetual motion", "[plotting] escape", "the unstable model for everything I was trying to write" (276). *Ghost Milk* is placed under the sign of De Quincey and his key mythical metaphor: "I wanted to test my faith in the northwest passage, as a metaphor and as a practical solution" (203).

Iain Sinclair first takes the motif at face value, before switching to psychogeographic drift. Indeed, he devotes a chapter (aptly entitled "Northwest Passage") to the geographic quest, and sums up the long series of journeys of discoveries, from the Elizabethan Frobisher to the thirst for expansion that followed the Napoleonic wars, and John Franklin's attempts (from 1822 to his final disastrous voyage begun in 1845):

> It was a high-risk enterprise, this squeezing through ice floes, over the top of the world, between the Atlantic and Pacific, searching for "Arctic Grail". Englishmen, from Sir Martin Frobisher in 1576 to John Franklin in 1845, ventured in unchartered oceans. (203-204)

Sinclair ironically transposes the passage from the Arctic to the mud of London borderland, leading from one of the London Stones (that once signalled the limits of the city and the estuary of the Thames) to the stone laid to recall Frobisher's departure for the Northwest Passage in Elizabethan times. For Sinclair, as Heike Hartung has shown, all walk is a palimpsest.[14] Here Sinclair follows the footsteps of those who once walked "against the grain" (as the title of the chapter has it), from Hogarth to J.G. Ballard. He is also discarding the maps that might put a stop to drift, such as the *Ordnance Survey map* or the book he takes as his guidebook, not the Baedeker but, ironically enough, Peter Ackroyd's 2007 book, *Thames, Sacred River*.[15] For Ackroyd, the Thames's flow must be followed, one cannot begin at the mouth of the estuary, lest one should run against the course of History. For Sinclair on the other hand, one must walk back towards London: his "reverse Ackroyd walk" (183) seeks to dismiss consensual nostalgia.[16] Thus he takes the London Stone which signals the merging of the Thames and the North Sea as his starting point, a symbolic landmark of the quest for the Northwest Passage. Once again, a literary echo may be heard – this is indeed the "sea-reach of the Thames" chosen by Conrad at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness,* "one of the dark places of the earth", where Marlow begins his tale by mentioning the "great knights-errant of the sea"[17] including Franklin and his ships, the *Erebus* and the *Terror.* As opposed to Ackroyd's celebration, Sinclair's walk turns into a kind of reverse journey towards the heart of darkness. Ackroyd's "deceptive" map promised the song of the Thames, the seashore with shells, blank "pure white space", but Sinclair can

[14] Heike Hartung, "Walking and Writing the City: Visions of London in the Works of Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair", in Susan Onega and John A. Stotesbury, eds., *London in Literature: Visionary Mappings of the Metropolis* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002), 141-163. For Brian Baker, "What Sinclair attempts to do is not to consume the spectacle of urban space, but to produce it through a reinscription of its histories. Baker also insists on the spectral dimension of his haunts. Brian Baker, *Iain Sinclair* (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 2007), 21.

[15] Peter Ackroyd, *Thames, Sacred River* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007). Logically enough, the Baedeker is mentioned in the chapter but only to recall that the German version published in 1936 for the Olympics was bowdlerized to cut out all reference to bridges and railways.

[16] Both writers read London as a palimpsest. "What results is the defamiliarization of London as narrative" Phillips, Lawrence, *London Narratives: Post-War Fictions and the City* (London: Continuum, 2006), 135. They write, however, from different perspectives.

[17] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1995 [1899]), 49.

only find a forbidden military zone with concrete blocks cutting off the path. This obstacle is included in the book through both photograph and description: "A pebble shore protected by sharp-angled Vorticist obstructions" (180). This entails meandering ways which turn the journey to the stone into a trial (Sinclair is tempted to give up), in this parodic quest for a diminutive Northwest Passage. Circumnavigating interdiction is required, and Sinclair must return with photographer Stephen Gill, to venture into the forbidden area aboard a small kayak. The wind, the choppy water recall narratives of exploration, Franklin's first journey by land, for instance. When they finally reach the obelisk, inlaid with fossils and half-erased names, we might well expect a photograph, but the picture shows instead Stephen Gill frozen in mid-air, arms spread, eyes towards the water, as if "jumping from insecure foothold to foothold, to arrive on a sandy beach of Crusoe novelty" (185). The pastiche of exploration ends with the misty photograph of a distant chimney, with muddy holes in the foreground, and "solitary trees poking out of rubble islands" (187). Thus the chapter is indeed written "against the grain", a pun on the name of the Grain Power Station, another vain ecological battle ("the battle of Grain" (182) – at least at the time when the book was published, the plant having been dismantled in 2015) – not to mention the threat of the Isle of Grain airport (one of the possible locations considered for a new airport). Thus the London Stone marks a waste land that recalls T.S. Eliot's, signalling simply the "madness of the Thames Gateway colonization" (183). Another landmark appears at the very end of the chapter on the edge of the forbidden military zone, an iron hut on which the grey letters "OLYMPIC" are scribbled, like a lookout or a prison.

The epic tale of the glorious Olympic Games is thus replaced by an absurd journey to the edge. The next step is Frobisher's stone (now watching over one of the ventilation shafts of the tunnel of Rotherhithe) which Sinclair seeks with film director Chris Petit, pursuing the Passage motif:

> I take a snapshot of Petit alongside a sign that says: GREENLAND PASSAGE. Hoar-stubbled, eyes narrowed, he's ready to climb the gangplank for a doomed Arctic Grail expedition.
> Unfortunately, the ferry isn't operating and the pier is padlocked. To get at our northwest passage we have to cross the river. (211)

With humour the text substitutes a ferry for the *Erebus* or the *Terror*, and a river for the arctic icy expanse. But Frobisher's stone is a significant goal. Indeed, to convince Queen Elizabeth I to finance further expeditions, Frobisher brought back samples of fool's gold, and set off again with a tremendous fleet of fifteen ships. He brought back tons and tons of ore containing only iron pyrite. As Glyn Williams recalls in *Arctic Labyrinth*, furnaces were also built at Dartford during his journey, to extract the promised gold:

> In all, 1250 tons of ore reached the huddle of blast furnaces, watermills and workshops built at Dartford ... The poorly constructed if expensive furnaces at Dartford were abandoned within twelve months of their building, while over the years the great piles of low-grade ore gained at such expense and hardship were used to repair roads and build walls in the Datford area. Some of it can still be seen today, glistening when the sun catches it.[18]

[18] Glyn Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth* (London: Penguin, 2009), 29.

For Sinclair, Olympic gold is a mirage, the modern avatar of Frobisher's mad quest and Dartford's ruined furnaces. No wonder that the short film directed by Mike Wells in 2011, featuring extracts from *Ghost Milk* read by Sinclair (accompanied by the sad saxophone of jazz player Bill Parry-Davies), should be entitled "Gold Dust".[19] A hyperreal computer-generated fantasy, the stadium is a gold rush which will beget nothing but rubbish.

[19] Mike Wells, *Gold Dust* (2011), http://vimeo.com/28065136, accessed 22 September 2014.

As if modelled on narrative of explorations, constrained by the erratic leads in the ice which open and close, constantly forcing explorers to change course, *Ghost Milk* steers its erratic course by jumping back and forth, stumbling upon obstacles and beginning again, elsewhere in terms of time and space. Wandering along the blue fence (that is covered with graffiti and blocks access to the future Olympic Park) is interspersed with flashbacks (Sinclair in his youth working in Hackney, unloading trucks), or detours to Liverpool, Hull or Manchester. There is, however, a loose but symptomatic connection. Sinclair is fascinated by "Urbis", another Grand Project designed in Manchester by Ian Simpson in 2002 (following the 1996 IRA bombing) – a Museum which failed, and was subsequently devoted to football, a blueprint of the Olympic Stadium and its future failure. As part of the Passage motif, Sinclair positions Urbis as a glacier or an iceberg stranded in the midst of Manchester: "And Urbis was part of the fallout, the collateral damage, a museum of the city dedicated to cultural amnesia" (288). From Liverpool to Hull, Sinclair's erratic progress thus leads from one sea to the next, a Northeast rather than a Northwest Passage. But there are other detours, to Berlin and the ghost of the spectacular display orchestrated by Hitler and filmed by Leni Riefenstahl en 1936, tainting the games with fascism. Even more symptomatic of the Olympic sham or scam is the shift to Greece, where the relics of the Parthenon and amphitheatres are juxtaposed with the mad splendour of the Olympic stadium. The disaffected modern remains stand in the shattered country like an oracle of hubris, "De Quincey nightmares that fade in the cold Athenian dawn" (375).

Calling time on the Olympic project, Sinclair then retrieves the metaphor of the Northwest Passage in its psychogeographic sense, as the very opposite of the colonial venture.

Dismissing fool's gold, Sinclair adopts walking as a line of flight. He offers drift as a way of revisiting the quotidian, to find stunning singularity and oppose the logic of official improvement.

Cassandra-like, Sinclair cannot expect his prophecy to be heeded: his brief allusion to miners' birds may be read in the light of Georges Didi-Huberman's 2014 essay, *Sentir le grisou,* which deals with historical foresight and the ability to sense forthcoming catastrophe: "quels seraient les organes sensoriels d'un tel voir-venir, d'un tel regard-temps?".[20] For Sinclair, drifting and walking may rekindle sight and the ability to read places and impending events. Franklin's error becomes the implicit model for capitalistic blindness (hence the metaphorical "permafrost of conspicuous investment" [58]). Like the mad Elizabethan venture, Victorian failure is a case in point: "The Franklin expedition, like a missing chapter from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* solicited catastrophe. Rumours of cannibalism. Fatty human traces in blackened kettles. Frozen air clamping hard on human vanity" (204).

[20] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Sentir le grisou* (Paris: Minuit, 2014), 9.

In the case of Franklin, brand new technology (steam engines, tinned food that was supposed to last for years) was meant to prevent disaster; yet the 1845 expedition vanished almost without a trace. The mystery led to countless search expeditions. In the 1980's Owen Beattie excavated the only bodies ever found (they had been buried early on, on Beechey Island), and found significant levels of lead poisoning, suggesting that the badly-soldered cans had killed rather than preserved lives.[21] In Sinclair's beloved London too, technology moves swiftly, neighbourhoods are destroyed, tadpoles relocated, garden plots erased. This is indeed a case of deliberate colonization, as Phil Cohen suggests in *On the Wrong Side of the Track? East London and the Post Olympics.*[22] In a chapter entitled "London Goes East", Cohen claims that the City reads East London in terms of Gothic Orientalism, turning *Eastenders* into the Other, the Empire's refuse calling for civilization and renovation. Sinclair fights again the legacy of Thatcher, the refusal to let the locals control a space which may have seemed dilapidated, but which they considered as their own: building the new infrastructure is nothing less than "a process of internal colonization as a new commercial empire", "to force a shortcut to more exploitable territory" (172).

[21] Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen in Time* (Vancouver: Douglas & Mc Intyre, 2004 [1987]).

[22] Phil Cohen, *On the Wrong Side of the Track? East London and the Post Olympics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2013)

The lead that poisoned the bodies of Franklin sailors finds its modern equivalent in the "ghost milk" oozing from the wounded land: "Toxic blight was all around, the ghost milk dying industries" (34). The wasteland has been poisoned, as the water of the Lea has become a threat, contaminated by thorium.

Toxic waste is matched by the poison of propaganda: "Ghost-mouths eating the rubble of development, the melancholy soup of black propaganda". (75) For Sinclair, the nationwide hysterical attachment to the Olympics taps into hegemonic dreams of bygone Empire and economic regeneration. For the Grand Project appeals not so much because of sports as because of the promised

legacy jump-starting London's economy, turning the Olympic Park into the navel of a new nation. In an interview Sinclair sees the forthcoming Olympics as a kind of collective hallucination, which we might call Fata Morgana, a mirage hovering on the ice. In *Ghost Milk,* teleological fantasy is ironically undermined by the repetition of clichés: "the manufacture of new clichés. *Direction of travel.* Whatever the mire, whatever revelations of malpractice and incompetence, you trot out this phrase: direction of travel." Yet this misguided leap forward fails to take into account potential misdirection, implicitly recalling Franklin's mistake as he sailed along the wrong side of King William Island, and was trapped in the ice that was never to melt: "Count the cost. Heap up the dead. Bury that in the direction of travel" (47).

For Sinclair, the upbeat Olympic promise is a sham, or, as we might say, a degraded utopia, to recall Louis Marin's deconstruction of Disneyland:[23] "The long march towards a theme park without a theme" (12). Indeed, there is a Disney touch in Danny Boyle's march from England's green and pleasant land (complete with tiny fake clouds and sheep) to the giant chimneys of furnaces and the melting fire filling the Olympic rings, a stunning visual moment tapping into the film adaptations of Tolkien and the idea of a community nourished by the fellowship of the ring. The reader might expect the inevitable melting of ice-caps, but Sinclair barely mentions it. Instead, the text plays on metaphorical transposition to convey Sinclair's deep attachment to the culture of Hackney and the walks lost to the Olympic Park.

[23] Louis Marin, *Utopiques: jeux d'espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1973).

For throughout the text China recurs as a motif implicitly recalling the commercial goals of the quest for the Northwest Passage, from a Chinese restaurant to the Chinese goods carried by the young Sinclair, accepting any odd job: "China is the myth, the money opera" (55). Gradually, the motif is connected to the Olympics, via a Chinese poet exiled in Hackney, Yang Lian: "I don't try to compare the Olympic experience in Beijing directly with what is happening in Lea Valley ... I witnessed the destruction of history in Beijing ... Lea Valley is being destroyed all the time ... I deeply hope the London Olympics are not only for commercial gain, but for the discovery of this other spirit. The invisible link between this land and mine" (157). Ironically, the Olympics superimpose China and England, achieving the phantasmatic Northwest Passage, since both governments (*mutatis mutandis*) yield to the nationalistic mirage, regardless of the people living in the area refurbished for the games.

Hence the significant stop in Liverpool. As Tessa Jowell proudly claimed, no one will die while building the Olympics apparatus, yet the text remains haunted. There are many tale-telling allusions to an "incident" before Sinclair actually visits Crosby Beach, where a group of Chinese migrants were trapped by the tide while picking cockles for local restaurants. Sinclair pauses on the

statues placed by Gormley by the Mersey's mouth, placed like an implicit commemoration. Endlessly duplicating Gormley's own body, those statues gnawed by sand and shells, left to rust also bear testimony to the passing of time. Hovering between light, sand and sea, the statue slowly sink, swallowed by Beckettian paralysis: "the pieces appear and disappear", as Gormley puts it.[24] For Christine Reynier the permanent display raises the romantic question of presence and absence, of Benjamin's notion of aura in times of mechanical reproduction, while recalling residue and the Industrial remains of Liverpool: "Thus Gormley's mechanical art of uniformity retrieves, through the agency of nature, a form of singularity".[25] Facing North, the statues play on the energy of space and of the human body, prompting a more open gaze.

Inhabiting space and looking out endlessly towards the sea, the statues may stand both for the Chinese workers who could not speak English, and for the sailors of Franklin's last expedition, trapped in the arctic.[26] Sinclair quotes John Davies to describe the statues. Rather than a photograph of Gormley's work, he inserts the picture of a single man walking on the sand, an ironic counterpart of the Olympic fuss and feats. Walking on the liminal beach defies the economy of the competitive, colonial or capitalistic venture.

To conclude, *Ghost Milk* revisits marginal places to challenge the redesigning of East London for the Olympics. Using the ironic motif of the Northwest Passage, Sinclair muses on the passing of time and contrasts forms of neglect, opposing ways of inhabiting the land. Watching over the brand new Olympic Park, the huge statue by Anish Kapoor (the UK's tallest statue, bigger than Gormley's "Angel of the North", as Sinclair stresses), strangely called "Arcelor Mittal Orbit", offers the ultimate expensive landmark of England's artificial Olympic Green Land:

> What a bizarre focal point Anish Kapoor's spiral callipers are: a Laocoönian observation platform strangled in red steel at a cost of many millions, while electricity pylons, with their austere elegance, once hymned by the poets of the 1930s, have been removed, at enormous cost, from the same site to be buried in the radioactive filth of landfill dumps and industrial detritus.[27]

As opposed to this landmark of a future waste land, Gormley's statues by the edge of the sea call for a different kind of space. Ghosting the Northwest Passage, as it were, Sinclair chronicles a helpless fight, calling for an ethics of vulnerability, reclaiming and inhabiting the margins: "How can something return when it has been obliterated?" (74). The last elegiac gesture, after the anger and elegiac energy of *Ghost Milk,* is the defiance of the clown: mocking the Olympic torch procession, Sinclair and Andrew Kötting[28] opted for a mock Odyssey aboard a fibreglass pedalo in the shape of a swan, filming the transition from the bucolic landscape of Sussex and Kent to the polluted Lea

[24] Antony Gormley, "Sculpted Space, within and without", recorded conference, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJ66jv8ICjc, accessed 22 September 2014.

[25] "Relocating Autonomy and Commitment: Anthony Gormley's 'Another Place'", in Jean-Michel Ganteau and Christine Reynier, eds., *Autonomy and Commitment in 19th- to 21st-Century British Arts* (Montpellier: PULM, 2012), 258.

[26] For Christine Reynier, the statues mock the explorers' statues traditionally erected in harbours, facing the sea.

[27] Iain Sinclair, "Diary", *The London Review of Books,* 34.16 (30 August 2012), 38-9.

[28] Andrew Kötting, *Swandown*, 2013.

and the formidable Olympic site, a last sign or fitting swan song for the haphazard *Ghost Milk*, and the long fight against the logic of consumption and waste.

Esterino Adami

Waste-Wor(l)ds as Parables of Dystopian 'Elsewheres' in Postcolonial Speculative Discourse

Abstract: Postcolonial speculative discourse has often treated the threat of potential ecological wastelands emerging from the unwise actions of humankind. Significant examples of this type of writing are the short stories by Manjula Padmanabhan (1999; 2004) and Vandana Singh (2004; 2008), two Indian writers who employ the narrative format to critically address the environmental question and the possible creation of waste worlds, also bearing in mind real-life catastrophes such as the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy. In particular, in their short fiction, both authors appropriate and reinvent the architexts of utopia and dystopia to build up a complex system of deictic temporal shifts that allow an exploration of the future and a reflection on the central role of nature.

In this article I focus on some literary works by Padmanabhan and Singh dealing with the theme of waste, and I adopt an interdisciplinary approach that benefits from an amalgamation of postcolonial studies, cognitive poetics and ecolinguistics. Here I aim at investigating how discourse worlds of waste are triggered by the texts under consideration through the resources of the language of science fiction. In my view, since the conceptualisation and the rendering of the theme warn and challenge the reader to respond to important ethical questions, these dystopian narratives are set to work as parables that have to be cognitively processed and decoded. In the final part of the article I shortly broaden my research scope and also take into account Ian McDonald's *River of Gods* (2004), SF novel that brings to the fore the idea of water exploitation and pollution in a futuristic Indian subcontinent, thus providing a further insight into the linguistic, stylistic and narrative construction of the waste theme.

Keywords: *architext, cognitive poetics, Manjula Padmanabhan, postcolonial speculative discourse, Vandana Singh, parable*

Introduction: Environmental discourse, postcolonialism and speculative fiction

The significance of ecological discourse and the preoccupation with threats deriving from the unwise actions of humankind often constitute a trope in the literary field, and this presence is even more salient in the case of postcolonial speculative fiction, a subgenre that reconfigures the understanding of reality through the lens of fantasy and imagination. In this article I will examine the theme of linguistic and narrative waste-worlds by specifically focussing on the short stories "2099"[1] and "Delhi",[2] respectively authored by the Indian writers Manjula Padmanabhan and Vandana Singh, who employ the narrative form to critically address the environmental question and the potential creation of waste worlds. By orchestrating stories that depict imaginary futures that blend together utopian and dystopian elements, the two authors, who have experimented with different text-types such as children's literature, essays and

[1] Manjula Padmanabhan, "2099", originally written for the 1999 *Outlook* millennium-ender special issue and now collected in *Kleptomania* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2004). All further references are to this edition, quoted as *K* in the text.

[2] Vandana Singh, "Delhi", originally collected in Nalo Hopkinson and Uppin Mehan, eds., *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 2004). It is now included in *The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet and Other Stories* (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2008). All further references are to this edition, quoted as *WTS* in the text.

comic strips, warn about the possible consequences of man's contemporary imprudent exploitation of nature. The images and metaphors they build are illustrations of the vitality of the language of science fiction, but they also operate as parables and architexts that bring to the fore the environmental question and challenge the reader to reflect on the impact of boundless progress onto the planet. Although specifically correlated with the Indian context, these texts also expand their force to represent the state of the entire planet and the active role of mankind in the biosphere at large.

In recent times, the field of ecocriticism, an umbrella term for a variety of theories and methods, has gained critical attention, supported by various publications and scholarship.[3] Recently an array of eco-approaches to literature, the arts and several other cultural domains have been put forward, also including the exploration of the culture and philosophy of the environment as demonstrated for example by Serenella Iovino's body of work.[4] In a similar vein, language and linguistics are now recognised as key elements in this debate, as shown for example by the idea of 'greenspeak' as a way to encode the concerns of environmentalism, in particular via figurative means, since, according to Harré, Brockmeier and Mühlhäuser, "thinking, speaking and writing about environmental matters employ, as do other genres of cognition, a huge range of metaphors".[5] In its broad perimeter, environmental discourse represents a complex and articulated area, especially in the postcolonial scenario.[6] In order to concentrate on the particular theme of waste-worlds, I will follow an interdisciplinary approach that draws from an amalgamation of postcolonial studies, cognitive poetics and ecolinguistics to spotlight how Padmanabhan and Singh manipulate narrative material and reshape the coordinates of speculative fiction, with its reflection on other worlds, utopian or dystopian futures, and super technology, to imagine the effects of waste-wor(l)ds. It is also worth noticing that this type of writing evokes the proximity, in cognitive terms, of fiction and non-fiction, as noticed by Peter Stockwell and other cognitive stylisticians,[7] since the stories here under consideration may extrapolate from or refer to real life episodes and, in thus doing, they further sustain the relevance of environmental discourse.

Specifically, Padmanabhan and Singh acknowledge the power of science fiction as a laboratory of ideas, dreams and issues that may stimulate thought and generate discussion in hypothetical terms, but not totally detached from real life. For the former, in fact, SF "offers a writer the opportunity to go directly to the heart of an ironical or thought-provoking situation by setting up a theoretical world" (*K*, viii), whilst the latter holds that "reality is such a complex beast that in order to begin to comprehend it we need something larger than realist fiction" (*WTS*, 203). In this way they both endorse the genre and consider it not merely as narrative entertainment, but also as an imaginative site capable of producing

[3] See for example Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004) or Rom Harré et al., *Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse* (London: Sage, 1999).

[4] See for example Serenella Iovino, *Filosofie dell'ambiente* (Roma: Carocci 2004); Serenella Iovino, *Ecocriticism and Italy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Serenella Iovino, *Ecologia letteraria* (Milano: Edizioni Ambiente, 2006).

[5] Harré *et al.*, 93.

[6] See for example Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, "Introduction: Towards an Aesthetic of the Earth", the introductory chapter of their edited volume *Postcolonial Ecologies. Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: U. P., 2011), 4-39.

[7] See for example Peter Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2002).

effects in the readership, i.e. of affecting and somehow changing people's stance and behaviour through the route to a *lector in fabula* paradigm by advocating a positioned reader. In other words, the two artists produce "literary works in which the ethical positioning of the reader is altogether allowing of more ambivalence, or which create more potential places for a readerly configuration of personality to settle"[8] and thus consciousness can be achieved and expanded. The text becomes the means by which the warning picture of the waste-land is evoked with the purpose to construct environmental discourse and elicit a pragmatic response. Built upon an ultimate call for responsibility, these narrative works impact on the readers' kinds of social cultural and intertextual knowledge, i.e. the "horizons of expectations by which any text will be measured"[9] so as to refresh and change schemas, ideas and intentions at large.

[8] Stockwell, *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U. P., 2012), 162.

[9] Katie Wales, *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (Harlow: Longman, 1995), 392.

Waste-wor(l)ds: Parables we live by and futuristic architexts

An important aspect shared by the stories written by both Padmanabhan and Singh lies in the conterminous nature of fields such as environmentalism, postcolonialism, and science fiction: at times indeed the three domains are overlapping as they explore the relations between the subject and the surrounding context, or its precarious equilibrium, but also the sense of the future as a direct outcome of the present. The image of the waste-world, in particular, seems to characterise postcolonial speculative writing, symbolically evoking the mistreatment as well as a metaphorical laceration of the earth (and in a parallel manner the exploitation of local communities) and disturbingly addressing man's agency in approaching and organising life.

My argument is located at the interface between the power of SF narratives as sociocultural acts of communication and their rhetorical function as parables of denunciation of ecological degradation. As a matter of fact, discourse worlds of waste are triggered by these texts through the resources of the language of science fiction, not only in rich metaphors, neologisms and other figures, but also at a micro level, where apparently 'banal' linguistic features in reality can become important meaning-making elements, as convincingly demonstrated by the study of Susan Mandala.[10] In my view, since the conceptualisation and the rendering of the theme warn and ask the reader to respond to important ethical questions, these dystopian narratives are set to work as parables that have to be cognitively processed and decoded, and here and in this article I will employ some of the principles of cognitive poetics, in particular the notion of parable as developed by Peter Stockwell and Michael Burke.[11] Both scholars in fact underscore the importance of allegorical messages in literary texts that convey a reconfiguration of the world and require the reader to collaborate in the

[10] Susan Mandala, *Language in Science Fiction and Fantasy* (London: Continuum, 2010); see in particular chapter four, "Extraordinary Worlds in Plain Language", 95-117.

[11] See Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* (London: Routledge, 2002), and Michael Burke, "Literature as Parable", in Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen, eds., *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2002), 117-128.

meaning-making process and elaborate further details, inferences, and implications.

As Burke holds, a "parable is a fundamental, continuous, cognitive instrument of thought that we employ, largely unconsciously, both in real-world meaning construction and in literary interpretation procedures".[12] Parables therefore emerge as mental and cultural structures utilised to understand the world, and the didactic nature of stories in reality is socially rooted and perpetuated through time thanks to narrations. In particular, parables, like all stories, rely on the inner means of projection, that is the capacity of the subject to mentally arrange images and meanings, and of blending, i.e. the ability of the self to mix, adapt and process previous ideas and notions. In this perspective, the stories authored by Padmanabhan and Singh – and to some extent McDonald's writing as well – transform a wealth of ecological themes such as air pollution and nuclear contamination into a series of admonitions via the linguistic strategies of science fiction and fantasy, so that the readers have to juxtapose what they know about the current condition of the planet with the imaginings of the future, its perils and its mutability. Ontologically these narratives are thus akin to other forms of discourse centred on environmental anxiety and, considering the personal involvement of Padmanabhan and Singh as activists who have often spoken out against the exploitation carried out by authorities, corporations and other bodies in many neglected territories, also function as critical tools to stimulate social conscience about working for collective human wellbeing.

[12] Burke, "Literature as Parable", 115.

Stylistically, the two writers in their short fiction appropriate and reinvent the prototypical SF device of time travel to build up a complex system of deictic temporal shifts that allow an exploration of the future and a reflection on the central role of nature. This imaginative strategy is instrumental to the stories I am here concerned with and allows the construction of what Peter Stockwell, with Genette in mind, labels as architext, or "any science fictional narrative which configures a fully worked-out, rich world, and also provides stylistic cues that encourage a mapping of the *whole* textual universe with the reader's reality".[13] Such notion is grounded upon the power of metaphor to compare images and hence conceive new meanings, shifting from the real to the fictional via creative imagination. The main frames of the SF architext are utopia, dystopia and apocalypse, three 'elsewheres' that nonetheless may partially be close to, or at least draw from the construal of the real world by virtue of metaphoric and metonymic relations. With regard to the realm of dystopia, for instance, Sandrine Sorlin remarks that "[elle] relève en effet davantage de la caricature déformée de notre réalité qu'elle ne crée un monde alternatif".[14] The SF stories of Padmanabhan and Singh creatively develop possible, alternate worlds, in which the borders between utopia and dystopia (with the recourse to

[13] Stockwell, *The Poetics of Science Fiction* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 204 [emphasis in the original].

[14] Sandrine Sorlin, *La stylistique anglaise* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 200.

apocalyptic traits too) are often porous, and the representation of nature incessantly foregrounds the possibility of huge catastrophes. In the following sections, some key passages from the texts by these writers will be subjected to linguistic analysis with the purpose to investigate the construction and relevance of the waste-land trope.

Dystopian elsewheres in Manjula Padmanabhan's waste-worlds

The notion of waste, in various forms, is a recurrent image in Padmanabhan's writing: in her novel *Escape*, published in 2008, it is identified with a huge sort of desert, devastated and contaminated by nuclear bombs, probably located somewhere in the Indian subcontinent, where people have to wear special suits to survive.[15] Not only is this type of representation significant for deictic reference, i.e. it depicts the locative dimension of this future world (and its unstable condition), but it is also symbolically noteworthy because it reshapes environmental discourse as an open condemnation of a certain world order that neglects the 'non-western souths' of the earth, namely those territories that do not belong to the privileged nations. Padmanabhan's short fiction too deals with the same theme, for example in the stories "Gandhi-toxin" or "Sharing Air", which pivot around the question of waste and pollution in the air, but here I will take into account another story, titled "2099". This from the very title introduces the idea of a future time, in which Mr M, the protagonist, awakes thanks to the perma-sleep programme, a hyper-technological machine that allows people to be 'frozen' and then resuscitated in another time. Having left in the past a country stricken by atomic bombs detonated with the purpose to solve the problem of overpopulation, the time traveller is now amazed by the utopian setting he finds himself in, a future India often referred to with the synthetic acronym I-O-I, in which "food was plentiful" (*K*, 156) and which was "at the forefront of the space-colonization campaign" (*K*, 156) with immense star ships called Gandhi I and Gandhi II transporting people to the communities settled on other planets, in particular Mars, now called Kalki.[16]

[15] Padmanabhan, *Escape* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2008); see also Esterino Adami, "Feminist Science Fiction as a Postcolonial Paradigm", in Alessandro Monti, ed., *Scritture e interpretazioni* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010), 145-157.

[16] It is worth noticing that in Hinduism the name designates the tenth and last incarnation of Vishnu as well as the harbinger of end times in Hindu eschatology.

However, after the first moment of wonder, the protagonist also learns about remarkable troubles in this dreamland, and the utopian image is subtly turned upside down, to become a kind of camouflaged dystopia. Apparently, in a nutshell, the story is structured as a reversal of utopia shifting into dystopia, but, in reality, a closer reading of "2099" calls into question such a binary vision, as it unfolds crucial environmental criticalities of all epochs, both past and future. In thus doing, the author organises her parabolic storytelling as a form of fantastic speculation about the repercussions of human actions across time. Initially, the architext of utopia is witnessed by the protagonist as a heavenly location, where "mango trees in a nearby orchard filled his senses with their

fragrance. The sky was a blue so deep and pure that it hurt to look at it" (*K*, 151) and this picture vividly contrasts with his own past world, whose description is worth quoting at length:

> Gas masks were mandatory in every city and all buildings had air-seals and elaborate security … well, of course, only those buildings inhabited by the rich. The vast mass of humanity lived and breathed a type of gaseous tar. And the cities themselves had spread like cancerous scabs across and around and under and over every open square mile of the country. There were no forests left anywhere, only 'environment parks' in which a sampling of all the flora and fauna that might have, at one time, been found in that area were crammed together in artificially sustained conditions, soaring high into the sky on pylons. Food was created in underground refineries or grown in domestic mini-farms. (*K*, 153)

The quotation inscribes a stark division of the country, which in hyperbolic fashion mirrors the conflict between social classes, here implicitly reshaped as those who can afford to pay for their wellbeing against the masses of the wretched, forced to live in dire conditions. But in actuality it triggers a broader sphere of meaning. Several linguistic items in fact are foregrounded to emphasise the condition of pollution, decadence and degradation: not only evaluative words such as the expression 'gaseous tar' or the adjective 'cancerous', extracted from the vocabulary of physics and medicine and bearing negative overtones, but longer explanations and references too, for instance the image of dilapidated zoos, or the fact that food is artificially produced in unusual establishments.

Likewise interesting is the way in which the story constructs the India of the future and its Martian colonies: apparently the two contexts are in opposition because the situation on Kalki is quite turbulent due to the appearance of some form of miscegenation and hybrid individuals, making up a kind of "mutant community" (*K*, 157) involved in wars with other groups. Whilst this representation symbolically encapsulates memories and references of colonial discourse, communalism and socioethnic diversity, it also points to wider environmental questions devastating the entire planet and not only the Indian subcontinent: "Among the Ordinaries, the Muslims, Hindus and Minorities each had vast sectors of the planet to themselves, but nevertheless fought vicious battles for space, food, water and political advantage. Cannibalism was the universally accepted social norm everywhere, as there were no local sources of protein" (*K*, 157). In particular the battle for water and food, the latter also disturbingly imaged as human flesh, is a key factor in the collapse of the general conditions of the colonies, and thus it creatively evokes a possible darkly skewered future. From this angle, the earth appears to be a "distant paradise to

which the older generation of all communities yearned to return" (*K*, 157), but in reality several clues interrogate such heavenly portrayal and disrupt the reader's utopian schema, starting from the very naming process. The acronym I-O-I that is used to indicate the country turns out to stand for "Idea of India", and in this manner it provides bitter irony that obfuscates the notion of wholeness and unity of the postcolonial nation: in fact the scientists explain to the protagonist that the future India is not a homogeneous, single territory, but rather a patchwork of various areas, detached from those "vast tracts of the country [that] had been rendered uninhabitable on account of radiation" (*K*, 158). These are linked to each other by means of special gateways and passages that constitute a sort of transportation network and may be reminiscent of a component present in much science fiction, i.e. 'wormholes', a kind of special corridors leading towards other dimensions or worlds.

The parabolic framework of the story envisages a series of opposite images, interpolating elements of the utopian and dystopian architexts, but since it draws extensively from several discourses it also stimulates the readers to respond towards its narrative and thematic core by triggering, blending and refreshing various domains and attitudes. Mr M of course is shocked by the false mirage of future India, whose map is made up of "unrecognisable strips representing the land of his birth" (*K*, 159), but nonetheless reacts vigorously as he decides to use the perma-sleep machine again, not to travel back to his own period but to move forward in time:

> 'Who wants to return to anything?' said Mr M, smiling slightly. 'I know what the past was like – miserable. And the present, so far as I can see, is even more miserable, though in a different way. But I've always had faith in the future. So I'll take my chances with time.' He started twiddling the buttons on his suit to turn himself around. 'Onward,' he said, 'to the end of the NEXT century!' (*K*, 160)

If superficially the forceful reaction of the character may seem to be grounded on a manifestation of ambition and search for power or knowledge, with a time deictic graphologically marked ("NEXT"), it may also testify to some hope for society (in any time) to come to terms with its ecological issues in order to avoid the resulting waste-worlds. From the perspective of cognitive poetics, it is up to the reader to elaborate a personal interpretation of the textual material in order to extract meanings and values, and in this way the entertaining nature of the story functions in tandem with some didactic provocations. By employing the structures and tropes of SF architexts, Padmanabhan allegorically condenses in a short narrative a range of looming questions about the role of mankind in the world and their responsibility in the long-term use and management of natural resources against the possibility of

generating devastating waste-worlds. Such messages resonate across the story and from the fictional form they convey a challenge by virtue of the parables that the readers have to deconstruct and meditate upon, thus highlighting the sense of personal and collective participation. Burke emphasises the importance of parables as narrative tools for the comprehension of the world, and such aspect is particularly salient as to environmental discourse and wastelands:

> Human beings possess a capability, which is arguably as innate and unconscious as the process of breathing itself, to construct ever-larger narratives from small spatial stories. This is how thought and reasoning operate. Current evidence in the fields of cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics and neurobiology seems to suggest that the ongoing narrative projection of stories is a device by which we constantly create open-ended meaning. In doing so, we are able to navigate our way through the world around us.[17]

[17] Burke, "Literature as Parable", 126.

In this sense, Padmanabhan's writing aims at provoking the conscience of the individual to morally and politically take action against contemporary processes of self-destruction. Waste-worlds and apocalyptic elsewheres are here observed as fictional contexts but they have clear correspondences with our world, as they mirror the consequences of ill-advised progress, urbanisation and industrialisation. The Indian frame of mind for instance is still haunted by the 1984 Bhopal disaster, one of the world's largest industrial incidents, which caused several thousands of deaths and many hundreds of injuries when gas and chemical leaks devastated that area of Madhya Pradesh. Such catastrophic event is treated in many fictional and non-fictional works, and it still dreadfully looms in the Indian public conscience in the hope to avoid similar lethal disasters in the future.[18]

[18] See for example the essay that Pablo Mukerjee dedicates to *Animal's People*, the 2007 novel authored by Indra Sinha dealing with the Bhopal disaster: "'Tomorrow There Will Be More of Us'". Toxic Postcoloniality in *Animal's People*", in DeLoughrey and Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies*, eds., 216-231.

Waste-worlds through time worlds in Vandana Singh's *Delhi*

I will now turn to another author, Vandana Singh, to investigate her narrative treatment of the waste-world theme in the introspective and almost metaphysical short story "Delhi". The title is not just a deictic marker, but also a symbol of cultural, historical and syncretic stratifications, since it indicates a city that accumulates layers of different civilisations and that in the text is imagined in various time contexts, to some extent similarly to another narrative work, namely the historical novel *Delhi* by Khushwant Singh (1990),[19] which also features a continuous shifting between different time levels and which accounts for the historical stratifications of the city. Given its thematic wealth and textual complexity, this novel may even be regarded as the model from which Vandana Singh draws inspiration to give shape to her speculative

[19] Khushwant Singh, *Delhi* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1990).

discourse. By extensively using the device of time travel, the writer interrogates the metamorphosis of a city that mirrors the pathway of humankind, with its intermitting succession of peoples, societies and cultures, including the surfacing of wastelands. This complex text is organised according to the parameters of omniscient narration, and focuses on the protagonist Aseem, a character that has the power to travel across ages and experience "tricks of time, tangles produced when one part of the time-stream rubs up against another and the two cross for a moment" (*WTS*, 20), as he follows a blind girl moving across the time dimensions. For the purpose of this article I will consider how the representation of space, often in binary terms and with a plethora of connotations, contributes to the environmental debate and works through a process of accumulation, because the textual manufacturing of the city points to the sedimentation of various cultural layers, and therefore even the image of dissolution and ruin bespeaks the weight of history:

> One of the things he likes about the city is how it breaks all rules. Delhi is a place of contradictions – it transcends thesis and anti-thesis. Here he has seen both the hovels of the poor and the opulent monstrosities of the rich. At major intersections, where the rich wait impatiently in their air-conditioned cars for the light to change, he's seen bone-thin waifs running from car to car, peddling glossy magazines like *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*. Amid the glitzy new high-rises are troupes of wandering cows and pariah dogs; rhesus monkeys mate with abandon in the trees around Parliament House. (*WTS*, 30)

The thematic scope of Vandana Singh's project is actually rather ambitious, and in Pak's words it follows "a strategy by which to recover a sense of the city's growth, tradition and history while gesturing toward the possibilities of a postnational future".[20] But, along with the idea of time travel, carrying the protagonist into utopian and dystopian bizarre time worlds, it also adopts the paradigm of the return to nature with its redeeming power. Aseem, for examples, finds a shelter in the woody area around the city, from which he can contemplate the relics of the past and meditate on the sense of the future:

> So he goes to the only place where he can leave behind the city without actually leaving its borders – houses and crowded roads, within Delhi's borders, there lies an entire forest: the Delhi Ridge, a green lung. The coolness of the forest beckons to him. Only a little way from the main road, the forest is still, except for the subdued chirping of birds. He is in a warm, green womb. Under the acacia trees, he finds an old ruin, one of the many nameless remains of Delhi's medieval era. After checking for snakes and scorpions, he curls up under a crumbling wall and dozes off. (*WTS*, 31)

[20] Chris Pak, "The Language of Postnationality; Cultural Identity via Scientific Fictional Trajectories", in Masood Ashraf Raja et al., eds., *The Postnational Fantasy* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2011), 63.

In this extract, nature is evoked not only in descriptive aspects in opposition to the spreading (and somehow threatening) urban milieu, but also with elements taken from the lexis of biology, which activate the poetic schema of the forest as a human body: the lungs, and also the womb, are textually built as synecdochal devices matching the body and natural landscape in an operation that substantiates the moral consideration of all forms of nature and life harmoniously interacting with each other, or in symbiosis. It is an instantiation of an organic metaphor that also signals the connection between nature and woman as life-giving or life-perpetuating agencies through time.

However, the menace of waste-worlds arises from the interstices of clashing time worlds the protagonist visits and in particular impinges on an actual icon of contemporary Delhi, the Metro, which was opened in 2002. The obfuscating images of the Metro in the future are textually interwoven with those of the present, and this type of stylistic ambiguity suggests an overlaying of utopian and dystopian architexts rendered in environmental terms and applied to the growing postcolonial metropolis. With its double, positional imagery (physically and metaphorically expressed by the 'under' and 'over' ground collocation), the reference to the Metro system introduces a hierarchical line of bisection between the wealthy and the disadvantaged:

> Lower Delhi – Neechi Dilli – that is what this must be: a city of the poor, the outcast, the criminal, in the still-to-be-carved tunnels underneath the Delhi that he knows. He thinks of the Metro, fallen into disuse in that distant future, its tunnels abandoned to the dispossessed, and the city above a delight of gardens and gracious buildings, and tall spires reaching through the clouds. He has seen that once, he remembers. The Immaculate City, the blind girl called it. (*WTS*, 33)

As the levels of time deixis constantly and puzzlingly intersect, Singh's writing unfolds significant intertextual overtones in the depiction of imaginary landscapes. On the one hand, the passage may remind the reader of Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972), in particular Leonia, the extraordinary city that reshapes itself every day and discards its recent past as a heap of garbage to be disposed of in a never-ending movement. On the other, it appropriates and reverses the 'under/over' ground partition of space of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), whose future world is populated by the debauched Eloi and the barbarous Morloi.

Clashing elements of pastoral and subterranean life are here at play and also carry a variety of symbols and echoes, from the colonial idea of the exotic garden to the postcolonial tentacular city of the future, with its chromatic purity and whose high spires look like the skyscrapers of western ultramodernity, to the derelict tunnels of the Metro inhabited by people "coming out of the cement

floor of the platform, as though from the bowels of the earth" (*WTS*, 33). Once again, an organic metaphor is here present, though this time by activating specific sensorial and bodily echoes it is employed to underpin the sense of misery and degradation that weighs heavily on the underclass.

But in using SF narratives to explore (im)possible worlds, and implicitly to ponder on the capacity of humanity to regulate their relation with nature and the environment, the author always bears in mind a preoccupation for the society to come, reflecting on how the future is the outcome of the present. Superficially the articulations of Aseem's time wanderings and the succession of different versions of Delhi may look confusing and irksome to process, but in reality the entire text is conceived as a macro metaphor that may be approached from a parabolic perspective, since, regardless of specific cultural or national traits, "the procedure of parabolic projection and the subsequent blending is never monolithic or bounded but is always dynamic and open-ended".[21] In other words, Singh seems to engage the reader in a vertiginous journey across time, a quest for identity that also touches on the issue of the waste produced by the strict oligarchy and plutocracy of those societies blind to the natural changes and devastation deriving from injudicious exploitation of the planet.

[21] Burke, "Literature as Parable", 126.

Concluding remarks: Beyond the borders of the postcolonial waste-worlds

In closing, I would like to briefly mention the case of *River of Gods*, a recent British science fiction novel that tackles the actual problem of pollution, especially with reference to water. Set in the year 2047, exactly a century after the achievement of independence, in the fragmented Indian subcontinent now called with the ancient and almost mythological name Bharat, and made up of quarrelling country-states, McDonald's narrative problematises, from a British standpoint, the question of water availability, management and exploitation in a context that traditionally considers rivers as holy places. In Indian classic culture in fact water is attributed paramount importance in a range of domains, given its power of life and death, for example with the coming of the monsoon, but also within traditional texts such as the Upanishads and the Vedas. According to the *Mahabharata*, the entire universe is constituted by water, and consequently all rivers of India, in particular the Ganges and Yamuna, are sacred, especially those that have a confluence and a ford (called *tirtha*).[22] Nonetheless the text irreverently denounces the contamination of the rivers, and water in general, as they are turned into a polluted harsh environment: "a thin piss of yellow water trickles from the spill-way flume. That is Mother Ganga".[23] The dramatic disintegration of the ecological equilibrium also pertains to another central motif of the book, the plan of subcontinental authorities to melt glaciers in order to solve a grave drought-induced water shortage in various

[22] See for example Stefano Piano, *Lessico elementare dell'Induismo* (Torino: Promolibri Magnanelli, 2011) or M. L. Varadpande, *A Dictionary of Indian Culture* (New Delhi: Arnold Publishers, 1994).

[23] Ian McDonald, *River of Gods* (London: Pocket Books, 2004), 260.

territories. Such an operation of course implies the perennial modification of natural systems and may result in impressive wastelands in the current scenario of the earth. From the greenspeak perspective, *River of Gods* too, with its multiplicity of SF themes and narrative manifestations, including many embedded stories and discourses, works as a megametaphor to caution the future generations, a parable of the results of irresponsible development and advancement at the expense of a larger environmental vision.

Along with the structures of the architext and parabolic writing, the eco-narratives of the waste-land that I have examined in this article are characterised by a further element, which is worth citing, i.e. the governing paradigm of hybridity, as the stories here under consideration draw from ancient myths, ethical debates, time-honoured traditions, innovative language and other domains. In different measures, indeed, these texts apply their ontological poetics of multicultural hybridity to depict future worlds and their oscillating alternatives, and thus it could be argued that "in a sense, all postcolonial science fiction – indeed, all postcolonial cultural production – is about hybridity".[24] To achieve their scheme of admonition, the postcolonial writers skilfully manipulate rhetorical structures, parabolic constructions and other literary devices to illustrate the actual-world danger of pollution and degradation via textual and creative images. In thus doing, they construct narratives with ironical implications that subtly and ethically challenge the reader to observe the shapes of literature as possible threatening realisations of the future, whereas the gap between fiction and reality may become narrower, so that new operational strategies for the environment may be put forward in order to escape nightmarish dystopias and dreadful elsewheres.

[24] Jessica Langer, *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 125.

Mirko Casagranda

E-waste. An Ecocritical Discourse Analysis

Abstract: The way in which environmental discourse is constructed in the media contributes to shape the attitudes that people have towards ecological issues, especially when it comes to pollution and climate change. The BBC plays a pivotal role in this process because of its global influence in the generation of consensus and common knowledge. E-waste, i.e. electronic waste, is one of the major environmental threats because of its toxic components and limited recycling possibilities. The paper aims at analysing the discursive strategies employed in fourteen articles about e-waste published on the BBC News website. Ecocritical Discourse Analysis is adopted in order to assess to which extent the BBC contributes to the maintenance of the status quo by framing the threat posed by e-waste as a resource for corporations to make new profits and create new job opportunities. By analysing linguistic features such as framing, metaphors, appraisal and facticity patterns, erasure, and salience, the paper demonstrates how e-waste is represented so as to make it functional to Western economic ideology rather than as a mainly environmental danger to the planet.

Keywords: *BBC news, ecocritical discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, environmental discourse, e-waste*

Introduction

In the 2008 Disney animated movie *Wall-e*, the earth has become a wasteland covered in trash and inhabited by robots in charge of the garbage disposal left behind by humans after the destruction of the ecosystem that supports human life on the planet. Robots, as such, are both waste and waste collectors, albeit with feelings – indeed the protagonist, Wall-e, falls in love with Eve, a 'female' robot. In the film, the catastrophic future of the planet and the fate of humanity are light-heartedly problematized, and the post-apocalyptic setting is only the background for a fairy tale. Nevertheless, *Wall-e* should be praised for awakening the ecocritical awareness of the viewer, and can be listed among the Hollywood blockbusters that draw inspiration from environmental issues.

Although fictionalised, the future envisaged in the film might become a reality, at least as far as the collection and disposal of waste is concerned. Indeed, our postmodern and globalised lives depend more and more on electronic devices that are 'doomed' to become e-waste, i.e. electronic waste, once their batteries are exhausted or their mechanisms broken. Even though when we buy them we are not used to considering them as waste, these items are very difficult to recycle and their components are potentially extremely harmful to the environment. Moreover, consumerism nurtures an endless desire

for new gadgets, which has prompted societies to favour new products over refurbished and repaired ones. Unlike general waste, old and unwanted electronic devices often end up in dumps thousands of miles away from the countries in which they have been sold. Consequently, e-waste is both a danger to the environment and a threat for geopolitical relations because its management – from production to disposal – strengthens the unbalanced polarisation between Western and non-Western countries.

The way in which e-waste is discursively represented in the media is responsible for the attitudes that people – and consumers – have towards the environment since the media "do not merely reflect the people, but dictate terms of reference to society".[1] Unlike some specialised publications, mainstream media frequently endorse the position of governments and corporations, especially when it comes to products that are deemed necessary for our everyday lives. The BBC plays a pivotal role in this process because of its global influence in the generation of consensus and common knowledge[2] and because international audiences rely on the information it provides to create their own 'vision' of the world. This paper aims at analysing the discursive strategies in a corpus of texts about e-waste published on the BBC News website. Ecocritical Discourse Analysis is adopted in order to assess to which extent BBC News contributes to the maintenance of the status quo by representing e-waste as an environmental problem that can be solved by means of new technologies and the creation of new job opportunities, which fails to unsettle Western economics discourse.

[1] Timothy Doyle and Aynsley John Kellow, *Environmental Politics and Policy Making in Australia* (South Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australia, 1995), 147.

[2] Richard J. Alexander, *Framing Discourse on the Environment: A Critical Discourse Approach* (London: Routledge, 2008), 109.

E-waste on the BBC News website

For this analysis, a corpus of fourteen articles has been retrieved by using the keyword "e-waste" in the search engine of the BBC News website. The articles cover a time span of four years, from January 2012 to January 2016.[3] The search produced five extra results, which have been excluded here either because the content was not relevant or because the entry was about a video or a picture gallery only. Five articles date back to 2012, three to 2013 and two to 2014, 2015, and 2016 respectively, which shows a regular – albeit infrequent – pattern in the coverage of the topic. While all of them deal with e-waste both as a threat to the environment and human health and as a recycling issue, some focus on a specific geographic area – in particular Ghana, Kenya, China, Taiwan, and India – or report on policies adopted by European and American governments, corporations, and non-profit organisations.

The articles have been published in four main sections, namely "Technology" (6 items), "Business" (3 items), "World" (3), and "Science and Environment" (2). One would probably expect that the hazardousness of e-

[3] All articles have been last accessed on 31 January 2016 at www.bbc.com/news. For space reasons, they will be hereafter mentioned by their title and date of publication within the text. When quotations from the articles follow the title, they are in inverted commas without any further reference. When the source is not stated in the text, references are made in the notes.

waste would be covered mainly in the Science and Environment section; on the contrary, the majority of the texts discuss it as a business-related or technological issue, which is quite telling about the perspective conveyed by BBC News. Furthermore, it is only in 2015 and 2016 that e-waste has appeared in the Business section. Technology, on the other hand, is the most pervasive category with two articles in 2012, two in 2013, and one in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

At first glance, hence, it is possible to state that, while the world has become more and more concerned with the possibly catastrophic consequences of pollution and the global rise of temperatures, BBC News has gradually constructed the discourse on e-waste as a profit-oriented enterprise. Moreover, when reporting on environmental issues, the BBC often aims at impartiality to subtly weaken or dismiss ecocritical voices that are not in line with mainstream discourse, while it overtly endorses economics discourse on growth and development:

> When climate change is reported on, the BBC has been accused of an 'over-diligent search for due impartiality' ... because of the tendency to bring climate change deniers in to 'balance' the voices of scientists; but when it comes to glowing reports of increases in economic growth or profits, there is no search for balance.[4]

[4] Arran Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2015), Kindle edition.

Also in the articles collected for this paper, environmental discourse is often framed so as to maintain the status quo of western economies and turn ecological 'problems' into profitable 'solutions'.

Methodology: Ecolinguistics and Ecocritical Discourse Analysis

Ecolinguistics critically focuses on the ways in which language is used to shape our relation to the environment and ecology, especially by means of linguistic structures that reinforce and justify human control over nature. Indeed, rather than considering human beings as part of the ecosystem, modernity has often represented nature as a resource. Since the natural world is socially constructed and named through language, "linguistic behaviour works as a powerful insidious vehicle in creating and maintaining hierarchies of power, perpetuating the devaluation and control of others".[5] According to Stibbe, ecolinguistics is about "critiquing forms of language that contribute to ecological destruction, and aiding in the search for new forms of language that inspire people to protect the natural world".[6] Such criticism aims at challenging the anthropocentrism of language[7] and promoting "an environmentally more correct biocentric" one.[8]

When it comes to environmental discourse in the media, Ecocritical Discourse Analysis successfully contributes to the study of the representations

[5] Mary Kahn, "The Passive Voice of Science: Language Abuse in the Wildlife Profession", in Alwin Fill and Peter Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader: Language, Ecology and Environment* (London: Continuum, 2001), 241.

[6] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

[7] See, among others, Valentina Adami, "Culture, Language and Environmental Rights: The Anthropocentrism of English", *Polemos*, 7.2, (2013), 335-355; Matthias Jung, "Ecological Criticism of Language", trans. by Alwin Fill, in Fill and Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, 270-285.

[8] Fill and Mühlhäusler, "Introduction", in Fill and Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, 5. Such language is also called 'greenspeak'. For further references see Rom Harré, Jens Brockmeier and Peter Mühlhäusler, *Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse* (London: Sage, 1998).

of its participants, i.e. nature, human beings, corporations, etc., and their underlying power hierarchies.[9] Such approach, thus, allows the analyst to demonstrate how "[t]he environmental news that travels around the globe is not neutral but reflects existing ideology of a few powerful Western nations".[10] This paper mainly draws on the method outlined by Stibbe in *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (2015), which builds on linguistic theories such as Critical Discourse Analysis, frame theory, appraisal theory, identity theory, fact construction, and theories of erasure and salience in order to unmask the ideologies embedded in environmental discourse and compare them to what he calls 'ecosophy', i.e. the ethical framework of scholars and ecolinguists.

[9] Arran Stibbe, "An Ecolinguistic Approach to Critical Discourse Studies", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 11.1 (2014), 117-128. Ecocritical Discourse Analysis is sometimes called Ecological Critical Discourse Analysis. See Andrew Goatly, "Green Grammar and Grammatical Metaphor, or Language and Myth of Power, or Metaphors We Die By", in Fill and Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, 203.

[10] Mühlhäusler, *Language of Environment, Environment of Language* (London: Battlebridge, 2003), 197.

Analysis and results

The analysis has been carried out according to the following categories: a) ideologies and discourse, b) frames, framing and metaphors; c) evaluation and appraisal patterns; e) identity; f) convictions and facticity patterns; g) erasure and salience.

Ideologies and discourse

Stibbe differentiates between destructive, ambivalent and beneficial discourses and points out that "[m]ainstream 'green' discourses are often ... *ambivalent discourses*, in that they contain some aspects which align with the analyst's ecosophy and some which oppose it".[11] This is also the case of the BBC News coverage of e-waste since the hazardousness of toxic electronic components is often discussed within a frame that does not question the economic system of the countries where such devices are bought. As a matter of fact, the economic advantages related to e-waste production and recycling are constantly paired with the ecological threat caused by the rising amount of disposed items.

[11] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

One of the features of ambivalent discourses is about "solutions to environmental problems in small activities such as recycling, which individuals can accomplish without reducing the overall consumption of society".[12] For example, in the article "Can technology help tackle the world's waste crisis?" by business reporter Padraig Belton (12/01/2016), WeRecycle manager Dr Jenna Jambeck is portrayed smiling in front of a dump. She "wants people to 'feel a moment of joy when recycling'" and praises the advantages of 'smart' bins that reward users – especially children – with a smiley face whenever an item is placed in the correct compartment. By quoting her authoritative voice, the journalist represents recycling as an amusing activity enjoyed by both children and adults, and implicitly places them on the same level. In so doing,

[12] Ibid.

recycling becomes a sort of game in which people do not necessarily need to feel responsible for their consuming choices. Moreover, the reporter introduces the topic by stressing how "you are charged for your un-recycled waste", which triggers a discourse according to which recycling should be done to avoid paying extra fees rather than for purely ecological reasons. In other words, the text places the benefits of recycling on the individual rather than the social level, and does not question the production of gadgets that will soon turn into e-waste.

In the article "Taiwan tests recycling's limits with bus stops out of bottles" by technology reporter Katia Moskvitch (01/03/2013), consumers' attitudes are even justified as if they were a harmless habit: "people here [Taiwan] love gadgets, and love to change them regularly". By reporting that '"[the recycling factory] will rise from trash' says the smiling young man", the journalist presents recycling in positive and reassuring terms, while ethical reasons are mostly avoided: "Lack of space and raw materials compels Taiwanese companies to recycle and make the world a bit greener". Also in this case, environment-friendly measures are taken only because of economic reasons.

Another feature of ambivalent discourse is that of hiding "agency to disguise blame for ecological destruction".[13] For example, the article "Toxic waste 'major global threat'" by Siva Parameswaran from BBC Tamil Service (20/11/2013) opens with the following sentence: "More than 200 million people around the world are at risk of exposure to toxic waste, a reporter has concluded." Here, the agent, i.e. the producers of such toxic waste, is omitted, while potential casualties are given a predominant spot by syntactically placing them as the subject of the clause. Later on, the same pattern is repeated by focusing on environmental destruction: "In some places the damage caused to the land is so huge that it cannot be reversed, so the only option is to move people away and seal the contamination". Again, no agency is mentioned, and instead of questioning the original cause of such catastrophe, the 'sink metaphor', i.e. the disposal of hazardous materials in a sort of safe sink,[14] is offered as a solution.

Building on the theory of ideology as a form of social cognition,[15] Stibbe defines it as a set of beliefs that "exist in the minds of individual people, but are also shared among a group".[16] The ambivalent discourse in the BBC News articles conveys a 'story' according to which globalisation and western economies are seldom overtly identified as the cause of e-waste production and environmental destruction. Quite on the contrary, e-waste is treated as an economic resource for corporations and governments, while environmental protection is mainly presented as an individual choice based on the ethical values of single citizens and consumers. The texts gloss on the fact that such choices are nevertheless conditioned by overarching social and economic

[13] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

[14] Mühlhäusler, *Language of Environment*, 135.

[15] See, among others, Teun van Dijk, *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2014).

[16] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

structures, with the possible exceptions of the articles "Where many of our electronic goods go to die" (08/01/2016), in which journalist Edwin Lane advocates the engagement of companies and governments along with a "more ethically-minded" consumer and human behaviour, and "Computer Aid demands greater e-waste accountability" (13/03/2012), in which Dave Lee concludes by quoting Gladys Muhunyo, Computer Aid's director of Africa programmes, who claims that "more still needed to be done to educate the public about the issue at the time they were buying a new device" and that "[t]he people who produce the gadgets need to make gadgets that are durable".

Frames, framing and metaphors

According to Stibbe, frames are "mental structures through which we understand reality"[17] which become framings whenever an area of life is conceptualised by means of a cluster of linguistic items from another area of life not directly associated with it. When we say that nature conservation is a commercial transaction, for example, we are framing the target domain, i.e. nature conservation, through a source frame triggered by words belonging to economics discourse. Being commonly used in everyday language, framings are culture-bound and easily identified by the speaker. On the other hand, reframing "is the act of framing a concept in a way that is different from its typical framing in a culture".[18] Describing climate change as a security problem, for instance, is a form of reframing because the environment is not commonly linked to security. An example of this type of reframing is contained in the article "US to build $120m rare earth research institute" by technology reporter Katia Moskvitch (11/01/2013), where a project to mine rare earths in several areas of the United States is discussed. Although the US Department of Energy is aware that "there are no really good environmentally friendly methods available to mine and recycle rare earths", the scheme has been founded in order "to reduce ... dependency on China" and "avoid a supply shortage that would threaten our clean energy industry as well as our security interests". Not only is security mentioned in relation to the environment, but a potentially dangerous method is put forward to foster the production of low-carbon resources, which – as stated by Daniel Danielson, the US assistant secretary for renewable energy – require earths to be manufactured. The oddity of such operation is not questioned in the text; on the contrary, the security issue is strengthened by the claim that "rare earth elements are also used for military applications". The article ambiguously omits the percentage of rare earths needed for such applications, and the reader is not provided with a straightforward explanation of the real reasons behind the project.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

Environmental discourse is characterised by several frames, among which the Moral Order Frame and the Problem Frame are particularly frequent. In the former, non-western countries are portrayed as children that can reach adulthood only by following the 'lesson' of western societies. In this frame, 'developed' and 'developing' are commonly used to label a dichotomy in which western values are considered morally superior. Such frame is so pervasive that it has been rooted in hegemonic discourses and taken for granted to justify Eurocentric and neo-imperialistic ideologies:

> The word 'development' and its derivatives are used without much thought of what they really mean. In particular, the distinction between 'developed' countries and 'developing' countries carries an imperialistic insinuation that sensible (or inevitable) evolution is for developing countries to become like developed countries. This insinuation is particularly dangerous because it has been the unthinking propaganda of both the developed countries and the developing countries.[19]

[19] Beth Schultz, "Language and the Natural Environment", in Fill and Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, 110.

The data present a few examples of the Moral Order Frame. In "[e]ven in the developing countries, they're after the smartphone"[20] and "the developing world grows more industrial and urban",[21] for instance, industrialisation, urbanisation and the consumption of electronic devices are implicitly considered as the goal to be achieved by 'developing' countries in order to 'grow up'.

[20] Jonathan Keane, "Bin diving: The start-ups that want your electronic junk" (17/04/2015), http://www.bbc.com/news/business-32339196.

[21] Padraig Belton, "Can technology help tackle the world's waste crisis?" (12/01/2016), http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35279854.

Furthermore, the data show that BBC News tends to frame e-waste as problematic by means of trigger words such as 'problem', 'solution, 'crisis', 'help', etc. Since the Problem Frame entails a solution which nullifies the problem, Stibbe points out that "[i]f climate change can be 'solved' then there is no need to create resilient societies that can adapt to the harmful impacts that climate change has already started having".[22] In other words, the real causes of the problem are not exposed since a solution that will not alter the status quo can always be found. Hence, instead of demanding a change in western consuming habits, this frame reassures the reader by focusing on a positive solution.

[22] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

BBC News often describes e-waste as a problem, e.g. in "an enormous and growing problem"[23] and "calls for greater efforts to be made to control the problem".[24] Also the hazardousness of toxic fumes leaching in the soil and spreading in the air is recognised: "[i]n some places the damage caused to the land is so huge that it cannot be reversed" (ibid.) and "where workers can become ill from the toxins, such as lead, mercury, and arsenic".[25] However, the articles often focus on a solution that relies on new technologies in order to turn the problem into a business opportunity, and frames nature as part of an economics discourse which "fail[s] to incorporate important moral and ethical concerns that humans have for nature".[26] When BBC News titles "Can

[23] Dave Lee, "Computer Aid demands greater e-waste accountability" (13/03/2012), http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-17354860.

[24] Siva Parameswaran, "Toxic waste 'major global threat'" (20/11/2013), http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-24994209.

[25] Belton, "Can technology".

[26] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

technology help tackle the world's waste crisis?", the problem – technology – becomes the solution, i.e. new technologies: "[b]ut could technology, which helped create much of this waste, also help deal with it?". Business reporter Padraig Belton oddly opts for the verb 'to help' to describe the problem. Instead of choosing a neutral verb, e.g. 'to cause', or a phrase like 'which is responsible for', Belton creates a parallelism between problem and solution in which technology is the helpful and harmless answer to the risks humanity will probably have to face. Only at the end does the reporter criticise the production systems: "For that we'll need a fundamental rethink about the way we manufacture things and the material we use". However, due to its position in the text, the short statement is discursively presented as a weaker option.

The article "Old laptop batteries could power slums, IBM says" by Dave Lee (05/12/2014) describes e-waste as an opportunity to alleviate poverty as it discusses how discarded electronic devices can be turned into power suppliers in some Indian urban areas. The technology reporter introduces e-waste as "a major problem, particularly in the developing world, where the majority of the West's unwanted technology ends up", and disguises it as an economic opportunity with humanitarian benefits for the poor: "UrJar [a new device] has the potential to channel e-waste towards the alleviation of energy poverty, thus simultaneously providing a sustainable solution for both problems". The article conveys the idea that the main goal of IBM researchers is "to help the approximately 400 million people in India who are off grid", although it is quite clear that for the American corporation the real aim is not poverty reduction, but cheap e-waste disposal strategies.

Also in this case, the problem becomes the solution since it is subtly suggested that the more e-waste is produced, the more energy poverty is alleviated. In other words, the economic system based on the production of potentially dangerous electronic devices is not criticised, but, on the contrary, already entails the solution to the problems it has caused. As a matter of fact, the option of renewable resources to power Indian slums is dismissed on the basis of economic reasons: "Options such as solar power are considerably more expensive and logistically more cumbersome at the moment". Nowhere is stated that such options would guarantee India's energy independence and force western corporations to recycle their e-waste elsewhere.

The reporter concludes by quoting Keith Sonnet, chief executive of Computer Aid, a UK-based charity organisation: "Refurbishing has definitely a more positive impact on the environment and we should encourage more companies to adopt this practice". Whereas there is no doubt that refurbishing is better than dumping, it is not clear what "a more positive impact on the environment" exactly means. Indeed, the fact that discarded batteries are re-used to produce power may positively affect a percentage of Indian population,

but the actual impact of these devices on the environment would not be erased. By disguising the interests of IT companies as those of the environment, this type of discourse further disconnects people from nature because it justifies a system in which the environment is seen as a resource separate from human beings. Helping poor people does not equal helping the environment, and the parallelism between the two subtly reinforces their separation.

Environmental discourse often relies on metaphors, which are a specific type of framing based on a conceptual distance from the target domain. In the data, e-waste is described as a massive flow of water in the idiomatic expression "stem the tide"[27] and as a "motley crew of toxins".[28] In both cases, the rising amount of e-waste is portrayed as something unpredictable and difficult to control. However, since tidal power is a renewable source of energy, the first metaphor is ambivalent since it evokes the catastrophic force of nature along with the possibility of exploiting it. Similarly, the phrase 'motley crew' reminds of stories of hordes of pirates and barbarians who can eventually be defeated and controlled by (Western) civilisation.

[27] Belton, "Can technology".

[28] Keane, "Bin diving".

Using the frame of e-waste as a resource, the authorless article "Microwaves and dishwashers dominate e-waste mountains" (19/04/2015) contains the metaphor of 'e-waste as a mine': "[w]orldwide, e-waste constitutes a valuable 'urban mine', a large potential reservoir of recyclable materials". Such metaphor is in line with the idea of representing e-waste as business rather than a danger. Elsewhere, electronic goods are metaphorically compared to organisms that after being exhausted "go to die" in African and Asian dumps.[29] Although personification is a common figure of speech, in this case the metaphor of 'electronic devices as organisms' strengthens the polarisation between the places in which these goods are consumed and those in which they are discarded since the 'afterlife' of e-waste becomes an elsewhere that apparently does not affect western societies.

[29] Lane, "Where many of our electronic goods", http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35244018.

In "Computer Aid demands greater e-waste accountability" by Dave Lee (13/03/2012), corporations are compared to citizens: "more could be done to ensure that technology companies were 'good corporate citizens'". The sentence employs the corporate citizenship metaphor, which is often found in business discourse.[30] From an Ecocritical Discourse Analysis point of view, it can be considered as a variant of the 'corporation is a person' metaphor, in which companies are described as the Senser participant in charge of mental processes like choosing, considering, wishing, etc. Such metaphor relies on metonymy and hyponymy since the term 'corporation' substitutes its owner, and firms and people are placed on the same level as hyponyms of a general term. Such metaphorical device, however, is seldom environment-oriented because "the discourse of neoclassical economics not only sets up the corporation as a person, but as a particular kind of person: one self-centredly

[30] See Jeremy Moon, Andrew Crane and Dirk Matten, "Can Corporations Be Citizens? Corporate Citizenship as a Metaphor for Business Participation in Society", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 15.3 (2005), 429-453.

seeking to push up profits, sales or growth whatever the impact on the environment".[31]

[31] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

Moreover, this metaphor is problematic because it contributes to conceal responsibility. Hence, the phrase "good corporate citizens" is quite ambivalent because despite the efforts made by companies to reduce environmental damage, their primary goal is still making profits. Such ambiguity is subtly constructed in the article, which extensively quotes Tom Davis, Computer Aid's chief executive, and Anja French, its director of communications. Indeed, while Davis thinks that "the richest companies in the world, who profit tremendously from IT, have an ultimate responsibility to deal with the consequences of all the things they've brought to us", the reporter cites French's words about Nepal refusing donations of electronic devices due to their potentially dangerous components: "If all countries were to do that they would cut themselves off from receiving technology from other countries, which would be a shame". By including the two quotations, the author highlights the fact that IT companies should be deemed responsible for e-waste production, but at the very same time does not question the idea that electronic devices and IT accessibility could actually be part of the problem. Quite on the contrary, the fact that Nepal declined the offer is described as a shame, which dismisses its concerns about the risks of refurbished devices.

Evaluations and Appraisal Patterns

Building on appraisal theory,[32] Ecocritical Discourse Analysis focuses on the positive and negative ways in which something is linguistically described in a text. Also in environmental discourse, marked words, which are usually negative, may lead to positive appraisals. One of the most common appraisal patterns is that of economic growth being good, which can be found in the BBC News coverage of e-waste as well. In the texts, however, the appraising items 'rise' and 'grow', which are often positive, trigger negative appraisals when associated with e-waste. As a matter of fact, the clauses "as the developing world grows more industrial and urban, and the amount of waste we produce continues to rise"[33] present a positive appraisal pattern as regards the economic development of non-western countries, and a negative one when it refers to e-waste. Also the verb 'to reduce' tends to be associated with negative appraisals; however, when it collocates with environment-threatening items, it triggers positive evaluations: "[r]educe potential damage to natural infrastructure by reducing water, land, and air pollution"[34] and "to reduce energy consumption and harm to the environment".[35]

[32] See, among others, M.A.K. Halliday, "New Ways of Meaning: The Challenge to Applied Linguistics" in Fill and Mühlhäusler, eds., *The Ecolinguistics Reader*, 175-202; James R. Martin and Peter R.R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (London: Palgrave, 2005).

[33] Belton, "Can technology".

[34] Richard Black, "Rio revisited: Glass half-full?" (24/07/2012), http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-18967011.

[35] Anon., "Ghana bans second-hand fridges" (31/12/2012), http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-20877804.

Appraisal patterns are often based on pairs of contrasting words such as big and small, new and old, up and down, etc., in which the first term usually

expresses positive appraisals. This is particularly true in economics discourse, where, for instance, "[n]ew technologies"[36] are positively described, while "old handsets and PCs"[37] are not. When it comes to solutions to the e-waste problem, moreover, the amount of money to invest plays a fundamental role; hence, cheap is better than expensive, as the following example shows: "using discarded batteries is cheaper than existing power options" in opposition to "[o]ptions such as solar power are considerably more expensive".[38] Here, the appraisal pattern reinforces the discourse according to which economic factors come first in the decision-making process about environmental protection.

[36] Belton, "Can technology".

[37] Moskvitch, "US to build".

[38] Dave Lee, "Old laptop batteries could power slums, IBM says" (05/12/2014), http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30345221.

In the BBC News articles, the prosodic pattern of appraisal choices, i.e. the tone established by appraisal patterns across a text, contributes to the polarisation between e-waste production and recycling, in which the former is bad, while the latter is good. BBC News discursively constructs e-waste as something bad that can be turned into something profitable thanks to technology, while recycling is always positively appraised by representing it as something enjoyable or a way to avoid extra taxes. Moreover, for industries and governments, it means new profits and energy-independence respectively. However, recycling is never appraised as something good for the environment per se, but only because it has positive consequences on individuals or the economy. Such appraisal choices are in line with a tendency to juxtapose human beings to nature as if the former were separate from the latter. The appraisal patterns in environmental discourse, thus, can be considered as a form of 'doublespeak', i.e. "the obfuscation of language in order to deny or shift responsibility".[39] Put simply, if recycling e-waste is good, the production of e-waste cannot be considered as bad.

[39] Kahn, "The Passive Voice", 243. For further references to doublespeak see William Lutz, *Doublespeak* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).

Identities

Ecocritical Discourse Analysis focuses on how identity is represented in relation to the environment in labels and linguistic structures which can also be destructive, i.e. in opposition to the ecosystem. Building on the study of pronouns in Critical Discourse Analysis, especially the us/them dichotomy, ecolinguistics further explores how pronouns are employed to create in-group and out-group ecological identities. The pronoun 'we', in particular, establishes a bond between writer and reader and strongly influences the self-perception of the latter as a member of the community the former is speaking to/from.

In the data, 'we' is always used to refer either to humanity in general or to a target reader who is assumed to share a western standpoint. In most cases, the two overlap resulting in a westernisation of humankind. Indeed, the BBC News readership is part of a globalised world in which, especially as far as economics discourse is concerned, common knowledge is shaped and sustained by Western

values. Whereas in the sentence "[w]e are in danger of turning that fictional future [a post-apocalyptic world covered in waste] into a reality",[40] the pronoun 'we' includes every human being, in "[b]ut as the developing world grows more industrial and urban, and the amount of waste we produce continues to rise" (ibid.), 'we' refers exclusively to the 'developed' world. The same is to be found when the possessive adjective 'our' or the object pronoun 'us' are employed, e.g. "[w]here many of our electronic goods go to die"[41] and "[t]he success of grassroots events like this highlights the fact that many of us are still unsure what to do with our old devices".[42] Furthermore, the implied opposition between the West and the rest of the world is made explicit in the sentence "[e]ven in the developing countries, they're after the smartphones" (ibid). Not only are these countries defined by means of the Moral Order Frame, but Western models are considered as neutral and desirable. The term 'even', moreover, reinforces the binary opposition based on the superior/inferior dichotomy and seems to mock non-Western countries in their pursuit of gadgets that symbolise western lifestyle.

[40] Belton, "Can technology".

[41] Lane, "Where many of our electronic goods".

[42] Keane, "Bin diving".

The lack of an inclusive ecological identity in the texts is strengthened by the quite frequent use of functionalisation, which is a strategy where "social actors are referred to in terms of an activity".[43] In a world dominated by global economy, this results in a discourse where people are seen as consumers, buyers, workers, etc. Indeed, the data show several examples of functionalisation with a predominant occurrence of 'workers' and 'consumers', while the agents, i.e. manufacturers and producers, are seldom mentioned. Furthermore, the potential victims of toxic components in Ghana and China – those who live near or on the dumps where e-waste is disposed – are often labelled as 'workers' since the recycling industry employs them in spite of the lack of safety measures. Functionalisation here clashes with an ecological representation – and perception – of identity, and functions within the texts as a means to reinforce a profit-oriented ideology.

[43] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2008), 42.

Convictions and Facticity Patterns

Facticity influences the reader's convictions about whether a description in a text is true, false, certain or uncertain by means of facticity patterns, i.e. clusters of linguistic devices such as modals, quantifiers, hedges, presuppositions, calls to expert authority, and technical terms. From an Ecocritical Discourse Analysis point of view, facticity is about whether environmental discourses are codified in a text as if they were neutral and independent from the author, i.e. true enough to become common knowledge or hegemonic discourse.

In its coverage of e-waste, BBC News often relies on calls to expert authority to present the content of its articles as true. This is even more so

especially in the texts published in 2012 and 2013, in which several authoritative voices are quoted, e.g. "Anja French, the charity's director of communications, told the BBC",[44] "says an investigative US writer based in Shanghai",[45] "Mr Minter says" (ibid.), "Mr Ofosu-Ahenkora says",[46] "Oxfam UK chief Barbara Stocking, for example, saying",[47] "said David Danielson, the US assistant secretary for renewable energy",[48] "said Prof Ekberg" (ibid.). As far as modals are concerned, when it comes to the solutions to the e-waste problem, the data show a lower degree of certainty due to a predominant use of 'could' and 'should, which, however, does not weaken the solidity of the overall discourse. Facticity, moreover, is strengthened by the frequent use of technical terms taken from scientific reports and popularised in the texts. They are most commonly employed in the descriptions of new recycling technologies and the effects of toxins on people and nature. In one case the text is followed by a glossary of rare earths.

[44] Lee, "Computer Aid demands".

[45] Katia Moskvitch, "Unused e-waste discarded in China raises questions" (20/04/2012).

[46] Anon. "Ghana bans".

[47] Black, "Rio revisited".

[48] Moskvitch, "US to build".

Erasure and Salience

Erasure focuses on participants who are "suppressed, backgrounded, excluded or erased from texts".[49] Ecocritical Discourse Analysis is particularly concerned with the erasure of nature and the suppression of people as agents in the manipulation and exploitation of the environment. Whereas e-waste has a central position in the texts, workers in African and Asian dumps are never in the foreground. As a matter of fact, backgrounding is a form of erasure in which participants, especially some social groups, are marginalised by mentioning them in a second moment. Among the linguistic devices through which erasure is achieved, transitivity and passivation are employed also by BBC News to refer to workers: "where workers are sometimes exposed",[50] "to protect workers",[51] "slowly poisoning the workers",[52] "where workers can become ill".[53] Taking into account that in any process described in a clause there are at least two participants, i.e. the actor and the affected, in these examples, workers are always the affected, being either the subject of passive clauses or the object of transitive verbs.

[49] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

[50] Anon., "Electronic waste: EU adopts new WEEE law" (19/01/2012).

[51] Keane, "Bin diving".

[52] Lane, "Where many of our electronic goods".

[53] Belton, "Can technology".

Stibbe defines salience as "a story in people's mind that an area of life is important or worthy of attention".[54] Among the linguistic features of salience, impersonalisation, individualisation and homogenisation are particularly relevant in this analysis since the way in which participants are portrayed in the texts contributes to their visibility as human beings. When it comes to the process of e-waste production and disposal, impersonalisation is often used, which leads to the dehumanisation of social actors and, in the case of manufacturers, the concealment of their responsibility. On the other hand, individualisation occurs especially with authoritative voices that are quoted to

[54] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*, Kindle edition.

support the discourse constructed in the texts. Chief executives, scientists, experts, non-profit organisations, etc. are often called by name and their social role is always recognised as salient. On the contrary, the communities that are directly affected by e-waste, especially workers in e-waste dumps, are seldom named and fall into a homogenous category of silenced people, with the exception of David Nderitu, a Kenyan boy who makes jewellery out of computer circuit boards.[55] Homogenisation, as a matter of fact, "reduces the salience of the individual as a unique being, and instead represents them as one of a set of equivalents".[56] By avoiding to identify them by their names, these people are dehumanised and marginalised within the very same discourse on the e-waste problem that deeply affects their lives. Their participation is erased and it is not a mistake that they are placed in the background of the text, since "salience can be built up by foregrounding participants in clauses" (ibid.). The data show how salience is preferably given to participants that belong to the western world or that adopt and promote its models in non-Western countries. As such, the discourse codified by BBC Media is still predominantly Eurocentric.

[55] Anon., "Kenya: Boy lifted out of poverty by e-waste jewellery" (30/01/2014).

[56] Ibid.

Conclusions

The data analysed in this paper show how environmental discourse on e-waste is constructed by BBC News as an economic and technological issue by framing the threat it poses as a resource for corporations to make new profits and create new job opportunities for the communities living near e-waste dumps in some African and Asian regions. By analysing linguistic features such as framing, metaphors, appraisal and facticity patterns, erasure, and salience, it has been demonstrated that BBC News does not omit the hazardousness of disposed electronic devices, but makes it functional to Western economic ideology.

From a diachronic point of view, moreover, the data prove how there has been a shift from articles that focus on specific 'stories' by extensively quoting several authoritative voices to texts that ambivalently present e-waste as a general problem with a positive solution for global economies and non-western populations. Similarly, the frequent use of the pronoun 'we' in the 2015 and 2016 articles may be interpreted as a tendency towards a more radical polarisation, which is anything but a good sign for the future of the ecosystem, i.e. nature and human beings as connected parts of the same environment.

Shelley Hornstein

Waste Not: Salvaging the Lives of Buildings at the Land/Digital Divide

Abstract: The destruction of architecture or its re-location elsewhere to avoid demolition is a part of a history of the planet's wastelands. Land/Slide, a vast art installation exhibition challenges how we consider historic buildings that have been transplanted, as it were, to new tangible and intangible, digital, places. The buildings that form the physical springboard for the exhibition were salvaged as a result of their being relocated to the Markham Museum, near Toronto. Land/Slide opens a debate around architectural history and contemporary practices in art, architectural heritage, and urban cultural life. Artists and architects were invited to adaptively reuse and infuse a selected salvaged building with new life while weaving it back into its previous existence. This chapter explores the game-changing strategies presented in this exhibition that challenge how we consider heritage buildings, sustainable architecture, systems of living and the stratifications of architectural history in what I am calling an ecology of heritage in contemporary culture.

Keywords: *destruction, architecture, salvage, demolition, art exhibition, ecology of heritage*

> Ce qui nous retient dans le spectacle des ruines, même quand l'érudition prétend leur faire dire l'histoire, ou quand l'artifice d'une mise en son et lumière les transforme en spectacle, c'est leur aptitude à faire sentir le temps sans résumer l'histoire ni l'achever dans l'illusion du savoir ou de la beauté, à prendre la forme d'une œuvre d'art, d'un souvenir sans passé
> (Marc Augé, *Le temps en ruines*)

While reeling from the cataclysmal news of the earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, where the staggering of life peaked to almost 9000 souls, we are at once reduced to a feeling of helplessness coupled with shock by the almost immediate and harrowing media images of physical devastation and ruins of architecture fragmented and pulverized to rubble and dust. Rubble is different from how we consider ruins, for as Marc Augé explains, rubble has no time to become ruins. Once, ruins did have a "pure, undateable time, which does not figure in our world of images, simulacra, and reconstitutions".[1] The pictures of Nepal that flooded social media are testimonies that stand in for lost life in a way that seem – however awkward and insufficient in communicating the events as they are experienced – more palpable, more real; these are pictures that convey the absence of any conceivable form of nostalgic and romanticized concept of ruin. Our sensibilities are immediately rattled to see the Maju Deval,

[1] Marc Augé, *Le temps en ruines* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 10 [translation mine].

once an elegant and austere temple of 1690 devoted to the God Shiva, obliterated from that same space, in a heartbeat. The idea that what was is no longer and that what seemed permanent – built of bricks and stone – can be eradicated in a nanosecond, is impossible to synthesize intellectually and we are left with the emotional fallout: the only part that remains for those who only receive the news. How can we not feel crestfallen and grief-stricken to witness these severe physical ravaging of homes and places, as if the image of the violent destruction is an anthropomorphized built environment that connotes the impending fear we imagine for the potential loss of our own lives. Yet the destruction of architecture into a wasteland as a result of natural causes or human interference (often to reinstate national identities) is part of our histories from the beginning of recorded time. And with that destruction, goes memory, embedded in the landscape, in the object, in the remains, in the material evidence or lack thereof. For, as Pierre Nora suggests, "Modern memory is, above all, archival ... it relies entirely on the materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image".[2]

For this chapter, I will discuss a vast art installation exhibition entitled, *Land/Slide*, in order to frame its game-changing strategy to challenge how we consider historic buildings that have been transplanted, as it were, to new physical settings. The buildings that form the physical springboard for the exhibition were salvaged, not demolished, and relocated to the Markham Museum, located in the City of Markham, a municipality in York Region, northeast of Toronto. Whereas the destruction of buildings in Nepal propelled an entire local and international community to rebuild on the site of devastation, the transferred buildings in Markham lost their connection to their original landscapes and material traces... the archival correspondence to the materiality of the trace, to recall Nora, meant that the memory could no longer be located. *Land/Slide* locked its horns with these complicated issues in order to open a larger debate around the stratifications of architectural history and contemporary practices in art, architectural heritage, and urban cultural life generally. I will explore how the curatorial objectives challenged how we consider new approaches to thinking about what I am calling an *ecology of heritage* in the context of contemporary culture. Thanks to this interventionist agency by artists and architects buildings that were once destined for landscapes of waste instead boldly confronted head-on multiple dialogues with the structures' pasts and futures to articulate manifold conversations of the now. How we journey through this temporary exhibition world that relays between the physical and virtual dimensions (or the tangible and intangible – or that which is difficult to put in material form – cultural heritage), is part of the voyage.[3] Therefore, I introduce the term *ecology of heritage* based on a concept by Janet Blake where she argues: "Cultural heritage does not end at monuments

[2] Pierre Nora, Preface, I, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* , trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Columbus: Columbia U. P., 1996), 8.

[3] I turn to Unesco's 2003 *Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage* but best summarized by Janet Blake in her report that attempts to trace the contours for standards for safeguarding that which is intangible. "Developing a New Standard-setting Instrument for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage", Unesco, 2001, revised 2002: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001237/123744e.pdf, accessed 17 May 2015.

and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants".[4] And for this reason, Kristina Baine adds that therefore, "Ecological heritage might be considered a subset of cultural heritage". To extend this for the purposes of this chapter, and taking Baine's lead, heritage is governed or guided by a set of considerations such as the type of involvement someone has with their environment, or if that environment has been subject to change over time.[5]

Public Art Curator, Janine Marchessault, set out to construct a vast physical and virtual network reaching into and beyond local geography where, as she proposed, "The ways in which the cartographic has moved beyond mere two-dimensional representations towards constructed, dynamic and layered spaces" are to be explored.[6] Land/Slide, a "massive"[7] public, spatially epic, exhibition delivered. It shaped, reconfigured, questioned and attempted to highlight the vexing space and place dyad by acknowledging first the breathability and volatility of the ground and what the ground of Markham and its museum represent. The Markham Museum was established in 1971 by the Markham Historical Society, the Lions Club, and the City of Markham. The twenty-five acre site includes a 2011 LEED Gold Standard exhibition hall (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the international rating system for buildings in order to encourage sustainable practices) and collection, and an open-air parkland replete with twenty relocated historic houses and outbuildings (dating from 1820-1930) comprised of, among others, houses and private tradesmen's shops. The Museum assembles thematic exhibitions related to settlement particularly with regard to the environment. Apart from the more than 75,000 items in its collection of various objects, archives and photographs related to individuals, families, settlement history, business and government, the Museum's permanent architectural heritage collection is made up of private houses, log cabins, a Church, Variety Hall and train station.[8]

The exhibition curated by Marchessault in Markham chronicled how, through art and architectural projects, the land on which the Museum sits slides and transforms into other shapes and essences. This was achieved by interweaving a network of tangible heritage historic buildings to the art installations – some of which were physically tangible, built objects while others were intangible digital networks and navigational devices. The label of site-specific work in the subtitle of the exhibition, that is to say art that is located intentionally in a geographic site and is thus physically present, was undone by the very teasing premise of the title of the exhibition itself, *Land/Slide*: Land that Slides, or Land is a Slide, or Can Land Slide? Is it stable, and what slides off of stable land? If site-specificity, as proposed by Nick Kaye, is an artistic approach that proposes "exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined",[9] then the notion of fixity or original

[4] Kristina Baines, *Embodying Ecological Heritage in a Maya Community: Health, Happiness and Identity* (London: Lexington Books, 2016), 7-8.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Janine Marchessault, Project Description, np.

[7] I take this adjective from the exhibition's website: "Land/Slide Possible Futures, September 21-October 14, 2013, Massive Public Art Exhibition in Markham, Ontario", http://www.landslide-possiblefutures.com, accessed 17 May 2015.

[8] Http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/RecreationCulture/MarkhamMuseum/WhatOn, accessed 12 May 2015.

[9] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.

location, as Kaye suggests, depends upon the integrated consideration of site to the work and the exploratory or problematic nature of that relationship.

For Marchessault, the invited artists needed to invest their projects with the imperative to consider the element of time as suggested by the subtext of the title: "Possible Futures". Hence, the interface between the digital and the tangible, the projected and the invisible, is one that we are invited to consider at once through physical presence but also across and through the space/time continuum. *Land/Slide* proposed a wickedly creative solution to adaptively reuse and infuse each of these salvaged buildings with new life, ensuring that this cluster of homes and shops belongs by tying back to the community. Artists and architects were invited to propose new interventional dialogues to take place within the extant buildings all the while tethered to the notion of history, that is, with an awareness of the relationship of the building to a previous existence. *Land/Slide* sought to take up the past in order to carve a pathway to the future yet firmly rooted in the now, the space of the exhibition and its temporariness. The invited contributors thus disrupted and played with these existing pioneer houses while poring over at least eight thousand artefacts in the collection in order to create site-specific installations that could speak to memory – or the imagined histories of the buildings – through interactivity, responsive environments and performative intervention. Each work is an attempt to request something new to emerge from the building as a result of this integration and interrogation, and each avoids cannibalising the existing building in favour instead of gentle agitation to set the structure gently thumping back into existence – almost giving the building a new heartbeat. Given this agenda of objectives, what are some of the game-changing shifts and strategies presented in this exhibition that challenge how we consider heritage buildings, sustainable architecture, systems of living and the stratifications of architectural history that attempt to be alive still and in continual dialogue? How is it possible to pretend to reach back into the past while pushing forward, or really consider the now? What does it mean to incorporate a historic structure into a contemporary project and weave it into the cloth of this Markham parkland, this oasis of ruined and revived buildings?

Some of the pieces, such as the work by Mark-David Hosale, computational media artist and composer whose work questions the digital, virtual and material divide, also included touch-sensitive electronic circuits inviting people to interact in an ecology of form, light and sound. Elsewhere, various mapping tools were introduced to negotiate the campus or staged events.

At this point, let me present a surgical snippet of only four of the over thirty artists' projects included in the show to drive home my point. First, in *A surface describing the volume of earth displaced for redevelopment on this building's original site,* (Figs. 1-2) Adrian Blackwell and Jane Hutton studied how the

colonised land is leveled, or that which is developed, stockpiled and backfilled, to erase previous footsteps, markers and life. Instead, they erected a structure of soil to approximate the displaced quantities for redeveloped land that would become the Wyper Harness Shop. In their words: "Levelling is a strategy which is a symptom of both sovereign property, the desires of the state to mark land as national territory, and of capitalist property, where the land is seen as a site for the extraction value that can be maximized on a *tabula rasa.*[10]

[10] See Adrian Blackwell and Jane Hutton, "A surface describing the volume of earth displaced for redevelopment on this building's original site", http://www.landslide-possiblefutures.com/site.html#blackwell, accessed May 2015.

Fig. 1: Adrian Blackwell and Jane Hutton, *A surface describing the volume of earth displaced for redevelopment on this building's original site*, Day, 2013, architectural intervention, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Fig. 2: Adrian Blackwell and Jane Hutton, *A surface describing the volume of earth displaced for redevelopment on this building's original site*, Night, 2013, architectural intervention, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Similarly, Jeff Thomas asks in the title of his installation, *Where do we go from here?* (Figs. 3-5). For his piece, he uses the once active train station that stood for movement of the colonial settlements and that undercut the indigenous histories of Markham and Toronto. Thomas considers the map of North America before Europeans set foot on its soil and then compares it to a second map of today's landscape where indigenous peoples are sequestered onto

designated land parcels: reserves and reservations. Where are the indigenous people on urban maps, he asks, and why they are invisible? That heritage, that ecology of population, must be made visible from there to here, from that place to which the general audience does not venture, to the place of this exhibition, and where we are located as we participate in the piece.

Fig. 3: Jeff Thomas, *Where do we go from here?,* Detail 1, 2013, photo intervention, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Fig. 4: Jeff Thomas, *Where do we go from here?,* Detail 2, 2013, photo intervention, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Fig. 5: Jeff Thomas, *Where do we go from here?,* Detail 3, 2013, photo intervention, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

For their contribution, Patricio Davila and Dave Colangelo tracked a romanticised cartographic return projected filmically on a barn structure in *The Line* (Figs. 6-7). Against the planks was a haunting and evocative showcasing in moving images of the larger lines that intersect the spaces between then and now, here and there, the borders, fences, pipelines, green belts and flight paths that represent, as they put it, our ideals, hopes, fears and failures. The piece shown day and night alike, and transforming light to darkness while cloaking architectural structures that make them disappear, beg the question that is their title: Where do we draw the line?

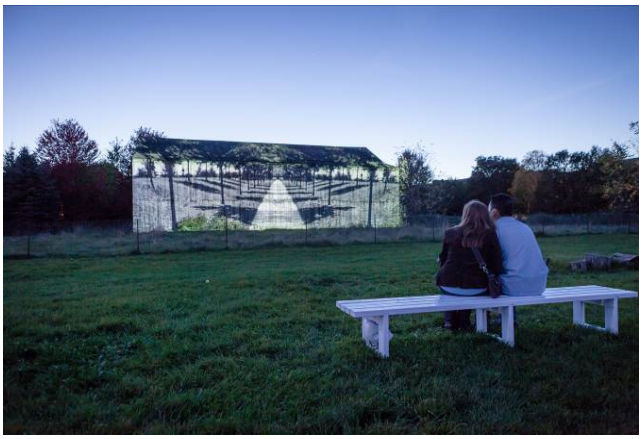

Fig. 6: Patricio Davila and Dave Colangelo, *The Line,* Day, 2013, installation and architectural projection, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land/Slide.

Fig. 7: Patricio Davila and Dave Colangelo, *The Line,* Night, 2013, installation and architectural projection, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Finally, in this brief sampling, Phil Hoffman's *Slaughterhouse* (Figs. 8-10) resolutely bars us from entry into the historic building, yet he teases our curiosity. How is this achieved? He offers temptations to peak through

peepholes and worn barn wood cracks in the rescued structure. The work calls attention by harnessing our visual contact to the slits and pokes into the boards and the space for our eyes to squint into the darkness. Eventually, we perceive the light that illuminates a photographic or filmic animation of the barn's butchering heritage. As if to beguile us with an exclusive and nostalgic view of the past, Hoffman shrewdly tugs us back to the present when we move onto a chink in the structure's surface that we must find for ourselves. The futility for us to be able to access the interior space aside from the visual glimpse through the crack or puncture in the barn-boards reminds us of the past that is impossible to recuperate. Yet while we can no longer access the slaughterhouse, Hoffman's experiment with cocooning the (and our) inside space is no less real.

Fig. 8: Phil Hoffman, *Slaughterhouse,* Detail 1, 2013, multi-channel video and sound installation, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Fig. 9: Phil Hoffman, *Slaughterhouse,* Detail 2, 2013, multi-channel video and sound installation, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Fig. 10: Phil Hoffman, *Slaughterhouse,* Detail 3, 2013, multi-channel video and sound installation, Markham Museum, Markham, *Land|Slide Possible Futures*, Courtesy of Will Pemulis and Land|Slide.

Apart from these four projects it is worth briefly mentioning a few others that stirred history, memory and place in these historic and physical settings. The "Soup and Bread" Food program, for example, was a digital and material media project by Lisa Myers and Richard Fung. Myers is an artist who uses walking and cooking research to retell narratives for her video, film and photographic projects. Fung is a Toronto-based video artist, writer, theorist and educator, whose work explores queer sexuality, Asian identity, colonialism, immigration, racism, homophobia, and his personal family history. An audio tour entitled, "The Rust in the Furrow" by David Han, recounted a fictional visitor's interactions with residents of one of the heritage buildings. As a filmmaker, video and digital media artist, he alters interactive technology to locate the fine line between cinema, new media and video. Or take a sound project by Iain Baxter& (pronounced Baxterand), "CARmen: a symphony for Cars". This legendary Canadian artist, whose work dates back to the 1960s, is often referred to as the visual Marshall McLuhan. An Officer of the Order of Canada, among other noteworthy honours, he has been devoted to exploring the meshing of environmental, ecological and contemporary projects with regard to the broadest sense of the information landscape. For Land/Scape, he included windshield wipers, car doors slamming open and hut, horns alarms, seat belts and ignitions that performed as musical instruments, creating a cacophonous symphony to awaken our senses to contemporary urban culture in this parkland.

General Thoughts on Heritage: Salvage and Waste Not

To return to the heritage objective of this museum, I want to lay out various thoughts about such objectives. Transporting these historic buildings to this Museum site reflects one type of heritage philosophy. While conventional wisdom suggests that architectural heritage buildings at risk of demolition can be "saved" if they are transported from one location (where the risk is high) to

another "safe space", this is really no more than an emptied emotional act, emptied of the memory that is tied to the what Pierre Nora referred to as the materiality of the trace: "Modern memory is first of all archival. It relies entirely on the specificity of the trace, the materiality of the vestige, the concreteness of the recording, the visibility of the image".[11] We no longer assign the emotional attachment to the material object – such as the barn or the house – when it is detached, or ripped from its material site. Site is powerful and is woven to the object, inseparable from it, actually. To surgically remove it and shift its location saves the material form but not the soul that inhabits it. For it is the fabric of places, all the architectural, geographic and topographic bits and pieces that form, when taken together, the cultural and emotional soul of a place. So what do we do with salvaged buildings and how are we to consider them in their new quarters?

Part of the rationale is rooted in the increasingly public and visible nature of heritage properties and the exponential growth of the preservation movements. While ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites established in 1965) banned relocation of historic buildings (of its Article 7 [Venice Charter, 1964]: "a monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs", more recently, in one of its charters of 2003, principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage, the idea relocation was accepted on the grounds that "Dismantling and reassembly should only be undertaken as an optional measure when conservation by any other means is impossible or harmful.[12] But as Jenny Gregory points out in her in-depth study of relocated buildings, "Underlying the heritage concerns surrounding relocation is a very real apprehension that relocation will compromise the authenticity of heritage buildings".[13] Yet she doesn't hold her punches when she underscores that "[m]uch that is intended to replicate the past authentically bears no resemblance to the 'real' past".[14] And of course, open air museums contribute to this aura of authenticity with simulations or performance based "staged authenticity", a term coined by Dean MacCannell in 1973 (and perhaps best understood in Living Museums where actors dress as historic figures, such as pioneers, to simulate life "as it was").[15]

However, this late 20th century preservationist methodology is not without its flaws. To imagine that saving a building is saving a past, or a nation, or an identity, reflects a cult of historic monuments, and a cult is a system of worship[16] replete with ethical and altruistic elements, whether national or individual, as Alois Riegl argued in 1903. "Old buildings became the relics, vestments, and symbols of a commemorative liturgy grounded in historiographical practice".[17] For his part, the art historian and preservationist, George Dehio, also declared: "We conserve a monument not because we consider it beautiful, but because it is a piece of our national life. To protect

[11] Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire", *Representations*, 26, Special Issue: *Memory and Counter-Memory* (Spring 1989), 7-24, 8.

[12] Jenny Gregory, "Reconsidering Relocated Buildings: ICOMOS, Authenticity and Mass Relocation", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 14.2 (2008), 112-130.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings", *American Journal of Sociology*, 79.3 (November 1973), 589-603.

[16] Rudy Koshar, "On Cults and Cultists", in Max Page and Randall Mason, eds., *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States* (New York: Routledge 2004), 37-60.

[17] Ibid., 31.

monuments is not to pursue pleasure, but to practice piety".[18] And so it is that the decision by the Municipality of Markham to move these houses and barns and harness shops to the museum location to "protect" them took place to inculcate the belief that in so doing, one takes on the role as protectorate of a past that would otherwise have been erased.

It is worth noting, too, that along with the theoretical implications about architectural destruction comes salvation: The term "spoliation", from the Latin term *spolia* – once used to describe the pillage and re-appropriation of buildings – is now defined as "the integral adaptation of buildings and as the reuse of construction material salvaged from structures for erection elsewhere".[19] Spoliation, for this exhibition especially, takes spins otherwise and provides these structures of the past, that is to say, heritage sites, with a new life in the present, for, as Eric Hobsbawn cautions, "If there is no suitable past, it can always be invented".[20] We see, therefore, that the Markham Museum acted on an impulse to integrally adapt the salvaged buildings to a new physical environment but in maintaining the mythologised "living" history of their pasts. This exhibition, however, clearly reveals the willingness and foresight of the Markham Museum director who embraced and encouraged *Land/Slide,* clearly recognising and championing its objectives. This is no doubt largely due to the idea that, rather than ruminate about wastelands and what the action of transposing architecture from its original setting does, this exhibition proposes an opportunity; an opportunity born from a cognitive dissonance. It is an opportunity to imagine an alternative community built for the future, a community where the wish to reconcile history could in some way be attempted to create a pattern of revival through sited incongruities, indeed sited through those dissonances. Here are some theoretical vignettes that demonstrate what I mean by cognitive dissonance.

[18] Ibid., 32.

[19] Joseph Albermes, "*Spolia* in Roman Cities of the Late Empire: Legislative Rationales and Architectural Reuse", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* 48 (1994), 167-178.

[20] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "The New Threat to History", *The New York Review of Books*, 16 December 1993, 40.21, http://www.nybooks.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/articles/1993/12/16/the-new-threat-to-history/, accessed 18 September 2015.

Vignette 1

The experience of place as a wasteland recovered, or as a wasteland retold, is at the heart of this exhibition. Specifically, architecture has been recruited to infiltrate and challenge sculptural practices and spatial narratives. This junction, or this mediated moment of encounter, between the afterlife of buildings and the visual and sensorial cultural process of making is required in order to mark the cognitive dissonance. And cognitive dissonance is marked in turn by the multiple and parallel systems of how we experience and sustain our cultures generally. Emily Apter bemoans that "Life forms are vanishing, landmasses are eroding, holes are widening in the ozone, and nations subsist in a state of increasing mineral depletion".[21] Each artist's project critically questions natural and built habitats in the wake of such an ecological mandate within their

[21] Emily Apter, "The Aesthetics of Critical Habitats", *October*, 99 (Winter 2002), 21-44.

practice. Moreover, each artist is preoccupied with the sites of political and social struggle surrounding them rather than the more globally produced (or virtual) habitats of social media. Yet, it is important to signal that Apter is speaking to a world that dates from more than a decade ago. These were early days when people were preoccupied, despondent, or even enraged with increasingly global overreaching culture and economies, announcing our world of today. However, to imagine the world of big data and trans-global networks overtop of the local – and sometimes all too myopic – economies, is to miss the point; this is because it is the very interfacial place, that space between those concepts, that is the point. And this is where Land/Slide derives its momentum and begins its journey.

Vignette 2

More tangentially, still, the dissonance of ripped architecture or newly functioning place became metaphorically clear for me on a recent flight from Los Angeles to Toronto. The view out my window laid out the strikingly arid landscape which soon appeared to be torn apart by finger-like cracks. Abruptly, with accelerated nightfall across the time zones, the geographic blackness splintered with bronze lights flickering far below: these familiar patterns of the suburban regularity of road systems and angled shapes of architecture became visible as the city took form. This series of images out my window is not unlike the way Michel de Certeau described his view from the then World Trade Center where "the gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes", and "One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it.... An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below".[22] It is almost as though we must relish this aerial view to appreciate our location – ever mobile nonetheless – in city space. Indeed airports, as the new train stations, accelerate a conversation about our relationship to the city. Yet we are still challenged, and subsequently refute the competing perspectives, of where we are. How can we awaken our state of interrogation to recharge our sense of place and its "imageability": that place where the land and the communities it represents meet the built forms, the forms from the past meet the future, and where we are present in stillness or movement as the *land slides* into being, a land once wasted and now recovered, and positions us to understand the full arc of its form in its context.

[22] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, trans. by Steven Randall), 91-2. De Certeau elaborates about Greek narration or "diegesis", a process that guides and transgresses, topological rather than topical, or place-related (see 129).

Vignette 3

Cities, of course, are for and of the people who are in them, live or visit, who ambulate, skate-board, bicycle, tram, bus, subway, drive, sit, stand, lie, live, eat,

work, or play in them. Cities are also flora and fauna, or what we sometimes call "nature" albeit mostly curated in cities as opposed to the landscapes beyond its ever difficult-to-decipher borders. And equally, cities are really the sum of its invisibles meshed with the hard architectural visibles: the smells, breezes, winds, drafts, heat-waves, cold spells, and all the other weather that fills the physical houses and office buildings, warehouses and apartments like spray foam insulation that puffs and expands into every nook and cranny. Mobility in cities is a performance of actors in place, of minds invited into a site to engage, rethink and reshape.

We also know that what gives character to places extends beyond the architecture to the psycho-geographic networks that tie those (usually) fixed objects to each other and to us in composing the city, communities, and places. Citizens and tourists, short-term and long-term visitors, and the routes they take every day, week or month of the year through its passageways are sometimes set, and many times are serendipitous pathways to create or follow once or repeatedly. Along the way we enter into stories and histories with the places we see, touch, hear, smell or sometimes even taste.

Between our entry points to the city and the stuff of the city itself, is the past of those places, the past we bump up against in the city, the past that lives in our everydayness, the past that is sometimes set apart as something to relish, something to consider, something to identify as precious and protected. It is what we inherit from the past, but then what we identify specifically as heritage, or that with which we no longer have an active engagement but rather a passive one.

Ultimately, an Ecology of Heritage

Why is there a worldwide campaign to protect heritage sites? Perhaps what we are truly considering, rather, is the ecology of heritage. Heritage sites are relics of the past but present today. Their apparent dis-embodiment from the present troubles us as we attempt to develop strategies to mediate them for our current moment in time: that is, to be present with us now as opposed to being considered as residue of relics of inheritance from the past, or a time that is no longer alive for us today. "Heritage ... is the transvaluation of the obsolete, the mistaken, the outmoded, the dead, and the defunct", as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblatt defined it long ago in 1995. She continues, "Heritage is created through a process of exhibition (as knowledge, as performance, as museum display)".[23] Another way of understanding this is to imagine that what we have been told as past is otherwise considered as finished, discarded remnants of another timeframe, nothing but waste and refuse (or that which is refused) of the past, the material culture of which is sometimes still tangible today.

[23] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Theorizing Heritage", *Ethnomusicology,* 39.3 (Autumn 1995), 367-380.

We have witnessed examples of where problematic scenarios arise in a battle to appropriate identities at these sites in an effort to "construct an authentic, historic narrative, on which collective identities and political claims can be validly asserted in the present".[24] Ecology has been subject to many diverse definitions and appropriations as a term. But if we return to its Greek origins where the root is in the study of the house, or the scientific analysis and study of interactions among organisms and their environment, then we are close, very close, to possessing a broad understanding of what it means to have an ecology of heritage, or the study of the various interactions among historic places, ideas, and habitats as organisms. Moreover, the word "organisms" can suggest heritage as a process of objects, indeed living things that are in ongoing interaction with their surroundings and with each other. For its part, human ecology is the spacing and interdependence of people. Hence we can come to a broader consideration of heritage ecology as a spacing and interdependence of heritage ideas, places, objects and people that relate to habitat or home.

[24] Chaim Noy, "Embodying Ideologies in Tourism: A Commemorative Visitor Book in Israel as a Site of Authenticity", in Phillip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams, eds., *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society,* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 219-240.

Land/Slide Wastes Not: Thoughts to Conclude

The Land/Slide exhibition revived the deadness of heritage sites and the idea that they can haunt so abidingly on their own. These sites, once transported to the Museum precincts, remained locked in what I would argue is a wasteland of the past, never to be considered anew and where the curatorial objective is to retain the format of a Living Museum. Living Museums typically attempt to recreate a semblance of the past by experiential considerations in the present architectures. For the Markham Museum, this takes the form of, among others, activities in the Blacksmith shop ("What is a Blacksmith and what was their changing role in the community?), or in a log cabin ("Discover how people lived before modern home conveniences"). As its website indicates, "[v]isitors can explore the changes in our landscape ... how we came together as a community over the past 100 years".[25] The challenge for the Land/Slide exhibition, therefore, was to target heritage alternatively. It mediated by fragmenting aspects of the past and re-assigning them as quotations in the present tense. How interesting to note that cultural historian and philosopher, Walter Benjamin, once suggested: "To write history ... means to *quote* history. But the concept of quotation implies that any given historical object must be ripped out of its context".[26] The ripping method modeled on his thoughts, became what he called the "montage principle", and recently, what Patricia Morton called a criticism method that completes a revelatory operation and makes explicit the pre- and post-histories of what is discovered.[27] An ecology of heritage, then, pushes our critical thinking to see what Benjamin saw as the dialectical image where the "trash of history" breaks the flow of narrative

[25] Http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/RecreationCulture/MarkhamMuseum/WhatOn, accessed 12 May 2015.

[26] Walter Benjamin, "On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress", N11,3, http://www.rae.com.pt/Benjamin_Methode.pdf, accessed May 2015.

[27] Patricia A. Morton, "The Afterlife of Buildings: Architecture and Walter Benjamin's Theory of History", in Dana Arnold et al., eds., *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 215-228.

continuity forcing a gap to be created between the notion of "context" and how the historical building once functioned.[28]

[28] Morton, "The Afterlife of Buildings", 225.

Land/Slide was welcomed as an event that began a process of thinking about this gap, or forced awareness of the space between then and now, and, as with all ecological structures, the inevitable interconnectedness of systems (and thanks to this exhibition and its afterlife in print and visual media, we are reminded of it). If we can begin to see heritage this way, we can also recognize how the term "authentic" is somewhat misplaced, or at least has an awkward role in heritage ecology. And this inevitably leads to considering how that notion of the authentic is mediated, in particular, through the souvenir, as a remnant of a place, memory or heritage property. "'Authentic' experience', as Susan Stewart tells us, "becomes both elusive and allusive as it is placed beyond the horizon of present lived experience, the beyond in which the antique, the pastoral, the exotic and other fictive domains are articulated".[29]

[29] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke U. P., 1993), 133.

To imagine these heritage houses and tradesmen shops in the parkland of the Markham Museum as "authentic" would be suggesting that they are part of the present lived experience. The Land/Slide artists and architects sought to disentangle these notions. And in the end, what this exhibition attempts to make clear, is how distant their pasts are, and yet how close and present they can be if articulated through a contemporary lens. It affirms that while an experience of nostalgia can result from the re-manufacturing of these emptied, re-positioned, and newly articulated historic buildings, there is an attempt to halt or reverse the nostalgic sentiment. To countermand this, Land/Slide offers vignettes, and indeed even encourages us to consider creating our own narratives for confronting history and memory so that it can be powered up for an ecology of heritage. The resistance to nostalgia is a conscious decision to untangle the knots of historical mythologies for all of these projects, in fact, in an effort to step into the present moment with new forms of agency and critique.

I have discussed only a smattering of the projects broached in this prodigious and capacious exhibition, projects that offer poignant cogitations with history, place, space and time. The curatorial objective shatters any shortsightedness that historic buildings continue to live and represent the past, that it is possible to support the idea of a fluidity from then to now, such as we continue to see in Living Museums, for example. What it did prove, however, is that the afterlife of buildings (originally destined as wasteland) can evolve differently. Patricia Morton eloquently summarises Benjamin's thoughts on traditional history (and in this case, read, buildings) that serves to reflect on the past as "a constellation of contingent, local knowledge that flashes up into dialectical images constructed out of history's detritus".[30] And this is precisely how Land/Slide proceeds. It serves as a moment in time – in only a period of a few weeks – as a media-interrogation, a meditative, psycho-geographic musing on history and

[30] Morton, "The Afterlife of Buildings", 228.

place, that resuscitated the park-land through storytelling that temporarily transformed itself and us by hitching us onto the past and sliding, as Land/Slides can do, maybe even head-first, into the future, possibly, but more importantly, into the now.

Stefania D'Avanzo

Promoting and Preserving 'The Waste Land': The Environmental Discourse of the UK Government

Abstract: The notion of language as a form of action which is socially shaped and socially constitutive allows us to think of any text as constitutive of social identity, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough 1992). Starting from this assumption, the study was aimed at investigating the UK government's 'beliefs' and viewpoint concerning environmental issues. In particular, the UK Department of Energy and Climate change and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' actions have been taken into account focussing on political speeches concerning environment, including sustainability, water and land pollution, food safety, energy efficiency, agricultural emissions, climate change. According to Fairclough (1989, 1995), ideologies are socially and discursively formed, reproduced and changed in a variety of ways which include institutional forms of discourse among their most prestigious varieties. In the study attention has been paid to the way the institutional Departments of the UK government build-up their own 'discourse' while promoting their own action on protecting and preserving the environment. In short, the final goal has been to focus on UK Government's ideological attitude towards the preservation of 'the waste' world environment.

Keywords: *evaluation, environment, CDA, food, commitment, politics*

Corpus, aims, methodology

The study is aimed at investigating the UK government's action and viewpoint concerning environmental issues. In particular, the UK Department of Energy and Climate change and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' actions will be taken into account focussing on some crucial topics, such as environment, sustainability, water and land pollution, food safety, energy efficiency, agricultural emissions, climate change.[1] The assumption is based on the theoretical notion of language intended as a form of action which is socially shaped and socially constitutive and which allows us to think of any text as constitutive of social identity, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs.[2]

Furthermore, the concept of ideologies intended as socially and discursively formed will be considered. In particular, ideologies are reproduced and changed in a variety of ways which include institutional forms of discourse among their most prestigious varieties.[3] More specifically, in the study, the relationship between Evaluation and ideologies will be investigated.[4] The corpus is comprised of 30 speeches by politicians working for two British Departments. The final aim will be to focus on the corpus on evaluative adjectives co-

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/%20department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs; https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change, accessed 14 May 2015.

[2] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press,1992).

[3] Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman,1989); Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[4] Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

occurring with some main key-words in order to analyse the institutional 'viewpoint' concerning some crucial environmental issues.

In short, attention will be paid to the way the institutional Departments of the UK government devoted to these issues build up their own 'discourse' while promoting their own action on protecting and preserving the environment.[5]

In the study, Antconc 3.2.4 W 2011 has been employed to provide quantitative data to be analysed from a quantitative and qualitative perspective. In particular, Antconc tools such as word frequency and clusters have been adopted in order to investigate the key-words in their immediate co-text.

[5] Susan Hunston, *Corpus Approaches to Evaluation: Phraseology and Evaluative Language* (London: Routledge, 2011); Hunston et al., *Pattern Grammar: A Corpus-driven Approach to the Lexical Grammar of English* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999); John Sinclair, *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1991).

Evaluation and CDA

The main concept in the current study is evaluation which is strongly related to a value-system where some ideological implications are found. This means that evaluative choices reveal the ideology implicit in the writer or the institution that has produced them. In particular, evaluation can be considered both subjectively and within a societal-system as it can convey the writer's viewpoint, but, at the same time, it may represent some principles and values belonging to some institutions and ideologies.[6]

In the study, particular attention will be paid to the evaluative adjectival dimension. The final aim will be to focus on the way the government controls people's opinions concerning political actions in favour of environment, climate, energy sources and food protection.

Powerful groups are usually assumed able to take and maintain control over public discourse, to build-up both content and 'structures' of texts and talks. In particular, controlling discourse basically means controlling people's minds. Thus, the focus is here on discourse structures which influence mental representation. This concept is based on the assumption that language is a part of society, as it can be considered a socially conditioned process, conditioned that is by other (non-linguistic) parts of society. This perspective is also shared by Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak who assert that defining discourse as social practice implies the existence of a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the institutions and social structures which frame it.[7]

In the study, the discursive event is represented by political speeches where the interaction 'engaging in politics' is most directly visible and experienced. Moreover, during the discursive event, political actions are also defined in terms of intentions, purposes, goals and functions within the more complex political process.[8] While focussing on aims and intentions, politicians make a large use of evaluative choice. Thus, the relationship between power and discourse structure is investigated here with particular attention to evaluative lexis in order to analyse the UK 'viewpoint' concerning some environmental issues and

[6] Hunston,"Evaluation and Organization in Academic Discourse", in Malcom Coulthard, ed., *Advances in Written Text Analysis* (London: Routledge,1994), 191-218.

[7] Gilbert Weiss et al., eds., *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[8] Van Djik, "What Is Political Discourse Analysis?", *Political Linguistics*, 11 (1997), 11-52.

the way the UK government represents its personal commitment to face them. In short, through the investigation of some evaluative choice, the ideological viewpoint of the two UK Departments concerning the environmental issue will be analysed.

Evaluation through adjectives

Evaluation means using that language which indexes the act of evaluation or the act of stance-taking[9] strongly related to ideological assumption. This relationship is multifaceted.

"On the one hand, implicit evaluation works in a text because writer and reader share assumptions. On the other hand, the ideological position that lies behind a text can be inferred by the analyst by examining the evaluation in it".[10] In the study, great attention will be paid to possible evaluative choices inside the text. In particular, the adjectival dimension related to evaluation will be taken into account. According to Francis et al.,[11] it is possible to distinguish among different types of evaluative adjectives, such as, for example, adjectives indicating emotion (e.g. *Ann's friends were less* ***enthusiastic*** *about her plans, I've always felt* ***very affectionate*** *towards Kare, Canada is* ***seriously worried*** *over the level of spending*), adjectives indicating human qualities (e.g. *Her mother was* ***clever*** *at many things, We left for New York feeling ...* ***inadequate*** *as parents*), adjectives indicating qualities of things (*e.g. blues and greens are* ***easy*** *on the eye*, *insects which are* ***beneficial*** *to birds)*, adjectives indicating attitudes (e.g. *It is* ***understandable*** *why they hate the sight of him*, *it is quite* ***possible*** *to alter or extend a house*). In the study, more attention will be paid to the adjectives used to convey qualities of things. To be more precise, the adjectives co-occurring with some key-words will be investigated. A crucial distinction concerning evaluative adjectives has been also provided by Martin and White.[12] In particular, they distinguish between patterns which appear to express 'what someone thinks about something' 'how good or bad an entity is' or 'how good or bad what someone does is'. The first is also defined as 'affect', whereas the second one as 'appreciation', the third as 'judgement'. The authors also provide some grammatical structures which could make the reader understand more easily the deep meaning of the three patterns. More specifically, they assert that affect occurs in the frame '*I feel (very)x, as I feel very happy/sad'*; judgment occurs canonically in the frame '*it was x of him/her to do that, as in It was kind or cruel of him to do that'*; finally, appreciation occurs in the frame '*I consider it x, as in I consider it innovative/unimaginative*'.[13] In the study, appreciation is the most significant category, as it implies a personal viewpoint about something rather than judgment or personal affect towards something. In a previous study on

[9] John W. Du Bois, "The Stance Triangle", in Robert Englebretson, ed., *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 139-182.

[10] Hunston, *Corpus Approaches to Evaluation* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 13.

[11] Gill Francis et al., *Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns 2: Nouns and Adjectives* (London: HarperCollins, 1998).

[12] James Martin et al., *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (London: Palgrave, 2005).

[13] Martin, "Introduction", *Text* 23, special issue on Appraisal (2003), 173.

evaluative devices in political discourse, the results showed that politicians both used them as a strategy to win electoral votes while deprecating the opposing party and, therefore, minimising their opponents' chances of winning the elections.[14] In the study, appreciation could be considered as a political strategy aimed at convincing the audience of good political actions concerning environmental issues.

[14] Ana B. Cabrejas-Peñuelas et al., "Positive Self-evaluation Versus Negative Other-evaluation in the Political Genre of Pre-election Debates", *Discourse & Society,* 25.2 (2014), 159-185.

Evaluation in the '*About us'* sections

In this section, evaluation will be investigated through the analysis of the adjectival dimension. In particular, the *about us* section of the two Departments has been analysed in order to focus on the strategies employed by the UK government to promote its own actions concerning energy supplies, climate change, environment and food:

1) About us section (UK Department of Energy and Climate change)
What we do
The Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) works to make sure the UK has ***secure, clean, affordable*** energy supplies and promote international action to mitigate climate change (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change, About us section)
Responsibilities
We are responsible for:

energy security – making sure UK businesses and households have ***secure*** supplies of energy for light and power, heat and transport

action on climate change – leading government efforts to mitigate climate change, both through international action and cutting UK greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 (including by sourcing at least 15% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020) renewable energy – sourcing at least 15% of our energy from renewable sources by 2020

affordability – delivering ***secure***, low-carbon energy at the least cost to consumers, taxpayers and the economy

fairness – making sure the costs and benefits of our policies are distributed fairly so that we protect ***the most vulnerable*** and fuel poor households and address competitiveness problems faced by energy intensive industries

supporting growth – delivering our policies in a way that maximises the benefits to the economy in terms of jobs, growth and investment, including by making the most of our existing oil and gas reserves and seizing the opportunities presented by the rise of the global green economy managing the UK's energy legacy safely, securely and cost effectively.[15]

[15] Https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change.

As can be observed in the text above, ***secure*** is the most frequent adjective, co-occurring with one of the most relevant key-words in the text. In particular, it co-occurs as a premodifier of the phrase *supplies of energy,* but also as a premodifier along with the adjectives *clean, affordable* or the phrase *secure, low carb on energy*.

According to the theoretical categorization proposed by Francis et al.,[16] all the adjectives can be included in the category of adjectives qualifying things. Moreover, they could be considered as expression of 'appreciation' according to the theoretical framework offered by Martin.[17] In particular, the UK Department wants to show 'how good' the supplies of energy will be in terms of security, cleanliness and affordability, as it commits itself to guarantee UK businesses and households protection and safety.

[16] Francis et al., *Collins Cobuild Grammar Patterns*.

[17] Martin, "Introduction", 173.

A similar perspective can be seen in the About us section of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:

2) About us section (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)
What we do
We are the UK government department responsible for safeguarding our natural environment, supporting our world-leading food and farming industry, and sustaining a ***thriving*** rural economy. Our broad remit means we play a major role in people's day-to-day life, from the food we eat, and the air we breathe, to the water we drink.
Purpose
Unleashing the potential of food and farming, nature and the countryside, championing the environment and protecting us all from natural threats and hazards.
Objectives
a cleaner, healthier environment which benefits people and the economy
a world-leading food and farming industry
a thriving rural economy, contributing to national prosperity and wellbeing
a nation protected against natural threats and hazards, with ***strong*** response and recovery capabilities
excellent delivery, on time and to budget and with outstanding value for money
an organisation continually striving to be the best, focused on outcomes and constantly challenging itself
Themes
boosting UK productivity
data availability and utilisation
better domestic regulation

delivering our priorities internationally (including EU reform, US and China) ...

Responsibilities include: ...

food and farming

animal health and welfare

marine and fisheries

science and innovation

better regulation

continuing to be successful, strong, healthy, etc.[18]

[18] Https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs, accessed 14 December 2015.

As can be observed in the example above, adjectives with a very positive connotation have been employed. In particular***, clean, healthy, thriving and excellent*** deal with the semantic fields of strength, healthiness, efficiency. More specifically, healthiness is associated with environment, whereas, strength and efficiency mainly refer to the UK economy and political actions (e.g. a *thriving rural economy, excellent delivery, on time*).

A very interesting point concerns comparatives and superlatives which have been employed in the example above. According to Huston and Sinclair,[19] gradedness indicates comparison, and comparison with a norm or scale is often a matter of subjectivity. The latter is one of the contributors to evaluative meaning. According to Thompson/Hunston,[20] "Identifying evaluation ... is a question of identifying signals of comparison, subjectivity, and social value". In the instance above, subjectivity and evaluation are conveyed through the graded forms of the adjectives ***clean, healthy, good***. Through subjective gradedness of these adjectives, the UK government seems to convey awareness of the need of a more efficient policy concerning environment than in the past. As a matter of fact, the adjectives are mentioned among its main objectives.

[19] Hunston et al., "A Local Grammar of Evaluation", in Susan Hunston et al., eds., *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2000).

[20] Ibid., 13.

Evaluative adjectives with key words

Evaluating *energy* and *climate change* in the whole corpus

A further step in the study has been to focus on possible evaluative adjectives co-occurring with the two main words and phrases in the corpus - *energy* and *climate change*.

As far as the word *energy* is concerned, further investigation of its immediate co-text has been carried out:

Total No. of Collocate Types: 278					
Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 1137					
1	305	0	0	-1	energy
2	80	0	80	8.41631	efficiency

3	74	0	0	-1	Energy
4	38	37	1	3.33913	the
5	24	4	20	3.40750	and
6	21	21	0	3.58775	of
7	15	0	15	7.65578	security
8	15	15	0	4.79595	our
9	15	11	4	3.42482	in
10	14	0	14	8.06320	saving
11	12	12	0	4.64579	on
12	12	12	0	7.62930	clean
13	11	11	0	7.50377	renewable
14	11	2	9	7.20832	efficient
15	11	11	0	6.23528	an
16	10	10	0	5.45066	their
17	10	6	4	3.70158	for
18	9	2	7	7.35177	secure

Table 1: Collocations of *energy*.

In the table above, collocations (sorted by right and left) of the word *energy* reveal the most frequent phrases or words co-occurring with this first key-word. If attention is paid to the most frequent adjectives, it is possible to observe ***clean, renewable, efficient and secure*** as the most relevant ones. In the following examples, the co-text of the pattern *evaluative adjective+energy* has been further explored:

3) Our reform of the electricity market will rebuild our energy economy, securing the next generation of ***clean*** energy infrastructure. The renewable heat incentive and carbon capture and storage projects are breaking new ground.

4) It is clearer than ever that energy efficiency is one of the most cost effective ways of meeting our objectives for ***clean, affordable, secure*** energy.

As can be noticed in 3), *clean* is employed to qualify the type of energy the UK government wants to provide in order to rebuild the UK energy economy.

In 4) *energy* co-occurs with the three evaluative adjectives *clean, affordable, secure*. In particular, the phrase *clean, affordable, secure energy* is explicitly presented as one of the objectives of the UK government.

As far as adjectives co-occurring with *climate change* is concerned, it is possible to notice two possible structures where *climate change* co-occurs with

some adjectives-phrase including *climate change+be+adjective* or *adjective (premodifier)+ climate change*:

5) *Action on climate change is integral* to a robust and resilient economy (Secretary of State's speech at the launch of the Risk Assessment, June 2012)

6) As Norman Lamb noted, *some level of UK climate change is unavoidable* and the Climate Change Risk Assessment, set out the range of risks and opportunities that the UK faces. (Greg Barker keynote speech at the launch of the new Met Office Hadley Centre Climate Programme, June 2012)

In the examples above, two different uses of evaluative adjectives emerge. In 5), the adjective *integral* actually refers to political actions to be taken by the Department regarding climate change. In 6), instead, *unavoidable* is used to qualify *climate change*. While the latter seems to confirm an actual condition concerning the issue of climate change, the former seems to be more interesting, as it conveys a full commitment by the UK government to tackle this issue. The adjective *integral* has been defined as 'essential to completeness' (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integral), thus, the political action on climate change is fundamental in order to offer a strong and successful economy.

Evaluating *environment* and *food* in the whole corpus

In this section, *environment* and *food* will be investigated. They can be considered as the main key-words in the corpus of speeches delivered by politicians belonging to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affair'. As far as *environment* is concerned, a list of collocates has been provided in order to investigate the most frequent evaluative adjectives co-occurring with this word:

Total No. of Collocate Types: 66					
Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 317					
1	86	0	0	-1	environment
2	43	43	0	3.32663	the
3	22	22	0	7.98429	**natural**
4	20	0	0	-1	Environment
5	18	3	15	2.62989	and
6	14	0	14	8.50214	Agency
7	7	7	0	3.37802	our

8	6	0	6	3.35493	We
9	6	2	4	2.60379	for
10	6	6	0	7.95782	agri
11	5	1	4	3.73131	The
12	5	0	5	7.01671	schemes
13	5	0	5	1.69028	in
14	5	0	5	4.57377	but
15	4	4	0	5.14019	**right**
16	3	0	3	3.51156	It
17	2	0	2	6.69478	White
18	2	0	2	3.91342	where
19	2	2	0	2.86189	their
20	2	0	2	0.75520	that
21	2	2	0	4.93990	quality
22	2	2	0	5.88743	Natural
23	2	0	2	0.73768	is
24	2	0	2	1.09859	I
25	2	0	2	4.88743	Food
26	2	1	1	4.33723	better

Table 2: Collocates of *environment.*

In the table above it is possible to observe *natural* as the most frequent adjective mainly co-occurring on the left of *environment.* The high frequency of *natural* is due to its main function in the corpus as a topical adjective rather than an evaluative one. In particular, topical adjectives give the subject area or specific type of a noun.[21] More specifically, it specifies the 'type' of environment the UK government wants to focus on.

[21] Douglas Biber et al., *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (London: Person Education, 1999).

In the following examples, instead, the evaluative adjective *right* has been investigated, co-occurring with *environment*:

7) The Rural Economy
But at Defra, as well as responding to emergencies, we also need to focus on creating the ***right environment*** for businesses to grow, and that requires a long-term economic plan. The rural economy is worth £211 billion a year. Rural areas are home to one fifth of the English population, yet they support nearly a third of England's businesses.

For years, the rural economy and farms were ignored but today, the Government is doing everything it can to support them. And that means more jobs, more opportunities and more financial security for hard working people.

(George Eustice speech to the National Farmers Union Conference: 'Backing the business of British Farming', January 2014)

8) Exports
So, cutting red tape, encouraging innovation, and safeguarding plant and animal health all set the ***right environment*** for farm businesses to grow. And I want to conclude by talking about some of the opportunities.

Yesterday I was in Dubai for the Gulfood exhibition, where over 100 British companies were present promoting British food and food catering equipment manufacturers.

Our exports to Dubai increased by 14 percent last year and there is growing demand for British dairy products and British lamb. (George Eustice's speech to the National Farmers Union Conference: 'Backing the business of British Farming', January 2014)

9) And we'll also start work on a comprehensive evaluation of doing the same for other materials, such as textiles, metals and all biodegradable waste. All of this is about creating the ***right environment*** for the resource management industry to thrive (Secretary of State's waste review speech, June 2011).

In 7), 8) and 9), *right environment* refers to the good environment conditions to improve farm business and resource management industry. More specifically, the focus is here on a better economy or policy concerning farm businesses, as the final aim is to make them flourish and improve. In these instances *right* implies 'judgement' by the UK government as the latter commits itself to take decisions concerning some good and correct environment conditions in order to guarantee a good and efficient rural policy.

If the immediate co-text of *environment* is further analysed it is possible to understand that some other evaluative adjectives have been employed:

1 areas are often also those with **the worst quality environment** and access to the **natural environment**. Research s
2 rst **quality environment** and access to the natural environment. Research shows that people in the most disadvant sp
3 ace - giving people and businesses **a high quality environment,** supporting biodiversity, managing drainage and t
4 an, and do, go hand in hand because **a flourishing environment** is essential to our future survival and prosperit
5 and markets which value and protect the **natural environment**. And follow-up work is now underway for example l spee

6 our understanding of how the state of the **natural environment** affects the performance of the economy and indivi

Fig. 1: Concordance lines for *environment*

Apart from the topical adjective ***natural***, it is possible to observe the noun ***quality*** employed in an adjectival position with an attributive function. One of the aims of the UK government is to provide people and business with a 'high quality' environment and avoid 'bad quality' environment thanks to a series of initiatives, such as managing drainage, supporting biodiversity, and so on. In these instances, it is possible to observe the employment of further specification of the word 'quality' referred to environment through some more specific extent descriptors (e.g. *high*).

The last word investigated in its immediate co-text is *food*. In the following table, it is possible to observe a high frequency of a nationality adjective (e.g. *British*) rather than evaluative adjectives:

Total No. of Collocate Types: 154					
Total No. of Collocate Tokens: 573					
1	163	0	0	-1	food
2	57	9	48	3.37039	and
3	28	0	0	-1	Food
4	22	21	1	1.43734	the
5	21	19	2	2.38000	of
6	21	21	0	6.46420	**British**
7	16	14	2	3.09636	for
8	13	13	0	3.34864	our
9	10	0	10	7.09425	security
10	9	1	8	1.98514	is
11	8	5	3	1.44589	in
12	5	4	1	2.22388	with
13	4	3	1	-0.63919	to
14	4	0	4	4.68486	sector
15	4	0	4	7.18736	safety
16	4	0	4	5.60239	production
17	4	0	4	7.18736	producers
18	4	4	0	5.60239	**global**
19	4	0	4	5.60239	exports
20	3	3	0	2.83372	UK

21	3	2	1	1.09989	on
22	3	3	0	2.03535	more

Table 3: Collocates of *food*

Notwithstanding, some evaluative adjectives are sometimes found co-occurring with this word:

1 redients and raw materials, coupled with **rigorous** production systems. We have totally reliable	**food**
2 a resource-efficient, climate-smart, **sustainable** sector will help economic growth, sparking in	**food**
3 alone. Only together will we develop a **global** system capable of providing food security for	**food**
4 paper work, and promoting the best of **British** and drink overseas. I want to focus on	**food**
5 smart and water-smart; to both grow **more** and export our intellectual property: our ex	**food**;
6 is a significant contribution to tackling **global** security - and to increasing the competitiven	**food**
7 entrepreneurs who want to help solve the **global** problem, and to help Britain take its share	**food**
8 how vital they are in building a **sustainable** system and a green and growing global economy	**food**
9 in this country and Britain brings **more new** and drink products to the market each year	**food**
10 Great British brand. We will promote **our superb** and drink through the new Great British Food	**food**
11 have some of the world\x92s **greatest** and finest landscapes, some of its most far-speechenvironment_june2015.tx	**food**
12 of a massive campaign to celebrate great **British** When I was growing up in Leeds, quite	**food**.
13 linator Strategy, but it also shows how **important** is to our environment and the interaction bet	**food**
14 to triple the number of apprentices in **British** and farming. But the fact is that British	**food**
15 big event next year looking at how **British** compares to French food at the Tour de	**food**

16 places like Italy and France that had **great**	**food**
and that here in Britain it wasn\x92	

Fig. 2: Concordance lines for *food.*

In the table above, apart from *British* and *global* as some of the most frequent adjectives, it is also possible to focus on some evaluative adjectives such as *superb*, *important, rigorous*, all referred to noun phrases where food is a premodifier of some several noun heads (e.g. *problem, system, sector, production*). The main concern by the UK government is represented by promoting national good food on one hand, but improve the national policy on food on the other. The focus on food promotion and political involvement in improving the global food problem clearly emerges from the observation of verbs preceding the phrases where the word food is found (e.g. *promote, tackle, solve, develop*).

Concluding remarks

Through evaluative adjectives characterised by a very positive connotation, the UK government seems to provide citizens with a reliable policy concerning some main environmental issues. In particular, through these adjectives, reference is usually made to political actions to be taken by the two Departments. Reliability is further emphasised by the high frequency of action verbs co-occurring with the most important key-words in the corpus (e.g. *develop* a global food system, *promote* our superb food, *create* the right environment). Furthermore, through the use of gradedness of the adjectives (e.g. comparatives), the UK government seems to convey awareness of the need of a more efficient policy concerning environment than in the past. This is particularly true with adjectives co-occurring with the key-word *environment*. In short, the UK government seems to build-up a discourse aimed at providing citizens with security, efficiency and protection while increasing its commitment to tackle the main environmental problems.

Eleonora Sasso

"Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals". Conceptual Blending and Eco-animalism in Atwood's Speculative Fiction

Abstract: This paper takes as its starting point the notions of blending and conceptual metaphors in order to advance a new reading of Atwood's fiction, one which sees it as parabolic stories projecting the conceptual metaphors "man is a wild animal" and "nature is a victim of injury".

Atwood's *Wilderness Tips* (1991), *The Tent* (2006) and the *MaddAddam* trilogy not only develop their own detailed blueprints of the Canadian fauna, but they also reveal Atwood's eco-animalism blending together men and animals, and leading to genetic mixing of species. By spending her childhood in the bush among wild bears, silver foxes, otter, weasels and muskrats, Atwood experienced the horrors of animal abuse. I intend to track through these references and look at the issues – attitudes to human crimes against nature, question of animal representations in narrative writing, historical and personal past related to eco-animalism etc. – which they raise. But my central purpose will be to re-read Atwood's eco-animalism from a cognitive perspective, projecting Atwood's thoughts on the Canadian waste land, inhabited by genetically modified animals and by Gothicized animal figures. In line with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in which thoughts are an entangled mass of animals, Atwood seems to employ new animal metaphors to convey their eco-bond with nature and to denounce all forms of animal exploitation. Through wild bears, aquatic birds, glow-in-the-dark rabbits, friendly, scentless rakunks (half-skunk, half-raccoon), wolvogs, rakunks, liobams, and so forth, I suggest, Atwood attempts to build into her works a kind of eco-warning which T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* extols with important socio-cultural consequences for the Canadian outcasts denouncing in Eliot's words "those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals".

Keywords: *conceptual blending, cognitive linguistics, eco-animalism, Margaret Atwood*

In her article published on *The Guardian* on Friday 14 October 2011, Margaret Atwood coined the term "ustopia" in order to define the Canadian wastelands depicted in her speculative fiction. According to Atwood, the lexical blend "ustopia" combines "utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because ... each contains a latent version of the other.... Ustopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind".[1] Defined by Roswitha Fischer as "semantic coordinatives, base words that are equal",[2] lexical blends and in particular Atwood's neologisms provide useful insights into the phenomenon of mixing between categories that according to Lydia Burton "may well constitute the 'Canadian style'".[3]

[1] Margaret Atwood, "The Road to Ustopia", *The Guardian*, 14 October 2011.

[2] Roswitha Fischer, *Lexical Change in Present-Day English* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1998), 39.

[3] Lydia Burton, ed., *Editing Canadian English* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 7.

By applying the blending theory,[4] Atwood elaborates a conceptual blending in her ustopian lands inhabited by the most diverse fauna of Canada, anthropomorphized beasts, as well as genetically-modified animals projecting such conceptual metaphors as NATURE IS A VICTIM OF INJURY, and MAN IS A WILD ANIMAL. It is my aim to investigate Atwood's eco-animalism through the notion of cognitive stylistics – a rapidly expanding field at the interface between linguistics, literary studies and cognitive science – which provides an illuminating framework for discussing Atwood's eco-cognitive stylistic dimension in such intensely thought-provoking works as *Wilderness Tips* (1991), *The Tent* (2006), *The Door* (2007), and *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003, 2009, 2013).

These latter ones appear to be parabolic stories blending together men and animals, life and death, utopia and dystopia in line with T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in which thoughts are an entangled mass of animals. As an international patron of the "Friends of the Earth", and most recently, supporter of "The Ghosts of Gone Birds" project,[5] Atwood seems to employ new animal metaphors to convey their eco-bond with nature and to denounce all forms of animal exploitation. Through wild bears, aquatic birds, glow-in-the-dark rabbits, friendly, scentless rakunks (half-skunk, half-raccoon), wolvogs, rakunks, liobams, and so forth, Atwood attempts to build into her works the type of eco-warning that Eliot previously engaged with in *The Waste Land* with important socio-cultural consequences for the Canadian outcasts denouncing in Eliot's words "those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals".[6]

A paramount example of Atwood's eco-bond with nature is the short story "Death by Landscape" in which Lois, the character who wanted to be an Indian, seems to put into practice a process of indigenisation according to which "you must shamanise or die".[7] In Atwood's words Lois "want[s] to be adventurous and pure and aboriginal"[8] like the native people in order to belong to the land the white coloniser has conquered. Together with Lucy, Kip and Pat, Lois spends her time singing the song *Alouette* not only around the campfire at Camp Manitou, a sort of totemic clan system based on bird and wolf totems, but also while canoe floating on the lake. When they stop at Little Birch for overnight, they see out on the lake "two loons, calling to each other in their insane, mournful voices ... sound[ing] like grief" (133).

Only in the mystic power of music, the process in which voice magically encounters music and makes of it a sonorous collection of effects, captivating listeners with its intense musicality, there lies a possibility of ethno-centric dialogue when the spirit of the wild emerges in such songs as *Alouette*, *Clementine*, and *The Quartermaster's Store* whose repetition, an important rhetorical feature in oral narrative, facilitates the emergence of the repressed. Particularly relevant in this sense is the song *Alouette*, a popular French

[4] Blending theory, also known as Conceptual Integration theory or Conceptual Blending theory was developed to account for the online construction of meaning in terms of networks of "mental spaces". As Elena Semino maintains, "blending theory explains the production and comprehension of specific metaphorical expressions in terms of conceptual networks involving four mental spaces" (Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper, eds., *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 114.

[5] "The Ghosts of Gone Birds" is an amazing U.K. exhibit of extinct-bird art to raise awareness on the increasing loss of bird species across the world. Atwood, who produced, together with others, new work for the exhibition, stated: "To find so many creative people engaged with the subject of birds and the threat of extinction that faces so many of them today, is truly inspiring. This magnificent show will reconnect us to the natural world, teach us about our past, and fuel our interest in saving what we are losing daily", http://www2.canada.com/topics/news/story.html?id=5601478, accessed 17 July 2015.

[6] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Harvest Books, 1958), 73.

[7] Ted Hughes, *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), 58.

[8] Atwood, "Death by Landscape", in *Wilderness Tips* (London: Virago Press, 2011), 129.

Canadian children's song about plucking the feathers, eyes, and beak from a lark, as a form of retribution for being woken up by the bird's song:

> Alouette, gentille alouette, / Alouette, je te plumerai. // Je te plumerai la tête. Je te plumerai la tête. / Et la tête! Et la tête! / Alouette! Alouette!/ A-a-a-ah // Je te plumerai le bec. Je te plumerai le bec. / Et le bec! / Et la tête! / Alouette! A-a-a-ah // Je te plumerai les yeux. Je te plumerai les yeux. / Et les yeux! / Et le bec! / Et la tête! / Alouette! / A-a-a-ah....[9]

[9] W.D. Lighthall, *A Pocket Song Book for the Use of the Students and Graduates of McGill College* (Montreal: Lovell Printing and Publishing Company, 1879).

Originally employed by French colonialists during the French Fur Trade in the second half of the 16th century, the song was believed to help to pass the time and make the work seem lighter for canoe trippers who used to transport trade goods in exchange for furs. From a cognitive perspective, Lois's singing projects the conceptual metaphor MAN IS A WILD ANIMAL based on the mental pattern of *planning* (e.g. *je te plumerai*) and the mental phenomenon of metonymy as exemplified by such expressions as *tête, bec,* and *yeux*. Endowed with the cognitive power of stories, the French song appears to be a parable of survival helping the reader to understand the sense of man's exploitation of animals. As opposed to human singing voices, the crying of the loons, connoted as insane and mournful, projects the conceptual metaphor ANIMALS ARE VICTIMS OF INJURY. According to Oatley and Johnson-Laird's nine basic emotion modes,[10] the birds' voices convey the everyday emotion of sorrow whose literary equivalent is called in Sanscrit *rasa*. This latter, as Oatley suggests, may allow the reader to see more clearly into the true nature and implications of emotions. It is not by chance that the narrator depicts the calling of lake birds as a grieving background, as an omen of death projecting the animal parable as a conceptual blending between man and animals sharing the same destiny. At the end of the story, Lois will desperately search for Lucy who has vanished near Lookout Point, by calling her name in the same emotional voice as that of the birds' crying.

[10] Keith Oatley and P. N. Johnson-Laird, "Towards a Cognitive Theory of Emotions", *Cognition and Emotion*, 1 (1987), 29-50.

It is likely that Atwood metaphorically constructs girls as birds realising a set of correspondences between the LOONS source domain and the domain of experiences relating to Lois – the LOIS target domain: Lois corresponds to an ululating loon.

The frequency and elaboration of metaphorical expressions drawing from the source domain of birds as exemplified by such short stories as "Eating Birds" and "Nigthingale" suggest that a systematic set of correspondences between the BIRD domain and the FEMALE domain is part of Atwood's conceptual structure. The fact that Atwood constructs women in relationship with birds, as bird eaters because "they want to be one with birds"[11] and as singing birds denouncing the violence and abuse of men is entirely consistent with the view

[11] Atwood, "Eating Birds", in *The Door* (London: Virago Press, 2007), 127. All further references are to this edition, quoted as *EB* in the text.

of metaphor proposed by cognitive metaphor theory. On the one hand, Atwood's BIRD domain (or in schema theory terms, her BIRD schema) is highly shamanised, and has positive emotional associations:

> We ate the birds. We ate them. We wanted their songs to flow up through our throats and burst out of our mouths, and so we ate them. We wanted their feathers to bud from our flesh. We wanted their wings, we wanted to fly as they did, soar freely among the treetops and the clouds, and so we ate them. We speared them, we clubbed them, we tangled their feet in glue, we netted them, we spitted them, we threw them onto hot coals, and all for love, because we loved them. We wanted to be one with them. We wanted to hatch out of clean, smooth, beautiful eggs, as they did, back when we were young and agile and innocent of cause and effect, we did not want the mess of being born, and so we crammed the birds into our gullets, feathers and all, but it was no use, we couldn't sing, not effortlessly as they do, we can't fly, not without smoke and metal, and as for the eggs we don't stand a chance. We're mired in gravity, we're earthbound. We're ankle-deep in blood, and all because we ate the birds, we ate them a long time ago, when we still had the power to say no. (*EB*, 127-129)

Similar to the song *Alouette*, albeit with a different intended action (shamanic cannibalism), "Eating Birds" projects the conceptual metaphor MAN/WOMAN IS A WILD ANIMAL based on the mental phenomenon of metonymy as clearly expressed by such sentences as "we wanted their feathers"; "we wanted their wings"; "we tangled their feet in glue" and so forth. But such a brutal practice turns out to be useless because of the human nature of women who are "mired in gravity, they are earthbound" and will never sing and fly as birds do.

On the other hand, because of Atwood's feminist view, her schemata relating to women and relationship with birds carry negative emotional associations. The title of the short story "Nightingale" refers metaphorically to Procne whose correspondence with a nightingale is more than simply a matter of linguistic expression: "Then she starts turning into a bird, the way she always does, and when I look down the same thing is happening to me" (*EB*,137).

Of course, given its subject matter (a woman who is victim of her husband's violence turns into a bird), Atwood's story can be identified with Ovid's story of "The Rape of Philomela by Tereus". As a blend, however, the allegory is complex due to the former re-writings of the Philomela myth by Eliot in *The Waste Land* (1922) and "Sweeney and the Nightingales" (1919-1920). Therefore, we cognitively map the Philomela and Procne story onto Atwood's story, but there is no communal feminist revenge in Atwood's version. Procne reveals her crime (filicide) warning her sister against the perils of violence:

I wanted you to avoid the mistakes I made, that's all.
What mistakes?
In answer she lifted up her hands. They were wet, they glistened. Our son, she said. I couldn't stop myself.[12]

[12] Atwood, "Nightingale", in *The Tent* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 137.

Atwood significantly changes the destiny of the two Greek sisters, one of whom survives the other and is haunted at night by the restless ghost of Procne doomed to tell her tragic story in order not to be forgotten or dismissed.

Thus, the resulting blend reveals mismatches between analogues in the mental spaces. With Procne, Philomel and Tereus in the source domain and Atwood's Procne, her husband and her sister in the target domain, frames such as marriage, abuse, and violence provide generic structure for this mapping to occur. The relation between the Greek myth, Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Atwood's re-writing is forced by conceptual integration as the figure below suggests:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Generic Space:
Abused women

violence on women
female abuse, sorrow and pain</td></tr>
<tr><td>Specific source:

Ovid's and Eliot's Procne and Philomela

are killed by men
suffer patriarchal violence</td><td>General target:
Women who

are subject to domestic violence
suffer patriarchal abuse and neglect</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Blend:

Atwood's women are like Procne and Philomela
A class member is the prototype</td></tr>
</table>

Information from the generic space of abused women includes marriage, childbirth, unfaithfulness and violence. This generic background informs the construction of both Eliot's lines and Atwood's story and it is also vital for conceptualising the allegory here.

Like Eliot's Philomela changed into a nightingale "filling all the desert with inviolable voice" (l. 101),[13] Atwood's Philomela appears to be turned into a singing bird whose unchained melody reaches out the hearts of men: "I begin to sing. A long liquid song, a high requiem, the story of the story of the story.... A man standing underneath our tree says, *Grief*".[14] Atwood has altered the mythical story to create greater similarity to Eliot's wasteland in which Philomela's crying may sound meaningless to someone ("'Jug Jug' to dirty ears", l. 103) but the world is still horrified by their tragedy.

[13] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 31.

[14] Atwood, "Nightingale", 138.

Reminiscent of the crying of the loons featured in "Death By Landscape", and Philomela's grief sung in "Nightingale", the howling wilderness described in "The Tent" is a humanised form of life, hybrid creatures connoted in zoomorphic terms, nocturnal howlers who cry out their legacy of ontological confusion, of polymorphous subjectivity, borderland métissage in relation to the dominant social culture.

In search of revenge and blood, the howlers surrounding Atwood's paper tent enact the cognitive metaphor MAN IS A WILD ANIMAL who "can kill and then howl over in celebration and then eat, one way or another".[15] Though assaulted by these animal-like howlers with "red and shining eyes" (*T*, 146), Atwood continues describing their natures, features, habits, and histories in written form in order to denounce the damages perpetuated by human beings. For Atwood, the tent is a mental space, a "flimsy cave" (*T*, 146), where she is affected by a "graphomania" (*T*, 146), the sole domain where projection and blending are components in this continual mental activity that together form the cerebral dynamo that drives parabolic thought in the human mind.

[15] Atwood, "The Tent", in *The Tent*, 145. All further references are to this edition, quoted as *T* in the text.

In terms of cognitive linguistics and of the range of motion events, the howlers are *figures* whose path is contrasted with the *ground* (i.e. the tent), which functions as a reference point or landmark for orientation and is tied to what the narrator regards as the present state of the world. Analysing the howlers' motion events in relation to the tent, we can determine their mapping scope whose source concept (GOAL-ORIENTED MOVEMENT) is metonymically related to a wider target concept (PURPOSEFUL or INTENDED ACTION). To put it into more simplified terms, the motion event that involves the motion towards the tent is related to the sole purpose of survival:

> You don't want to attract the howlers, but they're attracted anyway, as if by a scent. The walls of the paper tent are so thin, but they can see the light of your candle. They can see your outline, and naturally they're curious because you might be prey. You might be something they can kill, and then howl over in celebration, and then eat one way or another. You're too conspicuous. You've made yourself conspicuous. You've given yourself away. They're coming closer, gathering together. They're taking time off from their howling

> to peer, to sniff around. Why do you think this writing of yours, this graphomania in a flimsy cave, this scribbling back and forth and up and down over the walls of what is beginning to seem like a prison, is capable of protecting anyone at all, yourself included? It's an illusion – the belief that your doodling is a kind of armor, a kind of charm – because no one knows better than you do how fragile your tent really is. Already there's a clomping of leather-covered feet, there's a scratching, there's a scrabbling, there's a sound of rasping breath. Wind comes in. (*T*, 145)

Such verbs of motion as *coming closer, gathering together, sniff around* the TENT as exemplified by such sentences as "They're coming closer, gathering together", "They're taking time off from their howling to peer, to sniff around", are always related to goal-oriented movements which project the conceptual metaphor of SURVIVAL IN THE WILDERNESS. Furthermore, the path of the howlers' trajectory can be accessed conceptually through different windows of attention[16] in casual-chain events: *initial windowing* (see the light in the tent), *medial windowing* (come closer to the tent), and *final windowing* (sniff around and scratch the tent).

By blending men and animals in such a neologism as "the howlers", Atwood fuses together two mappings in this image. At the beginning of the story, she envisions people howling grief, to summon help, for revenge and for blood, later on she depicts things howling over in celebration, as if to employ all the sensorial modalities from the highest (SIGHT, followed by SOUND, SMELL, TASTE) down to the lowest sense, namely TOUCH. The blend arising from the fusion of material from the two input spaces (the HUMAN domain and the ANIMAL domain) into the wasteland scenario is based on the cross-space correspondences and on their shared structures.

Atwood's disillusionment and despair is embodied by the totem animal par excellence, the bear, alias *nanuk*, featuring in such poems as "Animals Reject their Names and Things Return to their Origins" and "Bear Lament". In those examples, Atwood's ustopian schemata dealing with bears and their ruined environments are applied as metaphorical source domains to construct a range of experiences. The BEAR domain has high multivalency or a wide scope due to its salience, its high level of elaboration and its emotional associations.

In "Animals Reject their Names and Things Return to their Origins" Atwood is overwhelmed by the bear's speech starting a revolt against linguistic logo-centrism. The wild bear renounces his metaphorical definitions "child-stealer", "shape-changes", "old garbage-eater" and rejects all blended spaces such as fairy-tale and totemism. By mapping a non-human being onto a human being, Atwood gives voice to voiceless animals rejecting the human act of naming entities and thereby professing their nameless condition. Behind the bear's words "My true name is growl"(*T,* 78), there lies a return to the wild, an eco-

[16] According to *Talmy* (1996), the *windowing* of *attention* is only one part of the larger cognitive structural category in language called the "distribution of *attention*", which is a system constituting the fundamental delineation of *conceptual* structuring in language. Leonard Talmy, "Windowing of Attention in Language" in Masayoshi Shibatani and Sandra A. Thompson, eds., *Grammatical Constructions: Their Form and Meaning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 235-287.

parable whose mental scope is magnified by the notion of linguistic projection: "don't offend the bear/Have compassion on his heart/Think twice before you speak". (*T,* 83)

Likewise, "Bear Lament" uses a metaphorical scenario related to the BEAR source domain in order to construct man's behaviour as absurd and unacceptable. In the beginning, the speaker is fused with the bear, dating back to the time when she believed she could "crawl inside a bear .../and take on its ancient shape" (ll. 2; 4)[17] in order to save herself in a time of crisis. In the blend, the poet enters the bear's secret house experiencing a dreamtime as if to "insulate" (*BL*, l. 12) herself from all the evils of the world. But the fairy-tale scenario is turned into a wasteland, when the lyrical "I" reports seeing a thin white bear, "thin as ribs/and growing thinner" (*BL*, ll. 20-21) searching for some food, "sniffing the brand-new/absences of rightful food" (*BL*, ll. 21-22). To put it into metaphorical terms, the "bear came over the mountain" to see what he could find but all that he could see was the other side of the mountain. As suggested by Alice Munro's short story significantly entitled "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" recalling the well-known American song "The Bear Went Over the Mountain", Atwood projects the conceptual metaphor THE BEAR IS ALL OF US and that we are already on the other side looking desperately for a paradise lost.

[17] Atwood, "Bear Lament", in *The Door*, 57. All further references are to this edition, quoted as *BL* in the text.

The projection of this concept, this new space in which men and animals are blended together leads to such rhetorical questions as "Oh bear, what now?/And will the ground/still hold?" (*BL*, 58 ll. 26-28), "What's the use anyway / of ... making animals cry?",[18] "Did we cause this wreckage by breathing?"(*BL*, 54), "Is it our fault?". In all those verses, Atwood strengthens the nature of the parabolic projection according to which man is a 'wastelander' whose only hope for salvation may be found in singing a message of harmony with nature.

[18] Atwood, "Owl and Pussycat, Some Years Later", in *The Door*, 34.

This eco-parable is projected by such poems as "Owl and Pussycat, Some Years Later" and "Singer of Owls" in which Atwood activates SINGING IS BELIEVING. In the first poem, the artistic collaboration between Charles Pacther[19] and Atwood is metaphorically equated to the relation between an owl and a pussycat singing under a full moon. For both owl (Pachter) and pussycat (Atwood), "singing's a belief/[they] can't give up"[20] because despite their worldwide success ("We're in anthologies. We're taught in schools,/with cleaned-up biographies and skewed photos", ll.143-144), they still want to spread their eco-messages ("there is still/a job to be done by us", ll.113-114) in order to change the world.

[19] Charles Pacther is one of Canada's pre-eminent visual artist. His images of the queen, moose, and maple leaf flag are icons of Canadian contemporary art. McClelland & Stewart has published an illustrated book on his life and work (1992), and Cormorant Books has published *The Illustrated Journals of Susanna Moodie*, his celebrated collaboration with poet Margaret Atwood (2014).

[20] Atwood, "Owl and Pussycat, Some Years Later", in *The Door*, 35.

As suggested by Nathalie Cooke, Atwood usually presents herself both as a metamorphosized pussycat and a tiger firmly convinced that cats are part of us:

> Tiger or pussycat? In Atwood's case, you can't be one without being the other. The appeal of the pussycat is precisely the power of the tiger. There's something very engaging about the very down-to-earth Atwoodian figure with the streak of humour and a curl in the middle of her forehead – the one who doesn't take herself too seriously and who, in the process, is wickedly funny and deadly serious.[21]

[21] Nathalie Cook, "Lions, Tigers and Pussycats", in Reingard M. Nischik, ed., *Margaret Atwood: Works and Impact* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), 23.

In the animal poems featuring owls and pussycats, Atwood activates a metaphorical blending between human and non-human entities extending the concept of a cross-domain mapping. Poems appear to be blended spaces helping to explain the strange fusion between different conceptual domains. The composed input spaces are drawn on to create a single fantastic imaginary space in which a "moulting owl" (l.151) and an "arthritic pussycat" (l.152) believe in the power of singing stories: "But sing on, sing/on, someone may still be listening/besides me. The fish for instance./Anyway, my dearest one,/we still have the moon" (ll.157-161). As moon-oriented animals, the Pactherian owl and the Atwoodian pussycat seem to operate mainly through the cognitive tool known as *narrative projection* of stories. Inspired and attracted by the moon, the owl and the pussycat constantly sing the wilderness surrounding them like "The Singer of Owls" of the eponymous poem.

Through the lens of cognitive grammar it is possible to read Atwood's animal poem by applying the notion of *profiling* which refers to a perceived relationship between two entities: the singer and the owl. The singer of owls is easily recognised as a *figure* profiled against a larger *ground* (darkness, and shadows of trees). In the first two stanzas of the poem, the poet is profiled as a singer of owls moving against a background, "wandering off into the darkness" (l.1), preferring dim corners, and shamanising himself into an owl as exemplified by such verbs as *opening to silences*, *swallowing mice*, *allowing ruthlessness and feathers to possess him*. In verbs like "open" and "allow" there are participant roles in the semantics of the verb: the primary focal participant (the poet), and the secondary focal participant (the owl). In "open", we profile the poet opening to wilderness, whereas "allow" profiles two participants, the allower ("the singer of owls") and the seizer ("the owl") blending together into one metamorphosed entity.

Questioning himself about the sense of life, and the meaning of singing wilderness, the poet confronts himself with the owl who reveals the bond between them: singing out of necessity a night song, or what Roland Barthes would call, a *geno-song*[22] projecting all drive energies while praising the beauties of nocturnal entities. The owl's thicket, moon, and lake are the landmarks against which the trajector ("the figure within a relational profile")[23] is profiled. The framework of profiling demonstrates how effects are achieved in the poet's mind, by his mind, and for the pleasure of his mind.

[22] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice", in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 182.

[23] Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen, eds., *Cognitive Poetics in Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 56.

Other poems such as "Blackie in Antarctica", "Mourning for Cats" and "Our Cat Enters Heaven" reveal Atwood's animal subjectivity. They show that Atwood takes different views of essentially the same animal. Like Eliot who, in his early and later poems, anthropomorphised animals turning them into social creatures and more specifically into city dwellers, Atwood privileges the cat metaphor accepting the animal within the human. Reminiscent of Eliot's clever and witty verse of cats (*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, 1939), Atwood's cats appear to be humanised animals, whose names are invented "bluntly and without artifice" ("Blackie in Antarctica", ll.9-10). The art of naming cats, in Eliot's view, is a difficult practice due to the nature of cats defined as "ineffable effable" ("The Naming of Cats", l.29)[24] which is better rendered by the lexical blend "effanineffable" (l.30).

[24] Eliot, "The Naming of Cats", in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 209.

In all Atwood's aforementioned poems, cats are associated with death which is seen as a scenario. From a cognitive perspective, a scenario is a complex structure consisting of sequences of action concepts, which actions are to be performed in recurrent situations with particular goal. In "Blackie in Antarctica" Atwood provides a tragicomic scenario according to which Blackie the cat, the yowling mooner and faithful companion dies because of an incurable illness and is buried in the freezer beside frozen hamburgers and chicken wings. In this death scenario, Atwood projects the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS SCORN as exemplified by such lines as "Catlike, you hated/being ridiculous" (ll.39-40),[25] "Death/is, though. Ridiculous" (ll.46-47). From a black cat leaping from roof to roof, Blackie is ironically turned into "a thin-boned Antarctic/explorer" (ll.31-32) associated with a Pharaon for the red silk in which he is wrapped. But such a blend between human and non-human is much more evident in "Mourning for Cats" in which Atwood associates them with dead children endowed with big eyes. The mourning for dead cats is so deep and sentimental that the poet asks himself a series of rhetorical questions about such a mutual relationship: "Why do dead cats call up such ludicrous tears?/Why such deep mourning?/Because we can no longer/see in the dark without them?/Because we're cold/without their fur?" (ll.27-33).

[25] Atwood, "Blackie in Antarctica", in *The Door*, 13.

By enumerating all the cat peculiarities – see in the dark, soft fur, playful nature and so forth –, the poet describes an alternate possible world as a different version of the world in which cats represent man's hidden second skin, the only way to find some relief from the world's woes. According to possible worlds theory, Atwood's possible worlds of logic are abstract, complete and consistent sets of states of affairs conceived for the purpose of logical operations. This is eminently exemplified by the poem "Our Cat Enters Heaven" whose textual universe is a dynamic combination of a text actual world on the one hand, and a different type of an alternate possible world formulated by the animal characters. As Gina Wisker has aptly summarised

"The laws of the human world have all been translated into something more palatable for a devious, mischievous, slyly vicious cat.... the cat is clearly in his heaven, free to catch, play, crunch, and be his cat self. It is whimsical, amusing and wry".[26]

Atwood describes this alternate possible world as an upside down Wish world in which God is a form of cat and the souls of human beings are mice persecuted by cats. By projecting the dreams of the cat entering afterlife, Atwood creates a conflict between the Wish world on the one hand, and, on the other, the human inferno. The following dialogue excerpt between the soul of the cat and the cat-like God provides a paramount example of Atwood's alternate possible world:

> They're the souls of human beings who have been bad on Earth, said God, half-closing its yellowy-green eyes. Now if you don't mind, it's time for my nap.
> What are they doing in heaven, then? said our cat.
> Our heaven is their hell, said God. I like a balanced universe.[27]

In order to introduce the mechanics of mental space analysis, I will briefly outline Gilles Fauconnier's account[28] of the comprehension of the following sentence:

When he got to heaven the cat started persecuting human mice

Fauconnier's diagrammatic representation of the mental space configuration relevant to this sentence is reproduced as the following Figure:

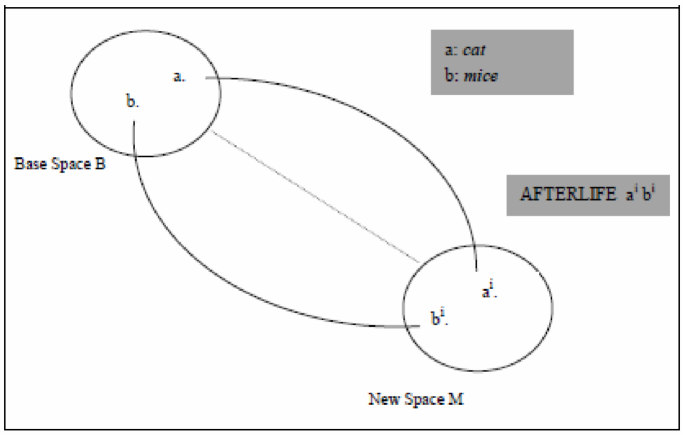

Fig. 1.

[26] Gina Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction to Critical Views of Her Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 174.

[27] Atwood, "Our Cat Enters Heaven", in *The Tent*, 65.

[28] See Gilles Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thoughts and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1997), 42-43.

The comprehension of this sentence, according to Fauconnier, involves the construction of two mental spaces. The first mental space, the 'Base' (B), includes two elements 'a' and 'b', which are accessed by the names 'cat' and 'mice'. This space is linked with information about the two entities which is part of background knowledge or has been derived from the preceding co-text. The Base is the space that functions as the starting point of each network of spaces, and is always accessible for the addition of further material of for the construction of new spaces.

The second mental space is derived from the Base via the sentence "when he got to heaven", which functions as a 'space builder'. Space builders are linguistic expressions which trigger the construction of new spaces and indicate the nature of the connection between each new space and the one from which it is constructed. The sentence "when he got to heaven" sets up the new space as a "possibility" space, i.e. as corresponding to a state of affairs that may or may not be true in relation to the Base. The possibility space contains two entities 'a^i' and 'b^i', which are counterparts of 'a' and 'b' in the Base, and are accessed by means of the same names. This is in virtue of what Fauconnier calls the "Access Principle". In the possibility space, a^i is persecuting b^i. This space is also structured by background knowledge triggered by the expression "Our heaven is their hell". This is indicated in the Figure by the small-capital mnemonic[29] AFTERLIFE in the square box. The dashed line indicates that M is set up relative to B, while the curved lines indicate a relationship of identity between elements in the two spaces. While B is the Base space of the structure, M is the "Focus" space, i.e. the space to which material is being added by the sentence. The space builder is marked for temporal distance from the Base, making what Fauconnier calls "reality within fiction".[30]

[29] Mnemonics are commonly used in cognitive linguistics to indicate frames or schemata.

[30] Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thoughts*, 50.

Within the frame of parabolic projection, Atwood creates a blend between men and animals in order to expose the unhealable wound between man and nature as envisioned in *MaddAddam* trilogy dealing with the imminent extinction of humanity. For example, in *Oryx and Crake* the only one man who has survived a mysterious worldwide plague is Jimmy the Snowman whose eco-mythical voice of warning suggests that nature is the recipient of nurturance and as such it involves respect, interdependence, adoration and commitment. Persecuted by gene-spliced animals like wolvogs, pigoons, rakunks, snats and bobkittens, the last man on earth finds safety and comfort into the top branches of trees where he sleeps for fear of those genetically modified wild animals. Reminiscent of Eliot's three leopards in *Ash Wednesday* sitting under a juniper tree and waiting to devour the speaker's body (his legs, heart, liver and brain), Atwood's animals prowling at night under Jimmy's tree are voracious carnivores (malevolently intelligent pigoons and savage wolvogs) in search of fresh meat: "Wolvogs can't climb trees, which is one good thing. If they get

numerous enough and too persistent, [Jimmy will] have to start swinging from vine to vine, like Tarzan. That's a funny idea, so he laughs. 'All you want is my body!' he yells at them. Then he drains the bottle and throws it down".[31]

Likewise, *The Year of the Flood* focuses on a group called God's Gardeners, a small pacifist community of survivors of the same biological catastrophe depicted in *Oryx and Crake*. The female protagonist is Toby, one of the God's Gardeners encountering two liobams in the meadow, i.e. sacred animals announcing the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom. This lion-ship splice commissioned by the Lion Isaiahists (a Biblical extremist group) represents the only way to create a possible world of peace: "to fulfil the lion/lamb friendship prophecy without the first eating the second".[32]

In Atwood's wastelands, the common species of animals have disappeared and in their place genetically modified beasts do populate the land. Reminiscent of Eliot's "The Fire Sermon" in which "the nymphs are departed" (l.3)[33] from the brown land, liobams represent epic spirituality and history of humanity. If Eliot's nymphs do belong to the world existing before the industrial revolution, then Atwood's liobams are to be interpreted as Darwinian evolutions of animal species resulting from the age of waste.

In such eco-mythical parables, Eliot and Atwood share the same vision on linguistic experimentalism projecting their ethics of responsibility. As forms of eco-linguistics, Eliot's and Atwood's play on words and lexical blends are endowed with the power of warning. See for example Eliot's cock in "What the Thunder Said" standing "on the rooftree / Co co rico co corico" (ll.392-393)[34] announcing the rain, or the previously mentioned "effanineffable" cat musing on animal names and their existential meanings, or even the rats' alley ("I think we are in rats' alley/Where the dead men lost their bones", ll. 115-116)[35] where wastelanders live in constant consciousness of death.

By applying the blending theory, Atwood elaborates a blended linguistic structure as exemplified by bisyllabic blends of zoomorphic forms which follow the principles of lexical economy and asyntactic relation of CanE. Such simple 2-word sequential blends as *wolvog* (wolf+dog), *pigoon* (pig+-oon), *rakunk* (racoons+skunks), and *snat* (snakes+rats) not only recall the wildlife of the Great White North inhabited by such animals as *nanuk* (bear), *tuktu* (caribou), *amarok* (wolf), *siksik* (squirrel), and *pangnerk* (buck), but do establish a linguistic resemblance with Inuit polysynthetic language characterized by a very rich morphologic system according to which words begin with a root morpheme to which other morphemes are suffixed.

Atwood's use of prefix-suffix pairs (*wolvog, liobam*, *rakunk*, and *snat*), i.e. source words which are semantically similar (the source words of *wolvog* are related in that wolf and dog are canine species) or semantically related (the source words of *liobam* are related since lions feed on lambs), may reflect Inuit

[31] Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago, 2003), 126.

[32] Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* (London: Virago, 2009), 112.

[33] Eliot, "The Fire Sermon", in *The Waste Land*, op. cit., 32.

[34] Ibid., 44.

[35] Ibid., 33.

derivational suffixes or what Lawrence Smith calls "derivational postbases".[36] As Arthur Thibert explains in the appendix to his Inuit Dictionary, "[i]n Eskimo, the suffixes are of the utmost importance. The meaning of each and every word is liable to be modified by one or several suffixes".[37]

Of particular interest is the lion-lamb blend mapping whose network representation involves the vital relation of identity between the animal properties of the lion and the animal properties of the lamb. This lion-sheep splice, commissioned to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom, does look gentle with curly golden hair and twirling tails but as soon as it opens its mouth, it displays sharp canines.

In line with Eliot's lion image blending together multiple meanings suggesting the animal nature being part of man's evolution (as in Sweeney,[38] Burnank and Bleinstein),[39] Atwood's liobam is strictly connected with man's destiny. This sacred animal appears to represent the "brutality couched in fluffiness which dominates the worlds before the Waterless Flood".[40] The cross-space mapping of cause and effect is activated and compressed into the blended property *dangerous/gentle* – a blended property because it can be understood as the result of a proceeding blending process based on the mental space "dangerous lion"/"gentle lamb" and another input space devoted to the outstanding qualities of sacred animals. The mental spaces involved show to what extent the blend between them is a forced result of compression of predator and prey properties. The liobam's gentle disposition is therefore due to the compression of a cause-effect relation between ferocity and gentility into a blended property. The following passage well clarifies Atwood's blending process with respect to animals and their social behaviours: "They're nibbling flower heads, they don't look up: yet she has the sense that they're perfectly aware of her. Then the male opens its mouths, displaying its long, sharp canines, and call. It's an odd combination of baa and roar: a bloar, thinks Toby".[41]

The frame below well exemplifies the conceptual blending network (an array of mental spaces) in such a neologism as liobam:

INPUT SPACE 1	INPUT SPACE 2
ANIMAL: lion APPEARCE PROPERTY: golden hair, sharp canines CALL PROPERTY: roar BEHAVIOUR: strolling and sniffing around as if it owns the place	ANIMAL: lamb APPEARCE PROPERTY: twirling tail CALL PROPERTY: baa BEHAVIOUR: nibbling flower heads

[36] Lawrence Smith, *A Survey of the Derivational Postbases of Labrador Inuttut (Eskimo)* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978), 55.

[37] Arthur Thibert, *Eskimo (Inuktitut) Dictionary: Eskimo-English, English-Eskimo* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1997), 143.

[38] See Eliot's "Sweeney among the Nightingales": "The zebra stripes along his jaw/Swelling to maculate giraffe".

[39] "Who clipped the lion's wings/And flea's his rump and pared his claws?" ("Burbank with a Beadeker: Bleistein with a Cigar", ll.29-30).

[40] Wisker, *Margaret Atwood: An Introduction*, 75.

[41] Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 113.

BLENDED SPACE	
ANIMAL: liobam APPEARCE PROPERTY: golden hair and twirling tail CALL PROPERTY: bloar BEHAVIOUR: nibbling flower heads, strolling and sniffing around as if it owns the place	

The lexical analysis of the word *liobam* may shed light on Atwood's borrowings from the Inuit language according to which one of the most commonly used infixes is -lior-, meaning "makes", while -b- is the transitive case for the subject of possession. At the same time, it is worth noting that the suffix -am produces homophony with Inuit sounds via assonance with the Inuit lexical item *ami* meaning "let me see".[42] It is significant, therefore, that liobam is a genetics work, possessed by a religious group whose intention is to let the world see the Peaceful Kingdom. Thus, though projecting the conceptual metaphor SCIENCE PROVIDES CONTROL OVER NATURE, Atwood aims at blending together science and nature by recalling the language of those peoples who fashioned their culture on nature's model.

[42] Thibert, *Eskimo (Inuktitut) Dictionary*, 139.

Another neologism which is worth mentioning is *Pigoon* (human/pig splices), a breed of genetically-modified pigs endowed with balloon-like bodies featuring both in *Oryx and Crake*, and *Maddaddam*. These transgenic animals designed to carry human-tissue organs for harvesting, live confined in the laboratories of the OrganInc corporation, whose scientists have exploited the genetic proximity between pigs and humans. If in *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy is frightened by the similarity between *Pigoons* and humans, in *Maddaddam* we are invited to view the *Pigoons*, the Mo'Hairs (human/goat splices), and other GMO creatures as part of a new natural order of things.

Quite significantly, the lexical blend of those 'humanimals' employs the Inuit "u" sound, which is pronounced "oo" as in shoot, or better as in the Latin "una". As suggested by Thibert, the main idea expressed by Inuit words beginning or ending with the letter U is the opening of the eyes[43] and the feelings of the soul as conveyed by *uimaktok* (i.e. is excited), or *ulutit* (i.e. saw). The word *Pigoon* produces homophony with Inuit sounds via matching the third person singular verbal suffix *-pigu*, and at the same time establishes an assonance with the Inuit lexical item *Angun* meaning "man". Atwood's *Pigoons* in *Oryx and Crake* are always described for their masculine strength and brutal voracity: "The two biggest ones ... move side by side to the door, bumping it with their shoulders.... There is a lot of muscle out there";[44] "Don't fall in," said his father. "They'll eat you up in a minute" (30). From this perspective, it could

[43] Ibid., 139.

[44] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 314.

be argued that Atwood's neologisms such as *Pigoons*, *AnooYoo,*[45] *NooSkins* ("New skins"), *Miniluv* ("Ministry of love"), are characterised by a high homophone density. This tendency suggests that when a lexical blend word is to be processed, phonological information of its Inuit constituents is automatically activated and reverberates back to generate a series of orthographic representations of Inuit morphemic homophones.

All the lexical blends analysed so far seem to confirm an eco-bond with nature and in more specific terms with aboriginal peoples. In order to exorcise Eliot's desert waste of stony rubbish, Atwood linguistically evokes a world in harmony with nature, and the peoples who respected the earth and its beauties. As Katherine Barber maintains, "Canada's aboriginal peoples have had an undeniable impact on the language"[46] as attested to by "an influx of words designating Aboriginal cultural realities into more mainstream Canadian English".[47]

In Atwood's possible worlds, a range of apocalyptic alternative worlds, spiritual environmentalism includes even the most hybrid forms of animals, challenging the boundary separating humans and animals. The ustopian scenarios depicted by Atwood are complex conceptual structures consisting of sequences of eco-action concepts which are to be performed by 'humanimals' in recurrent situations with a particular environmental goal. This scenario captures the fact that animals have to do with stages of relationship with man: they either do or do not want to coexist, then they either do or do not get happiness from each other, and finally they either do or do not keep each other company. Humans and animals want, get or keep each other because of particular causes, because of sentimental or environmental issues but what still remains in the reader's mind is the echo of their calling for help, that howling wilderness whose noise is deafening.

[45] *AnooYoo* is a multi-word unit standing for "A New You", a company that markets and creates *beauty* and age-defying *products*.

[46] Katherine Barber, *Only in Canada You Say: A Treasury of Canadian Language* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2008), 64.

[47] Ibid., 65.

Françoise Besson

From Deforestation to Awareness. Literature Opening onto a "Canopy of Hope"[1]

Abstract: Deforestation is one of the main ecological tragedies of our times and the need to turn ourselves into custodians of the forest is one the most pressing challenges facing the world today. The felling of trees, the conversion of forests to agricultural land and commercial logging have all resulted into reduction in biodiversity, erosion and soil depletion as well as destruction of human and non-human habitats. This article intends to show how texts are action and dissemination of action. It is founded on the belief that texts can help to change wastelands into regenerated nature because they are endowed with the greatest leverage when they exemplify the necessary interrelation between human beings and the non-human world. Wangari Maathai's autobiography in particular will appear as an instance of the deep role writing may have in the way to awareness and it will try and demonstrate how texts can trigger off, sustain, and prolong concrete action.

Keywords: *colonization, deforestation, ecology, environmental literature, oil-palms, Wangari Maathai*

The desert marches towards the sea
With camel-loads of broken skulls,
Roasting *iroko* trees for lunch
The mahogany for early dinner
Dandelions roar beneath its feet.
The elephant grass has lost its tusks
To the famished poacher from sandy regions

The desert marches towards the sea

Alas, the boundless rainforest of my youth
Has shrunk to a frightened eyebrow
On the forehead of the coast
Koko gba kokodi
(Niyi Osundare, *Hole in the Sky*)

The "boundless rainforest of [my] youth/Has shrunk to a frightened eyebrow," the poet says; but the painting of the planet's devastation made by Niyi Osundare may change revolt into a cry of hope if the awareness activated by his depiction of man's exploitation of Africa's resources opens on the determination to change those new wastelands into "boundless forests" again.[2]

[1] "Canopy of Hope" is the title of the epilogue of Wangari Maathai's autobiography, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006). All further references are to this edition, quoted as *UM* in the text.

[2] Niyi Osundare, "Hole in the Sky", Choreo-poem, *World Literature Today* (May-August 2014), http://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2014/may-august/two-poems-niyi-osundare, accessed 17 July 2015.

Texts are action and seeds refilling the wounded world with life. Literature can help the world to change wastelands into regenerated nature by showing the necessary interrelation between human beings and the non-human world.

A select survey of texts revealing the authors' will to highlight the damage caused by deforestation and their involvement in the preservation of the planet reminds us that deforestation is not something new. As an example, Wangari Maathai's autobiography shows the link between action and writing and the deep role writing plays in striking people to awareness.

From a Garden of Eden to a Wasteland: Deforestation in History

From those who "break the jungle's back"[3] to the "unbowed" woman who changed a desertified area into a new forest, the history of mankind is a story of exploitation, spoliation and reforestation. The innumerable forests covering the land in Prehistory gradually disappeared for economic reasons, particularly from the 19th century onwards. From Shakespeare's days to our era, deforestation is denounced in texts revealing the healing power of literature.

Once upon a time there were forests all over the world. "Botanical garden, paradise".[4] Trees create Paradise as Michel Serres says about a part of France: "Creuse displays a paradise of isolated trees.... Paradise: the place where reality meets rationality; where life reaches the Being's perfection".[5]

This earthly paradise is photographed or filmed by artists such as Sebastião Salgado,[6] Yann Artus-Bertrand or Art Wolfe, who show us the beauty of the world and its scars to convince us of the emergency of its preservation. Wade Davis, in his introduction to Art Wolfe's "hymn to the earth," evokes the impact a photograph may have on the change of people's way of thinking. It was an "earthrise" photographed on Christmas eve 1968 by Bill Anders, one of the American astronauts of Apollo 8, condensing "all the imagination and conscience of mankind".[7] This underlines the role art may have on our conscience. Sometimes artists show the beauty of the earth to make us realise the absolute necessity of preserving our human and non-human family. Sometimes they expose the damage done to our earth, either by using terrible images of reality or by using caricature to strike our minds.

Thus a satirical drawing, made by Haida artist Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, displaying "the monster of gluttony" stealing the resources of First Nations in British Columbia, might serve as a summary of the situation.[8] In this caricature, the character is presented as swallowing forests; his tail ends with a plug that is going to be connected to a factory. He stands not only for the logging companies ignoring Aboriginal rights but also for all the countries that destroyed forests.

[3] Wole Soyinka, *The Lion and the Jewel* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1971 [1969]), 23.

[4] Michel Serres, *Biogée* (Paris: Editions Le Pommier, 2013), 106 (translation mine).

[5] Ibid., 107 (translation mine).

[6] Sebastião Salgado, *La main de l'homme* (Paris: Editions de La Martinière, 1993). Also see Wim Wenders and Juliano Ribeiro Salgado's film *Le sel de la terre, un voyage avec Sebastião Salgado*, DVD Francetv distribution, 2014.

[7] Wade Davis in Art Wolfe, *Earth is my Witness* (S Rafael, CA: Earth Aware Editions, 2014). French edition: *Hymne à la terre* (National Geographic France, 2015), 18.

[8] Http://www.firstnations.de/development.htm, accessed 14 December 2015.

In Shakespeare's days already, the forests of England were dangerously shrinking:

> Ancient woodlands and forests had been shrinking throughout the middle ages. By Henry VIII's time the pace began to accelerate. Worried about timber supplies for shipbuilding, the government took the first steps – largely ineffective – to manage depletions. Climactic and demographic pressures aggravated over-exploitation, and by the 1590s caused a fuel crisis in south-east England and the country's first major environmental controversy. Similar to the threat of warming global temperatures today, the stresses on southern English woodland – at that time the country's most essential but finite natural resource – reached an ecological turning point.[9]

[9] J.U. Nef, "The Timber Crisis", *The Rise of British Industry*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1932), i, 156-164; in Randall Martin, *Shakespeare and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2015), 2, 173.

Shakespeare's allusion to a "sea-coal fire" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1.4.7-8) or in *Henry IV* Part 2 (2.1.85-87), concerns wood shortage and the solution that had been found to replace wood. Some statesmen tried to remedy the serious problem of wood shortage. In France, Colbert inspired the first forest policy based on concerns about forest protection in 1669. In the 19th century, some writers drew people's attention on the ecological consequences of human action, such as George Perkins Marsh, in *Man and Nature. Or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864). In France, Elisée Reclus evoked the relationship between man and the environment, mentioning the damage caused by human action on forests:

> Our forests' giants become scarcer and scarcer and when they fall, they are not replaced. In the United States and in Canada, most of the high trees that astonished the first settlers have been felled, and still recently the Californian settlers fell the gigantic sequoias that were 120, 130 or 140 metres high to saw them up into boards. That may be an irreparable loss....
> The expansion of agricultural lands, the needs of sailing and industry also reduce the number of trees.[10]

[10] Elysée Reclus, *De l'action humaine sur la géographie physique*, "L'homme et la nature", in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 décembre1864, 766 (translation mine), https://www.bibnum.education.fr/sites/.../Reclus-analyse-vf.pdf, accessed 4 December 2014.

In 19th century Canada, parts of forests were replaced by cities built with their very wood. Rudy Wiebe's novel, *A Discovery of Strangers*, starts with a chapter in which the animals discover the strangers through the sound of tree felling. They hear "bits of shriek and hammer," "the trees ... scream and smash" and "creatures that looked like humans standing motionless here and there, abruptly pointing and shrieking, pounding! Pounding!" That "brutal hiss and clangour" is the sound of the white settlers felling trees.[11] The novel, the gist of which is an exploration in Northern Canada, opens onto the non-human point of view. The lexical fields of sound, violence and suffering, the rhythm and sonorities of the military words "pointing" and "pounding" suggest the aggression on trees. The shrieks are both the human shrieks of violence and the

[11] Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1995 [1994]), 1-2.

shrieks of suffering of the trees felled. This aggression on the land also appears in Australia where "forests were devastated in a few years".[12] In his novel, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, Richard Flanagan alludes to the felling of trees in terms of massacre: "occasional gum trees stood as if brooding survivors of some terrible massacre,"[13] associating the massacres of Aboriginal peoples with that of trees:

> The torments inflicted on human beings echo the damage caused to the natural environment by the colonial enterprise. The sufferings and broken lives of immigrants, and the even worse lot of the convicts, the decimation of Aboriginal people, of animals, parallel the devastation of nature symbolised by felled trees....[14]

These fictional texts speak about the sad reality of beautiful areas changed into wastelands. As Pierre Rabhi writes, "if we insist with the absolute dogma of growing, all mankind is condemned to an economic, social and ecological chaos".[15]

Wole Soyinka poetically evokes the problem: "in the past decade or two, trees have attained apocalyptic dimensions – sitting in judgment over humanity – will the proceeding end in a reprieve, or a death sentence on the planet itself?" he writes.[16] While native forests drastically recede, plantations of oil-palms are disastrous for the environment:

> The oil palm tree is actually native to west and central Africa. A century ago, British siblings William and James Lever, whose company would become Unilever, ran a 17-million-acre palm concession in what was then the Belgian Congo. But it's only in the past few years that the crop has begun to transform the landscape of this continent.... The crop takes a dramatic toll on the environment. In 2007 the United Nations Environment Programme reported that oil palm plantations were the leading cause of deforestation in both Malaysia and Indonesia, removing a vital carbon sink and devastating the native habitat of orangutans and endangered Sumatran tigers and rhinos. The trees thrive at latitudes of roughly five degrees to the north and south of the equator, and in Africa that swath of earth runs thick with natural forest. The Guinean Forests, which stretch from Sierra Leone to Nigeria and once covered all of Liberia, have been identified as one of the 25 most important biodiversity hot spots on the planet, and what happened in Asia is a harbinger of what may happen here. As with any industrial-scale agricultural endeavor, the plantings have far-reaching impacts on both water supply and water quality and, given the pesticides and other agrochemicals involved in growing oil palm, on the soil itself.[17]

In Malaysia, where Swiss ecologist Bruno Manser spent several years with the Penang in the 1980s, defending their community and the rainforest before

[12] Colette Selles, "Australian Mountains – Myth and Reality, Devastation and Regeneration", in Françoise Besson, ed., *Mountains Figured and Disfigured in the English-Speaking World* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 628.

[13] Richard Flanagan, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1997), 20.

[14] Selles, "Australian Mountains", 627-628.

[15] Pierre Rabhi, *La part du colibri* (Clermont-Ferrand: Editions de l'Aube, 2014), 48 (translation mine).

[16] Soyinka, "Parables from Wangari Maathai's Trees", presented at the Storymoja Literary Festival in Nairobi, Kenya- September, 2014, http://www.africanstudies.org/blog/121-october-2014/418-parables-from-wangari-maathai-s-trees-by-wole-soyinka, accessed 14 December 2015.

[17] Jocelyn C. Zuckerman, "Africa's Vanishing Forests", http://archive.onearth.org/articls/2013/12/palm-oil-land-grab-africa, accessed 14 December 2015.

his probable death in the 2000s, deforestation was drastic; incidentally between 2000 and 2013, Malaysia had the highest rate of forest loss in the world.[18]

But in that general devastation, voices rise to fight against the destruction of nature; through either texts or actions, they show that nature may still be healed and that our survival depends on nature's life.

Wole Soyinka often refers to deforestation in his work and in an homage to Wangari Maathai's action, he writes:

> Land speculators – even when disguised as government – are of course a breed apart. When they see a tree, they see an obstacle – to be eliminated by the most efficient agency – the bulldozer. On the other side of the divide are the fanatics who have to be restrained as they watch the bulldozer ripping through a green belt without a thought for the void that is brutally opened up in a landscape that has become an integral part of what we are – or, if you prefer – a landscape of which we have become an integral part, through which we sense ourselves as breathing objects and thus, a meaningful part of a humbling network of Nature actualities.[19]

Trees indeed have often been obstacles to the so-called development in Africa, Asia or America, particularly in Brazil, where huge parts of the Amazonian forest have been erased to be replaced by pastures for the cattle of big land-owners, thus bringing misery to small peasants gathering in *favellas* or Indian tribes continuously pushed away. Soyinka goes on:

> The tree still stands as a primordial presence, but now it has also become an eloquent critique of ill-conceived and often, ill-fated social engineering experiments that involve human uprooting, are based on the text-books of ideologues who fail to relate social theories to the precipitates of accumulated history, human psychology, a reality so simply but profoundly captured in Jeremy Cronym's lines to which I often make recourse, even to the point of seeming addiction:
> *To live close to every tree you had ever planted*
> *Our century has been the great destructor of that,*
> *The small and continuous community, lived in solidarity*
> *With seasons, its life eked out around*
> *Your fore-mothers' and -fathers' burial-ground.*[20]

He quotes Wangari Maathai: "The future of the planet concerns all of us, and we should do what we can to protect it. As I told the foresters, and the women, you don't need a diploma to plant a tree".[21] This simple agricultural gesture is relayed by two Nobel Prize winners' texts.

[18] Https://news.mongabay.com/2013/11/malaysia-has-the-worlds-highest-deforestation-rate-reveals-google-forest-map/, accessed 14 December 2015.

[19] Soyinka, "Parables".

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

From " Vanishing Forests" to "Seeds of Change"

Two film titles encapsulate the present ecological situation. *Our Vanishing Forests*[22] is a film narrated by Kiowa writer N. Scott Momaday; it concerns the history and policies of the United States' Forest Service; *Seeds of Change* – which is also the title of a chapter in Wangari Maathai's autobiography –, is a film about the cleaning up of the Yangtze River in China, devastated by erosion due to deforestation.[23] The former exposes the preservation policy abandoned, thus provoking disaster since the U.S. Forest Service, "once the steward of wilderness, has abandoned its conservation ethic and now favours the interests of the timber industry;"[24] the latter opens new ways for hope. Those two ways of leading people to awareness are meant to show the threat hanging over the earth and the necessity to fight and change our behaviour, which many writers, since Thoreau's *Walden*, have suggested.

In *Travels in Alaska*, John Muir, one of the first initiators of environmentalism, evokes mines, logging and the construction of the Northern Pacific Railway, which transformed the landscape and destroyed natural territories. The Scottish-American man, soon to become one of the first advocates for the preservation of the wilderness in the USA, the founder of the Sierra Club, starts his travel book by referring to exploitation.[25] In this introductory passage, he reminds us that nature is often regarded as an element to be used. For instance, the river has been named with the mineral that is going to be "advantageous" for this population ("Carbon River"). The "railroad hopes [of the Sound region], its unrivalled timber resources, and its far-reaching geographical relations" are placed on an equal level and nature as such is absent. Only man is taken into account. John Muir softly leads his readers to have their own point of view on the issue of exploitation, to understand that there is a twofold perception of nature: on the one hand, the useful conception linked with the development of towns and the construction of means of communication to shorten distances; on the other hand, a vision led by an ecological point of view stressing the connection between nature and all its inhabitants including man who is one of them, but not the only one.

For Jacques Brosse, who also analyses the problem of deforestation, the fear of the unknown hidden in the mysteries of the forest that appears in novels or films is far from being a mere figment of the imagination but reveals an age-old fear. Even in the 21st century the economic motives engendering the destruction of the Amazonian forest meet a desire to reject the Other:

> The terror that can be caused by the sudden apparition of Amazonian Indians, the last true "wild men" since they live on the forest in which they are nearly invisible, merging with the trees and creepers out of which they suddenly emerge, thus frightening travellers, keeps on haunting people's minds, which

[22] *Our Vanishing Forests*, film Directed by Arlen Slobodow, produced by Public Interest Video Network.

[23] *Seeds of Change*, film by Lisa Miller, Ava Karvonen, Scot Morison, Francis Damberger, Films for the Humanities & Sciences (Firm). Hamilton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2009. "Seeds of Change: The ECO Story", http://www.worldcat.org/title/seeds-of-change-the-eco-story/oclc/503076994, accessed 14 December 2015.

[24] Http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/vf.html, accessed 14 December 2015.

[25] John Muir, *Travels in Alaska* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002 [1915]), 9.

> is shown by the film *La Forêt d'émeraude* (1985). More than cynical motivations, it is fear that generated the systematic destruction of Indians in Brazil, one of the shames of our time. That fear of the unknown is also at the origin of the half-achieved project of the trans-Amazonian highway, which goes with a clearing whose pointlessness has been demonstrated by biologists.[26]

[26] Jacques Brosse, *Mythologie des arbres* (Paris: Payot, 1993 [1989]), 258-259 (translation mine).

Kev Reynolds, an English mountaineer and writer, remembers a place in the Pyrenees which, when he first visited it, was a real Garden of Eden. Less than two years later, the "sanctuary" had been changed into a wasteland:

> Dusk was drawing on by the time we turned the bend into the upper **sanctuary**, and we were still on the bulldozed track that had not been there 18 months before.… A concrete ford had been created through the river, and where vehicles had used it their skidding tyres had ripped the vegetation on both banks. A **once-sacred** meadowland was **scarred** with dry mud and the imprints of wheels, not animals. Dwarf rhododendrons had been **desecrated**, and rainbow swirls of oil coloured puddles in the track.
> … Wine bottles had been smashed against a rock. Toilet paper fluttered from the branches of a pine tree, and tin cans were rusting in the stream.
> 'Urban motorised man,' wrote Fernando Barrientos Fernandez, 'has no responsible conservationist regard for nature.'[27]

[27] Kev Reynolds, *A Walk in the Clouds: Fifty Years Among the Mountains* (Cumbria: Cicerone, 2013), 21-22 (emphasis mine).

The "once-sacred meadowland" is now "scarred" and this near anagram – or rather a lexical chaos where letters have been turned upside down like the landscape – sums up the situation and the message: nature is irremediably wounded by "urban motorised man". The graphic words used by the mountaineer urge the reader to revolt, to realise the destruction of mountain areas, their "beauty," "innocence," "sacredness," life, by the construction of roads meant to bring more tourists. A similar wasteland is depicted in Native American poet Joy Harjo's poem "A Map to the Next World":

> Monsters are born
> there of nuclear anger.
> Trees of ashes wave good-bye to good-bye and the map appears to disappear.
> We no longer know the names of the birds here, how to speak to them by their personal names.
> Once we knew everything in this lush promise.
> What I am telling you is real and is printed in a warning on the map. Our forgetfulness stalks us, walks the earth behind us, leaving a trail of paper diapers, needles, and wasted blood.[28]

[28] Joy Harjo, "A Map to the Next World", in *A Map to the Next World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000), 19.

The impossibility to "speak to [the birds] by their personal names" suggests the distance taken with nature by human beings in the modern world. That distance perhaps comes from our inability to read nature's writing and to listen

to nature's voice, like Wangari Maathai listening to birds. The awareness that everything is linked and that the sacred is first the consciousness of life in everything opens the way to ecological conscience. But our economic world, by losing the capacity to wonder at nature, has also forgotten its language. Exactly as peoples have always been destroyed for economic or political reasons because dominating powers rejected their languages, the latter similarly refuse to hear the language of the non-human. Writers suggest that the main way to ecological awareness dwells on communication, particularly between the human and the non-human. David Abram tells the story of a Peruvian doctor, Manuel Cordova-Rios,[29] who was captured in 1907 when he was only fifteen, by Amahuaca Indians living in the Amazonian rain forest. The language of the tribe was understandable to the young boy once he had been steeped in the forest's and people's life. It is the rain forest that gave him the key to the understanding of a language unknown to him: "the tribe's language, which remained largely meaningless to Cordova-Rios for six months or more, became understandable to his ears only as his senses became attuned to the subtleties of the rainforest ecology in which the culture was embedded".[30] A key to the understanding of a people dwells on the understanding of their physical environment and the consciousness of the relationship between the human and the non-human. This is also expressed by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac*:

> It is a century now since Darwin gave us the first glimpse of the origin of species. We know now what was unknown to all the preceding caravan of generations: that men are only fellow-voyagers with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution. This new knowledge should have given us, by this time, a sense of kinship with fellow-creatures; a wish to live and let live; a sense of wonder over the magnitude and duration of the biotic enterprise.[31]

For Aldo Leopold, "that land is a community is the basic concept of ecology ... but that lands is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics".[32] The scientific perception of the land (Darwin's) must never be dissociated from the ethical and affective one. Darwin himself closed *On the Origin of Species* on the notion of "wonder".[33] These texts suggest that the union between knowledge, ethics and wonder is essential to save the planet. All forms of representations of nature and of the relationship of man with nature may be the seeds that will allow forests to grow again on the earth and to make wastelands recede in their turn.

Literature leading to awareness

Rick Bass's *The Book of Yaak*, which he describes as "a sourcebook, a handbook, a weapon of the heart" was planned to save a valley from

[29] See Frank Bruce Lamb, *Wizard of the Upper Amazon: The Story of Manuel Cordova-Rios* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971).

[30] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Random House, 1997 [1996]), 141.

[31] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac with Essays on Conservation on Round River* [1953] (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 116-117.

[32] Ibid., ixi.

[33] "There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved", Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006 [1859]), 307.

destruction.[34] "I don't know if a book can help protect a valley, and the people who live in that valley";[35] it is a shout of anger at the deforestation of the valley of Yaak, a soft weapon meant not to destroy anyone but to save everybody. Depicting the beauty of the place, "the music and harmony of large and small things" in "this land that congress forgot," Bass provides us with statistics.[36] After poetically depicting the beauty of the valley and the interrelation between all its inhabitants, he gives dry numbers and facts:

> Despite the influx of cheap Canadian timber – the results of the **obscene forest liquidation** going in up there, which rivals Brazil's deforestation rates – the timber companies working on public lands in the West continue to post record quarterly **profits** for their stockholder. By the end of 1994, despite a drop in timber prices, Plum Creek posted a record **profit** of $112 million; Georgia Pacific, based in Newt Gingrich's home state, had a 1,000 percent increase in **profit**...[37]

The notion of "Profit," hammered into the text, replaces "the spirit of [the] place," previously mentioned when the seasonal migrations are described by the writer and anthropologist Richard Nelson "as a pulse, a tracing, 'a luminous sheath' of passages".[38] Rick Bass's book is a fight to save the valley by showing its beauty and life, the interrelation between all species and the damage made on its forests by man for profit. Yet if Bass's book starts with a "shiver," it ends on a glimmer of hope, "the hope of fallen rotting trees",[39] trees dying naturally to make the forest live on.

Likewise, Niyi Osundare, in a wonderful hymn to the forest, exposes the wounds inflicted on trees, hence on earth:

> A forest of a million trees, this,
> A forest of milling trees
> Wounded, though, by time's' axe
> And the greedy edges of *agbegilodo*'s** matchet
> ...
>
> ** timber lorry.[40]

The poet conveys the repeated exploitation of timber ("time's axe") through anaphora ("A forest of") followed by two alliterative words whose partial homophony ("million" /"milling") echoes the shift from the luxuriance of wooded land to the ultimate destination of the trees once they have been hewn by sharp instruments ("axe" and "matchet") becoming the weapons wounding the forest. Men's greed is then transposed onto the very instrument of transport; the Yoruba word for timber lorry used here for its sounding and also for the ubiquity of the lorry on Southern Nigerian roads,[41] introduces a clash between

[34] Rick Bass, *The Book of Yaak* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), xiii.

[35] Ibid., xiii.

[36] Ibid., 67.

[37] Ibid., 88 (emphasis mine).

[38] Ibid., 64.

[39] Ibid., 187.

[40] Niyi Osundare, "Forest Echoes", in *The Eye of the Earth* (Ibadan: Heinemann educational Books, 2000 [1986]), 5.

[41] I am indebted to Christiane Fioupou for her illuminating analyses and translations of Nigerian poetry and I would like to thank her particularly for her help in the comment on Niyi Osundare's poem and her close reading of this article.

the music of Yoruba language and the sharpness of the "greedy edges of ... matchet" that the Yoruba word cuts into two parts. In another poem, "Eyeful Glances," the "flame tree" and the "tinder season" give way to "a desperate match" that "stabs the night/in the gloomy alleys/of NEPA's* (*National Electric Power Authority) darkdom".[42] Tinder is no longer a useful element of everyday life, but a sign of the destruction of their homes, of their lives: "Our farms are tinder".[43] The electricity company that is supposed to bring light brings gloom. Wole Soyinka, in the play *The Lion and the Jewel*, dramatises deforestation in a flashback representing the construction of the railway:

> Well, the workers came, in fact
> It was the prisoners who were brought to do
> The hardest part…to break the jungle's back...
> [*Enter the prisoners, guarded by two warders.... They begin felling, matchet swinging, log dragging, all to the rhythm of the work gang's metal percussion (rod on gong or rude triangle, etc.). The two performers are also the song leaders and the others fill the chorus. 'N'ijo itoro', 'Amuda el'ebe l'aiya', 'Gbe je on'ipa' etc.]*

The felling of the trees to the sound of percussions distorts African music muffling the sound of the death of trees. Mime songs, play within the play are theatrical ways of exposing the damage of colonisation on African forests in colonial and present time. The writer makes the jungle a body – "to break the jungle's back" – like another Nigerian writer, Niyi Osundare, who also uses a body metaphor to denounce the destruction of Nigerian forests; both writers reunite the human and non-human:

> Alas, the boundless rainforest of my youth
> Has shrunk to a frightened eyebrow
> On the forehead of the coast
> *Koko gba kokodi*. ("Hole in the Sky")

Both of them end the allusion to deforestation with Yoruba words as if the Yoruba poetic language was a way of recreating the environment of the destroyed forest.

In Kenya, Wangari Maathai, in her autobiography *Unbowed: A Memoir*, proposed a response to deforestation in Africa by the plantation of thousands of trees, an action giving reality to Jean Giono's tale *L'Homme qui plantait des arbres*.[44] In the same country, a few decades earlier, a woman coloniser, Karen Blixen, who had contributed to deforestation, gave her testimony in *Out of Africa*: "If I had had the capital, I thought, I would have given up coffee, have cut down the coffee-trees, and have planted forest trees on my land".[45] Thus admitting her economic motivation, she adds that she "would have had then ... a

[42] Ibid., 24-25.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Jean Giono, *L'homme sui plantait des arbres* (Paris: Gallimard Jeunesse, 2010 [1953]). Wangari Maathai wrote a foreword for the 2005 English edition *The Man who Planted Trees*.

[45] Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen), *Out of Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 1954 [1937]), 277. All further references are to this edition, quoted as *OA* in the text.

good market for both timber and firewood" (*OA*, 277). But the reader feels that her point of view evolves when, just after speaking about trees as an element of trade, she reveals her own pangs of remorse concerning deforestation:

> It is a noble occupation to plant trees, you think of it many years after with content. There had been big stretches of native forest on the farm in the old days, but it had been sold to the Indians for cutting down before I took over the farm; it was a sad thing. I myself in the hard years had had to cut down the wood on my land round the factory for the steam-engine, and this forest, with the tall stems and the live green shadows in it, had haunted me. I have not felt more sorry for anything I have done in my life, than for cutting it down. (*OA*, 277)

All these stages – her cutting down Native trees, planting coffee-trees, realising the damage caused by such a change on the land, her decision to plant new trees led her to the ultimate decision to create a new forest. Yet troubles with the coffee plantation prevented her from achieving her plans. The way she evokes the Natives as they tried to help her stay on the land shows how conscious she was of their superiority and at the same time she is the patronizing colonial woman who still considers herself as the leader: "A flock of sheep may be feeling the same towards the herdboy, they will have infinitely better knowledge of the country and the weather than he, and still will be walking after him, if needs be, straight into the abyss" (*OA* , 285). However colonial and derogatory the animal comparison might sound, at least it shows she was torn between her colonial vision and her awareness of the damage she and the other settlers caused to Africa and African people. Her perception is akin to the conscience Natives have of the close link uniting men, animals and the land. With Wangari Maathai things are different and yet one can remember that Karen Blixen's hope was to plant a Native forest to recreate "a singing wood," thus foreshadowing the bird singing at dusk about which young Wangari Maathai asked her mother what it was saying (*UM*, 44). This face to face between two women, a Native Kikuyu and a coloniser, between two autobiographies, reveals that people with radically opposed motivations may meet once they have realised the link between them and the non-human world, in this case, the trees and the forests, on which so much depends. In the same vein, Gary Snyder writes: "Not so long ago the forests were our depth, a sun-dappled underworld, an inexhaustible timeless source. Now they are vanishing. We are all endangered yokels",[46] and his association of men with a bird – the yokel, besides being a rustic, is here a green woodpecker, as is said in a footnote – stresses our dependence on the non-human world; by underlining our fragility he stresses the force of life that the non-human represents. This is emphasised by Wangari Maathai's autobiography.

[46] Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010 [1990]), 153.

Wangari Maathai and the "Canopy of Hope"

In 2004, Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace for her commitment and her work concerning reforestation with hundreds of Kenyan women. She came to symbolise the strength of collective action to help stop the progression of the planet's destruction.

Deforestation in Kenya started early as is suggested by geographer and geopolitician MacKinder's account of his ascent of Mt Kenya: "Evidently all Kikuyu [land] was once clad with forest, and in Meranga, with the clearing of the forest, the wild flowers of the glades have overspread the whole country. Some Bates or Wallace should make this land his home for a couple of years before it is spoilt by civilization".[47] The suggestion that European naturalists should study the land before it is too late reflects a patronising attitude and at the same time the author is conscious of the gradual destruction of this nature "spoilt" by what he calls "civilisation", that is the European presence. The "colonisation" of the area by wild flowers was the result of the "clearing of the forest" achieved by colonisers. The mountaineer's allusion is different from what is explored in Wangari Maathai's autobiography, a poetic summary of the connexion of all things and creatures in the world, the forest in the Kikuyu area being the key to demonstrate how text and action are complementary.

[47] Halford J. MacKinder, *The First Ascent of Mount Kenya* (Athens: Ohio U. P., 1991 [1990]), 153. H.W. Bates was a naturalist who published *A Naturalist on the River Amazon*, 1863; A.R. Walace published *Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, 1853.

Her story is a story of action that illustrates how a small gesture can change the development of an area, a country, the planet. Like the tree-planting shepherd in Jean Giono's tale, who transformed a desert zone in Provence into a living forest, the reforestation of Kenya she achieved with Kenyan women is a way of proving that everything is possible when one can see the connexion between people, between people and the land, people and non-human creatures, people and nature.

If she was awarded the Nobel Prize because of her action, her autobiography, a beautiful literary text, enhances the strength of awareness and the link between all things, reminiscent of the Native American philosophy linking all things in a series of concentric circles. From the story of her childhood – her telling Kikuyu myths, the evocation of her father whose strength was that of mountain – to the awareness of our vulnerability through the vision of her father's cancer, she guides her readers from life to wastelands and then from wastelands to life again thanks to the involvement of Kenyan women.

In order to point to the connection between human beings, trees, animals, landscape, everyday life, tourism, she stresses the link between the purity of rivers and the presence of vegetation: "It rained frequently but the rivers were always clear and clean because the land and the riverbanks were covered by vegetation" (*UM*, 33). Vegetation is an important part in the chain of

preservation broken by industrialised imports transforming both traditional everyday life and the life of the world, as is seen through the impact of plastic bags:

> When I look at Nyeri today, I am reminded that when I was a child, people carried beautiful, colourful baskets of different sizes and types made from sisal and other natural fibers to and from the markets to transport goods. These baskets were parts of the local handicrafts industry. Today, these baskets are hardly used and instead are made for tourists. The people meanwhile use flimsy plastic bags to carry their goods. These plastic litter the parks and streets, blow into the trees and bushes, kill domestic animals (when they swallow them inadvertently) and provide breeding ground for mosquitoes. They leave the town so dirty it is almost impossible to find a place to sit and rest away from their plastic bags. (*UM*, 35)

"[B]eautiful, colourful baskets" made with natural materials are contrasted with the ugliness of the plastic bags invading the city, hanging from trees: the artificial foliage mingling with the natural one writes in the cityscape the story of nature's destruction. To the organic cycles in which every element protects another one as the vegetation preserves the purity of water and prevents natural catastrophes, she opposes the chain of damage generated by the Europeans when they replace native trees by commercial plantations such as for instance "the hitherto pristine Aberdare forest":

> The colonial government had decided to encroach into the forest and establish commercial plantations of non-native trees. I remember seeing huge bonfires as the natural forests went up in smoke. By the mid-1940s, the British had introduced many exotic tree species into Kenya. Pines were transplanted from the northern hemisphere, and eucalyptus and black wattle from the southern hemisphere. These trees grew fast and contributed to the development of the newly emerging timber and building industry.
>
> To popularize them, foresters gave many such seedlings to farmers free of charge. Farmers appreciated their commercial value and planted them enthusiastically at the expense of local species. However, these trees did damage, too. They eliminated local plants and animals, destroying the natural ecosystem that helped gather and retain rainwater. When rains fell, much of the water ran downstream. Over the subsequent decades, underground water levels decreased markedly and, eventually, rivers and streams either dried up or were greatly reduced. (*UM*, 39)

Wangari Maathai points out the link between the plantation of species that are not adapted to the ecosystem and the damage it causes. This is what happened wherever plantations of coffee or tea replaced native cultures. The threat hanging over some animal species is widely due to the destruction of forests: the population of gorillas in Rwanda, gibbons in Indonesia, orang-utans

in Sumatra and Borneo, jaguars in South and Central America, lemurs in Madagascar, tigers in Asia, to give but a few examples.

Wangari Maathai emphasises the relationship between the presence of trees and the abundance of life: "Ihithe [Wangari Maathai's birthplace] borders the Aberdare forest and our area had many wooded plots. As a result wildlife was abundant" (*UM*, 43). Wildlife is not seen in opposition with human life but placed on a par. Her mother's advice to speak to the leopard – "You and I are both leopards so why we disagree?" – is the assertion of a common belonging, the conscience of which is synonymous with survival. When applied to all species, this changes the mode of behaving towards one another. The author opposes the conversation with the jaguar to the villagers' yell to frighten elephants away, which prompts the Kenya Wildlife Service to kill them just to calm people: "This sad state of affairs is caused by a lack of understanding of animal behaviour, something my mother's generation seemed to grasp" (*UM*, 44). What might appear as a sad anecdote is in fact presented as art of a long chain starting with forests in which birds live; the bird "warning people" leads to education: "when children communicate with adults, they learn a lot as they grow" (*UM*, 44). It all amounts to communication: communication of children with adults, human beings with leopards, birds with humans: when that chain of communication is broken – for example when villagers use their voices to frighten elephants away, which is a distorted form of communication – life is destroyed: the bird sings to warn human beings of a danger. The men yell to assert their strength. It is a one-sense communication where no answer is possible.

Through pages devoted to a fig tree, Wangari Maathai captures poetically and philosophically how those who listen to and respect nature preserve the ecosystem, hence the life of the earth. Wood gathering takes her to the forest, to birds, to fertility, mystery and then spirituality – "that's a tree of God" (*UM*, 45) – thus revealing through a fig tree that nothing is separated:

> I later learned that there was a connection between the fig tree's root system and the underground water reservoirs. The roots burrowed deep into the ground, breaking through the rocks beneath the surface soil and diving into the underground water table. The water travelled up along the root until it hit a depression or weak place in the ground, and gushed out as a spring. Indeed wherever these trees stood, there were likely to be streams. The reverence the community had for the fig tree helped preserve the stream and the tadpoles that so captivated me. The trees also held the soil together, reducing erosion and land slides. In such ways, without conscious or deliberate effort, these cultural or spiritual practices contributed to the conservation of biodiversity. (*UM*, 46)

One tree is enough to feed people, to bring water, to prevent landslides; the preservation of that tree allows "the conservation of biodiversity" and reveals the healing union between the human and the non-human.

Wangari Maathai's education in Kenya, what her parents and people had taught her about the land and the link between all things and creatures, her education in the United States of America to become a biologist, the conference she attended in 1975 – the first United Nation Conference on Women, gathering 135 governments and 4,000 women from all over the world –, all these factors converged to prompt her to action, planting thousands of trees to improve Kenyan life. "For me, a biologist who had grown up in a rural area where our daily lives depended on the health of the environment, the issues raised at the Liaison Centre[48] were not completely strange" (*UM*, 120). By hearing these women "talk about water, energy and nutrition," she "could see that everything they lacked depended on the environment": "The connection between the symptoms of environmental degradation and their causes – deforestation, devegetation, unsustainable agriculture, and soil loss – were self-evident.... We had to get to the root causes of those problems" (*UM*, 125). This was a plea for solutions:

> This is, I believe, a result of my education as well as my time in America: to think of what can be done rather than worrying about what cannot. I didn't sit down and ask myself, "Now, let me see, what shall I do?" It just came to me "Why not plant trees?" The trees would provide a supply of wood that would enable women to cook nutritious foods. They would also have wood for fencing, and fodder for cattle and goats. The trees would offer shade for humans and animals, protect watershed and bind the soil, and, if they were fruit trees, provide food. They would also heal the land by bringing back birds and small animals and regenerate the vitality of the earth.
> This is how the Green Belt Movement began (*UM*, 124-125).

She brought to reality the dream of Karen Blixen, a woman colonial in love with Kenya. If the experiences of the two women are radically opposed, their autobiographies point in the same direction. By explaining the genesis of the Green Belt Movement, Wangari Maathai does not just tell the story of her life. She opens way for communal action. Planting trees – as Jean Giono's solitary shepherd in Provence had fictitiously done and as hundreds of women in Kenya really did – changed the landscape, brought back non-human and human life to a formerly deserted place. By writing her autobiography she educated the whole world to the conscience of the relationship between all the elements composing the earth. Always explaining the world through relationships she ends her autobiography with the "linkage" between development and democracy by

[48] "The Environment Liaison Centre (now called the Environment Liaison Centre International)" (*UM*, 122).

using the metaphor of a traditional object, here the African stool: "a traditional African stool that has three legs and a basin to sit on":

> To me, the three legs represent the critical pillars of just and stable societies. The first leg stands for democratic space, where rights are respected, whether they are human rights, women's rights, children's rights, or environmental rights. The second represents sustainable and equitable management of resources. And the third stands for cultures of peace that are deliberately cultivated within communities and nations. The basin, or seat, represents society and its prospect for development. Unless all three legs are in place, supporting the seat, no society can thrive. Neither can its citizens develop their skills and creativity. (*UM*, 294)

The African stool is the sign of her taking root in the African soil. It also suggests that any political idea must be anchored in the soil, solidly placed and as stable as the stool with its three legs.

Wangari Maathai's text is not only the story of a life but it is also an invitation to go on fighting. It gives reality to other literary texts warning us against deforestation. Her autobiography ends with an injunction to fight, which is also a cry of hope:

> Those of us who witness the degraded state of the environment and the suffering that comes with it cannot afford to be complacent. We continue to be restless. If we really carry the burden, we are driven to action. We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk! (*UM*, 295)

Her action was prolonged by her texts to make forests grow again. Her autobiography exemplifies environmental literature as defined by Scott Slovic speaking about "three I's: "Indigeneities, Intersections, Interventions".[49] Listening to local cultural traditions, she points out connections which she converts into action.

Texts, like pictures, drawings, films, are action; on all continents writers and artists warn the world. On all continents people heal the wounded planet. In Kenya, China, Malaysia, Brazil, everywhere in the world there are examples of actions changing wastelands into a renewed environment and replacing "the relentless deforestation"[50] by "a canopy of hope".

[49] "Three I's: 1. **Indigeneities**: Attunement to **local** cultural traditions, vocabularies, environmental conditions. 2. **Intersections**: Illuminating or pursuing **connections** of various kinds, sometimes healthy and sometimes destructive. 3. **Interventions**: **Acting** upon issues of particular salience or urgency to specific regions," Scott Slovic, "Green Trends in International Literary Studies: Many Voices, Similar Songs", 15 October 2010, http://astra.us/2010/Slovic--am--InternationalTrends.ASTRA.pdf, accessed 17 December 2015.

[50] Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild,* ix.

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