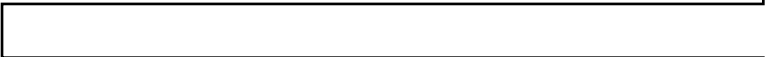
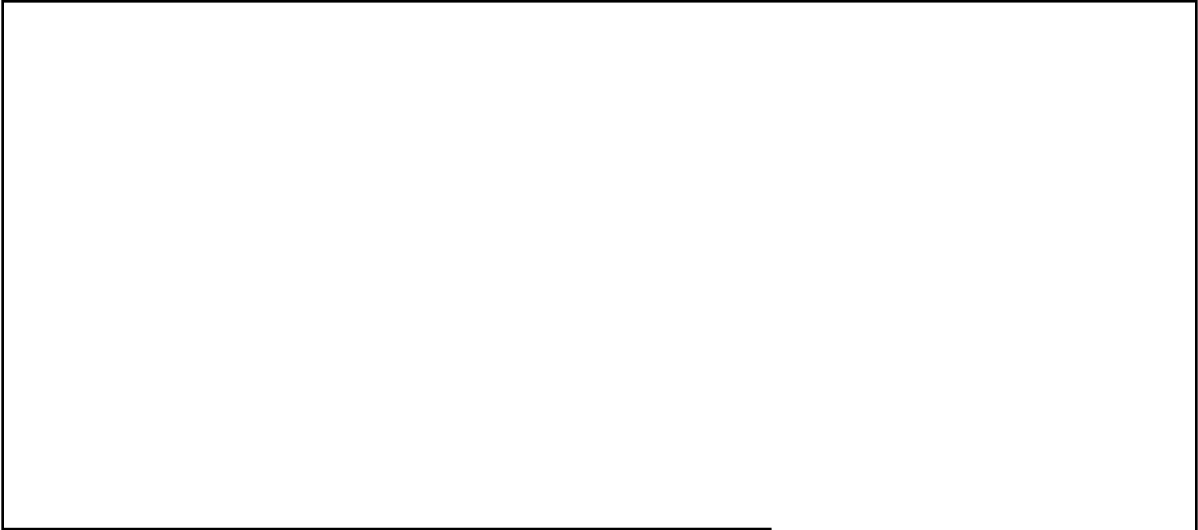


Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts



Cross Cultural Korea
Wavescape in the Anthropocene
Studia Mediterranea
Translations: Jurica Pavičić

Vol. 2, No. 3/4 2020
DOI - 10.38003/ccsr

Publisher

Centre for Cross-Cultural and Korean Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split
Poljička cesta 35
21000 Split

Web Page:

<http://crosscultural-korean.ffst.unist.hr/cross-culturalstudiesreview/>

Email contact:

culturalstudiesreview@gmail.com

Co-publishers

Institute for Cross-Cultural Studies
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul and Yongin
Studia Mediterranea Research Centre, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This journal is financially supported by the Seed Program for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the annual grant from Korean Studies Promotion Services (KSPS) of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2018-INC-2230010) and National Research Fundings granted by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split.

ISSN 2671-065X (Print)

ISSN 2718-2509 (Online)

Editors in Chief

Kim Sang Hun (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

Boris Škvorc (University of Split)

Journal Editors

Srećko Jurišić (University of Split)

Brian Willems (University of Split)

Editorial Board

Tihomir Brajović (University of Belgrade)

Eni Buljubašić (University of Split)

Cho Kang Sok (Yonsei University)

Angela Fabris (University of Klagenfurt)

Andrea Gialloredo (University of Chieti-Pescara)

Monica Jansen (University of Utrecht)

Bernarda Katušić (University of Vienna)

Leszek Malcak (University of Katowice)

Leo Rafolt (University of Osijek)

Simon Ryle (University of Split)

Ljiljana Šarić (University of Oslo)

Lee Ji-Eun (Washington University)

Advisory Board

Dalibor Blažina (University of Zagreb)

Zrinka Božić Blanuša (University of Zagreb)

Neven Budak (University of Zagreb)

Daniel Dzino (Macquarie University, Sydney)

Stipe Grgas (University of Zagreb)

Tatjana Jukić (University of Zagreb)

Park, Jongseong (Korea National Open University)

Soung, Jung Keun (Hannam University)

Andrea Lešić Thomas (University of Sarajevo)

Gordan Matas (University of Split)

Aleksandar Mijatović (University of Rijeka)

Alan O'Leary (University of Leeds)

Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić (University of Split)

Bogusław Zieliński (University Adam Mickiewicz, Poznań)

Laurence Rickels (Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe)

Editor of Cross-Cultural Korea

Kim Sang Hun (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul)

Editors of *Studia Mediterranea*

Srećko Jurišić and Antonela Marić (University of Split)

Reviews Editor

Simon Ryle (University of Split)

Editor of *New Media and Contemporary Arts*

Slobodan Jokić (University of Split)

Editor of *Literature in Translation*

Paula Jurišić (University of Split)

Editorial Office

Ivona Zebić Mitrović (University of Split)

Administrative Office:

Jelena Novaković (University of Split)

Cross Cultural Studies Review

— VOL. 2, NO. 3 – 4, 2020, TABLE OF CONTENTS

DOI – 10.38003/ccsr

Cross-Cultural Korea – 9

Edited by: King Sang Hun

Boris Škvorc (University of Split),

On Kim Young-ha and his Novels: The Darkened Worlds and Reflections of the Expressed as Hidden “Truth” – 11

Kim Sang Hun (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies),

Asian Studies in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia: Strategies for the Development of Korean Studies at the University of Split – 21

Brian Willems (University of Split),

Review of Readymade Bodhisattva, Eds. Sunyoung Park and Sang Joon Park – 41

Theme: Wavescapes in the Anthropocene (explorations in Blue Ecocriticism and the Environmental Humanities) – 47

Edited by: Eni Buljubašić & Simon Ryle

Simon Ryle and Eni Buljubašić (University of Split),

Introduction: Wavescapes in the Anthropocene – 49

Monika Bregović (University of Zadar),
**Virginia Woolf's Fish:
Animal Lives between Aesthetics and Ethics – 67**

Rupert Medd (w. Helene Guyot) (independent researcher),
Conversations with Planet Ocean – 83

Christina Heflin (Royal Holloway University of London)
**Jean Painlevé's Surrealism, Marine Life
and Non-Ocular Modes of Sensing – 143**

Studia Mediterranea – 163

Edited by: Paula Jurišić

Leo Rafolt (University of Osijek),
Terror of Acceptance: Montažstroj's Political Distopia – 165

Élisabeth Schulz (University of Angers),
**Shipwrecked Migrants: Behind the Current Issues of International
Migration, Through Fuocoammare: Beyond Lampedusa by
Gianfranco Rosi and Mediterranea by Jonas Carpignano – 183**

Katja Grečić (University of Zagreb),
**Fear Narratives in Documentary Theatre: Staging Asylum
– Žiga Divjak's 'Play Six' – 195**

**Translations:
Jurica Pavičić – 213**

Edited by: Srećko Jurišić & Brian Willems

Introduction by Srećko Jurišić – 215

Translation of chapters 29-30 from "Žena s drugog kata"
(Brian Willems / Srećko Jurišić)
English, Italian – 219

Interview with Jurica Pavičić by Srećko Jurišić – 227

Book Reviews – 237

Edited by: Simon Ryle

Anita Lunić (University of Split),

Review of: Humans, Animals and Biopolitics: The more-than-human condition (2015), Edited by Kristin Asdal, Tone Druglito, Steve Hinchliffe – 239

Iva Polak (University of Zagreb),

Review of: A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None (2018), by Kathryn Yusoff – 244

Arthur Lizie (Bridgewater State University),

Review of: Through a Vegan Studies Lens: Textual Ethics and Lived Activism (2019), Edited by Laura Wright – 247

Maria Lux (Whitman College),

Review of: Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age (2018) by Nicole Seymour – 250

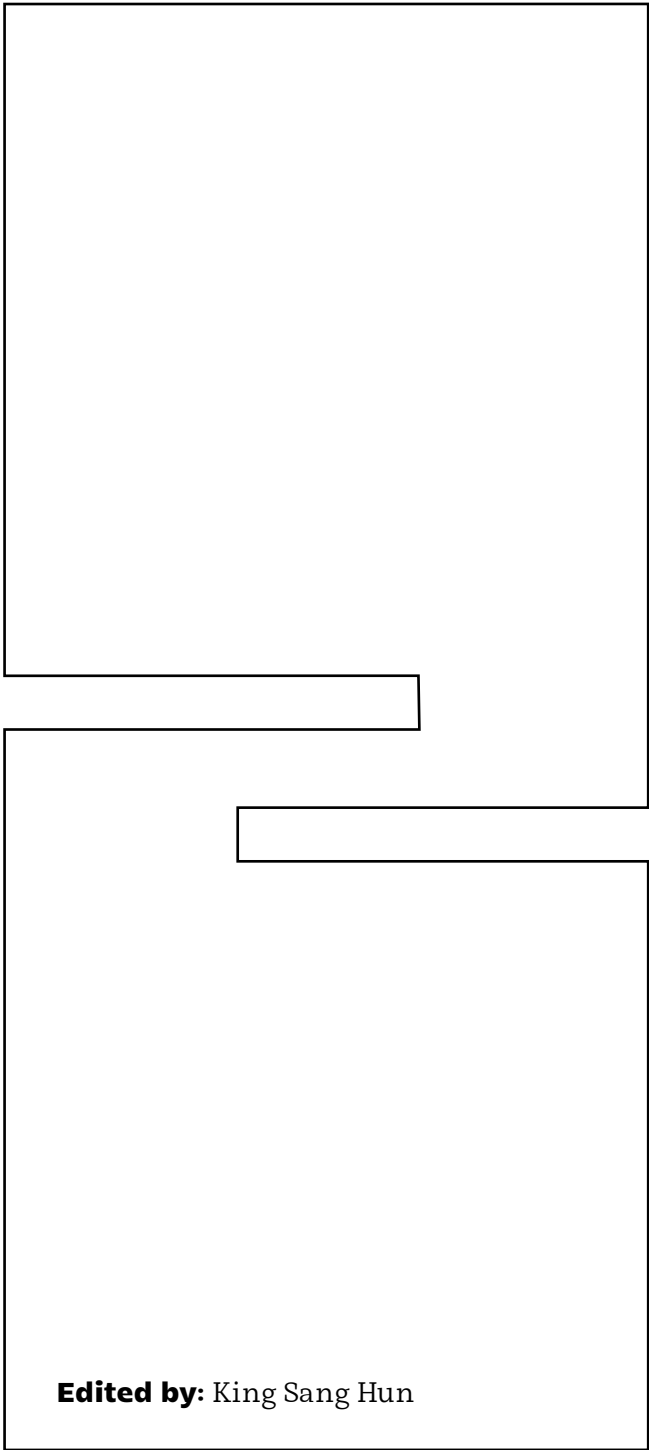
Brian Willems (University of Split),

The Ministry for the Future (2020), Kim Stanley Robinson; Capital and Ideology (2019), by Thomas Piketty; and Avatar अवतार: Contemporary Indian Science Fiction/Fantascienza contemporanea Indiana (2020), Edited by Tarun K. Saint and Francesco Verso – 253

Submission Guidelines – 261

Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts



Edited by: King Sang Hun

Cross - Cultural Korea

On Kim Young-ha and his Novels: The Darkened Worlds and Reflections of the Expressed as Hidden “Truth”

Boris Škvorc*
University of Split

Abstract:

This article is based on the Foreword to the translation of the novel *I Have Right to Kill Myself*. It is focused on the notes about above mentioned novel, but also discusses the contemporary Korean novels, the opus of Kim Young Ha, and the place of this novelist and his work in contemporary world literature. It also provides some insight in cross cultural ties between tradition of what is called “western canon” and East Asian adaptation of the genre of novel, as developed in Modernism and Post-modern “condition” of Anthropocene.

Keywords: Korean Literature, Cross-Cultural Studies, Korean Novel, Translation

Locating Korean (contemporary) Novels and the Korean “Cool” (in music and film)

Kim Young-Ha, or Young-ha Kim, depending on whether you follow the Korean spelling, where the last name (or tribal denotation) comes before the family name and personal name (Ha), or look at things “Eurocentrically” and first write the name and then the last name, is a unique personality in contemporary Korean literature. As a leading writer of the “more experienced part of the middle generation” (he was born in 1968), Kim played a pioneering role in fundamentally bringing the Korean literary tradition closer to the Euro-American paradigm in expression and even in the formation what is usually in today's comparative literary studies called The World Republic of Letters (see Casanova: 1999). In addition to his important contribution to the realization of the idea of “bringing” the Korean literary diachrony closer to the “world” or “Western” matrix, Kim

* bskvorc@ffst.hr

was also one of the first Korean writers to take the idea of multimediality seriously, in other words the permeation of literature by film and new media. He writes about this in a particularly interesting way in the parts of this novel that locate (or transmit) the world of Korean performative and new media art.

Kim Yong Ha¹ achieves this “connection” to the broader idea of world literature” through a series of four extremely interesting but mutually different novels and a collection of short stories “anchored” by the story “Memories of a Killer,” on which a film of the same name was based which is otherwise key in “artistic” Korean cinematography. Seen from the perspective of the development of local tradition, Korean literature, like many other aspects of life and cultural expression, was framed by its geographical location, centuries of isolation, colonial status vis-à-vis Japan (1910-1945), civil war, and the country’s division, that is, by its artificial division “in half” and the pressure of military dictators (more than one in a row!) who only gave way, sometime in 1988, for the country to develop into a modern democracy. The narration of this “tradition of isolation” as a value in itself was one of the modes of “making a difference” in writing. Writers were based on centuries of respect for the “literati” or imaginary (or from wider society secluded) Confucian “scholars.” For centuries (from the thirteenth to the late nineteenth), they represented the intellectual and cultural elite of Korean society, a privileged caste but also a kind of brake on development (modernization). The consequences of such an attitude and way of life are visible until the late 1990s, both in the structure and hegemonic order of the social community within the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and in art, whether we are talking about fine art or the written word. The paradigmatic development (genealogy) of the Korean novel during the twentieth century shares with its Western “role models” some formal characteristics (the idea of plot, characters, narrative view, time and place of action), but at the level of echoes of the text in the community and its effect on the hegemonic order of literature (and even film), it is significantly different. This was the case with premodern literature, and we can talk about similar “effects of reading” in connection with works created until the sixties and even the eighties of the twentieth century. In this sense, the novels of the period of late Japanese colonization and of the time after the end of the civil war are often considered dense and imposing are “foreign” to the reader from a Euro-focused environment, as are the imagined understanding of the idea and function of literature (see Kwon 2003: 487).

1 This is another way of writing the name and is as it now stands in Korean passports: tribal denotation at the beginning (e.g. Kim, Lee, Park, Hwan), family “name” in the middle, and one’s own name at the end.

It is the generation to which Young-Ha Kim belongs that changes this idea of inheritance, that is, the echo of literary diachrony in the community. Here we talk about the characteristics of the development and meaning of literature in society and through that, also about the modalities of presenting national culture to the world. Real changes came only in the late 1980s, with democratization, the Seoul Olympics, and the opening of the Republic of Korea in a political, economic and cultural sense. From there to today's "soft" domination of Korean economic and cultural "production" is actually not a big step. Changes are taking place on the economic level, but also in all forms of cultural activity (see Zur 2017).

During the 1990s, there was a significant turnaround, i.e. an opening up to the world and planned work on "fitting" the Korean vernacular pattern into the broader idea of "film production," "world literature," and internationally acceptable popular music with a "Korean flavor." In Korea (and a deliberate process of imposing an understanding of the idea of "Korea" abroad), an organized campaign for a "soft revolution" is being launched, i.e. an organized promotion (and the aggressive media presence) of Korean music, film, and art outside the country (see Hong 2014). These authors, teams, and projects whose purpose is to position Korea in the context of the international cultural scene are encouraged (financially and otherwise), while they still retain their original entity form, i.e. a kind of distinctive cultural "brand".

Of course, the greatest success in this imaginary discursive effort of Korean promoters was the project of "K-Pop" music, which was a planetary success. It is less known that this is a marketing-industrial project of mass culture organized in the "laboratory" of the Ministry of Culture, and that it involved composers from Sweden, choreographers from the Netherlands and Italy, marketing experts from the US and India, and so on.² Euny Hong writes about this in an interesting way in his book *The Birth of Korean Cool* (2014) which has the subtitle "how one nation conquered the world with its popular culture." The book is in English and I warmly recommend it as a kind of "popular" introduction to the Korean project of modern "soft" expansion, primarily to India, China, Vietnam,

2 The theory knows/recognizes the important difference between "mass" and "popular" culture, i.e. the tactics by which these projects are realized and produced. And while popular culture places an existing project in a specific target space, mass culture produces the need for a specific type of project that has been directed from a specific center from the very beginning. In the example of K-Pop as a mass-cultural phenomena, it is not, for example, a group that already exists, so the manager/promoter "finds" it, but the campaign that finds the members of a future (not yet existing) band, works with them individually for several years, and then they fit into possible "bands" for which the marketing design "produces a need." The TV soap opera industry acted in a similar way, but did an important part of cinematography in its campaign in Asia and later the world.

and Japan, as well as to other continents. Of course, it is common knowledge that in the K-Pop “package” there was also exported the project of Korean soap operas, which first conquered Japan, and then China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Iran, most Arab countries, and it is approaching Europe and America.

The history of Korean film also fits well into this project. Here we can start from the first “great international successes” of today’s classics, such as the world-famous neo-noir thriller *Old Boy* (2003, directed by Park Chan Wook), the neo-realistic hyperrealist crime story *Memories of Murder* (2003, Bong Yoon Ho; today best known for his Oscar-winning film *Parasite*) and the epic ambitious combination of crime, thriller and psychological drama *Oasis* (2002, directed by Lee Chang Dong, later celebrated with the film *Burning* 2018). Of course, the rise of Korean film happened in parallel with the first internationally sold TV series, such as *Winter Sonata* (2002-2003). This series opened the door to many others, first in Japan, then in Southeast Asia (from Vietnam to Singapore), then on the Indian Peninsula, and then in Iran, a number of Arab countries, Turkey, and elsewhere. Today, about thirty series are filmed annually, from hybrid historical spectacles with elements of horror, to psychological noir dramas and political soap operas, and the number of consumers (viewers) is estimated at the hundreds of millions. K-Pop and K-Series are some of the largest Korean export products, in the range of mobile phones and the automotive industry. Thus, in the 2000s, Korea took great strides in the international market of music and moving images (on the big and small screens) and to this day it has become a world superpower in these genres (products). This was, after all, confirmed by the example of the above-mentioned Boon Yoon Ho. In 2020 he became the first Oscar winner (in the main competition) for a film that comes from a non-English speaking area.

Is (Korean) literature also “Cool”?

The inclusion of literature in the project of a broader imagined cultural environment began earlier than the breakthroughs in the world of music and audio-visual arts (products), meaning sometime in the mid-1990s. When we talk about the names of writers who became active in the 1990s, or perhaps earlier, then we should definitely mention authors such as the last writer of the “old forge” (and the first of the “new”), Buddhist priest, poet and “scholar” Ko Un (b. 1933), then also the somewhat older, but (openly) influenced by “foreign modernism” Park Wan Suk (b. 1931, chronicler of “war horrors” and a prolific novelist) as well as Hwang Sok Yong (with a series of novels which range from those which are traditionally written

and locally set, such as the novel *The Shadow of Arms*, to the postmodern, which are at the same time local and global, as in his last novel *The Light of Twilight* from 2019). Next up is the next generation, led by Kim Young Ha, and they are: Shin Kyung Sok (the first winner of the Asian Literature Prize for the novel *Please Look After Mom*), Hwang Sun Mi (with her Asian “answer” to the Little Prince titled *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*), and others. These are authors whose work has opened the possibility for the next generation to further develop the “brand” of Korean integration into broader imagined trends and the “soft” conquest of Asia in another medium. They opened the door to today’s world-famous literary sensations such as Han Kang (*The Vegetarian*), Kim Jiy Oung (*Born in 1982*), Bea Suah (*Nowhere to be Found*) or Kryss Lee (*How I become a North Korean*). Of course, the success of these writers relies heavily on K-Pop and K-Series, rather than on some thoughtful and agreed-upon “trend” of the new Korean women’s writing. This does not mean, however, that these are works of mass culture. It is a serious literature that fits into the trends of “contemporary world literature,” just as it was conceived in the 1980s in theoretical discussions. We are now talking about literature that does not need philological notes, explanations of the context and localization of phenomena by translators or experts in a national literature. But there is no single pattern in this either, as was the case with some other media.

While some contemporary female authors appear or question the reasons for certain relations in society through restoring and rethinking the tradition of story and society (Hwang, Kang), others emphasize aspirations to hyperrealistic memoirs with political tendencies (Sok and especially Kim Jiy Oung). On the other hand, writers such as Hwang and Kim Young Ha, who belong to the both paradigms described above (generational, worldviews, and literature), are the backbone of the transition from the closedness of the Korean framework of “respect for tradition” to the openness to a broad paradigm. an imaginary idea, what Pascal Casanova called the “World Republic of Letters” in the 1990s, and a British group of researchers (called the Warwick Research Collective) “an unequal and leaping development” (of literary expression) that respects “the differences and similarities between cultures” (see WReC 2015). At the same time, these authors continue the tradition of the Korean national story about the consequences of war and the postwar environment, of dictatorship and then sudden industrialization with its accompanying carelessness regarding the individual, as well as the trends that dominate contemporary modalities and themes of literary expression. In other words, at the same time, the hi/story of the nation is honored and the desire to be liked and presented in the best light (to another) is used. In the latter case, of course, there is a danger of falling into the stereotyped space of fulfilling the expectations (of others) about us (i.e. them, Koreans). This

sometimes happens to Hwang, and especially to Kim (and even more so to Han Kang), but with Kim on the “first reading” this is almost invisible. A little more of this “escaped” in the novel *Quiz Show* (which has not been translated into English)³, but that is already a topic for another preface. What is important to say is that writers subject to this trend are not a Korean (nor Japanese, or Chinese) particularity.

Such writers also exist in the “peripheral parts” of Europe, which means in Croatia as well, and this especially applies to some (their) books more than to entire opuses. Since I am particularly familiar with Croatian literary public sphere, I will here give some examples briefly in order to get a better idea of how this process of simultaneously trying to fit into the “national” and the “world” works at the level of expression and at the level of reading. Writers who “perform” in this way in Croatian literary practice are Robert Perišić and Dubravka Ugrešić. They emerge from different angles (and understandings of the idea and function of literature), but both “aim” to fit into wholes and currents that transcend the default local hegemony and the “pressure” of being a nationally relevant follower of tradition, wanting to be an author who opens “new paths.” In the first case, this is best seen in the localized “width” of the novel *No-Signal Area*, and in Ugrešić’s novel *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*.

Belonging to a world “republic of letters” does not mean at the same time renouncing part of one’s local “enrollment” and the paradigmatic default of a certain language, its tradition and imperfections, nor the models of its temporality. In the contemporary Croatian literary tradition, probably one of the best examples of this combination is Josip Mlakić in his two novels *Freshly Painted* and *Planet Friedman*. Remaining inscribed in the local language paradigm and the courses of Croatian reality and the literary moment, Mlakić at the same time functions at the level of a broader inscription, a kind of “worldliness” of his problems and topics. *Freshly Painted* is a road (of no return) comparable to Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Road*. The dystopian novel *Planet Friedman* is on the one hand a story about the impossibility of historical survival, and at the same time an eco-critical dystopia and a vision of a “worse future” based on the current spirit of ignoring real (world) problems and our unwillingness to approach them. On the other hand, here we are talking about the local position of expression and the fit of this novel into the current of the Croatian dystopian idea, from Vladan Desnica to the present day. The reading of the “world dystopian orientation” is largely conditioned by the local, but in a way that insight into the local at the same time enriches the possibility of looking from the outside (into another, into something different from that external).

³ A section of this novel appears in English in *Readymade Bodhisattva* (eds. Sunyong Park and Sang Joon Park) which is reviewed in this issue of CCSR by Brian Willems.

Focus on Kim Young Ha and his place in the “Republic of Letters”

Young Ha Kim should be discussed in a similar way. On the one hand, Kim is, as Western critics often write, a kind of Far Eastern and twenty-first-century successor to Kafka, or a co-comrade of the quill, to Kazuo Ishiguro, the early Haruki Murakami, and/or similar writers whose poetics go beyond framing national languages and local (content) defaults. But he is also a product of the space in which he writes. The central unifying factor of the novel *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* is precisely this – suicide, as an institution and as a state of consciousness. This is a philosophical, ethical, and general problem. But it is also a concrete and large problem of Korean society in all segments of the national population. It is studied (or presented) here with an ironic detachment, perhaps the first of its kind in Korean literature at all. If you look through the book *A History of Korean Literature* (2003) by Peter H. Lee, you will see that the concept of irony as an element of prose structure in Korean literature appeared only in the 1990s with the return or arrival in Korea of the second generation of writers from the United States (these are the children of emigrants from the 1960s). In this context, two female writers are extremely important, Chris Lee and Eunyoung Hong, the latter the aforementioned author of *The Birth of Korean Cool* as well as the novel *Kept* (originally written in English). Of the “domestic” writers, who grew up and were educated in Korea, and who write exclusively in Korean, the first “ironist” is Kim Young Ha, which is especially true of the novel *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself*.

When we talk about his opus, then the first thing we notice is the thematic breadth of his work. In addition to the most famous, this short novel *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* (very popular in French and German, and respected in English, but not so widely read), Kim is the author of the dark detective stories in the collection *Photo Shop Murder*. Of these stories, the most famous is a very long story, almost a short novel, entitled “Memory of Murderer.”⁴ When we talk about his novels, in addition to the Kafkaesque novel we have had the opportunity to read here (*I Have the Right to Destroy Myself*), the most famous are the long novel *I Hear Your Voice* and the 1903 epic story of Korean emigration to Mexico entitled *Black Flower*. In addition to the above, probably Kim’s most popular novel of all that has been translated into English is the “spy” story *Your Republic is*

⁴ We distinguish the short story/short novel *Memory of Murderer* and the film of the same name from the cult film about unsolved murders in the suburbs south of Seoul entitled *Memories of Murder*.

Calling You. From comparisons to Kafka and Bulgakov for the novel *The Right to Suicide*, through allusions to Salman Rushdie and his “flying drivers” for some scenes in a powerful novel about food deliverymen from Seoul’s poor suburbs in a novel called *I Hear Your Voice*, to a deconstruction of the spy novel form (and the idea of the spy) in the book *Your Republic Is Calling You*, Kim always walks on the edge. On the one hand, it is the edge of literary impossibilities/possibilities, and on the other hand, the impossibility to systematize things to the end, to put them in the space and time to which they belong, or should belong. In addition to the concepts of good and evil, time and its oblivion, ethics and suicide etiquette, Kim often “touches” upon some concepts that make him unpopular in some conservative circles. These are above all the concepts of god and the divine in a person’s daily life and its subverted essence.

To this idea of the imagem (an idea given at the level of a visible symbol) of “god” realized in this novel, Kim returns in his most famous story, “Memories of a Murderer.” There are only two ways to remain a god, Kim’s narrator ironically says: through creation and through the taking away of life. Most of the characters Kim produces in his noir prose (and which only partially refers to the novels *Black Flower*, *Your Republic is Calling You* and *I Hear Your Voice*; which are therefore examples of prose of a “brighter character”) choose the latter. Taking a life is almost never the “work” of self-interest. It is always associated with ideology and disturbances in the understanding of the permissible and the tolerable. In a world where the “meaningfulness” of phenomena and fables is reduced to chance, suicide and murder are imaginary and desirable ways out, perhaps the only ways out.

But it is in this place that the ironic layer of Kim’s literary prosody opens up. As with his “Western role models,” such as Kafka and Bulgakov or Ishiguro and Murakami, nothing with him is (in fact) what it seems in relation to the explicit story. Distinguishing between the ironic and the allegorical in the expression and structuring of his novels, Kim walks a fine line between understanding and misunderstanding, absurdity and banality. Understanding and using tradition (the “literati,” dictators, and revolutionaries) transforms his “worldliness” on thematic and expressive levels, which this author transforms into the originality of local difference and inscribes it into the specificity of his small-large national culture.

Learning how to read “disclocated” literature (from other culture, other language and other space)

In this way, two things happen in Kim Young-Ha's literary work. On the one hand, we can easily read his novels even when we know nothing about Korea, Korean literature, its taboo topics, and the spaces of pressure that drive authors to places where “what can't be said” is suggested, as in *The Damned Yard* written by Ivo Andrić. On the other hand, it is precisely these unexpressed and (especially) inexpressible “things” that Kim points to, because of which literature is actually read and written. In this sense, his darkened worlds (from the title of this afterward/conversation), the dark scenes of the car racetrack, the rooms in which a suicide will be committed or a girl will be raped, contain their own contrariness. Reflections of that dark world, the one hidden behind the “darkening” its own kind of film frame, shine from the darkness, like Mimi who appeared to C on the screen of a 16-inch monitor, at the end, after who knows how many times watching that video with such a desperate performance. This reflection of some “hidden truth” given in the form of an instantaneous representation of the shadow is perhaps the only sign in the whole novel that there is something other than a “character from Hell” that tells the story of the right (obligation?) to destroy ourselves. It's a flash that lasts even when the light goes out, when the curtain goes down, or the scene in the movie fades out.

From all this we see two things: what kind of writer is this and that literature, no matter how much it keeps pace with the other arts, and despite the narrowed space of activity, always remains a space of resistance to the pressure of any hegemony, no matter how “colorful and fluttery” it may seem. And what could the world behind the curtain look like to a writer in a discourse that practically has its own “ministry of happiness,” one that organizes the production of K-Pop, K-Series, and a film industry, one that will conquer the world with its phones and electric cars? Does he have to get involved in that festival as a creator? The writer we are talking about here and the literature he produces let us know that the colorful carnival (also) is not of divine origin, just like the imaginary author of a novel about the right to self-destruction. And it indirectly suggests to us that after the darkening it is not the end, but that one must wait. For a flash, as a possible hidden truth. The truth, which Andrić would say cannot be expressed. It was Andrić, as another author who, despite the strong local inscriptions of his historical prose, did not need to have footnotes for foreign readers. This, then, is also a literature of the inexpressible,

not the unexpressed, as it seems at first glance. That is its simultaneous advantage and biggest handicap. It depends from which perspective you look: the local or the global, the unspeakable or the tacit.

Translated by Brian Willems

Works Cited:

- Casanova, Pascal. *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by: Malcolm DeBevoise. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Hong, Euny. *The Birth of Korean Cool*. New York: Picador, 2014.
- Kim, Youna, Ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Korean Culture and Society*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Kwon Yongmin. "Late Twentieth-century Fiction by Men." In: Peter H. Lee, Ed.: *A History of Korean Literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Lee, Peter H. *A History of Korean Literature*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Zur, Dafna. "Modern Korean Literature and Cultural Identity in a Pre- and Post-colonial Digital Age." In: Youna Kim, Ed.: *The Routledge Handbook of Korean Culture and Society*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Asian Studies in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia: Strategies for the Development of Korean Studies at the University of Split*

Kim Sang Hun**

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea

Abstract

Unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria—which became satellite countries of the Soviet Union after the Second World War—Yugoslavia maintained its own communist economic and social system as it neither belonged to the United States nor to the Soviet Union. Unlike the earlier introduction of “North Korean Studies” by the other communist countries, Yugoslavia opened departments of “Indology,” “Sinology,” and “Japanology,” recognizing them as representatives of Asian Studies rather than “North Korean Studies.” Asian Studies in Yugoslavia, which disbanded into six countries after the 1990s, was distinct in each of the republics. In the Republic of Serbia, for example, “Sinology” was representative of Asian Studies, while in the Republic of Croatia it was “Indology,” and in the Republic of Slovenia it was “Japanology.” The present study examines the characteristics and backgrounds of “Sinology” at the University of Belgrade in Serbia, “Indology” at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, and “Japanology” and the newly-formed “Korean Studies” (in 2015) at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Moreover, it describes the role of Korean government agencies and local universities and scholars in establishing Korean Studies in foreign universities. This study asserts that in order to establish Korean Studies in a foreign university, that university and its scholars must be actively involved, essentially leading the process, while Korean and local government agencies should assume the role of facilitator. This paper has been developed on the basis of “The Current Status of Korean Studies in Slovenia” which was published in the 2016 issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Korean Studies*.¹ However, because of its importance in relation to the establishment of a Korean Studies program in Split, it is being reprinted here with a new focus on “Asian Studies in Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia: Strategies for the Development of Korean Studies at the University of Split.”

Keywords: Asian Studies in Former Yugoslavia, Japanology and Korean Studies in Slovenia, Korean Studies in Ljubljana University, Indology in Croatia, Sinology in Serbia, Korean Studies in Split

* This work was supported by the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2020.

** minadir@hufs.ac.kr

1 *Journal of Contemporary Korean Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1-2 (August 2016): pp. 223-241.

1. Introduction

The history of Korean Studies in the Republic of Slovenia, which separated and became independent from the Socialist Federal Republic on June 25, 1991, is short compared to that of Sinology or Japanology. Even so, a pattern of rapid development over a relatively short period of time took place due to the popularity of Korean pop culture in Asia, especially in China, in the late 1990s, a popularity that eventually spread worldwide as the so-called “Korean Wave.”

The term “Korean Wave” was actually coined by the Chinese media in 2000,² but quickly established itself as a universal term to indicate not only Korea’s modern pop culture but also everything related with Korea. In Slovenia, a small country in Europe, there is rising interest among young people in the language and culture of Korea—a surprising fact considering how very far Korea is from them, not only in terms of distance but culturally as well. In fact, interest in Korean language and culture is not limited to Slovenia, but is present in all six independent countries which belonged to Yugoslavia. Thus there is great potential for Korean Studies in the Balkan Peninsula.

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which has disbanded, was formed during the Cold War between the United States, the leader of capitalist countries after the Second World War, and the Soviet Union, the leader of socialist countries. It comprised six socialist republics. Given its unique position, Asian Studies in the federation differed from that established in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, which were satellite countries of the Soviet Union. That is, whereas the latter focused on North Korean Studies, the former centered on Sinology, Japanology, and Indology.

This study explores Yugoslavia’s overall framework for Asian Studies and its focus on Asian languages, and how these are being carried out at present in the Sinology Department of the University of Belgrade in Serbia, in the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb in Croatia, and in the Japanology and Korean Studies departments of the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Notably, the Korean Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana was established quite recently, in September 2015. The ultimate goal of this paper is to explore ways to develop Korean language and Korean studies education at the University of Split in Croatia, which started in 2016, through a review of the history and current status

2 Interest in Korean pop culture, which started in China, spread quickly to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. A preference for Korea-related products also occurred after 2000 alongside increased interest in Korean dramas, music, and movies. In a comprehensive sense, all such phenomena is included under the umbrella of the “Korean Wave.”

of Asian studies, including Korean studies in each republic of the Former Yugoslavia.

2. Korean Language and Korean Studies Education: Asian Studies in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Eastern European countries, (which today are called Central European countries or the Balkans), which became socialist after the Second World War, had sustained political, economic, military, and cultural exchanges with North Korea for about forty years prior to establishing diplomatic ties with South Korea. However, as part of communist foreign policy, which the regime of the Sixth Republic of South Korea had been actively promoting since 1988, exchange with North Korea gradually decreased in the countries which formed diplomatic ties with South Korea. Accordingly, today there are practically no ties between these countries and North Korea, while active exchanges with South Korea are taking place across various fields. The successful shift from socialism to capitalism in Eastern European countries, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the loss of the political crutch in Eastern Europe were major reasons why these countries came to form stronger relationships with South Korea over the North.

Accordingly, “North Korean Studies,” which was established in Eastern Europe through close academic exchanges with North Korea about forty years previous, transformed naturally into “South Korean Studies” after the 1990s and beyond. The expansion of the “Korean Wave,” which rapidly spread worldwide after the 2000s, played a large role in this. However, Yugoslavia, unlike other Eastern European satellite countries of the Soviet Union, rejected Soviet policies that attempted to control all communist countries and set off on an independent path in June 1948. While its exchanges with the South were not as frequent as those with the North, unlike other communist countries in Eastern Europe, South Korea and Yugoslavia had several exchanges beginning in 1961. For example, after the Yugoslavia soccer team’s visit for the World Cup qualifying match in 1961, mutual exchanges began in athletics, academia, and the arts. As a country, it has had the most mutual visits with Korea. Although Yugoslavia, which established diplomatic ties with South Korea in December 1989, supported North Korea on the international stage externally, after the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988 (where 224 athletes participated), its relationship with South Korea continued to grow, especially in terms of trade.

As countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria— satellite countries of the Soviet Union—became communist

after the Second World War, each established departments of “North Korean Language and Literature” in their universities and sent many graduates to North Korea as international students. It is very interesting that unlike these countries, Yugoslavia did not establish a regular North Korean Studies Department, though it did have student exchanges with universities in North Korea. As a result, in all six republics which constituted Yugoslavia, though Sinology, Japanology, and Indology courses were on offer at universities, a proper Korean language course did not exist prior to the opening of the Basic Korean course at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia in 2003.

Just ten years ago, “Asian Studies” in Yugoslavia was focused on Sinology, Japanology, and Indology. Even before Yugoslavia’s dissolution in the early 1990s and the Bosnian civil war, Yugoslavia was a leader of communist countries—it adhered to a unique social-economic system with an economic scale not comparable with other satellite countries of the Soviet Union. And also unlike other communist countries, it was not greatly interested in North Korean Studies. It showed no interest in South Korean Studies either. This is a symptom of its moderate stance during the Cold War, a time it wished not to appear biased towards either the United States or the Soviet Union. But times have changed. Jumping ahead, South Korea’s rapid economic development after the 2000s, the South’s new status in the global economy, and worldwide interest in the Korean Wave likely spurred the relatively new interest in “Korean Studies” (that is, South Korean Studies) which has occurred in universities across the six republics that previously were a part of Yugoslavia.

Although Yugoslavia prior to dissolution consisted of six republics, the central republics were Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. What is interesting is that the representative universities of these three republics—that is, the University of Belgrade in the Republic of Serbia, the University of Zagreb in the Republic of Croatia, and the University of Ljubljana in the Republic of Slovenia—fostered the development of Asian Studies in different fields. In other words, Serbia’s University of Belgrade promoted Asian Studies focused on “Sinology,” the University of Zagreb in Croatia focused on “Indology,” and the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia focused on “Japanology.”

It was in 1926 when Asian Studies was established as part of Language and Literature Studies at the University of Belgrade (Filološki fakultet). Belgrade was the federal capital of Yugoslavia prior to dissolution and is presently the capital of the Republic of Serbia, and this was the first Asian Studies Department to be established among universities in the Balkan Peninsula. The founder of the Asian Studies Department at the University of Belgrade was Fehim Barjaktarević, who had received his doctorate from the University of Vienna in Austria. Turkish and Persian

literatures were also taught as elective courses in the World Literature Department of the University of Belgrade beginning in 1925. The scholarly significance here is that this was the first time that the languages of Arab and Turkish regions (including Arabic, Persian, and Turkish) and their literatures had been taught at a university in Yugoslavia.³ The following year, in 1926, Fehim Barjaktarević established Asian Studies as its own department following the dominant model of Asian Studies in Europe. For Serbia, which was ruled by the Ottoman Empire for almost 500 years, being able to study about East Asia and its impact on its own language and history, culture and religion, in language and literature studies at the University of Belgrade held major significance. Today, departments of Sinology, Japanology, Turkish Studies, and Persian Studies have been established, and in the case of Korean Studies, only two Korean courses are currently on offer.⁴

Chinese was the first East Asian language offered as part of the Language and Literature Studies at the University of Belgrade, and courses began in 1974. Books for the Chinese language course were purchased with special government funds donated to the University of Belgrade from the Chinese government. The university was located in the capital of Yugoslavia at the time. Chinese Language was offered as an elective (rather than being part of a formal department), and was offered continuously until 1985. Considering the fact that the official opening of the Korean Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, on which the present study will focus in particular, was achieved in September 2015, which is about ten years after the first offering of a Korean language course, the establishment of a Sinology Department in Serbia took a similar amount of time.

The founder of the Sinology Department at the University of Belgrade was Dejan Razić, a professor, literary theorist, and translator who held a degree in English literature. He later changed his research interests to Sinology and Japanology and gained fame as the first East Asia expert in Serbia. After the establishment of the Sinology Department, the Chinese government and the government of Yugoslavia signed an academic exchange agreement. The Chinese government sent two Chinese native professors every two years. Particularly, as Renmin University in China

3 The “Orient” in Yugoslavia, including Serbia, does not include the Far East such as China, Japan, and South Korea, but in terms of “the East” refers to Afghanistan and Iran; in terms of “the West,” Morocco in North Africa and Mauritania; in terms of “the North,” Turkey; and in terms of “the South,” the area of Sudan. The area ruled by the Ottoman Empire was called the “Near East” after the nineteenth century. During World War I, the Persian Gulf and the surrounding area was referred to as the “Middle East.” After World War II, the “Middle East” became a general name referring to the area including North Africa in Southwest Asia.

4 <http://www.fil.bg.ac.rs/lang/sr/katedre/orijentalistika/kineski-jezik/istorijat/>

and Beijing Language and Culture University regularly donated books relating to Sinology and Japanology to the University of Belgrade, a rich Chinese/Japanese library was formed. Moreover, in 2000 the Chinese government fully funded the building of a large modern language lab facility for language and literature studies at the University of Belgrade. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro cooperated to make Chinese TV broadcasts available. Such efforts had a decisive impact on placing Sinology at the center of Asian Studies at the University of Belgrade in Serbia. The Chinese government continues to provide support to the University of Belgrade to this day, selecting from three to five outstanding students among the senior students of Sinology as recipients of scholarships to study at Chinese universities for one year.

The full Sinology curriculum for a four-year program (eight semesters) is shown in Table 1 below. The table can be compared with the slighter “Korean Studies” curricula on offer at the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb in Croatia and at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, both of which will be explored in a later section.

Table 1.

Semester	Course name	Note
First semester	Introduction to Chinese Graphology Chinese Language 1 Modern Chinese Language 1	While three credits are assigned to most courses, nine credits are assigned to the “Modern Chinese Language” course that is offered for first and second-year students from the first to the fourth semester. However, the number of credits assigned to the “Modern Chinese Language” course in the third and fourth years is reduced to six. Instead, the “Chinese Language” course increases from three to six credits.
Second semester	Introduction to Sinology Introduction to Chinese History Chinese Language 2 Modern Chinese Language 2	
Third semester	Chinese Culture 1 Chinese Literature 1 Chinese Language 3 Modern Chinese Language 3	
Fourth semester	Chinese Culture 2 Chinese Idiom Chinese Literature 2 Chinese Language 4 Modern Chinese Language 4	
Fifth semester	Chinese Culture 3 Chinese Literature 3 Chinese Language 5 Modern Chinese Language 5	

Sixth semester	Chinese Culture 4 Chinese Literature 4 Chinese Language 6 Modern Chinese Language 6	
Seventh semester	Chinese Culture 5 Chinese Text Translation 1 Chinese Literature 5 Chinese Language 7 Chinese Classic Text Modern Chinese Language 7	
Eighth semester	Chinese Culture 6 Chinese Text Translation 2 Chinese Literature 6 Chinese Language 8 Modern Chinese Language 8	

Source: <http://www.fil.bg.ac.rs/lang/sr/katedre/orijentalistika/kineski-jezik/istorijat/>

The first Korean language lecture convened at the University of Belgrade took place in the latter half of the 1990s. The East Asian Languages Department of the College of Literature hired a Korean graduate student to teach a “Beginners’ Korean” course as an optional language course. At the time, the class was not that popular,⁵ but with the spread of the Korean Wave worldwide in the early 2000s, and with the interest and support of the South Korean embassy in Serbia, more students gradually began to enroll. From 2008, the Korea Foundation began to provide support for visiting professorships in Korean Studies, which helped to build a more solid foundation for a time. However, in September 2011, the Korea Foundation suddenly withdrew its support for visiting faculty. Thus from October 2011, Korean graduate students have led Korean language lectures, and because of their involvement, the program has survived.

The South Korean embassy in Serbia⁶ has throughout its existence held a wide variety of cultural festivals to spread awareness about Korean culture. Particularly noteworthy is the first Korean speaking contest held in March 2015, aimed encouraging students to study Korean language, history, and culture. A second speech contest was held in 2016. Though this is certainly a positive step, it appears that due to internal issues at the University of Belgrade, it will take considerable time and effort to establish an actual Korean Language Department. The conservative

⁵ Amidst the general social dislocation resulting from NATO bombardment, beginner Korean lectures, which had started in October 1998, were suspended for a time in 1999.

⁶ In December 1989, after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, South Korea officially established relations and an embassy in Belgrade. However, due to the NATO bombardment, and the breakup of Yugoslavia into six separate independent states, it closed its embassy. It again opened an embassy in Belgrade in March 2002, and it remains there to this day.

attitude prevalent on campus as well as slow decision-making processes are major reasons why the establishment of a new department is so complex—administratively and otherwise.

Since 2014, thanks to the continued efforts of the South Korean embassy in Serbia, plans have been put in place for a new Korean language program in the city of Niš in southern Serbia, which is also the location of Yura Corporation's production facilities. There are also plans to resume the visiting professorship program discontinued in 2011. Furthermore, it is expected that Serbian scholars who hold degrees in Korean literature from the Academy of Korean Studies will begin Korean-language classes at Belgrade University and Novi Sad University. Because in order to establish a new department at a Serbian university there must be a PhD holder in that field present, the latter plan is a particularly positive development because it fulfils a necessary prerequisite for the establishment of a Korean Language Department.

Among Asian Studies, Sinology takes center stage at the University of Belgrade in Serbia and has seen the most significant development, whereas "Indology" has the longest history at the University of Zagreb in Croatia and also boasts the most prominent academic achievements. Currently, Asian Studies at the University of Zagreb in Croatia is carried out under "Indology and Far Eastern Studies" (*Odsjek za indologiju i dalekoistočne studije*).⁷ Each major under Asian Studies once belonged to "General Linguistics/Oriental Studies" and later to "Oriental Studies/Hungarian Studies." The majors were then divided into sub-majors and put under the umbrella of the present "Indology and Far Eastern Department."

While Sinology and Japanology have a relatively short history at the University of Zagreb, in comparison the Indology Department was established along with the university, in 1874. In other words, prior to the formation of Yugoslavia as a country after the Second World War, Indology was already studied in Croatia under Oriental Studies and thus, the University of Belgrade, located in the capital of Yugoslavia, had no choice but to develop Sinology as the representative subject of Oriental Studies.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Indology was recognized as the foundation of humanities research and education since elements of Indo-European linguistics could be found in many languages and literatures.⁸ At the University of Zagreb, Indology— prior to becoming its own

7 The Far Eastern Asian Department is divided into "Sinology" and "Japanology."

8 Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), a nineteenth-century German Romanticist, never neglected the central position of language. He distinguished two types of language, that is, virtuous inflected language and non-inflected language of which the level of completeness is reduced. Inflected language has a psychological origin whereas non-inflected language is an "animal" or instinctual language. He believed that clear and sharp intellect or having high universal ideals is only possible through the inflection (refraction) of language based on Indian languages. See Bernal (2006).

department—had been included as part of Indo-European Studies and had a strong presence as it was considered the basis of Slavic linguistics. Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language, was important to understanding the entire Indo-European language. As it was Indology that formed the root of Slavic languages, even professors of Croatian could not avoid Sanskrit. Thus, Slavonic Studies, which included Croatian Studies, also included Indology, which had been established at the university at the very beginning. Indology in Croatia is not simply a field of Asian Studies but significantly contributes to the development of national literature in Croatia.

A key Indology scholar today is Mislav Ježić, who specializes in the relationship between Vedic and ancient Greek literatures and Indian linguistics and philosophy. He is also a member of the Croatian Academy (HAZU, Hrvatska Akademija Znanosti i Umjetnosti). Klara Gönc-Moačanin is another key scholar whose research interests focus on Asian culture, in particular ancient Indian literature and Japan's ancient theater. The University of Zagreb's Indology Department is currently made up of the following faculty: Professor Krešimir Krnić, who specializes in Indian and Sanskrit; Professors Goran Kardaš and Ivan Andrijanić, who specialize in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy; Professors Višnja Grabovac and Biljana Zrnić, whose research explores Indian and early Indian literature; Professor Sheoraj Singh Jain, who has translated multiple works of Indian literature into Croatian; and Visiting Professor Bharat Singh. Particularly, India-born professor Sheoraj Singh Jain, who received a doctoral degree in Croatian literature from the University of Zagreb in the 1980s, is a native professor of Indology who has made many efforts to broaden the study of Indology in Croatia.⁹

Although the Indology curriculum at the University of Zagreb in Croatia is almost identical to the Sinology curriculum at the University of Belgrade in Serbia, the biggest difference is that in the case of Croatia, students must choose two majors mandatorily in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. While these are usually four years (undergraduate) plus two more years (graduate) in South Korea, the study of Indology in Zagreb is completed in four years (undergraduate) plus one year (graduate) at the University of Zagreb. In addition, among the courses on offer in the Indology Department, the "Gypsy Literature / Culture" course is offered separately from the first to the fourth year.

Table 2 below provides a breakdown of the curricula of the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese language and study programs at Zagreb University. With the exception of foundation language classes, each department has its own characteristic subjects.

9 <http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/indolog/>

Table 2.

Year	Indian Language and Studies	Chinese Language and Studies	Japanese Language and Studies
First Year (Freshman)	Indian Civilization Gypsy Literature and Language Sanskrit Literature 1	Chinese History	Japanese History and Culture Introduction to Japanese Literature 1
Second Year (Sophomore)	Indian Arts 1 Indian History and Culture Seminar 1 Sanskrit Literature 2	Chinese Philosophy	Introduction to Japanese Literature 2
Third Year (Junior)	Indian Arts 2 Indian History and Culture Seminar 2 Introduction to Indian Religions 1 Sanskrit Literature 3	Chinese Cultural History	Japanese History and Culture Introduction to Japanese Literature 3
Fourth Year (Senior)	Indian Arts 3 Indian History and Culture Seminar 3 Introduction to Indian Religions 2 Indian Mythology Sanskrit Literature 4		

Source: <http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/indolog/>

Japanology opened at the University of Zagreb in Croatia beginning in the 2004/2005 academic year following a decision made by the university's Council of Philosophy Studies. It has a strong presence at the University of Zagreb alongside Indology and Sinology. However, as in Sinology, a certificate is issued rather than a formal undergraduate degree after three years of undergraduate study. Accordingly, after the program, students obtain an undergraduate degree by continuing their studies at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section, or at Japanese universities with which the university has an exchange agreement. The joint-degree academic exchange agreement in Japanology with the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia is a step toward the University of Zagreb establishing a formal academic degree in Japanology on its own campus.

The faculty of Japanology, in cooperation with the Japanese embassy in Croatia and the Croatian Japanese Teacher Committee, hold the "Japanese Speaking Contest (日本語スピーチコンテスト)" on an annual basis, and also actively promote Japanese language and culture through a partnership with the Japanese Foundation. In addition, students majoring in Japanology

are sent to Budapest, Hungary, each year to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.¹⁰

While Japanology was established in the 2000s, Sinology was established as an elective foreign language course long before, in the 1970s. However, in the 2004/2005 academic year the course was reclassified under “Indology and Far Eastern Asian Studies” after a decision made by the Council of Philosophy Studies at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. In the 2006/2007 academic year, Sinology professors of Asian and African Studies at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia began to teach regular Sinology courses. At present the Sinology faculty at the University of Zagreb in Croatia includes two native professors dispatched by the Chinese government, three visiting professors from Slovenia, and one local Croatian professor who completed a doctoral program in Sinology and Korean Studies at Heidelberg University in Germany. As with Japanology, students of Sinology are issued a certificate rather than a formal undergraduate degree after completion of a three-year program. After obtaining the certificate, students can then obtain an undergraduate degree by continuing their studies of Sinology at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia or at Chinese universities with which the university has established an academic exchange. In addition to teaching, Sinology faculty play a cultural-exchange role by participating in so-called “crosslinking activities” (Kineski most, hanyuqiao, 汉语桥) that strengthen the relationship between the Chinese and Croatian governments. Faculty also prepare students for the official Chinese Proficiency Test (hanyu shuiping kaoshi, 汉语水平考试) with support from the Chinese government.¹¹

Although Korean Studies is not an official department at the University of Zagreb in Croatia, a Korean language curriculum is available (to first through third year students) under the Chinese Language and Studies Department. The program is taught by a Croatian, a scholar who completed a PhD program in Korean Studies at Heidelberg University in Germany. However, it is worth paying attention to the fact that Korean is not offered within the framework of a Korean Studies-related department, nor is it offered as a second foreign language. Rather, it is offered, unusually, as an elective within the Chinese Language and Studies Department.

Moreover, even within the former Yugoslavia, compared to Slovenia, in which a formal degree in Korean Studies was created in 2015, and Serbia, where a program has existed since the late 1990s, Korean Studies has not received the same attention in Croatia. Given the geographic distance, the lack of cultural similarities and shared relations, as well as the lack of shared economic and political interests, from a certain point of view it is

10 <http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/japanologija>

11 <http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/sino/>

not surprising that Korean Studies has not developed spontaneously in Croatia. However, a television show about Croatia broadcast in November 2013 raised the interest of South Koreans in things Croatian. By late 2015, the number of Korean tourists that had visited Croatia exceeded 350,000. This rapid rise in tourist numbers is expected to continue, and in such circumstances, it is expected that interest in Korean language and culture will grow in Croatia. But while interest in Korea may suddenly rise in a short period of time, for such interest to be maintained and further developed, it must be accompanied by a “mutual economic exchange.” For Korean language and studies classes to be taught, and for such courses to become the basis for a department, and moreover, for students of such departments to find jobs in areas related to the Korean language, and for some students to pursue graduate studies— that is, to foster an academic virtuous circle—bilateral exchanges must continue and develop along constructive lines. In that respect, if we can combine the rapid rise of interest in Croatia amongst Koreans and the positive and productive way in which Croatians perceive the visits of Koreans to their country, it is much more likely that Korean Studies will become an established department in Croatia’s university system.

In July 2016, steps were made in this regard when Hankuk University of Foreign Studies and Split University concluded an agreement to establish a Korean language center. The center will offer two tracks of instruction: 1. “lectures in Korean language and culture targeting the general public”; and 2. “elective courses for students at Split University.” In October 2016, lectures in track one were set to begin, with elective courses for Split University students starting in October 2017.

The University of Ljubljana in Slovenia is the only university in the region of the former Yugoslavia that has established a Korean Studies Department (in September 2015). Asian Studies-related departments in general were not established independently at the University of Ljubljana until 1995 because of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Even so, interest and investment in Asian Studies are rather larger than in other departments. Korean Studies as a new department within the Humanities and Arts College is heavily indebted to the active support and contributions of Andrej Bekeš, who is a Japanese researcher as well as professor of Japanology at this university. Andrej Bekeš served as dean of the Asian Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana (Oddelek za azijske študije) and played a leading role in promoting the education and research of Japanology within Slovenia as well as in the establishment of other Asian Studies departments. Professors of Sinology Jana S. Rošker and Mitja Saje were also a great help in the establishment of the Korean Studies Department. Jana S. Rošker, after obtaining a doctoral degree in Sinology from the University of Vienna in Austria and studying in China for four

years, created a Sinology curriculum which adapted Vienna's learning systems. Furthermore, Andrej Bekeš introduced into the Japanology curriculum of the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia various Japanese learning systems which he experienced while attending Tsukuba University in Japan.¹²

Asian Studies-related courses at the University of Ljubljana in the early 1980s were managed by the first generation of academics who had studied Sinology and Japanology at Chinese and Japanese universities, such as Andrej Bekeš, Jana S. Rošker, Mitja Saje, and Maja Lavrač. Unlike the Indology Department that was established by the Croatian government and the University of Zagreb, or Sinology at the University of Belgrade in Serbia, which was established as its own department through the active support of the Chinese government, the scholars who helped establish the Asian Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia did so out of pure passion for the subject matter. Fortunately, their active efforts were complemented by positive advancements in the external environment. In economic terms, it was clear that China and Japan could not be disregarded in Slovenia's economic policy. Similarly, Korean Studies perhaps took only ten years to become its own formal department at the University of Ljubljana due to Korea's rapid economic development after 2000.

The University of Ljubljana in Slovenia seems to be building a framework for Asian Studies much more aggressively than any other university in the former Yugoslavia. It is reasonable to see this as a result of the Slovenian government's education policy, which focuses on practicality, rather than pure academic interest. This is reflected in the introduction to the Asian Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia:

Thus, the studies offered by our department are not restricted to studying the languages and writings of Asian countries, but they regard them as a basic tool which helps us to understand their cultures on the whole. Sinology, Japanology and the future Korean Studies and Indology are therefore to be understood not only as philological but also as cultural studies. (<http://as.ff.uni-lj.si/predstavitev-oddela/predstavitev-oddela>)

Activities in Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana go beyond just course offerings. Since 1997, the department has published an international journal called *Asian Studies* and holds annual international academic symposiums related to Sinology and Japanology. Furthermore, it has academic exchange agreements with Japan's University of Tsukuba, the University of Gunma, the University of Tokyo, the Tokyo Institute of

¹² <http://as.ff.uni-lj.si/>

Technology, the University for Foreign Studies in Tokyo, Japanese Women's University, and University Tohoku Fukushi. Among Chinese universities, it has academic exchange agreements with Chengdu University, Nankai University, Renmin University, Nanjing University, Qinghuangdao University, and Jingzhou University. Among Korean universities, it has academic exchanges with Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, ChungAng University, and the University of Seoul.

The Korean Studies program, which started with basic and intermediate Korean language courses in the 2003/2004 academic year and expanded in the 2008/2009 academic year to include enough courses to satisfy a double major, further developed in 2015 into its own department in which a formal undergraduate degree in Korean Studies can be obtained. At the time of its establishment the Korea Foundation reinstated support for faculty exchange, inviting Korean professors to teach in the department to strengthen its foundation. Furthermore the active efforts of Andrej Bekeš, who was dean of Asian Studies during the establishment of the Korean Studies Department, helped immensely to move the project forward. Moreover, the Academy of Korean Studies assisted the establishment with its "Seed Program for Korean Studies," under which support will be offered to the department over a three-year period from 2015 for academic materials development and research in South Korean literature. The department plans to invite Korean literary scholars as guest lecturers and to hold international conferences in Korean Studies to facilitate knowledge sharing on Korea. Korean cultural events and the translation and dissemination of Korean language works throughout Central Europe and the Balkans are also being planned. Korean Studies was approved as a formal subject of study for the 2015/2016 academic year by the Slovenian Ministry of Education. Fifteen students each year are selected to major in Korean Studies. In 2015, Korean Studies at the University of Ljubljana ranked ninth in enrollment among a total of fifty-one subjects. Given that it is a new department, it has received unusually high interest.

It goes without saying that the best way to effectively turn such interest into academic results is to develop an excellent curriculum. In order for this to happen, experienced, specialist teachers with an understanding of the requirements on the ground must be allowed to design new courses. With respect to Korean language education, a program already exists: Korean 1, 2, and 3. Attention should instead be directed to the creation of Korean literature and culture classes. Literature is not just language, but can be linked to cultural education. Providing Korean classes to Japanology and Sinology majors is another way to ignite interest. Moreover, developing classes for master and doctoral programs is now a matter of urgency. Thus, expanding the variety of courses on offer is undoubtedly essential.

For all this, Ljubljana University will have to support the development of an optimized set of teaching materials. While there is a wide range of Korean language textbooks on the market, mostly developed in South Korea, there are relatively few Korean literature-related materials available. There are, in particular, few if any literature-related textbooks targeting students in Central Europe and the Balkans. In Slovenia, all students have a command of English, but there is a need to devise and publish a set of literature-related textbooks to raise the effectiveness of education—this should reflect an awareness of the fact that the countries of the former Yugoslavia share, to some extent, a language and culture.

There are a total of ten courses on offer in the Korean Studies Department at the University of Ljubljana, with the exception of two courses in Chinese Language Practice added in July 2016. The course contents are shown in Table 3.¹³

Table 3.

Original language course name	English course name	Note
Korejska pisava	Writing Korean	Currently, as an elective, "Chinese language practice 1, 2" has been established. In 2013-2014, before the establishment of a formal department, "Korean language 1, 2" was initiated.
Korejska umetnost	Korean Arts	
Korejska literatura	Korean Literature	
Fonetika korejščine 1	Korean Phonetics 1	
Metodologija medkulturnih raziskav 2	Cross-cultural Research Methodology 2	
Sodobni korejski jezik 1	Modern Korean Language 1	
Sodobni korejski jezik 2	Modern Korean Language 2	
Sodobni korejski jezik 3	Modern Korean Language 3	
Sodobne družbene razmere v Vzhodni Aziji	The Modern Social Environment in East Asia	
Korejske študije - arhiv	Korean Studies - Material	

Source: <https://e-ucenje.ff.uni-lj.si/course/index.php?categoryid=131>

The establishment of Korean Studies as formal major is the result of active efforts by the Slovenian and Korean governments in addition to the continuous interest and efforts of the Asian Studies faculty at the

¹³ <https://e-ucenje.ff.uni-lj.si/course/index.php?categoryid=131>

University of Ljubljana. Slovenia has no Korean embassy; it falls under the jurisdiction of the Korean embassy in Austria. In March 2015, the ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Austria, Youngwan Song, and the president of the University of Ljubljana, Dr. Ivan Svetlik, held active discussions on the development plan for Korean Studies in Slovenia. Shortly thereafter, Slovenian Foreign Minister Karl Erjavec visited Korea and announced that Korean Studies would begin at the University of Ljubljana beginning from the fall semester of 2015, and requested support from the Korean government in this regard.

The University of Ljubljana case provides us with many lessons on establishing Korean Studies departments at foreign universities. What is needed first and foremost is for local scholars to actively promote such a department based on academic or practical needs, and then for them to start from the beginning by offering a simple language course. Next, there is a need to garner close cooperation and support from the local Korean embassy, the local government, and the Korean government. However, it is vital to keep in mind that without the support of local universities and scholars, any effort by the Korean government or local embassy to launch a Korean Studies department will soon collapse. As well, the following question must be asked and answered: Who will take the responsibility and lead Korean Studies with a long-term developmental vision? Governments should collaborate with universities, not lead the establishment of Korean Studies on their own, and they should remember that even things that look easy to achieve are often not. In this sense, the answer to the above question has to be the university and local scholars.

Conclusion

Unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, which were satellite countries of the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War, Yugoslavia, which created an independent communist economic and social system located somewhere between the United States and the Soviet Union after the Second World War, did not introduce “North Korean Studies” at its universities as other communist countries did prior to the 1990s. It had no “South Korean Studies” either. Rather, its Asian Studies focused on Indology, Sinology, and Japanology.

Asian Studies in Yugoslavia, after it disbanded into six countries after the 1990s, came to be divided into distinct academic fields according to each republic. In the Republic of Serbia, for example, “Sinology” became representative of Asian Studies, while in Croatia and Slovenia, the focus was on “Indology” and “Japanology,” respectively

However, due to Korea’s economic development after the 2000s, the

country's increased status in global society, and the influence of the "Korean Wave" (which began in China), "North Korean Studies" came to be replaced with "South Korean Studies" in former communist countries. Through steady support from the Academy of Korean Studies, which pursues the globalization of Korean Studies, and the Korea Foundation, a formal Korean Studies Department was established at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia for the first time in the 2015/2016 academic year. This department is also the first of its kind among the six republics that formally comprised Yugoslavia. In the future, establishment of Korean Studies is expected in other countries including Croatia and Serbia.

Given the complexity of establishing new departments at universities the role of local scholars should not be underestimated. Indeed, governmental support alone cannot solve all problems for departmental establishment. If appropriate economic support from the Korean government is added to the willingness and efforts of local universities and scholars of Asian Studies, including Korean Studies, the process of department establishment can be less complicated and take a shorter amount of time. This fact needs to be recognized by Korean governmental agencies. Governments should collaborate with universities, but take the position of facilitators rather than leaders in order for the establishment to succeed.

The University of Split established the Korean Studies Research Center in 2018 through "the Seed Program", which supports Korean Studies programs at overseas universities, which are often lacking Korean studies education and research. The Center has been given the role of a central institution that manages Korean language and Korean studies education at the University of Split in an integrated manner and publishes an international journal. In addition, through cooperation with the Research Center for Comparative Culture of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, the scope of the research will be expanded to a comparison of cultures across Asia and the world, including Korea. Furthermore, the University of Split must strive to expand research capabilities not limited to Croatia through ties and cooperation with Korean departments established at universities in Eastern Europe and cooperation with universities in Korea. The University of Split in Croatia is to be at the center of Korean studies education and research beyond the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia, where undergraduate and graduate programs are currently installed, as well as Belgrade University and Novi Sad University in Serbia, where Korean language courses are operated. For such an ultimate goal, a regular Korean department must be established, and through this, it is necessary to draw support from Korea.

Works Cited

- Baek, Young-Seo. 2007. "The direction that Koreanology studies in the humanities area should take in the future: Ideology and Institution." *Korean Studies* 17: 41-55. Center for Korean Studies, Inha University.
- Bernal, Martin. 2006. *Black Athena 1* [블랙 아테나]. Translated by Oh Heungsik [오흥식]. Seoul: Sonamoo [소나무].
- Kawashima, Delakorda Tinka. 2016. "The re-evaluation of Weber in Japan and some perspectives for the treatment of religion in relation to consumerism." [Ponovno ovrednotenje Webra na Japonskem in nekatere izhodišča za obravnavo religije v povezavi s potrošništvom]. *Asian Studies* IV (1): 247-263.
- Kim, Dongtaek [김동택]. 2006. "How to support Korean studies overseas." *Korea Focus on Current Topics* 14 (1): 111-124. Korea Foundation [한국국제교류재단].
- Kim, Dongtaek [김동택]. 2006. "Korean wave and Korean studies: status of foreign Korean studies and support plan" [한류와 한국학: 해외 한국학 현황과 지원 방안]. *Historical criticism* [역사비평] 213- 240.
- Kim, Kyung-Ryung. 2015. "A Study of Korean Learners Language Learning Style." *Korean language and culture* 17: 77-98.
- Kim, So-young. 2013. "The Korean wave and the present situation of Korean language education by using contents of Korean classical literature in Bulgaria - Focused on the educational contents of the Department of Korean Studies at Sofia University." *Korean Language and Literature* 51: 103-125.
- Kim, Tschung-Sun. 2009. "Korean Studies as Cultural Studies: Toward East Asian Korean Studies." *Keimyung Korean Studies Journal* 38: 195-225.
- Kim, Young. 2009. "The Present State of Korean Studies in the U.K." *Korean Studies* 21: 419-440.
- Korea Foundation [한국국제교류재단]. 2007. *Foreign Korean Studies White Papers* [해외한국학 백서]. Seoul: Eulyumunhwasa [을유문화사].
- Kwak, Sumin [곽수민]. 2012. "Analysis of Korean studies trends and research of development factors" [해외한국학 동향 분석 및 발전요인 연구]. *Mental Culture Research* [정신문화연구] 35 (3): 211-241.
- Lee, Wanbeom [이완범]. 2009. "Study on status of foreign Korean Studies and long-term development plan" [해외한국학 현황 및 중장기 발전 방안 연구]. Policy research report of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [교육과학기술부 정책연구과제 결과보고서] 1-201.
- Min, Chung-Ki. 1990. "A Framework for a Better Relationship between Korea and the European Community." *East and West studies* series 18: 175-202.

- Moskowitz, Karl. 1982. "Korean development and Korean studies." *Journal of Asian Studies* 42 (1): 63-91.
- Park, Jeong Kyung [박정경]. 2015. "Promoting Korean Studies in African Universities: A Case Study on Kenya." *Comparative Korean Studies* 23 (2): 361-389.
- Patterson, Wayne K. 2001. "Korean in America and the Future of Korean Studies." *Comparative Korean Studies* 8: 123-128.
- Provine, R.C. 1995. "Current Korean Studies in Europe." *Asian research trends* 5: 105-114.
- Sasse, Werner. 1996. "Teaching Korean culture through Korean Studies." *Korea journal* 36 (3): 20.
- Shabshina, Fanya. 1990. "The Korean reality and Korea studies in the USSR." *Far Eastern Affairs* 70: 76-90.
- Vorontsov, Vladilen. 1992. "Korean studies at the Oriental Department of Russia's Open University." *Far Eastern Affairs* 83: 7-10.
- Yeon, Jaehoon [연재훈]. 1997. "Status of Korean language education and research in England" [영국에서의 한국어 교육과 연구 현황]. *Gyoyug Han-Geul [교육한글]* 1 (10): 113-140.
- Yeon, Jaehoon [연재훈]. 2001. "The Present State of Korean Language Education at Universities in Europe." *Bilingual Society* 18 (1): 381-401.

Sunyoung Park and Sang Joon Park, Editors. *Readymade Bodhisattva: The Kaya Anthology of South Korean Science Fiction*. Los Angeles: Kaya Press, 2019.

Brian Willems*
University of Split

Challenging the Anglophone nature of much science fiction is a task being approached on many fronts. However, it is not enough simply to reproduce the hegemonic forms of traditional SF in other languages and cultures. Many types of stories, and many ways of telling them, are essential for imagining different futures. Yet, as N.K. Jemisin said in her stunning speech for winning the Hugo award in 2018 (after a group of voters tried to skew it hard-right), “this is the year in which I get to smile at all of those naysayers – every single mediocre insecure wannabe who fixes their mouth to suggest that I do not belong on this stage, that people like me cannot possibly have earned such an honor, that when they win it it’s meritocracy but when we win it it’s identity politics’ – I get to smile at those people, and lift a massive, shining, rocket-shaped middle finger in their direction.” The SF anthology under review here is a continuation of this notion.

The anthology is *Readymade Bodhisattva: The Kaya Anthology of South Korean Science Fiction*, and it is edited by Sunyoung Park, associate professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures and Gender Studies at the University of Southern California, and Sang Joon Park, translator, editor, archivist, and columnist in various areas of SF. The specification in the subtitle of the anthology being a “Kaya Anthology” is important. Kaya Press was founded in 1994 with the purpose of publishing work produced

* bwilllems@ffst.hr

by Asian and Pacific Island diaspora. The name “Kaya” comes from a utopian collection of six Korean city-states which functioned from the middle of the first century CE until the sixth. The Kaya confederacy, similar to the Mondragón worker cooperatives in Spain, is taken as an important historical example of an alternative way of organizing both the economy and politics, and thus functions as a gateway to understanding some of the important aspects of the works included in the anthology.

As indicated in its introduction, the anthology aims to collect a “distinctive and diverse” group of writers with the aim of “conveying the excitement and the dynamism of the subject matter” rather than merely attempting to create a canon of simply the best. South Korean science fiction has undergone a number of transformations, from an optimistic approach in the 1960s to a more critical view in the 1970s, and then featuring an explosion of fandom, clubs, and magazines in the 1990s. In the current collection, the authors cover more traditional SF themes such as robots and alien invasions along with more critical takes on topics such as colonization, genetic mutation, refugees, and corporations. We will only take a look at a few of the 13 stories in the collection. This does not mean these stories are the “best,” but rather that they have a running theme between them regarding the manner in which alternatives to hegemonic structures are presented.

The anthology takes its name from the first story, “Readymade Bodhisattva” (2004), by Park Seonghwan. This story functions as a way to rethink the mostly Anglophone narration of artificial intelligence, and it does this from a Korean perspective. Perhaps a reimagining of a Buddhist *jataka* tale, the story initially posits the question of whether artificial intelligence has a role in the spiritual life of humans. A technician visits a Buddhist temple to repair one of the robots that assists the monks. The robots have taken over the “sapan” class of monks, meaning those who usually take care of “the temple’s planning, accounting, and budgetary administration.” In the Avatamsaka Sutra, an important Buddhist doctrine, “sapan” refers to the material world while “ipan” refers to the more theoretical aspect of Buddhism. The regulation of AI to the administrative tasks of the temple seems appropriate at first since it leaves the human monks to the more spiritual duties. However, the reason the technician has been called is because of a “malfunctioning” robot named Inmyeong. The name of the robot loosely means “life,” and it indicates that the malfunction is a rather non-traditional one: Inmyeong has started going beyond its writ as an administrator by giving sermons based on its own understanding.

“So you’re telling me your robot has achieved enlightenment?” the technician asks, “You mean it’s giving a sermon based on its own understanding, and not just outputting some doctrine that’s been plugged

in as direct input?” This quote is important for understanding how the story relates to AI. The quote posits the question of how the robot can produce output based on “its own understanding” rather than just on “direct input.” In other words, the technician wonders how the machine has learned something on its own.

Machine learning is not something new. In fact it is one of the most important subsets of AI. Put simply, machine learning can start out with a relatively simple algorithm of just a few lines. This algorithm is then set to find patterns in a set of data (such as picking out all the cats from a group of pictures). The algorithm does so with various levels of guidance from humans, or none at all. Eventually the program develops a model of what a cat should look like and this model can be applied to different sets of data. It is this model that is called the machine’s “own understanding” in the quote from the story. This is because even though the initial algorithm for machine learning can be simple and fully understood, the models the algorithms develop are often so complex that even the programmers cannot predict what the algorithm will do in different situations.

This surprising aspect of machine learning was seen in one of the most impressive recent exhibitions of AI, a series of games of Go played between AlphaGo, an AI system created by the DeepMind London AI lab, and Lee Sedol, a South Korean Go player of the highest rank (9 dan). Although AlphaGo won 4 of the 5 games, what drew great interest was Move 37 from the second game. Here AlphaGo made a one-in-ten thousand move that theoretically no human player would make (although Lee made a similarly rare move in game 4, leading him to the only game he won). The rarity and boldness of the play was called both “unhuman” and “beautiful.” The defeat led to Lee’s retirement from the game, and with his saying in an interview that “Even if I become the number one, there is an entity that cannot be defeated.”

In the story “Readymade Bodhisattva” a different fear is expressed. Rather than being worried about the superiority of the robot’s enlightenment, the monks are nervous about the robot putting the monks out of business: “what does it mean to say that a robot has achieved enlightenment? And what will this mean to people in the outside world? Will people think that if a robot is able to achieve enlightenment, they, too, can do so? Will this mean that *anyone* can achieve enlightenment?” The term “bodhisattva” is used for those who have transcended human passions and desires, but when a robot is born without such frailties, can it really be said to have gone through the work of enlightenment? This brings us to the crux of the story, and of the title of the whole collection. It is not that the robot grew into sentience out of its initial basic programming. Rather the robot was born enlightened: “there once was a robot that

realized that it had already been in a state of enlightenment when it was first assembled. This happened when it was on duty at a Buddhist temple on Phobos. It was a bodhisattva – a readymade bodhisattva...”The robot is already enlightened because it was born free of the passions and desires that humanity must transcend. Thus the robot is a true figure of Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” meaning a readymade being created without parents, and thus outside of any Freudian hang-ups, gender issues, or worries about being alienated from work. In this sense AIs are born into a state of enlightenment, at least from a certain point of view.

Although there are many other stories to discuss in those collected here, including Mun Yunseong’s rampantly sexist (and chosen for inclusion for this reason, in an almost anthropological sense) “Perfect Society” (1965) and Choi In-Hun’s “Empire Radio, Live Transmission” (1967), which is an alternate history imagining that Korea never freed itself from Japanese colonial rule, perhaps the most logical discussion to follow one which inspires a discussion of a Go-playing AI is Jeong Soyeon’s wonderful “Cosmic Go” (2009). This is the story of a young Korean woman who dreams of going to space, more specifically to a moon base that is being constructed, although her becoming paralyzed from a traffic accident initially thwarts those plans.

The story begins with advice on playing Go: “The most important thing in the game of Go is where you place your stones.”The title of the story is a reference to the “cosmic” style of professional Japanese Go player Masaki Takemiya. Rather than focusing on locking-down territory at the beginning of the game, Takemiya spreads out his stones in the middle of the board, trapping his opponent into invading. In Jeong’s story, this cosmic strategy is represented in how the protagonist’s paralysis initially seems like a hindrance for going into space, yet when workers on the moon began “to experience loss of bone density” due to weak gravity, this disability is actually an advantage. The ESA/NASA conglomerate of the story begins explicitly recruiting candidates with disabilities, especially “lower-body amputees and those with paralysis of the legs who would not need to support the weight of their bodies once they returned to Earth after living in low gravity conditions.” Just as Takemiya’s stone placement initially seems like a weak position, the narrator’s disability ends up being what sends her into space (although there are also questions about this hiring policy raised by disability rights activists). “I contemplated the awesomely strategic placement of the stones that had made possible such a bold and aggressive round of Cosmic Go,” the narrator says, combining both Takeymiya’s style of play and the oblique manner she was able to fulfil her dream of going to the moon.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Cross-Cultural Studies Review*, Young-Ha Kim’s novel *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* (1996) is discussed. In *Readymade*

Bodhisattva, a portion of another novel of Kim's, *Quiz Show* (2007), has been translated. In this selection, the character of Minsu at first believes he has arrived at an intense boot camp in preparation for participation in a quiz show. However, in his conversations with another contestant named Yuri, Minsu comes to realize that his brain has actually been scanned and uploaded, "like transferring files to the cloud," to a space ship called Aleph, the name of which both references the first letter of Semitic abjads and the Borges short story about a point in space that contains all other points. However, in Kim's story the fact of finding yourself an uploaded brain leads to a number of more traditional speculations on the consequences of whole brain emulation and at least one novel one.

In the more traditional camp, Minsu wonders why most of the people on Aleph are happy to remain in their disembodied state, even though they can no longer see friends and family. In another example, Yuri uses the classic argument of how we experience and use furniture, familiar at least since the discussion of forms in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, to argue that Minsu will not notice any difference from his life before since we perceive the world exclusively through our minds, and it is our minds that have been fully uploaded into the spaceship. And in yet another example, Minsu wonders what will happen to his body back on Earth if, say, a hundred years pass by on the ship. It "would be easy to find new ones in which to house our minds on Earth," Yuri answers, asking Minsu hadn't he seen the movie *Being John Malkovich*?

But the most original question Minsu has, and the last thing that he wants to ask, is "Was suicide permissible? If all this was some kind of elaborate hallucination that my mind was experiencing, then could my mid alone kill itself?" No answer to this inquiry is provided in this short extract from the novel. After Minsu voices his concern, Yuri departs without a word. Minsu then goes back to the more mundane question of how you can know whether you really exist or not. Yet if we turn toward Kim's earlier novel, *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself*, in which the main protagonist helps others commit suicide, we can read "I have no interest in one person killing another. I only want to draw out morbid desires, imprisoned deep in the unconscious." Perhaps this quote can function as a clue to understand what is happening in this disembodied question of suicide from extract from *Quiz Show*: the slow drawing out of the morbid desires, but this time the desired involved when one's mind has been fully emulated on a computer.

As a final example from the collection, we can look at Park Min-Gyu's story "Roadkill" (2011). This piece weaves together two plotlines. The first is the story of two robots, Mao and Maksi, and their human minder Josah. This is told from Maksi's point of view. The three are tasked to clean up the decimated roadkill found along the tracks of a train that is so high-speed,

that “as soon as we hear the loud sound of the shuttle and see the light, its taillights are already disappearing far away down the road from us.” Josah is a drunk, Mao has a malfunction which causes him to be a fan of Mozart, and Maski’s body and circuitry are slowly winding down. All three are surprised when they find an intact, dead baby human along the sides of the tracks. This is only the second human Maski has ever been in contact with (the first being Josah), and no one has any idea of how it got there.

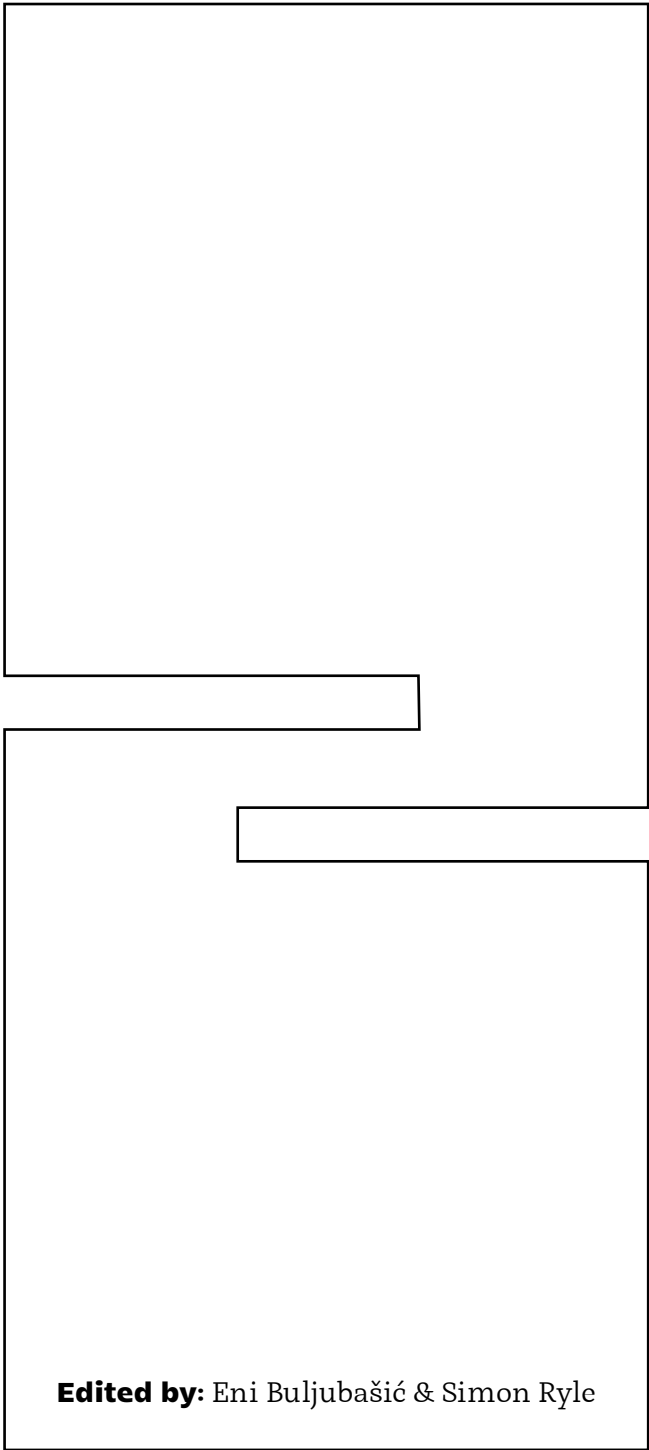
The fate of the baby is the focus of the second strand of the story. This is told in the second person, addressed to a man only known by the surname Li, who finds himself in a migration relocation camp and is forced to compete in a version of Russian roulette. The story takes place in a future in which all of Asia has united into a single corporation, with the younger generation speaking the new Pan-Asian language while the remnants of older, national languages are only found in the older generation. Li is of the younger generation, and he has survived eight rounds of what is now called Chinese roulette (since there is no longer any Russia). After surviving his ninth game, Li decides to take his winnings and use them to cross the high-speed train tracks and hopefully get to the other side and get arrested so that he’s put in prison, a fate deemed much better than life in the migrant camp. At the camp new families are formed between people who are not related, and Li takes some of his members, along with what could possibly be his child, along with him. All are killed when trying to cross the tracks, and the baby Li was carrying gets flung to the side as the train strikes.

When we return to Maski’s story we find that the drunk Josah has given the order to dispose of the baby just like all the other animal roadkill, an order Maski disobeys. Instead he finished Li’s journey by picking up the dead child and, with the last of his strength, carrying it over the border to where a group of humans are waiting to receive it and will hopefully treat it better than the abandoned pets and wild animals that litter the high-speed train tracks.

What Park’s story has in common with the others picked out from this collection is that non-traditional people, robots, and other forms of intelligence take over the work that more traditional people are no longer able to do. Whether this is praying, exploring space, exposing our most hidden fears, or caring for the dead, our understanding of what it means to be human is expanded beyond the borders of our prejudices and fears. This is one of the strengths of science fiction stories found outside the Anglophone sphere, and it is a strength of this collection in particular, reinvigorating the imaginative powers of science fiction with a diverse range of perspectives found right here on Earth.

Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts



Edited by: Eni Buljubašić & Simon Ryle

Wavescapes in the Anthropocene

(explorations in Blue Ecocriticism and the Environmental Humanities)

Introduction:

Wavescapes in the Anthropocene

Eni Buljubašić, University of Split*

Simon Ryle, University of Split

All sea voyages have several beginnings and several ends;
they are never completed.

— Predrag Matvejević

I spoke to the river,
And the river spoke back to me.
And it said, “you look so lonely,
You look full of misery,
And if you can’t find your baby,
Come make your home with me.”

— Percy Mayfield

Water proliferates throughout the cosmos. It accounts for 10% of interstellar matter, mostly as ice and gaseous matter (Armstrong, 44). Geochemical evidence suggests early in planetary history water was delivered to Earth by collisions with asteroids and planetesimals (Peslier et al., 743–810). Yet the liquid state of water on Earth is cosmically rare and precious. Water as a universal solvent is implicated in the first origin of life (Armstrong 44). However, in recent times water’s biospheres have been destabilized. If business-as-usual is not disrupted, it’s predicted that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the world’s oceans than fish (World Economic Forum 2016). Ocean acidification, due to increased carbon absorption, threatens to eliminate the world’s corals and sponges, each playing a vital role in complex marine bio-systems (Earth Journal Network 2016). Due to unprecedented patterns of offshore warming, the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season was the most destructive on record. Water is rendered eerie or uncanny by these ecological shifts (Morton). From the difficulty

* enib@ffst.hr

** sryle@ffst.hr

many people have in obtaining potable water, to the deadly threat of rising sea levels precipitated by global warming, the Anthropocene has refigured water as both a source of uncertainty and a fearsome threat. Our era has constructed massive infrastructures with calamitous effects on the life giving powers of water, such as the pesticide run-offs of modern farming, the pollution of mass tourism, deep sea drilling for oil, or declining fish stocks caused by industrial fishing. At the same time, Anthropocene transfigurations have hastened the sheer numbers of the displaced, whose migrations have often sought to transverse oceans and seas in the quest for a new life. Between January 2016 and December 2017 nearly 10,000 refugees lost their lives while crossing the Mediterranean (UNHCR 2019).

To consider “Wavescapes in the Anthropocene,” as does this special edition, is to attend to the uniqueness of water as it informs and intersects with human cultural life – but also ways that late modern ecological degradations impact upon the source of planetary life. Proposed in 2000 by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, the Anthropocene describes how modern human systems now intervene in planetary processes at a geological level. To consider “Wavescapes in the Anthropocene” is to face up to the uncanny incursions that late capitalism is making into the processes and flows of life’s liquid bases. In part this involves taking a different perspective on the firm ground that we make our home. For Steve Mentz, to be properly ecological, our thinking must become oceanic – capable of flowing between conventionally stratified categories, eras and bodies (xxi). Likewise, for Rachel Armstrong, to think with water is to take a critical perspective on the solidity that dominates many western assumptions:

Liquids are non-bodies, as they are constantly changing and therefore possess no formal boundaries. Possessing their own logic these protean structures assert their identity through their environmental context. They are pluripotent, not amorphous, being forged by oscillations and iterations of material expressions. Arising from interfaces, they persist through local connections and networks, which have the capacity to internalise other bodies as manifolds within their substance. Such multiple entanglements invoke marginal relations between multiple agencies that exceed the classical logic of objects, being capable of many acts of transformation. (69)

Thinking of life as a liquid flux means positioning living beings not as individual objects, but rather inextricable, infinite and mutually dependent symbiotic entanglements. Sea voyages, as Matvejević states, are never completed.

Along these lines, in advocating for a more culturally and

conceptually pronounced “marine trans-corporeality,” and therein for our kinship with “vast liquid habitats,” Stacey Alaimo warns that

the persistent (and convenient) conception of the ocean as so vast and powerful that anything dumped into it will be dispersed into oblivion makes it particularly difficult to capture, map and publicize the flow of toxins across terrestrial, oceanic, and human habitats. Moreover, many marine habitats, such as those in the benthic and pelagic zones, are not only relatively unknown to scientists, but are often depicted as “alien” worlds, completely independent from human activities. (187-188)

Trans-corporeal liquid habitats are both vulnerable to Anthropocene modernity – indivisibly interconnected to human economic decisions – and resistant to our knowledge.

The vital and uncanny forms and intersections taken by Anthropocene and other wavescapes, and the alien impenetrability of watery zones, are one reason why art and literature often invoke fascination with water. In Charles Sprawson’s classic study of literary liquidity, *The Haunts of the Black Masseur*, water is a realm of poetic and athletic heroism. At the same time, the voluptuous fluidity of water exerts an irresistible pull for the writer and the swimmer alike: “remote and divorced from everyday life, devoted to a mode of exercise where most of the body remains submerged and self-absorbed” (5). As a young man, Sprawson worked for several years teaching classical culture in an Arabic university. As he recounts, “The heat, the parched atmosphere and the non-existence of pools made me acutely sensitive to the slightest trace of water, any passing reference to swimming” (7-8). In these arid circumstances, Sprawson began compiling eccentric lists of water’s recurrent centrality to literature. In his thirsting regard, endless wavescapes rippled through the cannon, exerting an unerring pull on poetics: “Novels and poetry seemed to revolve around water and swimming, in a way that was quite out of proportion to the author’s intentions” (8).

Otherness

What aspects of water permeate its aesthetic treatment? Firstly, we note how frequently in art, literature, and film water invokes otherness. This may have a political dimension. In Carl Schmitt’s writing, the sea remains the space of the infinite unknown of Renaissance Europe, and the colonial conquest of the New World indicates a fundamental geopolitical transition (2009). This fascination is in evidence in all manner of dialectical uses of the sea across the history of the cinema, from the Lumière

brothers short film at the very birth of the cinema, *La Mer* (1895), to the haunting seascape horror sci-fi of Lucile Hadzihalilovic's *Évolution* (2015). It is this otherness that Christina Heflin in this special edition locates in Jean Painlevé's undersea surrealism. If the infinite timelessness of the sea's waves is comically mirrored by the endless procession of divers from the short jetty in the Lumieres' early images of the cinematic seaside, the evolutionary otherness of watery transformation is rather emphasized by Hadzihalilovic. Another dialectical pairing concerns surface and depth. One of the most eerie and alluring moments from the Studio Era of American cinema is a dreamlike sequence from Charles Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), in which two children, John (Billy Chapin) and Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce), escape from the ill-intentioned Harry Powell (Robert Mitchum) in a stolen rowing boat. As Laughton's camera picks out a spider web, a bankside toad, and pollen floating in the moonlight, the children float languidly beneath the starry sky upon the moonlit river, at once held protected upon the surface of brilliant luminescence, and threatened by depths of an incomprehensible surrounding darkness. If the placid and luminescent sheen of the river's surface contrasts with Powell's mendacity, it also echoes the screen's radiance.

Alert to this relation, the cinema has commonly contrasted the surface and depth of water. As with many films, the plots of Luc Besson's *The Big Blue* (1988) and James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989) centre on the deathly allure of the ocean depths, while Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) brings the fearful unknown of the nefarious subaqueous shark monster to the Martha's Vineyard beach setting by deploying the horror technique of the "dolly zoom." Pioneered by Alfred Hitchcock's cinematographer Irmin Robert for *Vertigo* (1958), the vertiginous effect of the dolly zoom is achieved by zooming the camera lens in order to adjust the field of view, while the camera dollies away at precisely the rate that keeps the foreground the same size in the frame throughout. This means the field of view is stretched out in a disorienting manner, the background seeming to drop away whilst the foreground remains unchanging – thus contravening all the visual hints that the cinema spectator conventionally uses to maintain spatial orientation concerning the diegesis. If the shark serves as eponymous and largely unscreened and unseen centre of *Jaws* – whose brooding menace and absence from the representation is neatly caught in John Williams's innovative minimalist theme, the dolly zoom brings the abyssal otherness of the ocean depths to cinematic mimesis. While witnessing a horrific shark attack, police chief Brody (Roy Scheider) is suddenly made aware in the most dramatic manner of his culpability in mistakenly allowing the Amity Island beaches to reopen; as he sees in gory technicolour, a maleficent shark was responsible after all, Spielberg's

dolly zoom brings to the mimetic surface this sudden horrific and isolating surge of awareness.

Spielberg's cinematography speaks to the unknown otherness of the oceanic depths. However, as Rupert Medd's article in this special edition demonstrates, the predominant horror troubling our oceans is not *Carcharodon carcharias*, the Great White of Spielberg's screenplay, but rather the monstrous 50-100 million tonnes of plastic that humans have in the last half century dumped into the oceans. Rebecca Giggs writes of a beached whale found in the Almería region of Spain, an entire greenhouse in its stomach, and well as other plastic items: parts of a dishwashing machine, a mattress, fishing gear, several coathangers, an ice cream tub. Giggs warns that, due to longevity of whales, and the way their blubber attracts fat-soluble toxicants, whales absorb "heavy metals and inorganic compounds that comprise pesticides, fertilisers, and other pollutants that have come to powder the modern sea" (10). If the whale's vast capacity to swallow objects recalls to Giggs tales of voyagers such as Jonah swallowed whole and finding undersea refuge inside the enormous creature, the contemporary plight of the oceans also warns of the uncannily changed status of contemporary human objects. The mythological alterity accorded to the oceans, as sites of both monsters and strange refuge, has shifted in the Anthropocene. In the age of industrial modernity, mass extinction ravages marine biosystems, and banal household detrita are transformed into terrifying agents of death that pollute the most unknown, unexplored regions of the ocean depths. "Would we know it, the moment when it became too late," Giggs asks, "when the oceans ceased to be infinite?" (16).

If our era involves a sea change in ecological consciousness, might watery aesthetics help us keep our bearings as we encounter and traverse disarming and uncanny new Anthropocene wavescapes? Certainly across literary history, texts have drawn repeatedly from the alterity of water. The archetype (and the fear of) watery depths, can be traced back to early cultures and literatures of Western civilization in shape of primordial water gods and monsters. The Sumerian Enuma Elish's serpent-like monster Tiamat represents the sea, and is progenitor of gods. The Babylonian and Ugarit cosmogonic myths are also determined by the (thunder) god's victory over just such a sea monster, standing for the primordial chaos and the unwieldy sea. The creation of cosmos-order was thus gained through the (masculinist) taming of the water element, while things watery (and slippery) gained the negative connotations of chaos, alterity, danger and mystery (cf. Levanat Peričić; Eliade 1958). Within this symbolic field of fearsome, mysterious watery creatures, more widely known are the Leviathan, which entered the Western imagination via Hebrew mythology, the Talmud and the Old Testament, and the Greek and medieval

cyborgs¹ and monsters such as mermaids, sirens, and the metonymical Scylla and Charybdis. To mention one more example of this rich imagological reservoir, an island-whale story is an intercultural Mediterranean narrative found across languages and genres. In different versions, this story is found in the Talmud, *The Thousand and One Nights*, medieval genres (bestiaries, summae), folk literature (Croatian, Italian) and in works by the authors as diverse as Ariosto, Milton, Rabelais, Melville, and Verne (cf. Miličević Bradač). The story narrates of a fishing trip, where the group, after being in a storm or a dense fog, embark on a small island, where they proceed to cook their lunch. Then, the island starts shaking and plummets into the water, for it was not an island but a whale's back they were cooking on. In medieval genres, the fishing group is sunk by this "demonic" creature, and their "fall into the abyss" is compared with falling into sin. On a wider scale, malevolent, benevolent, or indeed resistant to such binary determination, the "aquatic seducers" of both genders are found globally, from the Latin America (cf. Adamson 2018 on yakaruna stories and Amazonian cosmologies), African continent (e.g. Mami Wata) and, as first discussed, the West. These archetypes, images and polysemy are found in contemporary cultural production too, e.g. in the del Toro's film *The Shape of Water* (2017), where a magical watery creature brings forth the liminal qualities of the familiar and the chaotic, the mundane and the enchanted, identity and alterity.

In both genre and literary modern fiction, wavescapes connote alterity, but also open up possibilities for weaving the ties of kinship beyond the human-animal divide. As this collection explores, modernist and Surrealist artists explore both the archetypal and scientific dimensions of water and sea life, as well as its non-human alterity and mystery. In this collection, Monika Bregović explores aesthetics and ethics of fish in Virginia Woolf's fiction and essays, while Christy Heflin discusses the portrayal of non-ocular modes of sensing in Jean Painlevé's films. Both papers, in different ways, account for the otherworldly beauty and beautiful otherness of marine beings, also opening opportunities for cross-species kinship-making. One might consider in this context Joan Slonczewski's ground-breaking feminist SF novel *A Door into Ocean* (1986), which represents an all-female, egalitarian and pacifist society, the Sharers, who live on a water cover moon, Shora. The continual strangeness of Slonczewski's vision emphasizes the anarchic ecofeminist mutualism of the Sharer society, which harnesses giant squid to power their chariots, harvests the limbs of seamonsters, and whose lesbian eroticism reflects the fluid otherness of their watery planet.

1 According to Haraway's famous "Cyborg Manifesto," a cyborg appears in myth precisely there where a boundary is crossed. She refers to the animal/human boundary, but, in this context, it might be expanded towards those of chaos and cosmos, or familiarity and mystery.

By contrast, William Golding's *Pincher Martin* (1956) uses the hostile otherness of the ocean to dissect humanist pretensions – and perhaps goes so far as to suggest how resistance to wavescape alterity and flux lies at the heart of Anthropocene alienation. Stranded alone on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic, Golding's protagonist Martin presents a mal-formed détournement of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. In Golding's retelling of shipwreck, the dominating western Enlightenment individualist is flung upon an atoll so small and desperate the sea spray flies constantly in his face, no peace is possible, and madness looms terribly. Like Crusoe, Martin forces himself to think, to be practical, to use the intelligence that sets him apart from the rest of the creation: to collect water, harvest limpets and muscles, construct an SOS sign for passing aeroplanes from seaweed. But as his body weakens, injured from the hardships of the exposed rock, his ordeal in the sea, the stale water he must drink, madness seizes his thoughts. The rock becomes his image of his own sanity, and the sea that surrounds and dominates the feeble rock with its vast ungovernable loneliness, is the radical otherness of madness:

I am alone on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic. There are vast distances of swinging water round me. But the rock is solid. It goes down and joins the floor of the sea and that is joined to the floors I have known, to the coasts and cities. I must remember that the rock is solid and immovable. If the rock were to move then I should be mad (163).

The resistant fluidity of water is here absolute unthinking otherness, but its infinite flux also exposes the solidity of his desperately held identity as an alternative insanity. Refracted by endless water, western individualism becomes pathology. Pincher's thoughts drift loose on terrible ocean flux, his sense of self retreats inwards. His tiny exposed rock becomes the centre of the insane humanist Enlightenment identity as it grips the body, holds it firm from the endless flux of water:

The centre cried out.

"I'm so alone! Christ! I'm so alone!"

The centre told itself to pretend and keep on pretending.

[...]

The mouth had its own wisdom.

"There is always madness, a refuge like a crevice in the rock. A man who has no more defence can always creep into madness like one of those armoured things that scuttle..." (181-86)

Memory and speculative futures

Another recurrent aesthetic topos is the ability of wavescapes to absorb, manifest and redirect trauma. Ariel's song of the sea, from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, describes the transformative force of water:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange. (2. 1. 397-403)

Vitally, this transmutational power arises from the sea's status as repository of death. The strangeness Ariel describes is a function of the transformative integration of death by water. If the ebb and shift of the sea embodies endless flux – the sea's timeless flows as washing over irrecoverable loss. The memorial motif of water as traumatic repository is to be found in contemporary cultural forms as diverse as Disney animation and J-horror. Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee's 3D computer animated musical fantasy *Frozen II* (2019), for example, turns on the conceit that water memorializes the past. Travelling to the glacier Ahtohallan, which is said to record traces of the past, Elsa learns of the mendacious colonialist machinations of her own country's history. A different version of this conceit is to be found in Hideo Nakata's 2002 *Dark Water*, in which the eerie water supply of a rundown Tokyo apartment becomes haunted by the traumatized spirit of violent death. A divorced mother, Yoshimi Matsubara, moves into an apartment with her daughter, Ikuko, and experiences supernatural occurrences including a mysterious water leak from the floor above. It is gradually revealed that a year earlier a girl from an apartment one floor above, Mitsuko, fell into the water tank on the building's roof and drowned. Mitsuko's restless ghost haunts the building's water, seeking to drown Ikuko, and ultimately to claim Matsubara as her own mother.

An attention to Anthropocene wavescapes reveals the occluded eco-poetics that runs through these texts of late modern popular culture. In Jason W. Moore's account of the Capitalocene, the networked extraction and redistribution of global resources by European colonialism in the development of the commodity form kick-started European capitalism by accelerating the globe's ecological metabolism. Theories of capitalism

and ecology have positioned the Atlantic slave trade and early modern colonialism as initiating a new phase of the dialectical relation between capital and the web of life (Moore and Patel). A focus on cross-oceanic extractionism draws together research on the links between the plantation as a system of resource exploitation employed in Ireland by England and colonization in Africa, Asia and the New World by various European powers with the revolutionary conception of exchange value, and the new globally networked ocean economics therein accelerated. Early modern capitalism accelerated the extraction of wealth by transporting increasing amounts of matter and increasing numbers of beings across the seas: settling, exploiting, civilizing, displacing and putting to work indigenous peoples, fauna, flora and landscapes.² Remaking existent ecologies, colonialism, slavery, livestock and international networks of oceanic trade stimulated the production of wealth and accelerated the hold of capital over Europe, setting in motion “Capitalocene” modernity (cf. Malm; Moore).

In this context, popular cinema’s reconstruction of traumatized water centres on the haunting foreclosures of late modernity’s global capitalism. Mark Fisher’s use of “hauntology” repurposes Derrida’s concept to describe the haunting remnants of the utopian futures lost to neoliberalism. Disappointingly, *Frozen II* does not draw explicit links between its own climate narrative and the situation of contemporary glacier loss (nor resolve Elsa’s gender fluid sexuality). However, the film’s conceit of the water as memorializing and haunted by colonialist violence offers a succinct and subtle diagnosis of extractive modernity as remaking the very fluidity of the world. Likewise, *Dark Water* suggests an occluded hauntology of ecological degradation by eerily reframing the originary element of life as dirtied, polluted and traumatized by a spectrality that forever forecloses future life.

The Capitalocene’s past and future threads are imagined and explored in the numerous dystopian, apocalyptic and speculative novels and films. Water figures strongly in works thematising inundation and submergence (J. G. Ballard’s *The Drowned World*), a new ice age (M. Gee’s *The Ice People*, Bong Joon-ho’s *Snowpiercer*, together with the scientifically misleading blockbuster *The Day After Tomorrow*), flood (M. Gee’s *The Flood*, or, the denouement of Kingsolver’s *The Flight Behaviour*) (cf. Goodbody and Johns-Putra). On the other hand, allegorical and realist narrative modes are apt for the exploration of (neo)colonialist privatisation, as in Bollaín’s *Even the Rain*, and pollution, as Haynes’ *Dark Waters* (2019). Much of contemporary cli-fi, indicatively, paints wavespaces of sea-level rise and lost grounds as well as the gradual loss of wavespaces to droughts and contamination. Paolo Bacigalupi’s (*The Windup Girl*, *Water Knife*) and Kim

2 On this topic see Williams 1994; Canny, 2001; and Nibert 2013.

Stanley Robinson's novels (*Science in the Capital* trilogy, *New York 2140*) are famous examples of speculative climate fiction that interrogate life in Capitalocene's wavescapes of the first kind. While Robinson's relentless optimism displays far from utopian yet salvaged/-able society in which the semi-inundated New Yorkers live in co-ops and play submarine judo, Bacigalupi's visions are more violent, less optimistic, and equally cautionary. E. Itāranata's poetic and more personal novel *Memory of Water*, on the other hand portrays a world of fewer, contaminated continents and militarized waterscapes, as the government controls freshwater in the future Scandinavian Union. The presumably Asian protagonist preserves the ancient art of tea ceremonies, but more importantly, the alternative philosophical outlook by learning *from* water and its memory about its deep entwinement with humans' lives, deaths, and bodies.

This collection continues in this exploration of the intersections of aesthetic knowledge and watery realms. The confluence of art, activism and criticism in environmental/blue humanities is needed in negotiating plastic as a phenomenon at the crux of material, economic, ecological and biopolitical networks. In this collection, Rupert Medd aims at such synthetic exploration of plastics in "Conversations with Planet Ocean." Transversing literature, visual arts, natural sciences and humanities, as well as relaying personal experience of swimming, diving and sailing, Medd offers a study of marine plastics' influence on our environment, and on our cultural and environmental thinking. Alaimo's ecomaterialist notion of trans-corporeality is again here relevant for suggesting the inseparability of all sentient beings and things in the more-than-human-world. The borders of any being are porous, ever-exchanging substances with its environment, affecting it and being affected by it simultaneously. Plastic pollution of land, seas, and freshwater, microplastics in human and animal bodies, and toxic runoffs are solid examples of marine trans-corporeality which show the urgency of its ethical considerations. In this context, Medd examines the issues of indifference of our political institutions to marine plastic pollution, industrial fishing, eco-linguistics and eco-theory, carrying the concept of the ocean as common heritage of humankind and common responsibility.

Rhythm

"The sea is history," writes Derek Walcott (74). It guides us, and shapes us. It records our behaviours, receives our pollutions. Its tides and surges echo the rhythm of history. Penny Woolcock's experimental documentary *From the Sea to the Land Beyond* (2012) employs archival footage to revisit the tragic wrecks and idiosyncratic cultural forms that have arisen

at the British shoreline. Woolcock's mesmeric editing foregrounds the endless ebb and flow of the sea, using recurrent shots of waves breaking upon the shore and plumes of sea spray to punctuate and rhythmically intimate the uncannily tangled passage of history. Often this rhythm is violent. The multiple temporalities of contemporary planetary ecological entanglement, Mentz terms "shipwreck modernity." For Mentz, shipwreck modernity involves four concurrent factors that blend in a wild free-jazz amalgam:

- 1.) The Anthropocene – which refers to human degradations of the planetary systems;
- 2.) The Homogenocene – the cross-planetary entanglements and homogenizations of modernity, whereby lifeforms are carried across oceans to colonize new habitats and mix with indigenous species;
- 3.) The Thalassocene – the role of oceanic conquest in western imperialism and subsequent "wet globalizations," and the parallel poetic fascination with water. As Mentz notes, "Even today, the vast majority of mercantile goods travel by sea" (xxi);
- 4.) The Naufragocene – the swirling loss of direction, the violent encounter with disorder: shipwreck, and sea loss (xii).

One of the most striking cultural manifestations of Mentz's shipwreck modernity is the black cultural diaspora that Paul Gilroy names "the Black Atlantic" (1993). Centrally, this is an issue of rhythm. For Gilroy, the reason so many Black thinkers were impelled to cross the Atlantic, just as DJs' rhythms mutate and hybridize by also jumping back-and-forth across The Atlantic, is because they recognised themselves as agents of modernity working with and into an alienated and future-oriented diasporic tradition. Rhythm presses onward, turning the solidified past into liquid becoming – the impulse common to diasporic black music that Kodwo Eshun terms "Futurhythmachine" (2018, 00 [-003]). For US writers, the otherness of the Atlantic countered institutional racism of post-war America. As James Baldwin puts it in a notable TV interview, "My years in Paris released me from a social terror... visible in the face of every cop, every boss, everybody" (88). This alienation is freeing and destabilising – future oriented: as Robert F. Harney would state, "once you crossed the Atlantic, you were never on the right side again" (Moten and Harney, 92-3).

At the heart of Gilroy's black Atlantic, and of all modernity, is slavery – which severed first American Black culture, and then European modernity (as well as planetary ecology) from tradition and ancient homeostatic forms. Slavery is a cut in the world that initiated Anthropocene modernity. The Black Atlantic as cultural movement is the response to alienated modern lives: a version of what Christina Sharpe calls "the

wake” (2016). As Sharpe describes, the transatlantic slave trade that eased this geopolitical transition (to plantation capitalism) exploited 15 million African victims, and whose institutionalized racism continues to suck lives into its wake. The wake is the tranche of disturbed ocean left by the passing of the loaded slave ship on its unspeakable Middle Passage, and the refusal of that ocean memory to still. Yet it is also a place of refuge, a site of patient recuperation. “We are the shipped,” state Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (95), in attempting to describe the Capitalocene logistics that reach between the hold of early modern slave ships to the late modern intermodal freight container that has, since the Vietnam war, enabled globalization by standardizing every facet of international shipping. To recognize our place in this vast oceanic infrastructure (as they draw from Frank B. Wilderson III) is to create the possibility for newly fluid entanglements with the future: “And so it is we remain in the hold, in the break, as if entering again and again the broken world, to trace the visionary company and join it” (Moten and Harney, 94). In the hold, the broken becomes the break-beat, and the oceanic a refuge. This is why Percy Mayfield’s “The River’s Invitation” (quoted in our epigraph) is an exemplary text: staying in the wake, or hold, means always following the infectious beat, always choosing liquidity even to the point of death over the death-in-life of slavery.

This hold-state of suspension, or “contrapunctal island,” Moten and Harney describe as “a musical moment... the feeling of a presence that is ungraspable in the way that it touches” (95). Why is music, such as Mayfield’s, central to this recuperation of logistics? As Gilroy remarks, because the terror of slavery, of the construction of the inhuman, is both deeply embodied and also “unsayable” (74). Moreover, because the Black condition was also repeatedly one which stressed death over bondage (ibid, 68) so that the Black slave experience is quintessentially modern, committed to not going back: impelled by the terrible brutal violence of slavery, and its subsequent refusal above all; choosing futurity, the motion of a music which moves but does not say — even when going forward means death. So that for Gilroy, the most pressing, vital Black thinkers have been those who have embraced mutant and hybridizing diasporic forms, choosing to move forward into this futurhythmachine. As James Baldwin puts it, “beat is the confession which recognizes, changes and conquers time” (quoted in Gilroy, 203). Musical rhythms are that which express the body without being reducible to the ethical or cognitive (ibid, 76). And diasporic black Atlantic beats from spirituals and field hollers to Kendrick Lamar’s “Swimming Pools,” and FKA twigs’s “Water Me” express a fluidity that won’t stay solid long enough to allow alienation to catch up.

Wavescapes

A confluence of otherness, memory, rhythm and speculative futures is to be found in the wavescapes explored in this collection.

In his wide-ranging, at once scholarly and conversational essay, Rupert Medd (with illustrations by Hélène Guyot) acquaints readers with marine plastic pollution and its ecological, ethical and cultural consequences. “Conversations with Planet Ocean: Plastic pollution and the common heritage of humankind” interdiscursively and multimodally discusses the concept of World Ocean, and the author suggests that marine plastic pollution should be conceptualized in reference to the world-system planetary boundaries that it breaches. Presenting specific data on plastic pollution and institutional activity or lack thereof, this paper examines and converses with key concepts in the blue humanities, eco-criticism and eco-linguistics, and - what distinguishes it from usual scholarly prose - it also comprises personal and anecdotal discourse, such as sailor Mirko’s letter and the author’s photographs of marine habitats. Speaking to UN classification of environmental risk, and planetary ecological boundaries, Medd’s key suggestion is that plastic pollution be treated as “part of a Planetary Boundary within Novel entities’ as it adversely affects the Earth’s systems,” arguing that this is actually “a debate involving a moral reassessment and appreciation of Planet Ocean.”

Asking us to look more closely, to be captivated by watery lives, and to care, Monika Bregović’s article “Virginia Woolf’s Fish: Animal Lives between Aesthetics and Ethics” investigates Woolf’s fascination with fishes as found across her literary and non-literary works, especially the author’s usage of fish as a polysemic presence and a metaphorical representation. Bregović’s analysis and discussion is well placed in the larger context of Modernist art and Modern science discourse. Woolf is shown pondering the morphological alterity of the fishes’ bodies, appreciating their other-worldly beauty, as well as using its’ anthropomorphised representation as a metaphorical simile for creative thought and writing. Bregović also shows that in her fish writing’ Woolf narrows the animal-human divide, however, the fishes’ self-contained existence’ in their habitat-world is considered something unreachable to humans (which brings to mind Agamben’s thoughts on Jakob Johann von Uexkülls concept of “*Umwelt*”). These and other issues, such as feminism, gender fluidity, women’s writing (and Woolf’s self-proclaimed enjoyment of fishing) are all investigated via reading some of Woolf’s most famous writing, from *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, to “The Sun and the Fish”, and “Professions for Women”.

Finally, in “Jean Painlevé’s Surrealism, Marine Life & Non-Ocular Modes of Sensing,” Christina Heflin examines the idea that surrealist artists in general and Jean Painlevé in particular were “anti-ocularcentristic.” This idea is discussed through the artist’s portrayal of marine animals like sea urchins and octopi, which navigate their environment without visual aids, often posited as primary in anthropocentric thinking. Heflin contextualises her topic in the wider art movement of Surrealism and in interwar scientific and technological developments. Noting that visual primacy is intrinsically linked with hegemonic notion of (Western) subjectivity and anthropocentrism, she argues that Painlevé demonstrates the desire and artistic-technological means to transcend it, thereby breaching the boundary between the human and the animal. Concentrating on Painlevé’s films, Heflin also interrogates the role camera technology (e.g. close-up, acceleration) played in scientific and art developments. The discussed examples open up questions of animal/human (dis)similarities in perspective, motion, and orientation and set a challenge to anthropocentrism.

What we think this collection ultimately demonstrates is that if the Anthropocene involves a violent new phase of world insurrection, perhaps the longstanding cultural recognition of the sea’s changeability means the Blue Humanities, New Thalassology, Ocean and Island Studies, and water ecocriticisms are uniquely well placed to organize the stories that we tell of water and its life-giving and transformative force. In discourse and media, waters, seas, and wavescapes become social spaces, but also topoi of the limits to knowledge. It is perhaps due to this liquid dialectic that water has also long suggested a rich source of both alterity and flux, from Homer’s Sirens to the black and queer politics configured in the fluid aesthetics of Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight* (2016). As Nat Wolff states, “Jazz flows like water.” Element of ancient cosmologies, water has long served myth and philosophy as a mysterious or paradoxical mix of power and gentle transfiguration. As Lao Tzu observes, “Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it.” Likewise, Ovid remarks, “Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force but through persistence.” This ceaseless persuasion is why Božanić (2010) muses that dialectical thought was surely born next to water.

This essay collection explores water narratives (ecological, fictional, political) in the context of the changes that our rivers, seas, oceans, as well as other fluidities, are currently undergoing. It proposes, in various forms, that the stories we tell of water might also serve to guide us through the sea change of the Anthropocene – but also that such a recognition requires a more liquid flow of interdisciplinary discourse between water-focused political thinkers and activists, creative practitioners and scholars of the humanities, arts and social sciences. For Armstrong,

if we are to break away from the enduring habits that have scarred the surface of our planet, it is imperative that the stranglehold of the machine metaphor upon all aspects of life' must be broken... More than a mechanism, the agency of living matter squeezes through the gaps of our capacity to reduce' its nature into a set of simple causes and effects – declaring itself liquid' (58).

Seeking liquidity, this essay collection seeks to generate a platform for exchange concerning the crises and cultural heritages brought to the forefront by Anthropocene (or Capitalocene) transformations of water. For despite everything we remain intimately beholden to the wavescapes of the Earth. Water comprises roughly two-thirds of both the surface of the Earth and the human body alike. We live with and as water. Both our home and our being constitute modes of fluidity. As Isak Dinesen writes, with pain and hope, "I know of a cure for everything: salt water... Sweat, or tears, or the salt sea" (220).

Works cited

- Adamson, Joni. "Environmental Justice, Cosmopolitics, and Climate Change." In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, Ed. L. Westling. Cambridge University Press, 2011, 169-183.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open. Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Alaimo, Stacy. "Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism, and New Materialism at Sea." In *Material Ecocriticism*. Eds. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014, 186-203.
- Armstrong, Rachel. *Liquid Life. On Non-Linear Materiality*. New York: Punctum Books, 2019.
- Baldwin, James. *I Am Not Your Negro*. Ed. Raoul Peck. New York. Vintage, 2017.
- Božanić, Joško. "Terra Marique." In *Jadranski arhipelag priča priče*, Ed. Mirjana Tepšić. Split: Hidrografski institut; Zagreb: Algoritam, 2010, 117-127.
- Canny, Nicholas. *Making Ireland British. 1580-1650*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Crutzen, Paul and Eugene Stoermer. "The Anthropocene." *IGBP NEWSLETTER*, Vol. 41 (2000): 17-18.
- Dinesen, Isak. "The Deluge of Norderney." In *Seven Gothic Tales*. London: Putnam, 1934, 173-270.
- Earth Journalism Network, "Ocean Acidification and Coral Bleaching." *EJN*, Vol. 9 (June 2016). Internet: <https://earthjournalism.net/resources/ocean-acidification-and-coral-bleaching>.

- Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Sheed and Ward Inc. 1958.
- Eshun, Kodwo. *More Brilliant Than the Sun. Adventures In Sonic Fiction*. Verso, 2018.
- Fisher, Mark. "What is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (2012): 16-24.
- Giggs, Rebecca. *Fathoms. The World in the Whale*. Simon and Schuster, 2020.
- Gilroy Paul. *The Black Atlantic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Golding, William. *Pincher Martin*. Faber and Faber, 1956.
- Goodbody, Axel and Adeline Johns-Putra (Eds). *Cli-Fi. A Companion*. Peter Lang, 2019.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991, 149-181.
- Levanat-Peričić, Miranda. *Uvod u teoriju čudovišta. od Humbabe do Kalibana*. AGM, 2014.
- Malm, Andreas. *Fossil Capital. The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. Verso, 2016.
- Matvejević, Predrag. *Mediterranean. A Cultural Landscape*. University of California Press, 1999.
- Mayfield, Percy. "The River's Invitation." *Tangerine Record Corporation*, 1953.
- Mentz, Steve. *Shipwreck Modernity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Milićević Bradač, Marina. "Otok-kit od Aleksandra do Voyagera." *Latina & Graeca*, Vol. 23 (2013): 11-104.
- Moore, Jason W. and Raj Patel. *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things*. University of California Press. 2018.
- Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life. Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. Verso. 2015.
- Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney. *The Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Minor Compositions, 2013.
- Nibert, David. *Animals Oppression and Human Violence. Domesecretion, Capitalism and Global Conflict*. Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Peslier, Anne H., Schönbächler, Maria, Busemann, Henner and Shun-Ichiro, Karato. "Water in the Earth's Interior: Distribution and Origin." *Space Science Reviews*, Vol. 212, No. 1-2 (2017): 743-810.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Hamlet or Hecuba. The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*. Trans. David Pan and Jennifer Rust. Telos, 2009.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Trans. George Schwab. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest. The Complete Works*. Ed. Stanley Wells. Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Sharpe, Christina. *In the Wake. On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press. 2016.
- Sprawson, Charles. *The Haunts of the Black Masseur. The Swimmer as Hero*.

University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

UNHCR, "Desperate Journeys: Refugees and Migrants Arriving in Europe and at Europe's Borders." *UNHCR* (2019). Internet: <https://www.unhcr.org/desperatejourneys/>.

Walcott, Derek. "The Sea is History." *The Paris Review*, Vol. 74 (1978). Internet: <https://www.theparisreview.org/poetry/7020/the-sea-is-history-derek-walcott>.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. North Carolina University Press, 1994.

World Economic Forum. "The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics." *WEF* (2016). Internet: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_New_Plastics_Economy.pdf.

Virginia Woolf's Fish: Animal Lives between Aesthetics and Ethics

Monika Bregović*
University of Zadar

Abstract

Aquatic creatures such as pikes, salmon and whales feature prominently in the poetry, fiction and painting of the Modernist period. It should therefore come as no surprise that water-dwelling animals, and fish especially, were fascinating to Virginia Woolf too. Woolf's interest in fish (among other animals) can be accounted for by the profound changes in human-animal relations that mark the period of Modernism, and which were brought about by the unyielding influence of taxonomy and Darwin's theory of evolution, but also new developments in ethology and ecology that appeared in early 20th century. This article addresses the significance of fish as both zoometaphor and individual subject in the fiction and non-fiction of Virginia Woolf. First, I comment on the significance of fishes in connection to Modernist ideas on beauty. Then, I analyze fishing allegories and fish-related motifs in the context of Woolf's own (feminist) poetics. In the last part of the article I analyze the posthuman potential of animal consciousness that could be regarded as superior to the human one.

Key words. Virginia Woolf, fish, natural sciences, posthumanism, *écriture féminine*

Modernist Fish, Aesthetics and Ethics

The Modernist break with the past, reflected in profound changes in political economy, social theories and aesthetics, has for a long time fed scholarly interest and research into the period. In recent decades, Modernist culture is increasingly being studied with respect to another major paradigm shift – the breaching of the human-animal divide, rooted in 19th-century scientific theories and turn-of-the century developments in the life sciences. Drawing on Darwin's theory of evolution and the popularity of the taxonomic tradition which continued well into the 20th century, as well as early 20th century advances in ethology and ecology, research into Modernist culture now attempts to grasp these changes in human-animal relations, which are reflected in the period's

* mbregov@unizd.hr

fascination with zoology, animal life and nature. The analysis of literary symbols and imagery, of which animals are part, is a staple of literary studies, but with the so-called animal turn' (cf. Ritvo 2007), conventional approaches in the study of literature have been supplanted by readings that highlight the ethical potential of art and literature with respect to animals.¹ Issues of ethics and aesthetics intersect, as the wonder and admiration felt at the morphology and psychology of animals are seen as important ethical stances that contribute to human understanding and respect for animal lives.

The works of many great Modernist authors are imbued by the scientific discourses of natural sciences and zoology, putting animals and nature center-stage. One of the more interesting examples of the period's fascination with the world of animals can be found in the work of Virginia Woolf, which abounds in a large number of different animal species. While it is hard to say which animal bears the most importance for Woolf, it is safe to say that one of the animals to which she refers the most often are fishes. Fishes, and fish-related motifs and stories abound in Virginia Woolf's work, from the Brothers Grimm tale of the "Fisherman and his Wife," told by Mrs Ramsay to her son in *To the Lighthouse*, to the "snub-nosed monster" spurting water from his mouth in "Blue and Green" (1989: 142), and the underdone salmon in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Woolf is not solitary in her fascination for aquatic creatures, which can be seen in a large number of pikes, whales, and salmon that span poetry and fiction, but also painting of the period. D.H. Lawrence, for example, saw animal existence as something humans should emulate. For Lawrence, animals have access to a superior, primal form of consciousness, and exemplify a more physical, embodied kind of existence, such as the one depicted in his poem "Whales Weep Not!" In this poem, aquatic animals are portrayed as creatures of an unrestrained, enviable sexuality, which is something humans cannot access due to cultural constraints. Such a view of animals goes against the grain of the many Modernists who have, according to Carrie Rohman (2008), pushed animals away from the human realm and positioned them as 'other' to humanity, in reaction to Darwin's theory of evolution, which was perceived as threatening to the status of humanity in the world. Other Modernists writing about fish made use

1 The status of animals in the human world received more scholarly attention with the rise of animal studies', an academic discipline that engages in a variety of animal-related issues. Scholars belonging to so-called critical animal studies' try to distance themselves from the more mainstream strands of the field by being dedicated to issues of ethics, and working toward the abolishment of animal exploitation. While a large portion of mainstream animal studies approaches animals as "reified signs, symbols, images, words on a page" (Best et al., 2007: 1), and remains rooted in speciesist ideologies, critical animal studies' is interested in animals as sentient beings and living subjects.

of it to bestialize the human. This can perhaps be illustrated by James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, which, Margot Norris points out, provides its cultural narratives with a broad ecological framework (2014: 540). In chapter seven of Joyce's book of night', featuring the struggle between the twins Shaun and Shem, Shem is compared to a salmon and other kinds of fish, and described as having "barbels," and "eelsblood in his cold toes" (2012: 169). While Patricia Morley stresses other possible interpretations of fish symbols in *Finnegans Wake*, she also mentions that the comparison of Shem with a fish may also imply that he is cold-hearted and mean (1969: 268). On the other hand, some Modernists made use of the more archetypal, religious meanings attributed to fish in many cultures, in which they are linked with narratives of regeneration and rebirth.² T.S. Eliot in his "Waste Land" makes the same kind of association with the story of Fisher King', to which he alludes in the poem, and which is essential to its topoi of barrenness and desolation. The morphological peculiarities of the fish were also interesting to many painters, such as Paul Klee, famous for his Expressionist and Surrealist style. His "Fish Magic," "The Goldfish," and "Around the Fish" feature unlikely-coloured fish of strange geometric shapes, occupying dreamlike environments that are often interpreted as manifestations of the unconscious.

As other of her animals, fish acquire diverse meanings within the framework of Woolf's literary texts, and are often admired for aesthetic reasons. Still, they also serve as a fit illustration of the broader cultural changes in the human view of animals, brought about by the life sciences in the period of Modernism. These intersections of science and literature, and ethics and aesthetics, embedded in Woolf's literary oeuvre, also prove crucial for her take on life, art and literature, and human-animal relations.

Modernist Beauty and the Aquarium

Woolf often wrote about fish as living creatures, praising their beauty and biological complexity, which she saw as extremely aesthetically pleasing. In a review written for the *Nation & Athenaeum*, on "the new aquarium" at the London Zoological Gardens, Woolf describes the fishes as being equally fascinating to scientists and poets:

- 2 Writing about water in his seminal work "Patterns of Comparative Religion", Mircea Eliade describes it as the supreme symbol of creativity. Spanning mythical narratives across the globe, water symbolizes a medium that precedes, gives birth to and succeeds all life (1958: 188). Creatures associated with water, such as "dragons, snakes, shell-fish, dolphins, fish", typically enjoy its powers, sharing them with those with whom they come into contact (1958: 207). In Christianity, fish is a symbol of Christ, and in Buddhism and Hinduism, it is related to the renewal of life.

Aesthetically speaking, the new aquarium is undoubtedly the most impressive of all the houses at the zoo. Red fish, blue fish, nightmare fish, dapper fish, fish lean as gimlets, fish round and white as soup plates, ceaselessly gyrate in oblong frames of greenish light in the hushed and darkened apartment hollowed out beneath the Mappin terraces. Scientifically, no doubt, the place is a paradise for the ichthyologist; but the poet might equally celebrate the strange beauty of the broad-leaved water plants trembling in the current, or the sinister procession of self-centred sea-beasts forever circling and seeking perhaps some minute prey, perhaps some explanation of a universe which evidently appears to them of inscrutable mystery. Now they knock the glass with their noses; now they shoot dartlike to the surface; now eddy slowly contemplatively down to the sandy bottom. Some are delicately fringed with a fin that vibrates like an electric fan and propels them on; others wear a mail boldly splashed with a design by a Japanese artist. That crude human egotism which supposes that Nature has wrought her best for those who walk the earth is rebuked at the aquarium. Nature seems to have cared more to tint and adorn the fishes who live unseen at the depths of the sea than to ornament our old, familiar friends, the goat, the hog, the sparrow, and the horse (1986: 404-405).

In her analysis of Woolf's review, Caroline Hovanec points out that the admiration Woolf expresses for the strange forms and striking colours of the fishes can be understood as a reflection of Modernist aesthetics (2018: 2), which displays an interest in the exotic, uncanny, and bizarre, and subverts the normative ideas on beauty, reality, perspective and other aspects of human life. Jane Goldman explains that the alien beauty of the fishes, occupying an underwater realm unfamiliar to humans, requires of us to reconfigure our established notion of beauty, and puts the drabness of humans and the world known to them to shame (1998: 100). The discovery of an entirely new dimension of the world challenges the conventional ideas of beauty, which now include previously unknown creatures of exquisite morphology, form and colour. Virginia Woolf points out that the beauty of the fishes greatly surpasses that of "the goat, the hog, the sparrow, and the horse," which are animals that have for centuries lived in companionship with humans, but also that of all creatures "who walk the earth," which includes humans too (1986: 405).

Woolf provides another extensive commentary on fish in her essay "The Sun and the Fish," written after the eclipse of the sun in 1927. Although the essay is loaded with symbolism related to the solar eclipse, fish are again referred to in a complimentary way, with the description bordering on the fantastic:

The fish themselves seem to have been shaped deliberately and slipped into the world only to be themselves. They neither work nor weep. In their shape is their reason. For what other purpose, except the sufficient one of perfect existence, can they have been thus made, some so round, some so thin, some with radiating fins upon their back, others lined with red electric light, others undulating like white pancakes on a frying pan, some armoured in blue mail, some given prodigious claws, some outrageously fringed with huge whiskers? More care has been spent on half a dozen fish than upon all the races of mankind (1994: 92).

The extraordinary beauty of animals hidden in the depths of the sea alters the normative way we usually perceive our surroundings. The multiplicity of perspectives and possible worlds are important elements of Modernist ideology, and are also reflected in the literary devices used by Modernist authors. In his well-known essay "Art as Technique," Viktor Shklovsky argues that the estrangement of the common ways in which humans see their world is the very purpose of art. According to him, human perception of the world has become automatic, and the role of art is to make things strange, "make objects unfamiliar", "make forms difficult" and thereby recover the sensation of environment lost by habit (2017: 9). Woolf's accounts of fish operates with the same alienating effect, which is triggered by their unusual anatomy, colour and form.

The creatures in the aquarium appear unfamiliar thanks to their vivid colours, and unusual shades and patterns. Some of them are described as sporting "blue mail," and others as emitting "red electric light." The painterly quality of these descriptions, conveys a sense of wonder at the animal world, and the fish seem unusual and beautiful at the same time. Woolf also plays with the reader's perception of the fish by the changes in perspective, as she zooms in' on minute details of the fish's body, camera-style. While the image of the fish's "whiskers" requires the reader to focus on a detail on the fish's body, the reference to the large size of the fish's barbels creates a counter-effect, making the reader adjust their perspective, since the detail is now regarded as something large and out-of-proportion. A similar effect is produced by the reference to the fins that "radiate" on the back of the fish, which again conveys an impression of excessive spreading out.' The play of perspectives puzzles the reader, and disrupts their habitual way of looking at things. Finally, Woolf creates a sequence of striking similes by linking things that are seemingly disparate. She compares white fish to pancakes on a frying pan (1994: 92), and comes up with technology-inspired comparisons that make the fish appear almost mechanical. The image of the fish "propelled" by a fin that "vibrates like an electric fan" (1986: 405) is one of the more striking images that alienate habitual perception.

The morphological alterity of the fishes, which is highlighted and complemented by literary devices, positions the creatures as being worthy of aesthetic appreciation. The fact that they are described as more beautiful than humans is a statement on value in itself. Furthermore, in both of these texts Woolf acknowledges the animals as creatures endowed with a subjectivity of their own. Goldman points out that, in the *Aquarium* review, the aesthetic appreciation of the fishes is not an end in itself, since they are described as not only objects of the human gaze, but also subjects in their own right (1998: 100). In the review, fish are described as moving “contemplatively,” and looking for “some explanation of a universe.” They also knock their noses on the tank glass while looking at us (Woolf, 1986: 404). This conveys a picture of fish being endowed with a subjectivity of their own (Goldman, 1998: 100), occupying a world which is separate from the human one, but which also overlaps with it. The fact that Woolf acknowledges animals as autonomous creatures can be interpreted as part of legacy of the scientific theories that have redefined the place of animals in the human world, most important of them being Darwin's theory of evolution.

It is a widely known fact that Darwin's theory of evolution proved central to the dethroning of humans from their privileged status. Gillian Beer (2009) sums up the political, social and religious implication of Darwin's ideas by pointing out that one of the most important implications of the theory of the descent of man is that humans were suddenly seen as animals themselves. Furthermore, the theory of evolution disrupted the belief that humans were created in God's own image, which made their rule on Earth and dominion over the animal kingdom even more questionable. In addition, humans are no longer regarded as the only beings who are in the possession of reason (Beer, 2009: 7-9). The narrowing of the gap between humans and animals, prompted by Darwinian ideas, is reflected in Woolf's writing and description of animals.

Not only does Woolf depict the fish that populate her aquarium as more beautiful than humans, she also points out that they have been given colour and shape without any respect for human concerns. Fishes have been endowed with features that are beautiful and striking in their form, and these aspects of their bodies are there for their own use and sake. In “The Sun and the Fish”, Woolf states that the shape and form of the fishes is part of their self-contained existence, which appears to have no relation whatsoever to the human world. They are “slipped into the world only to be themselves” (1994: 92), which goes against the anthropocentric belief, predominant even today, that humans are superior, rational creatures who are more apt in making decisions on not only human but also animal lives. In other words, animal bodies, their fur, skin, feathers, and other things that make them beautiful, or are simply

part of animal life, are not there for the use and pleasure of humans, but rather serve animals themselves. Even though the gap between humans and animals appears to be greater in “The Sun and the Fish” than Woolf’s essay on the aquarium, the statement on the detachment of the fish from the human world and their unknowability to humans does not preclude ethics, since it is precisely their alterity that commands respect in treatment.

Fluidity of Life and *Écriture Féminine*

In Virginia Woolf’s work, fish often appear whenever there is talk of writing and literature. They are described as dwelling in deep lakes, and slumbering at the bottom of the sea. They are keenly sought after, but get loose as soon as caught. Just as the material of literature itself, fish are elusive but crucial if art is to happen at all. Woolf’s fishing allegories might have had their foundation in her own fishing experience, which she describes in the biographical *A Sketch of the Past*. She describes the activity of fishing in an exhilarated manner: “the line thrilled in one’s fingers as the boat tossed and shot through the water; and then – how can I convey the excitement? – there was a little leaping tug; then another; up one hauled; up through the water at length came the white twisting fish; and was slapped on the floor” (1985: 134).³ The preparation of the rod, the anticipation of the tug, and the satisfaction of pulling the fish out of water mirror the stages of the writing process, and the effort involved in putting words on paper.

Indeed, Woolf often referred to fish and fishing in trying to describe the act of putting the complexity of world into words. In her novel *The Waves*, one of its male characters, Bernard, describes his inadequacy in using language to express life:

The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst. Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers (1992: 184).

3 While she recalled her fishing passion being extinguished by her father, who stated that he would stop accompanying her because he did not like to see the fish caught, Woolf admits that she had always associated fishing with an extreme thrill and pleasure.

Bernard's attempt to find the right chain of signifiers for the desired field of reference, and contain the evanescent material of life in words, is compared to fish which keep slipping through one's fingers.

Again, in *A Sketch of the Past*, Woolf refers to fish in trying to explain the futility of life writing'. The life of a person is shaped by so many invisible presences that, without trying to describe them, it is impossible to capture an individual's life on paper. Thinking about the influence of her own mother on her own life, Woolf compares herself to a fish whose body is moved here and there by currents of water: "I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream" (1985: 80). Reducing life to a cluster of facts about the person, without attempting to grasp the environment which cannot be peeled away from them, means that what is essential about the human in question will be left out in biographical writing.

The view of life as evanescent and fluid, and the futility of trying to impose fixed truths are expressions of the ideology of Modernism, and its epistemological uncertainty which extends to things such as consciousness, subjectivity, time, and perspective. In addition to Bergson's notions of subjective time or duration', and Freud's ideas on the unconscious, which have influenced the poetics of many Modernist authors, some critics also stress developments in the life sciences as contributing to the Modernist skepticism towards the fixedness' of life. In her study of the natural sciences and Virginia Woolf, Christina Alt points out that Woolf, despite her childhood enthusiasm for bug hunting, gradually grew critical towards the traditions of taxonomy and classification, which had at the time given way to new practices of studying nature and animal life, based on observation. Her criticism of these traditions of natural history is best seen in her rejecting the idea of naming, capturing and fixing' as a way of getting to know the truth' about the world (2010: 72). This can be substantiated by her references to fish in respect to the writing-process, in which fish signify the difficulty of containing meaning in words, something which Woolf has written about extensively in many of her essays.

Woolf proposed her own notion of life in "Modern Fiction," in which she describes a series of unpredictable sensations, emotions and stimuli that shape a person. These should, she believed, be recorded in the same non-linear, spontaneous manner in which they affect an individual's brain (1994: 161). Referring to what seems to be the stream-of-consciousness technique, which she describes as more suitable for encapsulating life,' Woolf again reveals her interest in a different kind of truthfulness, one which describes life by respecting its interactive, dynamic and changeable quality. The conviction that life is fluid, elusive and evanescent was reflected not only in Woolf's choice of literary devices, but also her ideas

on the fluidity of gender, which played a major part in her distinctively feminist poetics.

Fish feature in one of her much-studied feminist texts, *A Room of One's Own*, in which she makes use of a fishing narrative to criticize the exclusion of women from the world of education and literature. The narrator in the essay, visiting "Oxbridge," takes a walk around the university grounds. Musing about all sorts of issues, she makes use of images of water and fish to describe her thoughts:

Thought—to call it by a prouder name than it deserved—had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it until—you know the little tug—the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one's line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out? Alas, laid on the grass how small, how insignificant this thought of mine looked; the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating. (1977: 9)

In the continuation of the essay, she is suddenly interrupted by a Beadle, who drives her off the Oxbridge lawn, sending her "little fish" (1977: 10) into hiding. Since the university turf is not meant for women, the narrator has to leave. In the text, the reference to the fish that is driven away by the actions of the Beadle can be read with respect to Woolf's materialist ideas on literature. The Beadle embodies the institutional obstacles that reproduce gender inequality, preventing women from accessing education, which directly stifles their financial independence. The reference to the fish that is driven away by the Beadle can therefore be seen as a commentary on history written by patriarchy, which has eliminated all potential for women reaching the same level of skill in writing as men. The fish that is sent into hiding by someone who represents patriarchal authority is described as "the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water" (1977: 9). However, the little fish could have grown larger if left to grow.

In "Professions for Women," another of her well-known essays, Woolf again draws a link between writing and fish. In describing the process of writing as such, she comments on a very specific state of mind which the (female) writer has to achieve before she can start putting words to paper:

I hope I am not giving away professional secrets if I say that a novelist's chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible (...) I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours,

she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the water. She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being (1974: 239-240).

The trance-like state of unconsciousness in which the imagination of the author flourishes precedes the act of writing as such, but remains crucial for it. The physical inactivity and social isolation that it demands should be maintained if the mind is to be active and creative. What happens in this state is compared to fishing. This indicates an automatism, or an absence of control on behalf of the writer, who has no total power over writing or its outcome. Woolf then goes on to describe the obstacles to writing, which resemble those already discussed in "A Room of One's Own":

Now came the experience, the experience that I believe to be far commoner with women writers than with men. The line raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. It had sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. And then there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was roused from her dream. She was indeed in a state of the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer (1974: 240).

Woolf describes the writer as inhibited by a set of conservative gender expectations that collide with that which she, detached from her conscious self, finds she wants to say. The reference to the unconscious' and dreaming' might be understood as part of the legacy of Freud's psychoanalysis and its interest in what remains hidden from the conscious self, but what is important for the state that Woolf describes is that she equals it to a sense of detachment. Detaching from reality allows for the emergence of thoughts and ideas that will eventually be externalized in and through writing. The deep, dark lake in which the writer fishes for her material, and the large fish' that do not dwell close to the surface indicates the separation between reality and the mind of the writer who needs to forgo everything that stifles her, most importantly aspects of her gender.

The creative mind works best when the artist withdraws from reality. This can be seen in a number of Woolf's fictional artists, such as the

painter Lily Briscoe from the novel *To the Lighthouse*, who has trouble painting due to the presence of other people. The sense of detachment contributes to and is simultaneously maintained by the elimination of everything that is external, including not only literary conventions and tradition, but also aspects of one's (gendered) identity.⁴ Although she was concerned with the position of women in the world of literature, Woolf had a personal take on women's writing'. Rather than favoring a form of literature that would be based on difference, she was interested in its abolition in the process of writing. For Virginia Woolf, the writer is an androgynous creature, much like her Orlando, the main character of the eponymous novel. The writer comes into being only when she manages to give voice to her interiority in a way which is true to her, catching a string of fish' that make up her unique view of the world. In "Professions for Women," Woolf points out that she will be able to define what a woman is only after women manage to express themselves "in all the arts and professions open to human skill" (1974: 239). What a woman is cannot be defined by a set of fixed qualities – a woman becomes' in expressing herself. In this respect, Woolf anticipates Hélène Cixous and her well well-known essay on *écriture féminine* "The Laugh of the Medusa," in which she urged women to give their passions, thoughts, and ideas a voice. By reclaiming their bodies, which are constrained by patriarchal ideology embedded in the discourse of femininity', they could speak for themselves and about themselves in a special kind of "female-sexed" writing. Rather than favoring anything specific that would make a text female', Cixous calls for the liberation of the immense richness and diversity that exists in each individual woman: "Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing; their stream of phantasms is incredible" (2012: 941).

Fish Consciousness, Posthuman Potential

While animals abound in the texts of Virginia Woolf (cf. Czarnecki and Rohman 2011), explicit commentary on the cruelty and violence to which they are exposed in the human world is not that frequent. As Christina Alt explains, Woolf was acquainted with the protectionist ideas and

4 Woolf talks about abolishing gender in many of her texts. In her essay "The Patron and the Crocus" she describes an ideal reader, or the patron', and discusses the conditions in which one's writing, the crocus' of the story, would flourish best. In addition to ignoring everything that stifles the writer, such as preconceived notions of decency' ("The twentieth-century patron must be immune from shock" (1994: 214)), the writer should forget everything that is part of one's identity when it comes to gender: "And if you can forget your sex altogether... so much the better, a writer has none" (1994: 215).

movements of the period (2010: 135-147), but her interest in animal well-being often intersected with issues of gender or class. In her essay on the Plumage Bill' (cf. "The Plumage Bill" 1994), published in the *Woman's Leader* and written as a response to a text by H.G. Massingham, editor of the *Nation*, she speaks against the cruelty involved in the trade of feather, often used to adorn women's hats. However, Alt explains that Woolf does so to defend women from Massingham's accusation that they themselves are the culprit, instead of the larger, patriarchal structures which profit from plumage trade (2010: 132-133).⁵ These instances illustrate Woolf's interest in oppression on a broader socio-political scale, but her contribution to the ethical treatment of animals should be looked for elsewhere, that is, in her posthuman take on human and animal minds. Her understanding of the human mind exemplifies a challenge to the established notion of the human which, according to Timothy Clark, produces better results in contributing to our respect and understanding of animals than the more frequent critical practices based on detecting human' qualities in animals and vice versa (2011: 187).

Woolf's interest in animal psychology can best be seen in her novel *Flush*, which takes up the perspective of a spaniel, but she explores the perspectives and points of view of other animals too, such as that of the snail in "Kew Gardens." Caroline Hovanec argues that Woolf's interest in animal minds reflects the ideas of another scientific discipline that was prominent in the period, that of comparative psychology. Interested in animal minds, comparative psychology envisaged them as having a more profound experience of the world, based on sensations. Superior in their perspective of the environment, animals are understood as being rooted in their life-world by the senses, which enable them to have a more embodied experience of the world. To Virginia Woolf, literature offered means to explore animal minds, their specific animal experience, and the way it intersects with and alienates our world. She also made use of the (imagined) aspects of animal consciousness by applying it to humans, and zoo-morphing their mode of existence, which makes it seem as something porous, and unstable (2018: 176-184).

When it comes to fish, they appear in "The Mark on the Wall," in which Woolf describes a narrator's sequence of thought in trying to figure out what the mark that can be seen on the wall really is. The narrator's mind is fluid, moving from one topic to another with the help of free-indirect discourse, and at one point, the narrator suddenly despairs over what she sees as the inadequacy of the human mind: "I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from

5 For a reading that focuses on patriarchy and the violence of fishing see Shirkhani (2011).

my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts” (2008: 5). Then, in the continuation of the essay, the narrator expresses skepticism about human knowledge and its institutions, imagining a world free of them:

Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant world.... A world without professors, or specialist or house-keepers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's fingers as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs... How peaceful it is down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections. (2008: 8)

In her analysis of Woolf's essay, Hovanec argues that the consciousness of the fish, which the narrator takes up, reveals a form of non-human epistemology based on sensations. The fish is described as being one with the environment in a physical sense, touching the plants, moving through water, watching the play of light on the surface. The description of the fish as passive, their consciousness embodied, their bodies one with its medium, reflects the primitivist aspects of comparative psychology, which casts the animal experience as predominantly sensory (Hovanec 2018: 179-180). In this respect, Woolf takes on the mind of the fish echoes D.H. Lawrence's poem "Fish," in which the titular animal is described as inseparable from its environment, free of self-consciousness and intersubjectivity. In her reading of the poem, Rohman points out that Lawrence sees the animal's primal form of existence as more perfect than the human one (2008: 96), which is why the poetic speaker is envious of it: "To be a fish!// So utterly without misgiving/ To be a fish/ In the waters" (1994: 271).

For Woolf, the mode of consciousness of the fish appears as a welcome non-human alternative that reveals a different form of existence, and other possible worlds, which the human could occupy if only they got rid of the legacy of their human knowledge. In other works, she envisioned these other modes of being in the world by painting the human experience from a distinctively sensory, non-human perspective. *The Waves* for example features human subjects whose experience of the world cannot be defined as entirely human, and according to Derek Ryan, illustrates a "posthuman form of intra-action," based on "natural-cultural entanglements" that subvert the distinction between human and non-human agency (2013: 177). In *The Waves*, one of the male characters, Luis, is hiding from his friends, and experiences something that transcends the boundaries of both his body and mind:

I am alone. They have gone into the house for breakfast, and I am left standing by the wall among the flowers. It is very early, before lessons. (...) The flowers swim like fish made of light upon the dark, green waters. I hold a stalk in my hand. I am the stalk. My roots go down to the depths of the world, through earth dry with brick, and damp earth, through veins of lead and silver. I am all fibre. All tremors shake me, and the weight of the earth is pressed to my ribs. Up here my eyes are green leaves, unseeing. (1992: 340)

How he feels and what he sees seems to be modeled on plant-life, the way this is described draws on the plant's would-be sensory experience. Louis feels the dryness and dampness of the earth, and the weight of it on his chest, in an act of physical, bodily unity with its environment. His experience of the environment and his knowledge of it are defined and limited by his senses, which can be seen in the fact that he describes his eyes as "unseeing". Rather than being endowed with eyes, plants rely on other types of senses when collecting information on their surroundings. The fact that the erasure of boundaries between self and other and human and non-human happens to Louis as a child is important, as the period of childhood, situated at the beginning of the novel, is depicted as free from the restraints which come with growing up and entering institutions of education, and their tight and narrow moulds. The predominantly sensory mode of existence, imaged by comparative psychology as typical for animals, but applied by Woolf to both human and plant life, presents an alternative and complement to human experience.

Woolf's critique of human modes of consciousness for their predominantly intellectual quality and rootedness in social and political hierarchies, as well as institutions and knowledge that are closely tied to violence, establishes grounds for a new kind of understanding between humans and non-humans. As Cary Wolfe argues in his work on posthumanism, insight into animal minds and perspective contributes not only to our respect towards animals but also those who are often considered to be less-than-fully human, due to different modes of interacting with their environment. In considering the sensory apparatus of the animals, and the specificities of their experience of the world, Wolfe points out that the understanding of the animal's sensorium contributes to our redefinition of the concept, but also increases empathy and deepens bonds with those suffering from disorders such as autism (2010: 127-142). Interest in animal psychology therefore contributes to the establishment of new bonds across species, but also to a more profound understanding between humans.

Works Cited:

- Alt, Christina. *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Czarnecki, Kristin and Carrie Rohman, Eds. *Virginia Woolf and the Natural World. Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Clemson University Digital Press, 2011.
- Beer, Gillian. *Darwin's Plots. Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Elliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction. Third Edition*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Best, Steve, et al. "Introducing Critical Animal Studies." *Critical Animal Studies* (2007). Internet: <http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/Introducing-Critical-Animal-Studies-2007.pdf>.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." In *Literary Theory. An Anthology. Third Edition*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Wiley, Blackwell, 2017: 940-954.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Sheed and Ward Inc., 1958.
- Goldman, Jane. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Hovanec, Caroline. *Animal Subjects. Literature, Zoology, and British Modernism*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2012.
- Lawrence, David Herbert. *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence*. Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1994.
- Morley, Patricia A. "Fish Symbolism in Chapter Seven of *Finnegans Wake*. The Hidden Defense of Shem the Penman." *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969): 267-270.
- Norris, Margot. "The Animals of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*." *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 60, No.3 (2014): 527-543.
- Ritvo, Harriet. "On the Animal Turn." *Daedalus*, Vol. 136, No. 4 (2007): 118-122.
- Rohman, Carrie. *Stalking the Subject. Modernism and the Animal*. Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Ryan, Derek. *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory. Sex, Animal, Life*. Edinburg University Press, 2013.
- Shirkhani, Kim. "Small Language and Big Men in Virginia Woolf." *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 43, No.1 (2011): 55-74.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as Technique." *Literary Theory. An Anthology. Third Edition*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Wiley, Blackwell. 2017: 8-4.
- Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

- Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women." *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974: 235-242.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Grafton, 1977.
- Woolf, Virginia. "A Sketch of the Past." *Moments of Being*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985: 61-159.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Aesthetically Speaking, the New Aquarium..." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 3 – 1919-1924*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986: 404-405.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Blue and Green." *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Susan Dick, Harcourt Inc., 1989: 142.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Collected Novels of Virginia Woolf*. Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves. Ed. Stella McNichol, The McMillan Press, 1992.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4 – 1925-1928*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt, 1994: 157- 166.
- Woolf, Virginia. "The Patron and the Crocus." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4 – 1925-1928*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt, 1994: 212-215.
- Woolf, Virginia. "The Plumage Bill." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4 – 1925-1928*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt, 1994: 241-245.
- Woolf, Virginia. "The Sun and the Fish." *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4 – 1925-1928*. Ed. Andrew McNeillie. Harcourt, 1994: 519-525.
- Woolf, Virginia. "The Mark on the Wall." *The Mark on the Wall and Other Short Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 2008: 3-10.

Conversations with Planet Ocean: Plastic Pollution and the Common Heritage of Humankind'

Rupert J. M. Medd*

Independent Scholar and Creative Writing Tutor

Hélène Guyot

Illustrations

* tallsilverfish@googlemail.com

¹ Thank you kindly to all the conversationalists who, in varying degrees, took part in this oceanic story. A wonderful inspiration was Serpil Oppermann who sent me her publications on ecocriticism and material ecology. Serpil was the first to receive my full-length manuscript and enthusiastically invited me to Ankara, Turkey where I spent three full days in conversation with both herself and her research students. I am grateful for all her thoughts, time and friendship. This extends also to artist Hélène Guyot for her illustrations and help; Eni Buljubašić and Simon Ryle - the editors of this series; my two peer-reviewers at CCSR for their time and excellent criticisms; *Emilie Cousteau - my surf partner with a famous Grandfather*; Gizem Yilmaz, Serenella Iovino, Louise Westling, Timo Maran, Scott DeVries, Peter Jacques, Bo Söderström and Margery Masterson who all offered me direction. Through all their insights I also came to realise that the Environmental Humanities still has a long way to go before dialogues between the Natural Sciences and Humanities find mutual and fertile ground. However, Stockholm Research Centre really opened my worldly vision, and especially Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez for all her inspiring emails and views. I would also like to thank the tutors at SDSN for their wonderful course "One Planet, One Ocean"; The Canadian International Council; The Guardian Newspaper's "Green Light" round up; the editorial teams at *Resilience* and *Journeys*; Philip Hurst; Peru's late environment minister Dr Antonio Brack Egg (RIP); Jo Ruxton (BBC, "A Plastic Ocean"); Jennifer Lavers; Jan van Ewijk and Erika Träskvik (The OCEAN CLEANUP); Joanna Borczak; Matthew Brown; Ximena and Paco Maurial; Sandra Nava; Michelle Cassar (City to Sea); Anna Bunney and Sophie Tuppen (ORCA); Laurie Wilson and Andreas Krebs (International Fund for Animal Welfare); Matthew Taylor (environment correspondent for *The Guardian*) who "took" my idea of plastics being "as dangerous as climate change", as did George Monbiot in his article on the need to develop ecolinguistics; Levon Sevunts (Radio Canada International); Martin Jakobsson (Department of Geological Sciences, Stockholm University); photographer Walter Wust for his unfaltering collaborative spirit; Rich Pancost at The Cabot Institute - Centre for Climate Uncertainty for his time and support to hold a conference on marine plastic pollution. Lastly, thank you to my university friend Lina Ionta for her wonderful humour that she shared with me while we were campervan and housebound in Spain during the pandemic of 2020. Her stories kept me inspired and laughing out loud while alone with only the Atlantic Ocean for company.

Abstract

This story-based journey is an eclectic discussion on marine plastic pollution. It responds to the Environmental Humanities by bringing material history, personal experiences as well as ecotheories and natural sciences together. The conversational style, like shifting tides, speaks to anyone who wishes to develop a broader understanding on plastic pollution and its ecological consequences. While much of the scientific data has been drawn from specialist journals such as *Marine Pollution Bulletin* and *UN-Oceans*, it is the mostly shared experiences on the World Ocean that inform this study such as dialogues and stories spoken by blue activists, general audiences, local groups, fishermen, researchers, students, scientists, surfers, sailors, divers, day-trippers, ferry crews, port authorities and marine protection societies. These voices speak from a position of ecocosmopolitanism on wide-ranging issues such as indifference, world-systems, modernity, ecological literatures, a common geostory, biosemiotics, the Anthropocene as well as Planetary Boundaries. By acknowledging that the World Ocean and its qualities have come to symbolise a fluid globalising world economy, alternative themes surface such as permeability, flows, agencies, loss, renewed sense of place, cross-species entanglements, peace and sustainability. The debates edge along fairly freely yet engage with three original ideas, namely: (1) plastic pollution may impact the climate more severely than the actual circulating concepts on climate change; (2) critical levels in the environment have been reached and this should, therefore, be part of a Planetary Boundary within “Novel entities” as it adversely affects the Earth’s systems; and (3) the question of language and how new education curricula centred around ecolinguistics and a shared geostory would better inform our environmental relations and altruistic natures. As presented here, plastic pollution is at its heart a debate involving a moral reassessment and appreciation of Planet Ocean, which constitutes our greatest personal gift – the “common heritage of humankind.”

Keywords: World Ocean, Plastics, Marine Life, Marine Pollution, Environment, Modernity, Anthropocene, Biosemiotics, Consumerism, Loss, Imagination, Ecology.

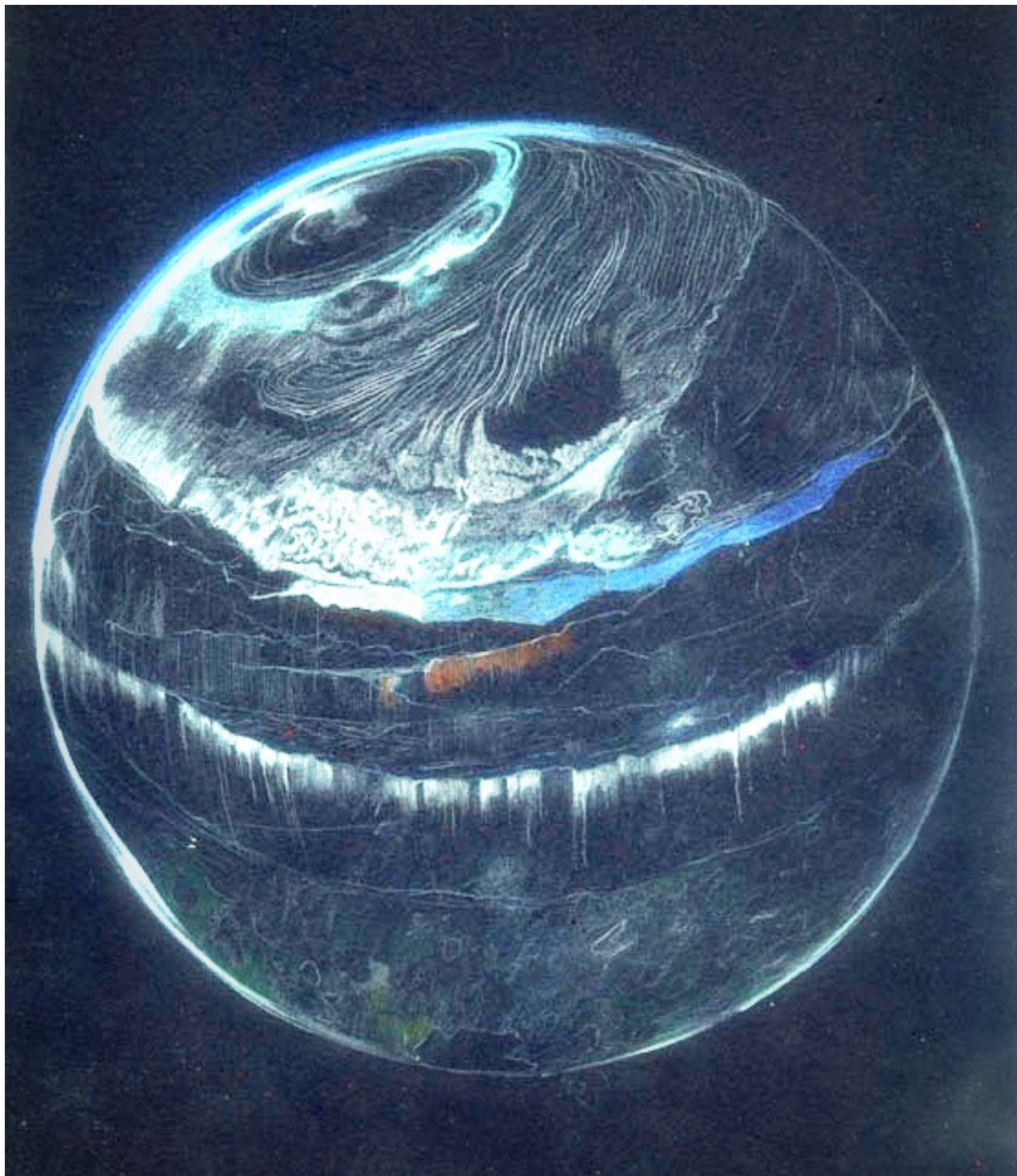


Image 1

Blue Beyond All Imaginations. Illustration by H  l  ne Guyot,
www.firststrainofsummer.com



Image 2-A

A sign on an empty beach on the magical Canary Island, El Hierro, reads:
 “We do not ask you to clean the beach. We only ask that you do not dirty it.”²

SEEN FROM ABOVE

... To preserve our peace of mind, animals die
 more shallowly: they aren't deceased, they're dead.
 They leave behind, we'd like to think, less feeling and less world,
 departing, we suppose, from a stage less tragic.
 Their meek souls never haunt us in the dark,
 they know their place.
 they show respect.

And so the dead beetle on the path
 lies unmourned and shining in the sun.
 One glance at it will do for their meditation -
 clearly nothing much has happened to it.
 Important matters are reserved for us,
 for our life and our death, a death
 that always claims the right of way.

— Wistawa Szymborska, *Nothing Twice. Selected Poems*, p. 189.

2 Unless indicated otherwise, all photography has been taken by the author. Cameras used for the images in this essay: Nikon F 35mm film; Mamiya RB67 120mm medium-format film; Leica M240 with Summicron lens; GoPro Hero 4 for underwater images.

Introduction, One World Ocean

In a recent essay by Stacy Alaimo titled “Oceanic origins, Plastic Activism, and the New Materialism at Sea,” the dire condition of the World Ocean is given to us like this:

Climate change. Ocean acidification. Dead zones. Oil “spills.” Industrial fishing, overfishing, trawling, long lines, shark finning. Bycatch, bykill. Ghost nets. Deep-sea mining. Habitat destruction. Dumping. Radioactive, plastic, and micro-plastic pollution. Ecosystem collapse. Extinction (186).

On “World Oceans Day 2018” Erik Solheim, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme stated “let there be no doubt: we are on edge of a plastic calamity.” His projections show that global plastic production will “skyrocket in the next 10-15 years. This year alone, manufacturers will produce an estimated 360m tonnes. With a booming population driving demand, production is expected to reach 500m by 2025 and a staggering 619m tonnes by 2030. So the next time you see scenes of plastic choking a river or burying a beach, consider double that impact in just over 10 years” (2018).

Plastic is an associate of monumental modernity and “man’s surrogate.” This is because we can easily imagine plastic as “a horrific extension of ourselves, a discarded and disavowed entity that bobs along, wreaking incalculable harm” (Alaimo 2014: 200). During the 1940s the total production reached 175,000 tonnes; in 2016 this quantity had leapt up to 300 million tonnes; by 2050, and according to the United Nations, the total global production will reach 34 billion tonnes with 250 million tonnes of mismanaged plastics in the environment. If we understand that in 2015 a mere nine per cent was recycled with 50-100 million tonnes already circulating in the World Ocean, it seems probable that these predictions for mismanaged waste are hugely misleading. It will be worse than the United Nations’ estimates; let us already consider the billions of plastic test kits used in response to a global health pandemic. In 2020, the new tides of the Plastic Pandemic are already depositing colossal amounts of facemasks, gloves and baby wipes along the shores of the world’s beaches.

The first literary reference of the problem came to my attention while reading Norwegian explorer-ethnologist, Thor Heyerdahl’s (1914-2002) account of his journey from the west coast of Africa to the Americas on a papyrus reed boat. This incredible journey – that mixed pure adventure with

anthropological enquiry – was captured in his book, *The Ra Expeditions*. In an entry in 1970, and while on the open Atlantic, Heyerdahl noted:

Next day we were sailing in slack winds through an ocean where the clear water on the surface was full of drifting black lumps of asphalt, seemingly never-ending. Three days later we awoke to find the sea about us so filthy that we could not put our toothbrushes in it... The Atlantic was no longer blue but grey-green and opaque, covered with clots of oil... Plastic bottles floated among the waste... It became clear to all of us that mankind really was in the process of polluting its most vital well-spring, our planet's indispensable filtration plant, the ocean... (234).

They had been the first to encounter and write about a plastic ocean gyre. The scientific research into marine pollution has burgeoned since then, and especially over the last two decades. This is because the advent of plastic as a major consumerist product and persistent organic pollutant (POPs) is also recent. Now that plastic pollution is understood to be highly invasive, is being ingested by marine biota while also being transferred across the entire ocean's trophic levels, it has become a priority to understand its effects further.

Under the United Nation's University programme, I had all the figures of Planetary Boundaries, changes in terrestrial ecosystems, mega dam constructions, glacial melt and collapse, mangrove and forest reductions, habitat losses for wildlife, yearly agricultural yields, algae blooms, energy and water consumption, pesticide and fertiliser usage, depleted ocean stocks, fishing subsidies, waste measured in billions of tonnes and so much more hurled at me. The figures are titanic. As I step back now from a laptop screen and ask myself what 300 million tonnes, or even 1 million tonnes, or 5 trillion pieces of plastic look like, it all seems completely beyond my imagination and impossible to visualise.

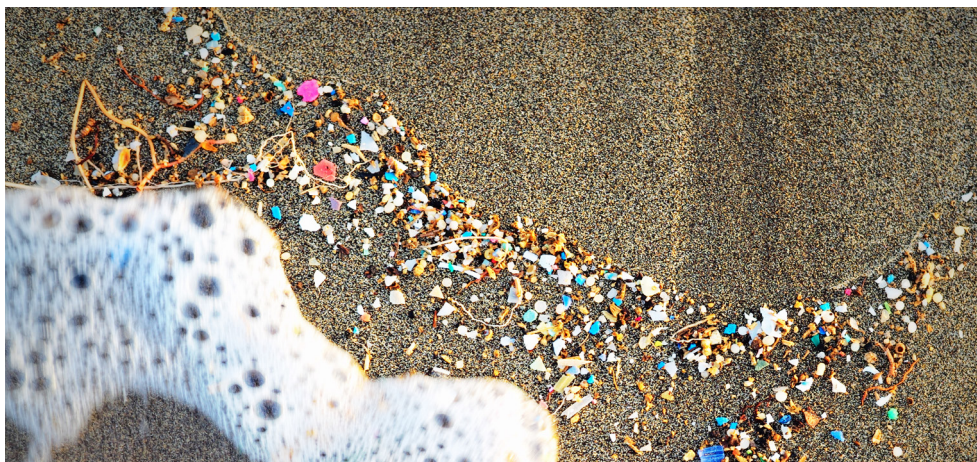


Image 2-B

The waves wash up; they deliver uncountable quantities of differing plastics. As seen, these are particles that have already spent many years, even decades at sea, being worked by the elemental forces and broken down into ever-increasingly smaller fragments. This is the point at which they truly become an environmental hazard for all marine life. Photograph taken by the author.

Our planet is fundamentally one World Ocean and its health has formed our past, present and will also determine our futures. On the beds of the ocean our planet is breathing and pushing out the actual minerals fundamental to all life through vents known as “smokers.” Plastic deposits throughout such depths confirm how our modern lifestyles are centred around hyperconsumerism and an unwillingness to dispose effectively of our by-products. This pervasive reality amounts to humankind’s inferior ecological condition and inability to engage with non-human life by allowing such encounters in any equal and natural form. Today, and especially heightened by the threat of pandemics, everyone knows that no magic forces will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves and, therefore, a decentring of humankind has been triggered by our planet’s responses to our behaviour.

In Pieter Vermeulen’s thinking on today, the contradictory nature of life is often “theorized under the rubric of the Anthropocene.³ From this perspective, human life does not stop being a biological, psychological, and linguistic phenomenon, but it now also plays in the same league as, say, heat waves, volcanoes, and Antarctic ice” (185). We are awakening to the realisation that all previous readings of human life and histories have to be reimagined and told differently by weaving more non-human life in to the emerging narratives. This includes stories that engage with the effects of our waste and destructive actions such as Neal Layton’s recently published book for children, titled *A Planet Full of Plastic and How You Can Help*. The rapid rates of biodiversity extinctions propel a growing sense of collaborative survival and this encompasses a world-view of “humans as a species, a species dependent on other species for its own existence, a part of the general history of life” (Chakrabarty 219).

3 Experts have formally classified the present period as a distinct époque in planetary history, this neologism referring to an “Age of the Human.” Drawing on Paul Crutzen’s and Eugene Stoermer’s hypothesis in 2000, human activities and behaviour have shifted Planet Ocean from beyond the safe boundaries of the Holocene period of the last 13,000 years and into the Anthropocene. A date that is frequently passed around for this event is 1750 and thereafter. See www.anthropocene.info. The author’s personal position is that Earth’s climate stability has been massively disrupted since 1952, and thereafter, following the thermonuclear testing of hydrogen and nuclear bombs in the South Pacific region by the USA, UK and France.

A wider world-view that speaks of interdependencies, while bringing language to the foreground in such a way that it can be refashioned into an ecolinguistics for the future, concerns biosemiotics. This would allow humans to develop altruisms to actually feel Nature, sense landscapes in terms of their geological and naturalcultural histories. A degree of biosemiotics, according to Wendy Wheeler “does away with the idea that nature and culture are very different, and even opposed, phenomena. Biosemiotics suggests, rather, that culture is emergent in nature. It puts us back in nature” (144) and, therefore, back into a natural and cultural worldly state. This brings to mind the ethos of travel writers and naturalists such as Alexander von Humboldt, Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Nan Shepherd and Robert Macfarlane and so on.

Effectively what is being raised here is the notion of giving deep meaning to a space in order to transform it in to a place with culture, memory and homely imaginaries – all of which requires language as we forge meanings from and set roots across our respective environments. But natural and cultural worlds also have specific rhythms and take time to experiment, adapt, harmonise, interconnect and so on. The Earth’s motions and emotions – processes referred to as agency in Bruno Latour’s thinking – are strongly tied to human and non-human languages, their cultural backgrounds and Earthly connections as the essential phenomena, including ancestral voices. It concerns being grounded to the Earth and sharing a common lively story – a geostory (Latour’s term) – as opposed to being reduced to the rationality of bare bones and facts. As humans we become more permeable, receptive and linked to a world that has forever been brimming with narrations of every kind since the beginnings.

In Latour’s assessment of agency and the Anthropocene, he writes “Neither the extension of politics to nature, nor of nature to politics, helps in any way to move out of the impasse in which modernism has dug itself so deeply... The point of living in the epoch of the Anthropocene is that all agents share the same shape-changing destiny, a destiny that cannot be followed, documented, told, and represented by using any of the older traits associated with subjectivity or objectivity” (15). Latour stresses the terrifying edge of all our predicaments. In short, we are navigating unknown forces now and unable to apply with any certainties the preconceived knowledges that have been drummed into and across civilisations over millennia. A shape-changing destiny that *cannot be followed, documented, told, and represented by using any of the older traits associated with subjectivity or objectivity*.

Incidentally, in Michel Serres’s book, *The Natural Contract*, there is a strange form of nostalgia for the older traits – for those days when it was still possible to dream of making a contract with Nature, as the

Enlightenment thinkers had envisaged during previous centuries and then the deep ecologists from the 1960s. For sure, the idea of such a contract is not unnatural, “but,” Latour writes “because in a quarter of a century, things have become so urgent and violent that the somewhat pacific project of a contract among parties seems unreachable. War is infinitely more likely than contract” (5).

Using a historical lens, since industrialisation took a firm iron-grip hold (1750 onwards) as well as the powerful drivers of capitalism (1450, the Age of Capital and its new technologies and *technics*, being a “repertoire of science, power and machinery – that aimed at...appropriating new Cheap Natures” (Moore 2017: 610), humankind is now being reassessed as a *geological agent*. Humans and their economies are, therefore, recognised as having stressed the planet beyond its natural carrying capacity. The Planetary Boundaries are being rapidly transgressed and no longer offering “safe operating spaces” for future life. Whereas the massive extension of the conditions for life, Earth as a self-cleansing and stable mechanism, healthy and thriving ecological webs and so on, have all been the hallmarks of the Holocene. Not so for the Anthropocene, as Latour has highlighted.

Interestingly, Dipesh Chakrabarty in his influential essay “The Climate of History,” aligns the “mansion of modern freedoms” that came under the auspices of the Enlightenment with the ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel usage. He poignantly asks “So, has the period from 1750 to now been one of freedom or that of the Anthropocene? Is the Anthropocene a critique of the narratives of freedom?” (210). This is a poignant comment as all of us reading this have interacted with the structural fabric of modernity to differing degrees. As much as it concerns freedoms it is also highly selective about what and who to include, being controlled through operational powers from above. Thus, in order to make the transitions towards sustainability truly viable as well as give credence to ecoactivism, we also have to be certain that this movement's new voices for change are *new* and that they will not repeat “the errors that undermined modernity's positive emancipatory aims and led to such ecological destruction” (Zimmerman 7). The scale of climate action now needed will certainly end the freedoms and excesses of Western societies by appealing for a universal sacrifice as “what many people want may not be immediately compatible with what is ecologically sustainable” (Nadir 37). If we are going to be able to express our new condition that will emerge from our sacrifices, then having a biosemiotic will be a necessary linguistic and emotional set of skills.



Image 3

Meaning and identity for humanity because we are a part of this cosmically unique life system and every single aspect of its interactions. Medium format photograph taken by the author. Location, Tarifa's beaches, Cadiz, Andalucia, Spain.

Indifference

"What I find the most difficult is the fact that we are basically today in a dynamic of denying what I call our collective commitment, or our ideals of solidarity, worldwide."

— Joanne Liu, International President of Médecins Sans Frontière.

The huge quantities of plastics now circulating in the World Ocean have come to signify a "globalisation of indifference." This cultural amnesia symbolises the hyperconsumerism of the global economy, the unforgiving exploitation of resources, other humans and sentient animals. This

indifference that prevents us from proactive environmental action and living within a planetary state of peace has its origins particularly in the processes of modernity. Its theory, therefore, is useful in deepening the discussion on human cultural attitudes toward the natural world.

Colossal amounts of plastic waste have been located throughout the World Ocean and their harmful effects across the entire chain of marine life are well studied and known. Even so, the scale of plastic production is increasing, while an entirely safe means of its disposal is impossible due to its toxic essence and sheer unmanageable quantities. Governments have been far too slow to bring in stricter measures to control its uses and production rates. As our planet is 71 percent ocean (and as glaciers collapse and meltwater runs off then this figure is rising), we are failing to tackle this issue with the severity it deserves. The resulting outcome has created indifference, a philosophical space of emotional neutrality. Let us be clear, without doubt a deteriorating planet propelled by biodiversity extinctions and pollution will equate to a total breakdown in security and an erasure of deep meaning and identity for humanity.

Loss can be viewed as an “event” as its moment comes unannounced – even if expected. It can become “an individual and collective problem when it involves basic resources, relationships, values, or meaning systems necessary for psychological strength and well-being” (Lear cited in Kirmayer 310). Pope Francis, aka the “Climate Pope” celebrates earthly contemplation and has tuned his ear and mind’s eye toward Nature. His private philosophical explorations are no longer limited to a *conversation in the cathedral* (as per the title of Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel), but a steadily intensifying message that these local-global struggles are leading to nothing other than that of saving the planet in its entirety as it is already over-saturated with consumerist demands, inflicted by mass poverty and well-beyond its carrying capacity.

Pope Francis declared that we are “At the limits of suicide... The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” In 2016 for the XLIX World Day of Peace he said, “But in our day, indifference has...taken on broader dimensions, producing a certain globalization of indifference.” The French anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1970s wrote “The first thing we see as we travel round the world is our own filth, thrown into the face of mankind” (43-44). Peace, the Earth, our home, living on the edge, filth and indifference are all bound uncomfortably together here. Our lives and those of our companion species and planet are being suffocated by the plastic packaging and oil economies that define our wasteful industrialisation, individualism and consumption. The huge production and industry chain behind plastics – which are increasingly the lifelines for oil companies and all their directors and shareholders – continue to spill out this unmanageable toxic product

into the global markets. Worryingly, we continue to engage ever deeper with these primary drivers.

The globalisation of indifference is partly the result of the inadequacy of words and equally of our (Western) framing of ways by which to see and imagine our amazingly diverse planet amid the bigness of it all. Everything considered, how hard ought this to be when we reflect that our Blue Planet is utterly alone “out there”? It is but a miniscule speck of life-affirming energies, an isolated blue beauty, in the enveloping cosmic darkness, lit by the sparkling of distant stars.

I have always been fascinated by what can now be termed as planetary distancing and questions such as “why are we here”? When at sea and as night falls, the immensity of it all provokes such conversations that go beyond an earth-bound imagination. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote that the planet “is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it” (338). The sense of belonging raised here for humankind is ephemeral; this organised spatial system denies us roots in deep time. As mere inhabitants, we are made to understand that we are recent participants, somewhat homeless, and stepping gingerly on timeless shores. *As an aviator, the hugely-loved French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry came to similar conclusions as he star-gazed from his cockpit, believing that we are still denied a homeland (see on).*

Serres is another philosopher who contemplated the lives of planets and their interplanetary relations – what he termed as laws, contracts and points of view. His vision that panned steadily outwards and beyond is one that is relevant to the collateral damage being inflicted on our planet and the wider system: “*The great planetary bodies grasp or comprehend one another and are bound by law, to be sure, but a law that is the spitting image of a contract...* The slightest movement of any one planet has immediate effects on all the others, whose reactions act unhindered on the first. Through this set of constraints, the Earth *comprehends*, in a way, the *point of view* of the other bodies since it must reverberate with the events of the whole system” (cited in Latour 6).

In this light, under these hostile conditions of the Anthropocene, the Earth is quaking anew and like ourselves, in total fear of any deviation caused to the surest of equilibria. I once heard that Inuit people of the Canadian Arctic acknowledge Time as geography without landscape. It is indeed fascinating material to imagine planetary *contracts, points of view* and geographies without landscapes. Their interactions comprise a basic acknowledgement that states of equilibrium must be maintained – what could be considered as planetary agency peace and ethics.

Many voices throughout this project have acknowledged the lack of a wider world-view and the limitations of our tellurian language mean that we are failing to convey the signs that denote the true scale

of today's environmental crises. This shortfall in our environmental imaginaries questions whether we are even interpreting them realistically. Additionally, in terms of acknowledging our current perspective on events, the global hegemony of the English language gives further cause for concern. This led Ursula Heise to note how "monolingualism is currently one of ecocriticism's most serious limitations. The environmentalist ambition is to think globally but doing so in terms of a single language is inconceivable – even and especially when that language is a hegemonic one" (513).

Hegemony, and its innate qualities such as control of economy, subjectivity, language and so forth, became a fairly frequent conversational topic. It poses the supposedly culturally impossible question as to how alternative ways of being in the world can be made possible? The marvels, order and harmony that so many of us in the West have enjoyed until today have been brought about by modernity: processes that have travelled the globe in line with Western social and economic domination. When Europeans presented as fact "the notion of being the centre of world history" this equally became an essential trait of the modern world. Professor of ethics, Enrique Dussel explains how this "centrality is achieved from various perspectives: state, military, economic, philosophical. In other words, there was not a world history in an empirical sense before 1492 (as this date was the beginning of the "world-system" (470-471). Modernity emerges from an entangled history of "unfinished paths, dialogues, negotiations that, in spite of the multi-directional pulls, like an anchor, are forever reaching directly for the bed of struggles and encounter formed through contact" (Emberley 748).

The true origins of modernity and globalisation stem from the moment when the totality of a male Eurocentric capital-driven world emerged through processes known collectively as coloniality, having four leading components: (1) the control of economy; (2) authority; (3) gender and sexuality; (4) the control of subjectivity and knowledge within a Eurocentric framework.⁴ However, Chakrabarty also notes that global climate change does unsettle this postcolonial premise that capitalism and globalisation are driven by a distinction between natural history and human history. He wisely reminds us that "we still need the hermeneutics of suspicion that postcolonialism offers but that we must not conclude that our human experience and our human responsibilities can be reduced to the self-understanding that historical knowledge produces for us" (cited in Deloughrey and Handley 29).

As our minds cumulatively work within the discipline of history (I

4 For further reading on coloniality see Mignolo 2007; Moraña, Dussel and Jáuregui, eds. 2008; Quijano 2008 and 2007; Wallerstein 1987.

am who I am today and 12,000 years of history), we resist any separation of the history of empire from ecocritical reflections. This is important when historicising Nature due to their unequal influences on each other. In short, our planet's life-affirming environments have stood as victims and witnesses to these processes of coloniality. Modernity, and especially monumental modernity such as mega dam constructions and hydrogen/nuclear bomb testing, are the ultimate displays of this. Their dominant features and effects are hugely responsible for humanity's poor cultural attitudes toward the natural world, including our failure to make the rapid transition toward sustainable lifestyles as well as act with urgency on critical climate chaos. Ultimately, it shows Nature to be "the other," a subordinate alongside colonial and third world Natures, women's and brown bodies and alternative spiritualities. Thus, in Arturo Escobar's words, this environmental crisis demonstrates how "modernity has failed to enable sustainable worlds" and, in doing so, also failed to articulate the histories of Nature and people save through the "capitalization of nature and labor" (2007: 197; see also Plumwood 2003 and most of her other publications).

This predominantly colonial mindset constructed continuous dichotomies within its framework of global power. Relevant examples are nature/culture; European modern peoples/non-Europeans as primitive peoples living in Nature; capitalism/non-monetary exchange and so on. Martin Lukacs describes how such a world-system has produced a disposable collective narrative – like our plastic consumption – and one that demonstrates our willingness to rip our planet's processes apart, while making the transition toward sustainable futures appear unlikely by ensuring this agenda is politically unrealistic and culturally unthinkable. He writes, "Its celebration of competitive self-interest and hyper-individualism, its stigmatization of compassion and solidarity, has frayed our collective bonds. It has spread, like an insidious anti-social toxin... a culture telling us to think of ourselves as consumers instead of citizens, as self-reliant instead of interdependent..." (2017).

A total rethinking of the economy with a promotion for Nature from the lowly ranks to pole position has been on the horizon for many decades. It is a huge task as what is being demanded of us now is to put distance between the Eurocentric ordering and rationalisation of the planet over the last 500 years and to open up new dialogues and considerations – inclusive of local and marginalised voices. In one sense, critical climate chaos is already dismantling the constructed sense of predictability and giving rise to unknowns. It is remystifying the natural forces as well as seeking to bring the sciences and humanities to the foreground in a participatory universe of questioning, experimentation and investigation. We may well ask "how can we be content with our lives knowing what

we have done and continue to do to the very organism that sustains all life – our Planet Ocean?” This living entity provides us with the absolute basics from every breath of air we take to every drop of water that touches our lips, and to every mouthful of food we eat: it is our universe. David Abram puts things like this, “What is climate change if not a consequence of failing to respect or even to notice the elemental medium in which we are immersed?” (cited in Oppermann 2016: 274).

Clearly, the historic inscription of metaphor and the framing of meaning onto spaces – such as the conquest of the Americas and birth of modernity – were decided by earlier voices who were not visionaries and mystics; they could not have foreseen a world infected by an “industrial/consumer orientated culture that is now being globalized, and that is overshooting the sustainable capacity of the natural systems” (Bowers 4-5). When we consider the mass presence of plastics (Novel entities) in the World Ocean, for sure this is not a Western phenomenon as China, other Asian countries and Turkey are equally some of the leading polluters today. However, the globalised model of capitalistic growth based on hyperconsumerism, marketisation and militarisation – imperial globality – brings every nation into the field of capitalised operations whether a major driver, or actively present on the sidelines. It does not engage with any world-view centred around differences, nature’s rhythms, diverse ecologies and geographies, and the realisation that other worlds and knowledges are possible (see Escobar 2004 and 2007).

When we consider that in 2015, 6.3 billion metric tonnes of plastic waste were amassed. Then, a mere nine per cent was recycled; twelve per cent was incinerated; and the rest was tossed nonchalantly into the environment – namely Nature itself like landfills, rivers, fields, roadsides, beaches, oceanfills and, finally, the World Ocean. The plastic waste comprises mostly packaging and single use items that will never be given a second thought, but have every possibility of reappearing as microscopic particles that flow through our taps as drinking water.⁵

X

⁵ Figures from “Plastics: a villainous material? Or a victim of its own success?” *Science Weekly*. A 33-minute podcast giving a brief history of plastics, the consequences of their circulation in the environment, and a discussion on solutions such as the bio-based economy. Presented by Nicola Davis. Accessible here: <https://audio.guim.co.uk/2017/08/28-48000gnl.sci.170830.ms.plastics.mp3>.



Image 4

A mythical ocean-human flying fish bears marine pollution in its watery wake.

Microplastics seem set to trigger the biggest future distress ever by the very fact that they have entered all food, earth, air, glacial and water cycles. Microplastics already are circulating throughout the entire oceanic trophic levels, being consumed by humans and, therefore, part of our biology and reproductive systems. A perfect all-invasive transport vector for viruses and alien bodies.

Illustration by H  l  ne Guyot, www.firsttrainofsummer.com

None of us reading this can make the semiotic connections here that are necessary when both coming to terms with and translating this information into reality. We may well ask ourselves what 6.3 billion tonnes truly equates to, but it is unfeasible. Thus, lacking a workable sense of the scale of events, we then reduce this massive information into a small window onto our lives. We can begin to look at our permeable human selves and from there we can nurture a world-view.

Taking the World Ocean as the example, the international legal document *Mare Liberum* (Freedom of the seas), written by Hugo Grotius in 1609 took as its central assumption the notion that the availability of the ocean, its ecologies, services and all resources were *inexhaustible*. Grotius's claims were contested – and historians revealed that aspects of the document were self-serving on behalf of his own Dutch patrons – but it stood. In 1967, Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918-2002), the German/Canadian

political scientist and one of the founding members of the Club of Rome and the first Convention of the Sea (1970), challenged and revaluated the premise of this colonial international legal doctrine. Borgese wrote that “every human...is a good bit of planet ocean: 71 per cent of his substance consists of salty water, just as 71 per cent of the earth is covered by the oceans” (cited in Deloughrey 2017: 34). Also in 1970 the aforementioned explorer, Heyerdahl began asking the readers of his travel books on oceanic adventures (see on), “Did we still cling to the medieval idea that the sea was infinite?” (235).

Thus, in 1967, Borgese advocated for a provision within the Law of the Sea that the high sea was to be claimed as the “common heritage of humankind.” This implies that foreign policy is interconnected and that the decision-making on the governance and exploitation of the sea is part of collective processes. Between 1958 and 1982 the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) met and actually determined how to manage such freedoms.⁶ Its successes marked a major leap forward in ocean governance and cooperation, overcoming the immense obstacles when bringing the international community together (as did the fairly recent Paris Agreement, PA 2015, and its framework convention on climate change⁷

Many decades have passed since the convention was initiated. The need now for a more ambitious framework to stop species losses and restore biodiversity is urgently required. In short, UNCLOS lays out the duties and rights of coastal states, their two hundred nautical miles of exclusive economic zones (EEZ), criminal jurisdiction, straits and international navigation and general provisions among many other articles. Remember that more than 70 per cent of our planet is Ocean and of that, 58 per cent remains outside of any national jurisdiction. These oceanscapes are known as the “high seas” and exist beyond the two hundred nautical mile limits (EEZ) accredited to individual coastal countries, while also marking the boundaries of their national waters. Outside of these limits, on the high seas, there are simply no effective protections in place for creatures, plants, submerged reefs or habitats. This translates as more than 40 per cent of the entire planet’s surface has no safeguarding in place for its wildlife or their habitat waters. The World Ocean is also where 97 per cent of the Earth’s water circulates.

Peace and, therefore, sustainability were at the centre of Borgese’s

6 Convention available at http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

7 Paris, COP 21, 30 November-11 December 2015. Then, in November 2018, nearly 200 countries met again to begin implementing a new strategic plan for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with the health of the World Ocean considered a priority.

thinking when she argued that the World Ocean is totally susceptible to human activities. This change in fate has now been widely understood as being the case for at least sixty years. The misconceptions and silences that had been blindly cemented in older languages were uprooted by modern science, confirming that its fisheries are collapsing, coral reefs stressing, bleaching and dying, temperatures rising, and that acidification and unprecedented, unhealthy and unforgiveable levels of toxic wastes are prevalent throughout the water column. By the 21st century the political scientist, Peter Jacques was expressing the severity of this scenario, writing “The ocean system is deteriorating and structural elements of the ocean are changing globally. This is not just a loss of security, but a loss of meaning and identity for humanity because we are a part of the ocean - we depend on and gain life from the ocean... ” (2006: 165).

This uncharted yet inspirational level of interconnectedness brought about by UNCLOS ought to have been the dawning of a superior consciousness – one where “place” is firmly located at home within a local community, but equally one that celebrates an extension of ideas and a world-view. The basis of the World Ocean becoming the *common heritage of humankind* is so honourable, so uplifting and exemplifies this thinking. To actually slow down and reflect on this fact that the beauty of the World Ocean, including its mysterious body, life, forms, shapes, colours, poetry is all something that legally is a part of me/us and something to call our own, merits immense celebration. This, alongside the notion that sustainability can only exist with ubiquitous peace, is all what Borgese taught us.

Semiotic Widening: Thoughts on the Refashioning of Future Language into an Ecolinguistic

In New York City in 1941, the aforementioned author-pilot, Saint-Exupéry was confused and concerned by the direction the world was taking. He determined to bring all the wildlife and landscapes that he had encountered while flying his airmail plane over North Africa back to life on the page. Buying a box of watercolour paints he started a story about a little boy and his conversations with Earth and its inhabitants, being an unfamiliar planet he was visiting.

Said the fox, “But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world ...”
 “I am beginning to understand,” said the little prince. (2014: 89)

The bonds were so imaginative and magical that even long after the little prince had departed the fox continued to listen to his voice on the wind,

brushing over the wheat fields. The fox, as imagined by *Saint-Exupéry*, was connected to the biosphere⁸ through a shared dialogue with his human visitor. An ecological imaginary was brought to the forefront. This little prince was a time traveller and his inter-planetary journey stated as much about him as the strange and busy Blue Planet he was to encounter.

I regularly swim with turtles (*Caretta caretta*) and free them from plastics, ropes and fishing lines. My kindred vision, aside from forming an ecological consciousness, recognises that we share the World Ocean's entire history through our salty bloods, tears, sweat, movements through the water and need to surface for air. But I stop short of possessing the turtle's acute sense of navigation. I imagine their rhythms and paths over thousands of kilometres and remain amazed as to how they know exactly where they are headed within the blue body of this powerful and living planet. Of course, I read from the seabed, its features like depressions and even where certain shoals of fish species frequent, but I am very aware of my huge limitations in my readings between signs, scripts, languages and the deeper sounds of the world below. However, this does raise the potential for a biosemiotic and how materials and matter are interconnected "here" via such relationships, and none more so than the World Ocean, described by Stefan Helmreich as the "Worldwide Web of Genes" (50). Suddenly, in this light, the priority given over to digital pathways – being endlessly beamed between the stratosphere, outer space and Earth via satellites – is reversed and directed inward toward Earth, ourselves, our true origins, our genomes and the interior body mass of our Planet Ocean.

Human permeability is a further extension to this ecological condition. For example, in Alaimo's reckonings on our oceanic origins, she writes how having a "more potent marine trans-corporeality would link humans to global networks of consumption, waste, and pollution, capturing the strange agencies of the ordinary stuff of our lives" (188). This requirement of a specifically eco-tuneful and meaningful language – one as true, self-cleansing, absorbent and susceptible to the surrounding environment – can also be found in Arundhati Roy's poignant words. By describing how "Language is the skin of my thought" (in Nixon 76), Roy inspires us to reflect on how we might also fuse our words to our environments, hence our bodies, ancestors, fellow species and elements of

8 This is precisely everything that the scientific community are asking humankind to now achieve - "to reconnect to the biosphere" – as part of our individual and collective ecological responsibility. See, Folke and Hall 2014; Stockholm Resilience Centre. "Biosphere" is defined as the sphere of all land, water and air on the planet in which all life thrives; it is the very ecological system that integrates all living beings and their interdependencies.

the greater biosphere. This would certainly render us “Earthbound” in the sense that Latour employs the prefix “geo” in geostory. It is not intended as a return to Nature “but for the return of object and subject back to the ground” (16). It would make us, as individuals, completely aware of our daily actions and, importantly, of the afterlives of what we consume and put back into the environment.

Being raised here then is the notion that environmental imaginaries, corporeality and conversations with our planet are crucial as stories do matter. Leading ecocritic and blue humanities philosopher, Serpil Oppermann explained that this is “because they communicate a message of revaluing what we may lose, generating the creativity to imagine new accountabilities, more sustainable solutions, and also ethical responses. Telling stories are in fact, to quote Thom van Dooren’s wise words, as an act of response, an effort to craft better worlds with others.”⁹ In our collective efforts to foster a world-view and learn to share more, we are only too aware of how the “shrinking of knowledge to expertise and the centralising of power – not least the power to tell – renders us unsighted” (Nixon 77). This blindness leaves us struggling to see beyond the narrative monopoly generated by globalisation. Hence, Lukacs’ aforementioned critique of the world-system as one that dictates culture and erodes path-building towards sustainable lives seems totally valid. It all has to actually be *culturally* imaginable if we are to make an alternative world beyond consumerism and neoliberalism possible. After all, survival itself is never about our existences being scaled back to the bare bones of life, but more of a state of anxiety caused by the strain present between a life of absolute necessity and the question of how to cope from the task of continuing with life itself.



Image 5



Image 6

9 Private email correspondence written by Serpil Oppermann. Received 19 September 2017.

A balloon says “Happy Birthday” and has travelled through underground wastewater systems where it now meets the Mediterranean Sea in Kaş, Turkey – a habitat of the loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*). These turtles mistake balloons for jellyfish, which are their staple diet. In Kaş, this turtle is the town’s major marine attraction, being promoted by the local council, diving schools, the free diving world championship events, tourist agencies, boat touring companies, hotels and marina. If children could better sense the suffering such frivolous items cause marine life, they surely would want alternative decorations for their special day. Photos taken by the author.

Thus, language becomes a tool of possibility as well as a process that signifies a greater eco-achievement. The process requires not only a dialogue between ourselves and our worldly ethics, but equally responsive actions as means through which to craft better worlds with humans, non-humans and our very planet. Clearly though, concepts centred around the Anthropocene and the very words “climate change” need challenging also. What is occurring today across the world is so much more than a new geological époque and a mere change in climate. Lukacs reminds us that “the counsel we hear on climate change could scarcely be more out of sync with the nature of the crisis...These pervasive exhortations to individual action – in corporate ads, school textbooks, and the campaigns of mainstream environmental groups, especially in the west – seem as natural as the air we breathe. But we could hardly be worse-served” (2017).

Thus, the New Human Condition being put forward is fundamentally ecological, permeable and pacific (see Holm *et al.* 2015). It needs to go beyond modernity’s tireless history of violence and exploitation that subordinates Nature and alternative peoples as the Other. “To grasp the world of today,” wrote Saint Exupéry in 1939 “we are using a language made for the world of yesterday... truly we are emigrants, still to find our homeland” (2000: 30-31). A universal sense of homeland promotes a collective and individual responsibility towards planetary biosphere stewardship, while respecting diversity (bio and climatic) as well as the varying timescales of different communities as they learn from and adapt to their specific geological foundations. Colonialism’s premise, therefore, that one model fits all was entirely erroneous from the outset. The message is now one of collaboration, returning to conversations, stories and shared knowledges between community spokespeople, academics, policymakers, producers, educators, the wider public and so forth. Perhaps this language of hyper, mega – and even global – is disconcerting as people are inspired by the very things that they can control, like dreams that are actually within their reaches.

“Storytelling,” writes Latour “is not just a property of human language, but one of the many consequences of being thrown in a world that is, by itself, fully articulated and active” (13). I find this insight absolutely

fascinating – our world, its geological wonders and time, inhabitants, ocean and landscapes are all continually narrating in a world of constant meanings and communications. What does an articulate world mean? And what does it demand from us in consideration of the New Human Condition? Equally, Edward Said perceived postcolonial literature as ecological – as being “a process of recovery, identification, and historical mythmaking enabled by the land” (in Deloughrey and Handley 3-4). Thus, postcolonial writers – who are, in my view, at the forefront of experimenting with semiotic widening – have embarked on a literature of healing (involving memory) to recover earlier social and environmental imaginaries and relations through a long process of decolonisation (see Medd 2015a).

Fluid watery-word poet Alice Oswald rejects landscapes that have been linguistically domesticated over many centuries, especially the Romantic gaze that in postcolonial studies became a reference for the male ego and its “all seeing I.” This gaze was to function as a means of conquering landscapes by reducing their savagery to tamed wildernesses, and by inscribing metaphors and meanings onto newly acquired lands. “I’m continually smashing down the nostalgia in my head,” Oswald says, “and I am trying to enquire of the landscape itself what it feels about itself rather than bringing in advertising skills. There’s a whole range of words that people use about landscape. Pastoral? Idyll? I can’t stand them” (2010). This form of biomythic enquiry is certainly a profound altruistic skill that surely has echoes of pagan sensibilities towards the environment. It interweaves emotions of geoempathy, biosemiotic perception and activity – and all the while with an acute awareness of the terrifying Otherness of Nature itself. It is far from a complacent position towards life but one that acknowledges the everyday and long effort to live atoned to Nature, and not its pacified renditions but its alien and unpredictable fragility, power and glory.

Certainly, we need to be more courageous in our ways of living with and seeing Nature. It is this sense of a wholeness, of being a contributing protagonist in a wonderfully complex geostory that needs developing. As participants in a polluted and deteriorating world such thinking needs prioritising and urgently introducing into school curriculums. With this in mind, I realise that a Sustainable Development Goal that could frame, give value to and permit input into the formation of a common “geostory” has been sadly omitted from the United Nations SDG 2030 Agenda. As will be shown below, a more visible ocean narrative would go a long way toward eradicating the cultural backdrop of plastic pollution that originates on land. Alaimo’s candid concept of “marine trans-corporeality” would fuse the everyday objects of our lives to our consciousness as well as to the environmental realities of consumption, waste and pollution.

The lives of Others would become important.

In summation, human semiotic activity “also involves (and is driven by) the need to produce technologies (in our case first nonverbal and then, later, verbal language) capable of more effective means of modelling the world” (Wheeler 142). This entails a world-view and has emerged in romantic poetry “which keeps the breath of body and the breath of spirit in creative and rhythmic connection” real (Ibid. 153); and in postcolonial enquiry into biomythic narratives that place “nonhuman animals as ancestors or companions species” that work as literatures of resistance to the disenchantments and fundamental greed of modernity (see Deloughrey and Handley 2011; Medd 2015a).



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of The Paris Agreement (PA, 2015-2016)¹⁰ are a critical global climate accomplishment, forged by 195 nations and represents a historic undertaking. Tackling the issue of plastics are: “SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”; “SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”; “SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

The author’s additional goal is centred around education and people-orientated participation, “SDG 18. A Common Geostory: Allow all peoples a multilingual voice to share their stories on the environment as ways of understanding and building collaborative solution-based networks”. For example, set aside lands to build inter-oceanic eco-routes linked by green corridors (and ocean-blue corridors) that criss-cross countries and continents, allowing wildlife and marine life to travel freely and safely. These would become invaluable natural resources for schools and scientists, creating living areas where field studies could be undertaken as part of the new ecocurriculum as well as powerful sites where new stories might be born.

Visit: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

10 See http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php.

Planetary Boundaries: Marine Plastic Pollution is the New Climate Change Contestant

Since the beginnings of this philosophical and physical exploration in 2014, I have travelled fairly widely as a surfer, swimmer, diver and sailor. On one such occasion I worked my passage as a deckhand while sailing along Turkey's Mediterranean coastline under the captainship of Mirko Tirani. Always from the deck of a boat our imaginations responded to the waves of ideas that swelled around us, inspiring conversations about the universe, oceanscapes and the reflective qualities that rippling blues, sparkles of silver shards and blazing horizons have always had on the minds of people. Tirani then went on to sail the world and one day this email message appeared from him:

Subject: Mirko letter sea pollution

Dear Friends,

My name is Mirko, I am a sailor and I have been sailing for sixteen years. I would like to share my latest experience at sea with you. In the last year, I have sailed from the Indian Ocean to the Caribbean Sea and I saw amazing sights that left me astounded by the beauty of nature, but unfortunately, I also saw many crimes against our planet that traumatized me. I am seriously worried about the conditions of the sea. During my navigations, I have seen plastic or even worse, oil from cargo ships that floated for miles and miles along the waves.

The quantity of ships at sea for commercial use has increased and continues to do so; unfortunately, the sea is becoming the trash bin of the Earth, a black hole of unwanted items. People throw their unwanted items at sea, thinking they will go unnoticed. For example, recently tons of non-disposable chemical waste from the iron metal industry was found a few miles outside the departure port of Italy. This cargo had no destination other than a quick disposal at sea, in this way the cargo ship would be ready for another shipment. In the business world there is no respect for nature, because no price is too high to pay and no sacrifice is too great when it comes to making a profit. These selfish and egoistic business decisions are destroying the beauty of the sea, and the effects on the sea are now noticeable. It is our job not to turn a blind eye to this problem because it is one that affects us all, animals and people alike.

Last summer I was sailing back to the Tyrrhenian Sea after many years

of absence, and it was clear that the quality of the sea was no longer the same as it been just a few years previously. I was astonished by the amount of plastic on the surface. I didn't go one mile without seeing plastic floating along beside me. I believe that the Mediterranean Sea in its current state is in a pollution crisis. The fact that the Mediterranean Sea is a closed basin results in an accumulation of garbage and plastic that remains trapped in the area and doesn't disperse at sea. Instead, it remains as a constant reminder of our negligence. We have to do something, maybe it is too late, but we must try to preserve our planet and our sea. It is of fundamental importance to teach the new generation to take better care of the environment, and to inform people of the disastrous consequences that our carelessness has produced.

I hope that together we can be the miracle, I want to trust in human beings.

Best wishes to our Planet.

M.T.



Image 11

Timeless scenes on the Mediterranean at sunset. A local fisherman feeding out short-run nets by hand. Photo taken by author.

For a decade or more I have been teaching and stating at conferences that marine plastic pollution is the new climate change. While studying under a United Nations programme in Earth Systems in 2015, I began to voice this amongst the scientific community. So in 2017 when Jennifer Lavers of the University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic

Studies echoed my thoughts during an interview, I felt encouraged to finally have a scientist on my wavelength. Lavers said “For me, marine plastic pollution is the new climate change, but I would like for us to not make the same mistakes. We’ve been arguing about climate change, and whether it exists and what is changing, for the better part of 40 years ... Let’s not wait for more science. Let’s not debate it. The rate of plastic in our oceans is absolutely phenomenal, and we need to do something now” (in Hunt 2017; see also Lavers and Bond 2017; Laville and Taylor 2017).

The new climate change refers to its multifarious presence that is enmeshed in “all the driving factors” that feed into the 21st century’s pervading ecological crises; it is found in melting ice throughout the polar regions; it is piling up in the deepest points of our planet; it is now circulating throughout the entire food and water chains and flows; it is acting as a transport vector for invasive species, microorganisms and possible future pandemics; it is in our drinking water, our biology and reproductive systems as well as the biology of wild and marine life. These factors pertaining to critical thresholds signify that their accumulated global effects are impeding vital Earth-system processes. The term Earth System refers to the suite of interacting “physical, chemical and biological global-scale cycles and energy fluxes that provide the life-support system for life at the surface of the planet” (Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill 615).

For sure a warming planet is sparking major concerns too. It needs to be made clear that the Earth System has never exceeded two degrees Celsius warming over the last three million years as the biosphere system has been perfectly self-regulating. Within a minuscule period of approximately 150 years, humanity is forcing the geological climate clock back to conditions that were prevalent during the Miocene époque of ten million years ago, and with four+ degrees of warming. Our future is better understood, therefore, as becoming a planetary past and is now referred to as the “Miocene Future.” This will have resulted from humanity having crossed tipping points within the Earth System’s self-regulatory mechanisms. The very recent *IPCC Ocean and Cryosphere Report*¹¹ (24 September 2019) outlined cascading effects such as the collapse of the western Antarctic ice shelf – now irreversible and to raise global ocean levels by 3 metres.

11 The “cryosphere” is defined as the components of the Earth System at and below the land and ocean surface that are frozen, including snow cover, glaciers, ice sheets, ice shelves, icebergs, sea ice, lake ice, river ice, permafrost, and seasonally frozen ground. Report available here, <https://www.ipcc.ch/srocc>.

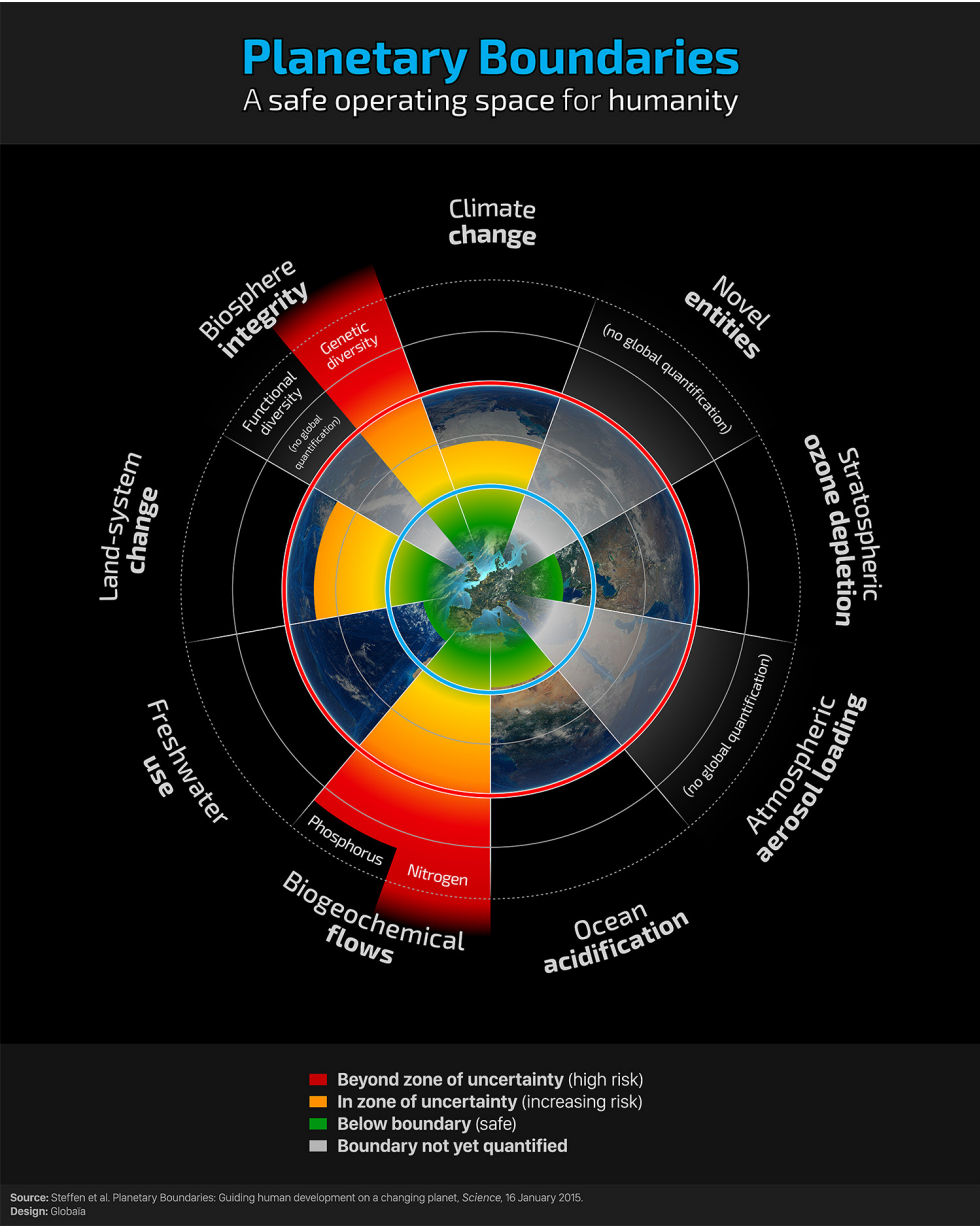


Image 11

Source: Steffen *et al.* SRC. 2015. Illustration by F. Pharand-Deschênes/Globalia and used with permission.¹²

The influential “Planetary Boundaries Framework” – as set out in the illustration above – was theorised by an international and interdisciplinary

¹² To watch the “Reflections on the Planetary Boundaries framework” conference presentations, see <https://stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2019-10-14-reflections-on-the-planetary-boundaries-framework.html>.

group of scientists in 2009 and revised in 2014, and mostly informed by those researching at the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). In their words “The planetary boundaries concept presents a set of nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to develop and thrive for generations to come. The planetary boundaries approach is not intended as a replacement for ecosystem management approaches but a complement that takes Earth system considerations into consideration” (Various 2018).

Unified, the boundaries form a synthesis of the intrinsic biophysical processes that regulate the stability of Earth. In turn, this acknowledges that Earth is a single complex and integrated system, functioning through interdependencies. Importantly, it is equally a measure of ecosystem health throughout these biophysical boundaries. Those that are now moving into the yellow are zones of “uncertainty,” whilst those already in the red have transgressed “safe operating spaces” where a stable planetary ecosystem can no longer be assumed or sustained.

In January 2015, an update was published in *Science* revealing that an additional boundary had been breached – Land-System Change, consequently leaving four out of the nine borders in a worrying/perilous state. So, Land-System Change (deforestation/agriculture/damming/concreting); Biosphere Integrity (biodiversity losses and extinctions); Biogeochemical Flows (industrial and agricultural processes/fertiliser usage); and Ocean Acidification (carbon dioxide uptake/industrial run-off and seepage of nitrogen and phosphorus/pollution) are all today close to, or have reached high-risk levels and together they feed into the equally critical and accumulative effects of the Climate Change boundary.

In 2018, in a co-authored paper titled “Marine Plastic Pollution as a Planetary Boundary Threat: The Drifting Piece in the Sustainability Puzzle,” the article’s leading researcher, Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez stated that:

A remaining question to be answered is if the concentration of plastic in the ocean, today or in the future, will reach levels above a critical threshold leading to global effects in vital Earth-system processes, thus granting the consideration of marine plastic pollution as a key component of the planetary boundary threat associated with chemical pollutants... The irreversibility and global ubiquity of marine plastic pollution mean that two essential conditions for a planetary boundary threat are already met. (2018)

We do not know the full consequences of transgressing tipping points but we can assume that their effects will be long-lasting, irreparable and, consequently serious at both ecological and social scales. I am going beyond Villarrubia-Gómez’s assertions on the effects of plastic pollution in marine ecosystems and how they tie in closely to the core planetary

boundaries of biosphere integrity and climate change. I am claiming that, yes, ocean plastic pollution is part of a chemical pollution planetary boundary and also that it has the potential to be more serious than climate change itself due to the sheer amounts of mismanaged waste, the rapidity of its escalating permanence and its capability to drive species to extinction. It possibly has the potential to affect the natural forces of circulation of the geostrophic currents.

In private communications with Villarrubia-Gómez on this issue, she wrote that:

due to the complexity of this material's interaction with the environment and the great lack of scientific-based information we could not state that marine plastic pollution ought to be included within the planetary boundaries framework. That does not mean that we should not keep pushing it forward... If research on this topic continues and someone manages to get the inclusion of plastics as a quantitative planetary boundary (as a sub-boundary within the boundary of "Novel Entities"), it will already be significant which, in my opinion is more feasible than making it a whole boundary by itself. Including plastic pollution under the "umbrella" boundary of Novel Entities is necessary because, in fact, plastic is a human-made entity (a novel one which was not present during the Holocene state of the Earth system). A quantified sub-boundary would have equal weight and applications and importance as any other boundary, as the Nitrogen and Phosphorus aspects of the Biogeochemical flows' boundary show.¹³

It should be understood here that every piece and particle of plastic ever manufactured is still somewhere in the environment. This gives a stark

¹³ Private email correspondence between the author and Patricia Villarrubia-Gómez. Friday 12 January 2018, for which the author is truly grateful for such expertise and insights. Regarding making plastic pollution a boundary unto itself, Villarrubia-Gómez also writes "we have had this conversation many times here at the centre (Stockholm Research Centre), and with other experts. You have every right to argue for it, it won't make plastic pollution more notorious or important for future policies or any application." In terms of the claim that "every piece and particle of plastic ever manufactured is still somewhere in the environment," Villarrubia-Gómez adds to the discussion, stating "I would also include that: All the plastic produced, except the ones that have been recycled and/or incinerated, are still in the environment. I received the correction myself during the paper's peer-review process because it was not clear enough, according to the reviewer. This is a very important point, because, for example, countries like Sweden incinerates most of its plastic waste to create energy from it. I am not saying that I agree with the "solution" towards plastic pollution, but it is a fact indeed. And one that is planned to increase now that China is not accepting waste imports from other countries." Even so, incinerated plastics and their by-products that are reused for energy do not seem to eliminate plastics from the environment to my mind.

reflection on the meaning here of “irreversibility.”

Thus, in terms of the forthcoming production figures for plastics and human demographics over the coming decades (see on), and all the while supported by the poor cultural attitudes toward our planet, plastic pollution will outweigh and become more serious than the other factors feeding back into the pivotal boundary of Climate Change. Clearly, when creating boundaries both sides of the division must be accounted for, therefore, domino effects incorporate the social consequences of reaching tipping points within Earth systems, raising further the issue of oceanic and human health.

From Microorganisms to Whales: The Whereabouts, Reach and Effects of Plastics Once Discarded



Image 13



Image 13

Day trippers in Kaş, Turkey. Everything they consume, sit on and use as floor coverings are made from plastics. For the ocean, the planet and all wildlife this nightmare continues forever. Photographs taken by the author.

In 1907, Leo Hendrik Baekeland (Belgium 1863-1944 USA) created Bakelite working from a laboratory in New York City, which he patented in 1909. Bakelite is a polymeric plastic of phenol and formaldehyde. Baekeland retired in 1939 while the world production of his Bakelite plastic had topped 175,000 tonnes. Ironically, he took to sailing his yacht! Unconsidered at that time, the discarded plastic items had begun to fill up the World Ocean. Thereafter, chemists experimented further, breaking down hydrocarbon chains in crude petroleum, and plastics rapidly emerged as the most basic infrastructure of modern consumer society. To give an example, single-use plastic bags appeared in the USA in 1957 and in British supermarkets in the late 1960s. By 2017, over a billion such bags are being given out daily and free of charge. For sure, the historical beginnings of

the Plastic Age (Plastocene) and equally of the Pope’s “legacy of filth” truly begin inside Bakelite’s laboratory.

We may ask why is plastic the most basic infrastructural material of modern consumerist societies? The answers are the very reasons why it is also an extremely damaging and harmful product. Its uses can be hugely beneficial for the good of all humankind such as in the provision of clean water services, hospitals and in health products, to list but a few. However, by far the highest proportion of plastics manufactured yearly comprise disposable packaging (80 million tonnes in 2011), as well as a wide selection of short-lived items. In Western Europe, a single-use shopping bag has a practical life expectancy of fifteen minutes whereas once in the environment it breaks down into ever decreasing sizes, becoming part of the food chain. Industry is literally wrapping society and the planet’s biosphere in toxic plastics.

The versatility of plastic has undoubtedly altered our lives in fields such as communications and technological advances. The unique properties of plastics are: low production costs, strong, lightweight, corrosion resistant, durable and they act as electrical and thermal insulators. As such, plastics have contributed to energy reductions in industry, such as heavy transport costs. Once seaborne though it is these very advantages of plastics that inflict harm, suffering and mortality to all marine life. More than seven hundred species forcibly encounter plastics in the marine environment. By being lightweight, durable and toxic, plastics, by default, are a major environmental hazard.

Plastic Class		Products and typical origin
Low-density polyethylene	LDPE & LLDPE	Plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, netting, drinking straws, toothbrushes
High-density polyethylene	HDPE	Milk and juice jugs
Polypropylene	PP	Rope, bottle caps, netting
Polystyrene	PS	Plastic utensils, food containers
Foamed Polystyrene		Floats, bait boxes, foam cups, fish containers
Nylon	PA	Netting and traps
Thermoplastic Polyester	PET	Plastic beverage bottles
Poly (vinyl chloride)	PVC	Plastic film, bottles, cups
Cellulose Acetate	CA	Cigarette filters

Table 1. Commonly encountered classes of plastics in the marine environment.

In the 1970s, scientific academies in the United States made estimates of 45,000 tonnes of plastic entering the World Ocean per year – what equated to 0.1 per cent of the total global production and a mere one per cent of our general waste. In 1974, the British Plastics Federation claimed that “plastic litter is a very small proportion of all litter and causes no harm to the environment except as an eyesore” (Derraik 2002: 842). From 0.5 million tonnes per year in the 1950s, plastic production has increased to a staggering 300 million by 2016. This situation can no longer be considered an “eyesore” but a life-threatening material that qualifies as a Novel Entity within the Planetary Boundaries framework. This fact comes with the appalling knowledge that over the forthcoming decade there will be more plastic products manufactured than what equates to the entire history of plastic production since the 1950s. Of note, curbing consumerism is a target set by the Paris Agreement: “SDG 12. Responsible consumption and Production.”¹⁴



Image 15

The binned rubbish from day trippers to the Los Lances Beach, Tarifa, Spain, 2019. Full recycling banks are a mere 50 metres away. If the famous “Levante” wind starts then within minutes this will all be carried out into the Atlantic Ocean. The gross figures for actual plastics which have been recycled or incinerated are low. The majority by far – 80 per cent – has been hidden away from sight in landfills, or swept away by winds to begin their oceanic journey.¹⁵ Photograph taken by the author.

14 Most of the statistics come from the following journals: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*; *Water Air Soil Pollut*; *Ecology and Society*; *Environment. Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*; *Nature*; and *Environmental Research Letters*.

15 To learn more of the journey of a plastic bag once discarded into the environment, see Konner 2010.

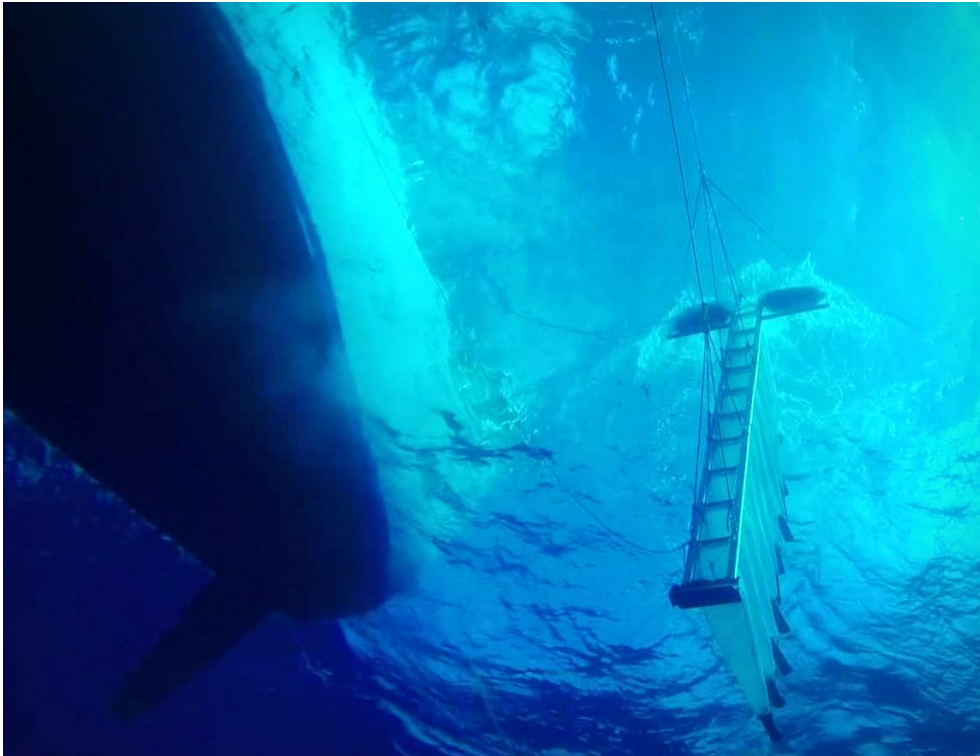


Image 16

A multi-level trawl for vertical distribution research. The scientific assessment on how much plastic is now floating in the World Ocean is accepted to be 100 million+ tonnes (5 trillion pieces). Studying the quantities and their effects often involves strenuous research, being conducted on the high seas, isolated littorals and in the extreme climates of the polar regions. A typical process involves an expedition aboard a crewed ship, GDP drifters, manta trawls, specific capture nets, collection bags, rinsing sieves, collecting trays, microscopes and computers to calculate and store data. The individual pieces of plastic are then sorted depending on whether they are fragments, polystyrene pieces, pellets, polypropylene / monofilament lines and films.

Photo used with permission. Source: www.theoceancleanup.com.

Nothing in life is as it so often appears to be on the surface! Even so, a significant proportion of the worldwide distribution of plastics *is on the surface* of beaches, waterways and the open ocean. The latter is accumulating within the convergence zones of each of the five subtropical gyres – see onwards, and in the included diagram. However, the study by Andrés Cózar *et al* in 2013 exposed a major gap “in the size distribution of floating plastic debris as well as a global surface load of plastic well below that expected from production and input rates... these findings provide strong support to the hypothesis of substantial losses of plastic

from the ocean surface” (10241). In other words, the amount of plastics known to be floating on or near to the ocean’s surface falls well short of the total volume that is entering the World Ocean. The central questions now are: where is it? Is it settling on the ocean bed? What does this mean for the World Ocean and the planet?

We can recall that in February 2017 scientists discovered unbelievably high levels of toxic pollution in the Mariana Trench, being the deepest known point in our ocean at 10,994 meters (36,070 feet) below sea level (with an estimated accuracy of ± 40 meters. Mount Everest is 8,848m high). The Mariana Trench is situated in the western Pacific Ocean, east of the Mariana Islands and this discovery confirms that plastic waste is spreading industrial pollutants to the remotest and most inaccessible places on our planet. In 2018, the reporting clarified actual quantities, and later published in *the journal Geochemical Perspectives Letters*, where researchers “found that the concentration of microplastics increased as the sample sites descended the trench. At the bottom, they reached a maximum of 2,200 pieces per litre in sediments and 13 pieces per litre in water” (Carrington 2018a).



Image 17

A fishing buoy is wrapped around the pectoral fin of a Blue Shark.

Photo supplied by ORCA. Used with permission. For further information see <http://www.orcaweb.org.uk>.

This doleful scenario gets steadily more complex as plastics are more often than not mixed with additives and filler products during manufacture, or actually acquired from seawater itself through processes referred to as sorption. This alters their composition making them denser than the specific gravity of sea water which is $\sim 1.025 \text{ kg/m}^3$ (depending on water temperature and salinity). Nylon is one such plastic that hovers at lower depths in the water column while many actually steadily sink and finally settle on the “coastal” sediment. There are then the actual forces that break plastic down into smaller particles to consider, and substances with an affinity for organic matter that attach themselves more adeptly to buoyant plastic particles (persistent organic pollutants, POPs). These POPs then hitch rides to the remotest regions by ocean currents and introduce “invasive species.” This also occurs via cargo ships that use seawater ballast that is emptied and refilled at international harbours.

We would think that once biofouled fragments (microorganisms, algae, plants or marine life that attach themselves to host surfaces) obtain the density of seawater they would then enter the water column and begin to drift neutrally, or sink steadily until settling on the deep ocean floor. This is the case in shallower, coastal and nutrient-rich areas as fragments are being recovered in the sediments. However, because seawater density gradually increases the deeper one goes, plastics find their equilibrium accordingly and remain suspended at multiple depths in the water column. These are termed “plastic sinks” and may account for a substantial amount of the missing quantities. Furthermore, there is a circular pattern in the form of “natural release” that field experiments have uncovered: biofouled plastic debris rapidly defouls when submerged, thus becoming lighter and returning toward the surface. In deep water this can be prompted due to the dissolution of carbonates and opal owing to acidic conditions.

Scientists have proposed four main scenarios to account for the missing quantities of plastics:

1. Nano-fragmentation which refers to minute plastic particles generally less than 100 nanometres in size.
2. Shoreline deposition.
3. Biofouling.
4. Ingestion, the most worryingly and likely.

Invisible to the eye from the outset and, therefore, extremely difficult to study by using spectroscopy, nanoplastics are also compositional ingredients in a wide range of cosmetics, creams and soaps that just wash down our drains in huge quantities. Clearly this is worrying as coastal areas are now home to the majority of the world's population – a trend

which is intensifying – and where the ocean dead zones are forming due to ocean suffocation. The same circumstances apply to our roads where tyre fragments get washed into drains and windblown plastics from landfill sites make considerable journeys toward the ocean. Of note, what is happening in the World Ocean is also occurring in the Great Lakes of North America.

As the global production of plastics will have soon topped 33 billion tonnes what we realise is that our plastic pollution is migrating faster and in huger numbers than ourselves. It seems that an open call for a high-level conference on the travel and reach of our pollution will be insightful and a step closer towards instigating industry and societal changes. As shown in the world map below, plastic originates from land and sea-based centres and then the majority gravitates toward subtropical gyres, becoming a dense mass of macro and microplastics. These gyres are created by a combination of currents and their deflection due to Earth's rotation. The Ekman transport (induced by easterly winds in the tropics approximately 0° to 30° latitude; and westerly winds in the mid-latitudes, 30° to 60° latitude), is driven by regional winds and geostrophic currents that form the balance between sea levels and the Coriolis force (see Eriksen *et al.* 71). They total five and are located in the North Pacific, North Atlantic, South Pacific, South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean.



Image 18

The circulating currents of the World Ocean forming gyres caused by the Coriolis effect, or deflection of currents due to Earth's rotation and surface winds. Collage created by the author. Ocean image was taken while sailing on the Mediterranean Sea; the plastics were collected from the Playa de Merón beach, San Vicente de la Barquera, Cantabria, Spain.

While writing this, a scientific paper titled “The Arctic Ocean as a Dead End for Floating Plastics in the North Atlantic Branch of the Thermohaline Circulation,” was published, in which the authors identified a sixth plastic convergence zone forming within the Arctic Polar Circle. Their findings provide research evidence based on field data and surface circulation models. As the human population north of 60° is fairly low and the fragments are aged debris that show long exposure times in the environment, it is understood that the plastics are travelling towards the Arctic from other more densely populated latitudes. In effect, the oceanic route and its subsurface waters pass via Scotland and Iceland. This transect is a major gateway for the passage of plastics where they accumulate in the Greenland and Barents seas. Once here the plastic mass is forced to stop due to the polar ice cap and actual landmass that together act as physical barriers to flows. Scientists now believe that the naturally downward flowing transport systems are also resulting in the seafloor beneath the Arctic becoming a sizeable sink for plastic fragments. Ocean circulation models have predicted that “the formation of a plastic accumulation zone within the Arctic Polar Circle would require a few decades” (Cózar *et al* 2017). It is no kept secret that plastics entering en masse such a unique and rich ecosystem will have deleterious ecological implications that will equal – if not surpass – the already evident effects of climate change occurring so rampantly throughout this victimised region.

The truly distressing face of this globalisation of indifference toward our planet is the physical breadth of our filth. It has migrated before we have toward geographical zones that remain too hostile for human occupation. It is already affecting the serenity, balance and quality of life of the wildlife that – until very recently – inhabited pristine environments free from any notable forms of contamination. In 2010, beyond the 66° 34' northern latitude in an immensely beautiful and sophisticated region such as the Arctic, the estimated mass of plastics carried to the region topped 2 million tonnes per year. In 2014, researchers uncovered a further plastic sink in the Arctic sea ice itself that was much denser than the already contaminated surface waters. Whereas, at the opposite pole, in a survey of waters near Antarctica “plastic pollution was the only type of marine debris found south of 63° S” (Barnes, Walters and Gonçalves 250–252). Since those figures for 2010 were made public, and as I write this nearly a decade later, we are already looking at 15+ million tonnes of plastic debris in Arctic waters – which will come to outsize and physically replace the melting mass of year-round sea ice in coming decades.

In essence, it is known that the overall figures and actual whereabouts of all the plastics entering the World Ocean do not tally. It is believed that a large amount of the missing quantities of plastics are ingested by marine mammals, marine life, invertebrates such as molluscs and

crustaceans, birds and reptiles – becoming pollutant vectors that travel directly into and across the entire food chain. *Any form of petroleum finding its way into the marine environment is classed as a pollutant.* Plastic enters the ocean by winds, rains, rivers, beaches, agriculture, aquaculture, industry, roads, household grey waters, tourism and marine activities such as shipping and fishing. Huge quantities are also the result of illegal dumping – see subheading below, The Commercial Fishing Industry. The scientific terms are numerous such as anthropogenic marine debris (AMD), as are the categorisation of the classes, composition and sizes of plastics. The actions that break plastics down when once seaborne are:

UV/photo degradation	action of sunlight
Biodegradation	action of living organisms such as microbes
Hydrolysis	reaction with water producing other compounds
Mechanical abrasion	natural elements, motorboat engines

Table 2. Showing the elemental forces and actions that embrittle plastics – processes that continually reduce their composite strengths and sizes.

These actions all cause plastics to lose their pliancy resulting in surface embrittlement and microcracking. When reaching this point, plastics are a serious environmental hazard, breaking down into smaller particles and much aided by wind, tides, currents and waves.

<1.00 nm	(nanoplastics, invisible to the eye)
0.33–1.00 mm	(small microplastics)
1.01–4.75 mm	(large microplastics)
4.76–200 mm	(mesoplastic)
>200 mm	(macroplastic)

Table 3. Categorising the break up of plastics by sizes and defining them accordingly.

In 2016, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published figures on the death toll caused by plastics. In summation, plastic is killing millions of seabirds a year and 100,000+ marine mammals and turtles. Commonly found items in the stomachs of dead seabirds and turtles are combs, cigarette lighters, plastic bags, latex balloons, bottle caps, toys, tampon applicators, cotton bud shafts, toothbrushes and medical equipment. For example, a study of fulmar carcasses that washed up on North

Sea coastlines found that 95 per cent had plastic in their stomachs – an average of 45 pieces per bird (UNEP 2016); 80 per cent of the loggerhead turtles captured illegally by fishermen in the western Mediterranean contained plastics in their gastrointestinal tracts; researchers and local inhabitants in the Arctic have sighted the creamy white cetacean, the beluga whale along with narwals and migrating humpback whales trailing discarded fishing gear, buoys, lobster and crayfish pots as well as long-lines wrapped around their flukes, fins and tails. As natural conversationalists and moving in pods, what would such a crippling impediment for a beluga whale compare to?



Image 19

Humpback whale with its fluke entangled in ghost fishing gear. Photo used with permission. Source: CWRT/IFAW. Stacy Alaimo asks whether “evolutionary origin stories that emphasize how human bodies descend from marine ancestors can provoke an environmentalist ethos toward the oceans?” (2014: 188)

The figures of this destruction seem to spiral in ever increasing circles. In *Nature* it was reported that a discarded fishing net weighing 11.5 tonnes was removed from a marine reserve in Hawaii (Cressey 263-264), while Professor Callum Roberts at the University of York said that most “Marine Protected Areas are no more than paper parks that offer no sanctuary at all to wildlife in the sea...We have been fooling ourselves that there are cost-free protected areas where we can have it all” (Carrington 2018b; for more on environmental lawlessness, see Medd 2015b and 2020).

Plastics now interact with the ocean’s microorganisms, moving increasingly up the food chain. The ocean’s trophic levels begin with phytoplankton as they occupy the base of the aquatic food web. Phytoplankton are primary producers capable of transforming inorganic carbon into protoplasm. In a healthy ecosystem, phytoplankton provide food for a wide range of sea creatures including whales, shrimp, jellyfish and snails. They function in a similar way to terrestrial plants as they contain chlorophyll and only sunlight gives them life. Therefore, most are buoyant and found in the surface layers of the ocean where sunlight penetrates.

Zooplanktons¹⁶ are equally as important, occupying the second trophic level, as are the Pacific Krill that occupy the third; together they eat the staple phytoplankton and are, in turn, a source of energy for crustaceans at the third level. Both molluscs and crustaceans are especially sensitive to the organic contaminants that sorb and amass on plastics hindering their reproduction and growth. The fourth level comprises carnivorous fish that eat crustaceans, while the fifth and sixth are carnivorous consumers such as seals, dolphins, sharks and other animals and birds that eat fish. The more trophic levels present, the less energy is conserved at higher trophic levels. In some parts of the world as I write, microplastics in the World Ocean are outdoing surface zooplankton. One of the world’s leading marine toxicologists, Canadian Peter Ross discovered that it is not only “zooplankton that are consuming microplastics, but also mussels, herring, cod, haddock and sharks, among others. In other words, the plastics reach from one end of the marine food web to the other” (cited in Mitchell 64). The sheer reach and volume of plastics has actually shocked the global scientific community.

The blue, green, white and clear pieces of microplastics and nanoparticles are the same colours as plankton and fall within their size ranges. Plastics, therefore, have equally been transfigured to find their place at the very “base” of the food chain. Their durability and ease of transportation means that plastics travel across the entire ocean basins, transferring toxins up the food chain to include everything from the shorelines, the

16 Globally, these microorganisms, phytoplankton and zooplanktons produce half of the planet’s oxygen. They also form the basis of the entire marine food web.

water column and to pristine environments where human presence is yet to be established. This includes the deepest depths of the World Ocean, places where deep-sea submersibles have recorded white plastic shopping bags hovering in the dark at some 2,000 metres “looking like an assembly of ghosts” (Editorial 2010: 1).

The science should have the last say here and endocytosis – the process by which plastics are taken up by living micro- or nanofauna also results in an adverse toxic finale: “As plankton species constitute the very foundation of the marine food web, any threat to these can have serious and far-reaching effects in the world oceans” (Andrady 1603). This research shows that the “impacts of plastic on the ocean environment and human health is likely to conclude the problem is worse than currently understood” (Editorial 2010: 3).

Putting the plethora of scientific research into plastic pollution aside, surely it is basic knowledge that no good will ever come from jettisoning and amassing billions of tonnes of toxic waste within the body of the World Ocean? Half a century has passed since Heyerdahl first noted oil and plastics amassing in bulk across the mid-Atlantic, taking him three to four days to sail clear of the debris. In his aforementioned travel account, he wrote how “We must make an outcry about this to everyone who would listen. What was the good of East and West fighting over social reforms on land, as long as every nation allowed our common artery, the ocean, to become a common sewer for oil slush and chemical waste?” (234-235). And what became of the intervening 50 years since Arne Næss (1912-2009) and the deep ecologist movement encouraged us all to act benevolently toward Nature?¹⁷ Or the Humboldtian thinking of the unity of all the forces and agencies – “a reflex of the whole,” developed thereafter by Henry David Thoreau, George Perkins Marsh, John Muir, Rachel Carson, James E. Lovelock, Lynn Margulis, Róger Rumrill, Pierre de Zutter, Val Plumwood, to name but a few?

We know our World Ocean is the “space” that gave “meaning” to our “place,” confirming the origins of all life on the planet. Without doubt, the level of importance subscribed to the World Ocean varies according to social groups. For example, for an Inuit, the ocean carries meanings assigned to it by him or her: a hunting ground, a transportation corridor, a spiritual environment, a memoryscape, a common geostory and so on (for further reading see Sejersen 2004; Hovelsrud *et al.* 2011; Jones 2004). Whereas, for someone who has never seen the ocean, it will have less significance. However, the ocean brings meaning of place into all our lives to some degree by the very fact that our planet is predominantly oceanic with most of the world’s burgeoning cities and their cultures

17 See Næss 2010; Lovelock and Margulis 1973; Lovelock 2006.

having been built along the coast.

The Commercial Fishing Industry: A Clear Example of a Cultural Low

In a supporting context, this discussion exemplifies the wasted opportunities being played out by poor cultural outlooks in the structure of wild capitalism as it is practised on the High Seas. It casts a net of hope that this whole social and economic approach could be turned around through a biosemiotic; a sense of the dynamics of hunting; a fundamental acceptance of ocean narratives; of the lives of companion species; of the value of eco-oceanic education; as well implementing a colossal clean-up operation in place of fishing subsidies.

I have watched local fishermen on the coasts of Turkey and Greece discarding their rubbish and old engine oil into the Mediterranean Sea. All marine and wildlife throughout the lawless high seas faces an existential threat from fishing, shipping and the military. Trawlers often drag fishing lines that are more than 75 miles long, each bristling with hooks. Tens of thousands of sea turtles get snagged on these and drown every year. This carnage goes unchecked because outside of the national waters there is no protection at all for species, endangered or otherwise. This includes fish and seabirds, plus fragile ecosystems such as deep-sea corals. It is beyond tragic (see McKie 2018).

The concept of hunting has been utterly lost to the fiscal benefits of mega modernity's capitalism. Hunting really becomes a way for the human to engage in a wordless dialogue and one that, according to Sigfrid Kjeldaas holds the power to draw the hunter into "life-worlds shared with other creatures and... Because these relationship patterns are simultaneously ecological and social, they represent for the individual in question ecological dependencies as well as patterns of meaningful social engagement with environmental Others..." (77). In this light, the actual taking of fish from the ocean should become an expression of the fisherman's physical and cultural engagement with the oceanic environment as well as their long and shared histories (see Operman 2013 for introduction).

Clearly, then, a distinction must also be made here between the working lives and relations with the World Ocean by individual fishermen and the army-like crews of industrial transnational fleets. I would equally like to stress the importance of the terms "meaningful" and "relationship." Our troubled and unsettling entry into the Anthropocene (and its

transnationalised practices and agencies) does not have this depth of thinking, cooperation or altruism. My main point then is that the ecological dialogue that is so necessary here recognises and responds to the environmental Other – all the while being part of the overarching relational patterns of life-worlds shared, of renewal, life cycles, caution and respect. This is the word-less, perhaps even ecospiritual dialogue that draws the hunter into the life-worlds shared with other creatures.

In Frank Sejersen's analysis on cultural environments, he explains that continuing "meaningful dialogue with the landscape and to be able to pursue strategies towards a future of diverse and rewarding potentials is perhaps what sustainability is all about" (84). Forming intimacy between humans and our environments ultimately equates to enriching our lives with deeper and alternative knowledges, sensibilities and with the satisfaction that we are looking ahead – to the impending rights of all future life. This line of enquiry is equally what Oppermann explores in postmodern fictions; she brings "the word" and wider understandings of coexistence forward once again as forces for change:

In the present crisis of sustainability, the postmodern interrogation of the divide between word and world, the rift between human and nonhuman realities, and the fundamental essence of binary thinking prompt readers to reconsider their existence in the world as not only shaped and defined by language but also by interconnected relations to entire biotic communities. If their existence continues to be threatened, so is ours (249-250).

In terms of fishing on the wild seas, this dialogue (biosemiotic/ecolinguistic) is rooted in a feeling of being in an open, clean, pure, energetic and astoundingly powerful oceanscape that is not only teeming with immense life and diversity, but also a living natural body that has thousands of years of human culture inscribed into and across it. Indeed, maritime anthropology has investigated in depth the coastal lifeways of the Inuit, South American and Pacifika peoples, drawing on their relations, mythologies, cultural imaginaries, spiritualities, economies and so on. Obviously, hurling dynamite into the ocean above coral reefs; removing entire shoals of valuable fish – big and small – by use of satellite tracking capabilities and water dyes; assisted by industrial-sized netting and hydraulic haulage to perform huge catch-grabs; murdering protected and docile creatures like whale sharks for their large dorsal fins which serve as menu and billboards outside restaurants across Asia to advertise shark fin soup; and reducing this beautiful Blue Ocean to a huge garbage site for dumping unwanted lifeless catch, equipment and packaging is not a dialogue. It is physical abuse at every level.



Image 20

The fishing fleets have returned, their catch is unloaded. A change of engine oil results in the old sump being dumped overboard and later washing onto the shores. In place of being revered, this is a form of voluntary polluting of the World Ocean – what is the very life-source that constitutes people's histories as well as the livelihoods of families throughout fishing communities. Photograph taken by the author.

Wild capitalism was given credence through modernity's manufacturing and throwaway sets of policies and mindsets – which the fishing industry typifies. New Zealand's Department of Conservation published figures back in 1975 that accused the world's fishing fleets of jettisoning 135,400 tonnes of plastic fishing gear and a further 23,600 tonnes of synthetic packaging material into the ocean! The actual gear itself is extremely wasteful due to its inefficiency and massive spread across whole tracks of open ocean. "Whether by long lines, trawling, or huge drift nets," writes Alaimo "industrial fisheries destroy most of the catch as "bycatch" – living creatures cast back as lifeless garbage" (186). This criminal industry promotes a scouring of emotion while camouflaging its ecological violence by using the World Ocean as a huge veil of invisibility and unaccountability. In other words, the industrial fishing industry rides and hides on the waves, employing the phrase "out of sight, out of mind." In the neo-liberalisation of the World Ocean there is a counterpoint, a message that states that we erode the base of our humanity by

devastating a cosmically unique life system like the World Ocean.

The 1978 Protocol to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships – shortened to MARPOL – became an important legislation to address this issue. Coming into effect in 1988 was Annex V, banning at sea the “discharge of garbage... disposal of plastics and other synthetic materials such as ropes, fishing nets, and plastic garbage bags with limited exceptions.” In a familiar and depressing pattern, these laws for the World Ocean read like the terrestrial laws on deforestation and the protection of bio-reserves – weak, mostly disregarded and totally unenforceable due to limited manpower and authority, resulting also in personal fear. Annex V is widely ignored by the general fishing industry and back in 1997 ships were found to have jettisoned in excess of 7 million tonnes of plastic into the World Ocean (see Derraik 2002).¹⁸

Today, all the global fishing fleets are equipped with plastic fishing gear and packaging – mostly polyolefins and nylons due to their ease of availability, cost-effectiveness, lightness, durability and mass production. Consequently, this voluminous gear is all too often readily abandoned on the high seas, being literally tossed overboard. This becomes a floating plastic mass of nets and lines that can stretch tens of kilometres – hundreds even when they converge. It is known as “ghost fishing” because they are eerie death traps that float through the currents without any operator, entrapping and killing marine life for extended periods of time. Ghost fishing comprises a huge proportion of the total volume of marine plastic.

These salvaged nets have been transformed into ghost net sculptures by Pormpuraaw Indigenous communities. Their works give the ocean's passive victims ghostly voices, thus bringing awareness to a wider public. Their exhibition made international news in 2017 and, in interview, Paul Jakubowski, the manager of the Pormpuraaw Art and Culture Centre said “It's a particularly vile form of pollution... Three hundred and ninety by-species are killed in the nets, including things like sea turtles, and dolphins and whales. You're affecting a traditional food source and a very important current food source” (Sebag-Montefiore 2017).

The following images were taken along an isolated beach on El Hierro, the most westerly of the Canary Islands. Overpowered by the dynamics and intriguing geography of black volcanoes and the omnipresent Atlantic, this island has a small population of 4000 people. Without a house or road in sight, here I found contaminated beaches strewn with discarded fishing nets, boxing, ropes, single-use items and dead wildlife.

¹⁸ Captain Mirko and the author have witnessed massive container ships dumping oil on the high seas, leaving slicks as far as the eye can see. “During my navigations, I have seen...oil from cargo ships that floated for miles and miles along the waves.” See letter from Captain Mirko above.



Image 21



Image 22

El Hierro, Canary Islands, showing the density of plastics littering an isolated and otherwise immensely beautiful volcanic beach. It mostly comprises discarded fishing gear.

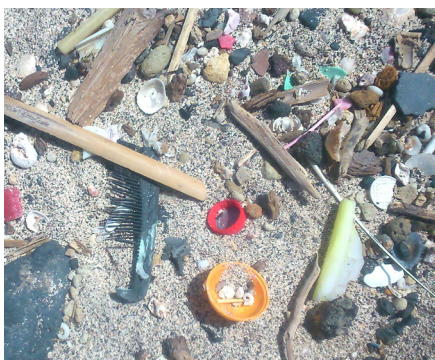


Image 23



Image 24

Daily household items – none of which should ever be manufactured from plastics – and dead wildlife. Photographs taken by the author.

On the global scale, the plastics polluting our ocean from the fishing industry equate to a significant 20-25 percent-one quarter. Whereas in some regional waters, case studies have confirmed such gear as comprising the absolute majority of marine litter. For example, researchers assessing the daily accumulation rates of marine debris on sub-Antarctic beaches found discarded fishing gear to be the dominant grouping with the most common items being ropes, bait box straps, squid jigs, floats, netting, buoys, crayfish pots, monofilament lines, hook blocks. Debris consistent with illegal fishing techniques such as the long-line method for toothfish has been recovered now for many years. In the remotest Alaskan waters ghost fishing gear is greater than 50 per cent of all plastics recovered. Between

1996 and 2006, NOAA¹⁹ recovered “511 tonnes of fishing gear from the reefs of the Northwest Hawaiian Marine National Monument” (Editorial 2010: 1).



Image 25

Dutch Harbour, Unalaska. In the once pristine ocean and melt waters of Alaska, ghost fishing gear today is greater than 50 per cent of all plastics recovered. Photo taken and permission given by Philip Hurst.

19 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, see <http://www.noaa.gov>.



Image 26

The unbelievable amounts of discarded fishing gear now circulating throughout the World Ocean is referred to as “ghost fishing” because it drifts in a deathly mass, entangling and killing fish, birds and mammals over long periods of time – decades. It comprises a huge proportion of the total volume of marine plastics, and these nets and lines can stretch out over many, many kilometres.

Photo used with permission. Source: www.theoceancleanup.com.

Concluding Conversational Thoughts: Planet Ocean is One, But Earth is Not

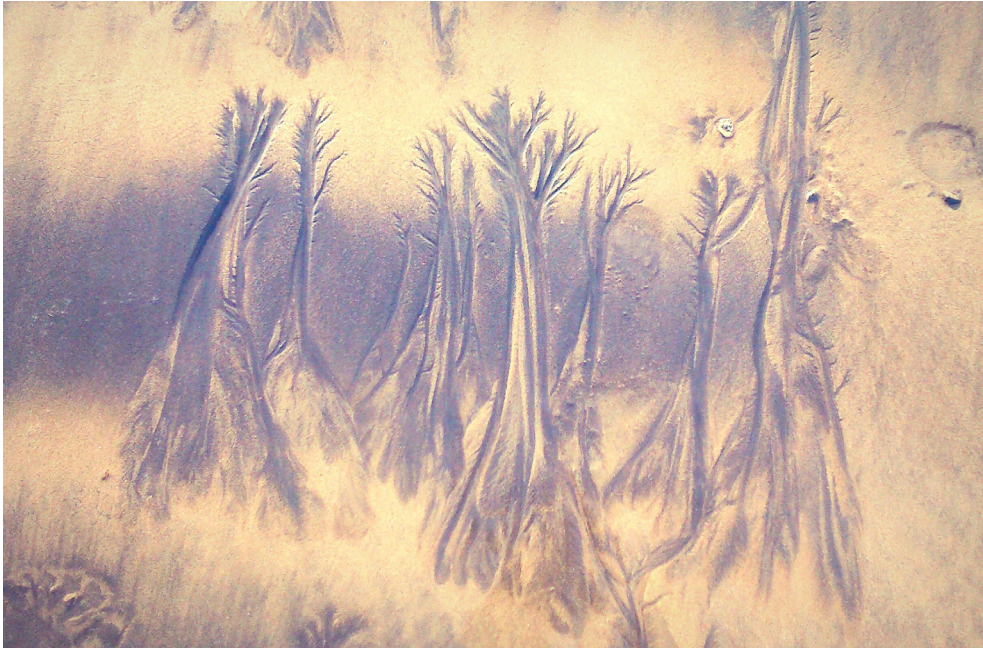


Image 27

The sheer artistic elegance of golden-black volcanic sands, carved and left naturally by the retreating tides – truly magical stories, patterns and dialogues waiting to be observed, explored, imagined and shared. Photo taken by the author.

It has been discussed how modernity as a world-system has failed to enable sustainable worlds and, crucially, how its seepage into every aspect of our lives has also strived to make it culturally impossible until now for us to imagine alternative world-views, lifestyles and attitudes. Its language has equally failed to convey any meaningful understanding of the scale of the environmental crisis that now underpins all our lives. Due to its interconnectedness, modernity's processes have assured humankind that together with the Earth's motions and emotions, everything now shares the same shape-changing destiny as we begin to negotiate the Anthropocene. A future of unprecedented negotiations, cooperation, action, navigation, love, respect and altruism seems an important conclusion to draw.

The notion of a biosemiotic that fundamentally puts distance between the history of a Nature/culture divide was raised, and to speak again with

Wheeler, this suggests that *culture is emergent in nature... It puts us back... into a natural and cultural worldly state*. As discussed throughout, it is the absence of a sense of the current tragedy and of that very dialogue that nourishes ecological dependencies between companion species that has resulted in an absolute ignorance of life's complexities. A worldly-view, environmental imaginary and trans-corporeality would counteract attitudes of indifference by asking us to reimagine our relationships with plastic and with the ocean and, ultimately, the planet. In Oppermann's and Iovino's thinking, the historical neoliberal framing of social and ecological relationships drives a logic of Othering that subjugates humans, sentient animals and anything else in Nature that is exploitable, forming a "hyperseparation" (5) that counteracts ethics and peace.

The realisation that human consciousness centres around an ecological whole has always been the root reality for many alternative cultures, but today it is evident to us all – the science, reportage and demonstrations happening across the world are testimony to this. Most notable have been the multiethnic voices of Indigenous peoples, activists and school children. There is also a sense of urgency swelling in the air; the conclusions drawn recently by the United Nations (2020) that the Sustainable Development Goals/IPCC of The Paris Agreement are largely off-track have also coincided with the publication of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5* (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020), that is highlighting mass extinctions of species. Overall, it appears that as much as this is now a fight for Nature, it is equally one for change on all fronts; especially for peace in the forms of basic human rights and a fairer living world for all – humans and our companion species alike. To revisit Arturo Escobar's premise, modernity has failed to articulate the histories of Nature and people save through the capitalization of nature and labour.

The fusing of language to the body sensory and consciousness that was explored in Arundhati Roy's perceptions is also echoed in Stacy Alaimo's call for a marine trans-corporeality. This extends to any other material shapes and forms that are entangled with meanings and narratives. As plastic particles are now part of our biology this means that we might well pause for a moment and consider the lives of Others that are affected all the way down the ecological line by our daily patterns of consumption, waste and planetary pollution. Many discussions shared throughout this oceanic journey have focused on humankind developing a deeper ecosensibility – an ecocosmopolitanism and a biosemiotic – that ties us more strongly to the wider world through multidirectional dialogues. A united confrontation with the outdated mindset and values under modernity resounds in Latour whose same shape-changing destiny, he informs us, is a future path that *cannot be followed, documented, told, and represented by using any of the older traits*. Indeed, the point of

being in the Anthropocene requires structural revisions associated with subjectivity and objectivity alike. “They say the sea has been emptied in the social sciences - emptied of significance. But maybe the vocabulary is just empty of the right words. Maybe our images are just devoid of the right pictures” (Peters and Brown 6). May be, then, the World Ocean is not simply an ocean at all, but the body and guiding language of our planet, comprising an incomparable marvel that one will never fully know within the limits of one’s lifetime.

As a case example, the lawlessness of commercial fishing – all supported by criminal government subsidies – was highlighted as needing monumental reforms. Without posing impossible legislation, crews of fishing fleets could attend courses that not only engaged them in studies on marine ecology and science, but also with the literature on the World Ocean. This approach embraces the current findings on marine pollution, its effects and whereabouts, while also drawing on ocean historiography, poetry, mythology and prose. The overarching idea is to revert today’s oceanscapes from being “infinite” spaces for dumping waste, industrial scale massacres of species, by-catch and extinctions into places of respect, abundant life, fish, fishing, recreation and conversations. It would signal a “Return of the World Ocean,” crafted consciously by biographically meaningful stories of seafaring and ocean pride.²⁰

Since the quest for El Dorado and what became *the worst journey in the world*²¹ for America’s Indigenous peoples, the ensuing butterfly effect has assured that this juncture has also become our own ordeal. All humanity now stands together and also strangely apart as castaways on the polluted geological shores of the Anthropocene. Our entrance is defined by the transgressing of Planetary Boundaries; we are running to stand still, striving to give peace a chance, a place, finally somehow. Without doubt, the violation of Earth’s ecological capabilities brings tremendous uncertainties and pending insecurities. I have been keen to assert that marine plastic pollution is the new climate change and should, therefore, also be incorporated into the Planetary Boundary framework within Novel Entities. If plastic production was halted tomorrow, the planet would be dealing with its environmental consequences for unimaginable periods of deep time. On the ocean’s bed where an estimated 70 per cent of marine plastic debris ends up, the timeframe equates to tens of thousands of years.

20 An example of such a course is run by the United Nations “Sustainable Development Solutions Network” and titled “One Planet – One Ocean,” exploring topics such as “The Ocean – Our Future”; “Ocean Circulation and Physics”; “Drivers of Life in the Ocean”; “Ocean Ecosystems”; “Human – Ocean Interactions”; “Ocean Governance and Sustainability.”

21 *The worst ourney in the world* was the title of Apsley Cherry-Garrard’s brilliant book of endurance and survival during Captain Robert Falcon Scott’s disastrous attempt to reach the South Pole, Antarctica in 1912.

Much of the science presented here portrays this problem as being so acute that prevention is now key. Social change on the scale required today can only come from lead-by-example government policies and green business sectors that can act as catalysers. Thus, a cultural-political series of organic movements that were left to run their own transformative courses would be far too slow to take the immediate effect that is being stressed here. Such courses would require generations and the research into climate change is not even allowing us a decade as a workable time-frame. The amount of plastics that will be manufactured under today's scenario will reach 33 billion tonnes by 2050.²² The consensus on the two main approaches toward ridding Nature of the affliction of plastics are source reduction in the manufacturing and design stages, and nothing short of planetary land and ocean clean-up operations.

Again on World Oceans Day 2018, Erik Solheim gave the global audience a stark message that resonates deeply with the many ideas that have been discussed here. In a short timescale of just five years while researching and preparing this work, I now see how my thinking on this topic is becoming increasingly acknowledged by environmental agencies, activists, departments, organisations, editors and people. "Those who say there are more important environmental crises to tackle are mistaken," writes Solheim. "In today's world, protecting our environment is not about choosing one issue above another. The deeply interconnected systems that make up the natural world defy such a narrow-minded approach. Beating plastic pollution will preserve precious ecosystems, mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, and indeed human health. Confronting this crisis of convenience is a fundamental battle that must be fought today as part of the broader struggle for a sustainable tomorrow" (2018). As tomorrow came around only too soon, notably in terms of threats to human health, in 2020 we found ourselves in the midst of our unified struggle against a pandemic that is itself strongly linked to losses in biodiversity integrity and planetary pollution. I have hinted at how our plastic pandemic could yet become the perfect all-invasive transport vector of the near future.



Image 28

What the Whales Would Tell Us. Humpback Whales feature on The Australian Antarctic Territory stamp. Used with Permission.

²² For a brief overview on the very latest reporting on the threats and urgency of climate change and rising temperatures by the authors of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), see Watts 2018; also Various Authors 2020, *Global Biodiversity Outlook* 5.

Jonathan Steinwand's quirky essay, titled "What the Whales Would Tell Us" reminds us that there is no "magical return to nature without commitment or responsibility." Yet, the magic will always remain out there by "listening for the local values of relating to the extra-human world that are expressed in the myths and the songs... What we may never be able to understand in the songs of the whales...should remind us that the environment exceeds our grasp..." (190). And here lies the beauty in ecological thinking, in my mind. It is somewhere present within the mystery of knowing that storytelling, to listen again to Latour, is not just *a property of human language, but one of the many consequences of being thrown in a world that is, by itself, fully articulated and active*. With such vibrancy still to tap into, an additional SDG goal comprising shared dialogues and storytelling has been proposed, namely "SDG 18. A Common Geostory: Allow all peoples a multilingual voice to share their stories on the environment as ways of understanding and building collaborative solution-based networks." With more developed environmental imaginations we could feel life and our Blue Planet differently by truly understanding as well as respecting our greatest personal gift – the "common heritage of humankind."

Without doubt, the twenty-first century is now overshadowed by the greatest social, political, economic and environmental upheavals humankind has ever had to confront, namely the protection of the entire system Earth through a co-evolution of natural and social systems at a planetary scale. Does such a graphic reality justify attitudes that amount to a "globalisation of indifference"? If we fail to adhere to the science and bring about this rapid cultural transformation, it just might be something as supposedly inconsequential to our daily lives, that most have never heard of, such as the very smallest of microorganisms – the oxygen-producing phytoplankton and zooplanktons for example – that seal our fates irrespective of whether we land a few more people on the Moon again.



Image 29

A sand arrow left by retreating tides on golden-black volcanic sands.

A Note on Solutions

Due to lack of space it has not been possible to publish the list of suggestions for action and change that the author has developed while in conversation.. The avenues for exploration are wide-reaching, being educational, people-centred, technological and enforceable. They range from colossal clean-up operations; source reductions in the manufacturing and design stages; controlled disposals; catchments at rivers and waterways; ecological roles for NATO and the world's naval war fleets; creation of more extensive marine reserves and migration corridors; deployments of low-cost underwater "Slocum Gliders" to detect large plastics, ghost nets and to map commercial fishing fleets; sophisticated upgrading of harbour controls that have the capacity to man their waters, track vessels, identify the types of craft and details of ships' inventories; immediate freezing of all government subsidies that renders unprofitable fishing profitable...

Should you wish to receive such a detailed analysis on solutions then please contact the author directly.

List of Further Courses, Documentaries and Studies that Inform this Research

"One Planet – One Ocean," massive open online course, United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Enrol free here, <https://www.oceanmooc.org/en/index.php>.

United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal No. 14, New York, 5-9 June 2017. "Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action," available at <https://oceanconference.un.org/callforaction>. Short educational videos of "Our Ocean, Our Future," visit <https://vimeo.com/220289475>.

World Ocean Review 5, Living with the Oceans. Coasts, a Vital Habitat Under Pressure. 2017. Jan Lehmköster (Project Manager). Hamburg: Maribus gGmbH.

"Plastics: A Villainous Material? Or a Victim of its Own Success?" *Science Weekly*. A 33-minute podcast giving a brief history of plastics, the consequences of their circulation in the environment, and a discussion on solutions such as the bio-based economy. Presented by Nicola Davis. Accessible at <https://audio.guim.co.uk/2017/08/28-48000-gnl.sci.170830.ms.plastics.mp3>.

GESAMP. Joint group of experts on the scientific aspects of Marine Environmental Protection. 2015. "Sources, Fate and Effects of Microplastics in the Marine Environment: A Global Assessment." International Maritime Organization. No. 90. Visit http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/descriptor-10/pdf/GESAMP_microplastics%20full%20study.pdf.

The Oceans Solutions Report by SDSN Northern Europe. This compilation of innovative solutions toward achieving SDG No. 14, "Life Below Water" focuses on four key areas: litter, energy, aquaculture, and pollution. The diverse range of ideas presented demonstrates that sustainable use of our ocean is achievable with both policy and cultural changes. Full publication available here, http://www.unsdsn-ne.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Oceans-Solutions-Report_Pages_Web.pdf (2017).

The following scientific journals: *Marine Pollution Bulletin*; *Water Air Soil Pollut*; *Ecology and Society*; *Environment. Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*; *Nature*; and *Environmental Research Letters*.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare at <http://www.ifaw.org>.

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, visit <https://www.pik-potsdam.de>.

A Plastic Ocean – a documentary film that brings to light the consequences of our global disposable lifestyles. Headed by Jo Ruxton, the film was released in January 2017, visit <https://www.plasticoceans.org/film>. If you wish to host an educational and awareness-building film screening of this documentary, then contact <https://www.plasticoceans.org/host-a-screening-form>.

Works Cited

Alaimo, Stacy. "Oceanic Origins, Plastic Activism, and New Materialism at Sea." In *Material Ecocriticism*. Eds. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann. Indiana: Indiana University Press. 2014: 186-203.

Andrady, L. Anthony. "Microplastics in the Marine Environment." *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, Vol. 62 (2011): 1596-1605.

Barnes, D.K.A., A. Walters, and L. Gonçalves. "Macroplastics at Sea Around Antarctica." *Marine Environmental Research*, Vol. 70 (2010): 250-252.

Bowers, C. A. "Why the George Lakoff and Mark Johnson Theory of Metaphor is Inadequate for Addressing Cultural Issues Related to the Ecological Crisis." *Language and Ecology*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2009): 1-16.

Carrington, Damian. "Plastic Pollution Discovered at Deepest Point of Ocean." *The Guardian* (Dec 20 2018a). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/20/plastic-pollution-mariana-trench-deepest-point-ocean>.

- Carrington, Damian. "Marine Life Worse Off Inside Protected Areas, Analysis Reveals." *The Guardian* (Dec 20 2018b). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/20/marine-life-worse-off-inside-protected-areas-analysis-reveals>.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses." *Critical Enquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2009): 197-222.
- Cózar, Andrés *et al.* "The Arctic Ocean as a Dead End for Floating Plastics in the North Atlantic Branch of the Thermohaline Circulation." *Science Advances*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (2017): 1-9.
- Cózar, Andrés *et al.* "Plastic Debris in the Open Sea." *PNAS*, Vol. 3, No. 28 (2013): 10239-10244.
- Cressey, Daniel. "The Plastic Ocean." *Nature*, Vol. 536 (2016): 263-265.
- Deloughrey, Elizabeth. "Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene." *Comparative Literature ACLA Forum. Oceanic Routes*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (2017): 32-44.
- Deloughrey, Elizabeth and George B. Handley. "Introduction: Toward and Aesthetics of the Earth." In *Postcolonial Ecologies. Literatures of the Environment*. Eds Elizabeth Deloughrey and George B. Handley. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011: 3-40.
- Derraik, J. G. B. "The Pollution of the Marine Environment by Plastic Debris: A Review." *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, Vol. 44 (2002): 842-852.
- Dussel, Enrique. "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism." *Nepantla. Views from South*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2000): 465-478.
- Editorial. 2010. "Plastic Pollution: An Ocean Emergency." *Marine Turtle Newsletter*, Vol. 129 (2010): 1-4.
- Emberley, Peter. 1989. "Place and Stories: The Challenge of Technology." *Social Research*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1989): 741-785.
- Eriksen, Marcus *et al.* "Plastic Pollution in the South Pacific Subtropical Gyre." *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, Vol. 68 (2013): 71-76.
- Escobar, Arturo. "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program." *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2-3 (2007): 179-210.
- Escobar, Arturo. "Beyond the Third World: Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-globalisation Social Movements." *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2004): 207-230.
- Folke, Carl and Lars Hall. *Reflection on People and the Biosphere*. Stockholm: Stockholm Research Centre, 2014.
- Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020). Internet: www.cbd.int/GBO5.
- Heise, Ursula. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism." *PMLA*, Vol. 121, No. 2 (2008): 503-16.
- Helmreich, Stefan. "Human Nature at Sea." *Anthropology Now*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2010): 49-60.

- Heyerdahl, Thor. *The Ra Expeditions*. Trans. George Allen and Unwin. Bungay: Book Club Associates. 1972.
- Holm, Poul *et al.* "Humanities for the Environment – A Manifesto for Research and Action." *Humanities*, Vol. 4 (2015): 977–992.
- Hovelsrud, Grete K., *et al.* "Arctic Societies, Cultures, and Peoples in a Changing Cryosphere." *Ambio*, Vol. 40 (2011): 100–110.
- Hunt, Elle. "38 Million Pieces of Plastic Waste Found On Uninhabited South Pacific Island." *The Guardian* (May 16 2017). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/15/38-million-pieces-of-plastic-waste-found-on-uninhabited-south-pacific-island>.
- Jacques, Peter. *Globalization and the World Ocean*. Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2006.
- Jones, H. G. "The Inuit as Geographers: The Case of Eenooolooapik." *Études/Inuit/Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2004): 57–72.
- Kirmayer, Laurence J., Joseph P. Gone and Joshua Moses. "Rethinking Historical Trauma." *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (2014): 299–319.
- Kjeldaa, Sigfrid. "Barry Lopez's Relational Arctic." *Ecozon@*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2014): 72–87.
- Konner, Jeremy. "The Majestic Plastic Bag – A Mockumentary." In *Heal the Bay* (Aug 14 2010). Produced by Jeremy Konner. Narrated by Jeremy Irons. Internet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLghgh2ePYw>.
- Latour, Bruno. "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene." *New Literary History*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (2014): 1–18.
- Lavers, Jennifer L., and Alexander L. Bond. "Exceptional and Rapid Accumulation of Anthropogenic Debris on One of the World's Most Remote and Pristine Islands." *PNAS*, Vol. 11, No. 23 (2017): 6052–6055.
- Laville, Sandra and Matthew Taylor. "A Million Bottles A Minute: World's Plastic Binge As Dangerous As Climate Change." *The Guardian* (Jun 28 2017). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/28/a-million-a-minute-worlds-plastic-bottle-binge-as-dangerous-as-climate-change>.
- Liu, Joanne. "TWD 2017: MSF's Joanne Liu on a World in Denial." *OpenCanada* (Mar 8 2017). Internet: <https://www.opencanada.org/features/iwd-2017-msfs-joanne-liu-world-denial>.
- Lovelock, James. *The Revenge of Gaia. Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity*. New York: Basic Books. 2006.
- Lovelock, James E., and Lynn Margulis. "Atmospheric Homeostasis by and for the Biosphere: The Gaia Hypothesis." *Tellus*, Vol. 26 (1973): 1–2.
- Lukacs, Martin. "Neoliberalism Has Conned Us Into Fighting Climate Change As Individuals." *The Guardian* (Jul 17 2017). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jul/17/neoliberalism-has-conned-us-into-fighting-climate-change-as-individuals>.
- McKie, Robin. "The Oceans' Last Chance: It Has Taken Years of

- Negotiations to Set This Up." *The Guardian* (Aug 5 2018). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/aug/05/last-chance-save-oceans-fishing-un-biodiversity-conference>.
- Medd, Rupert J. Mould. "Disobedience in Paradise: Can We Extend a Loving Frame of Mind in Time for the Amazon?" *Berghahn Books* (2020). Internet: <https://berghahnbooks.com/blog/disobedience-in-paradise-can-we-extend-a-loving-frame-of-mind-in-time-for-the-amazon>.
- Medd, Rupert J. Mould. "Wakas and Water: Julio César Tello's Spiritual Poetics of Archaeology." *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2015a): 147-168.
- Medd, Rupert J. Mould. "The Case for Global Environmental Law." *OpenCanada* (2015b). Internet: <https://www.opencanada.org/features/case-global-environmental-law>.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "Coloniality of Power and De-colonial Thinking." *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2017): 155-67.
- Mitchell, Alanna. "Eating Microplastic Threads. What Does That Do To You? Unknown." *Canadian Geographic*, Vol. 136, No. 6 (2016): 61-65.
- Moore, Jason W. "The Capitalocene, Part 1: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2017): 594-630.
- Moraña, Mabel, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, Eds. *Coloniality at Large. Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Nadir, Christine. "Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature, and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin." *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2010): 24-56.
- Næss, Arne. *The Ecology of Wisdom*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2010.
- Nixon, Rob. "Unimagined Communities: Developmental Refugees, Megadams and Monumental Modernity." *New Formations*, Vol. 69 (2010): 62-80.
- Opperman, Serpil and Serenella Iovino. "Introduction: The Environmental Humanities and the Challenges of the Anthropocene." In *Environmental Humanities. Voices from the Anthropocene*. Eds. Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino. London, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017: 1-21.
- Oppermann, Serpil. "From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures." In *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*. Ed. Hubert Zapf. Berlin; Boston: DeGruyter, 2016: 273-294.
- Oppermann, Serpil. "Enchanted by Akdeniz: The Fisherman of Halicarnassus's Narratives of the Mediterranean." *Ecozon@*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2013): 100-116.
- Oppermann, Serpil. "Seeking Environmental Awareness in Postmodern Fictions." *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (2008): 243-254.
- Oswald, Alice and Madeleine Bunting. "Landscape and Literature Podcast:

- Alice Oswald on the Dart River." *The Guardian Podcasts* (Jul 13 2010). Internet: www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2012/jul/13/1.
- Peters, Kimberley and Mike Brown. "Writing with the Sea: Reflections on In/experienced Encounters with Ocean Space." *Cultural Geographies*, Vol 24, No. 4 (2017): 617-624.
- Plumwood, Val. "Decolonizing Relationships with Nature." In *Decolonizing Nature. Strategies for Conservation in a Post-colonial Era*. Eds. W. M. Adams and Martin Mulligan. London: Earthscan Publishing Ltd., 2003: 51-78.
- Pope Francis. "Overcome Indifference and Win Peace: Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the XLIX World Day of Peace, 1 January 2016." *The Holy See* (2016). Internet: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20151208_messaggio-xlix-giornata-mondiale-pace-2016.html.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality of Power." In *Coloniality at Large; Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*. Eds Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008: 181-224.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2-3 (2007). 168-178.
- Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. *The Little Prince*. Translator's Details Not Given. Istanbul 2014.
- Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. *Wind, Sand and Stars*. Trans. William Rees. St Ives: Penguin Classics, 2000.
- Sebag-Montefiore, Clarissa. "Ghost Nets: The Remote Town Turning Death-Trap Debris Into World-Class Art." *The Guardian* (Jul 12 2017). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/jul/12/ghost-nets-the-remote-town-turning-death-trap-debris-into-world-class-art>.
- Sejersen, Frank. "Horizons of Sustainability in Greenland: Inuit Landscapes of Memory and Vision." *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2004): 71-89.
- Solheim, Erik. "The Planet Is On Edge Of A Global Plastic Calamity." *The Guardian* (Jun 5 2018). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jun/05/the-planet-is-on-edge-of-a-global-plastic-calamity>.
- Spivak, Chakravorty Gayatri. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Steffen, Will et al. "Planetary Boundaries: Guiding Human Development on a Changing Planet." *Scienceexpress* (2015). Internet: <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/early/recent>.
- Steffen, Will, Paul J. Crutzen and John R. McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" *Ambio*, Vol. 36, No. 8 (2007): 614-621.
- Steinwand, Jonathan. "What the Whales Would Tell Us." In *Postcolonial Ecologies. Literatures of the Environment*. Eds Elizabeth Deloughrey and George B. Handley. New York: Oxford University Press. 2011: 182-199.
- Stockholm Resilience Centre. "Planetary Boundaries: A Fundamental

- Misrepresentation of the Planetary Boundaries Framework." *Stockholm Resilience Centre Newsletter* (Jan 5 2018): Internet: <http://www.stockholm-resilience.org/research/research-news/2017-11-20-a-fundamental-misrepresentation-of-the-planetary-boundaries-framework.html>.
- Strauss-Lévi, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1976.
- Szymborska, Wistawa. *Nothing Twice. Selected Poems*. Trans. Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh. Warsaw: Fundacja Wistawy Szymborskiej, 1997.
- UNEP. "Marine Plastic Debris and Microplastics – Global Lessons and Research to Inspire Action and Guide Policy Change." *United Nations Environment Programme* (2016). Internet: <http://www.unep.org/about/sgb/Portals/50153/UNEA/Marine%20Plastic%20Debris%20and%20Microplastic%20Technical%20Report%20Advance%20Copy.pdf>.
- Vermeulen, Pieter. "The Sea, Not the Ocean: Anthropocene Fiction and the Memory of (Non)human Life." *Genre*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2017): 181-200.
- Villarrubia-Gómez, Patricia *et al.* "Marine Plastic Pollution as a Planetary Boundary Threat: The Drifting Piece in the Sustainability Puzzle." *Marine Policy* (2018). Internet: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2017.11.035>.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. "World-Systems Analysis." In *Social Theory Today*. Eds A. Giddens and J. H. Turner. Cambridge: Polity Press. (1987). 309-324.
- Watts, Jonathan. "We Have 12 Years to Limit Climate Change Catastrophe, Warns UN." *The Guardian* (Oct 8 2018). Internet: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>.
- Wheeler, Wendy. "Postscript on Biosemiotics: Reading Beyond Words – and Ecocriticism." *New Formations*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2008): 137-154.
- Zimmerman, Michael E. *Contesting Earth's Future. Radical Ecology and Postmodernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1994.

Jean Painlevé's Surrealism, Marine Life and Non-Ocular Modes of Sensing

Christina Heflin*

Royal Holloway University of London

Abstract

The obsessive representation of and violence against the eye is inescapable in surrealist art, with works like *Un Chien andalou* and *Histoire de l'oeil* being the most renowned for their depictions of acts of ocular defilement. Over the years, scholars have questioned these artists' intentions and have even gone so far as to position them as anti-ocular. Compromising the physical integrity of the eye is not necessarily an outright rejection of vision, as Martin Jay claims. Instead, it questions the hierarchy of the senses and promotes an enrichment of different sensory modes. The use of marine animals in surrealism seen in works by artists like Jean Painlevé represents beings which rely on other modes of sensing, thus navigating their worlds without visual primacy. I argue they are not anti-ocular but anti-ocularcentristic. Surrealism's depictions of marine life reflect an interest in alternative sensory regimes and rejects the primacy of vision above other senses. These representations express a desire to move beyond the eye to expand perception and explore faculties of perception denied to the human eye. Moreover, these works also challenge other concepts such as gender roles, anthropocentrism/the human-animal boundary and C.P. Snow's Two Cultures Theory.

Keywords: surrealism, marine biology, modernism, anthropocentrism, Jean Painlevé

Introduction

Materialism, the biological sciences and the marine within surrealism are under-examined concepts in the scholarship of the avant-garde. In a similarly under-researched vein, there is the work of French filmmaker and marine biologist Jean Painlevé (1902-1989), known for his surreal and pioneering underwater documentary films, and whose place within surrealism as a whole is also rather murky. The underexplored nature of these subjects – marine fauna and surrealism – provides an opening to discover a side of popular science and art in a new way in order to

* Christina.Heflin.2016@live.rhul.ac.uk

consider the implications that materialist – as opposed to metaphysical – science may have had on surrealism and surrealist artists. The root cause of this lack of *a priori* understanding is due to the excessive attention given to metaphysical theory and Freudian psychology in the canonical study of surrealism. This article seeks to change this narrow focus by widening the scope in a discussion of Jean Painlevé and three of his films. In addition to his touching portrayal of underwater sea creatures, what is remarkable about Painlevé's work is his use of the camera as an extension of the human eye. He was one of the first to capture images underwater, giving us a clearer vision than what the eye would normally have had in that medium. He uses new cinematic technologies adored by surrealists like microscopy, acceleration and deceleration to capture what the naked eye cannot. Painlevé and his work also appear to have embodied another typically surrealist pastime, “a magical and creative rebellion” against contemporary civilization and the status quo (Solarik 7). Specifically by taking a critical look at Painlevé's place in this artistic movement, it is also possible to interpret these films as a revolt and a questioning of hierarchies, whether it be related to the human senses, anthropocentrism or patriarchal gender roles.

In his book *Downcast Eyes*, Martin Jay argues that surrealist artists reject ocularism, or the dominance of eyesight above the other senses. He cites myriad reasons including the experience of trench warfare during World War I, where the scope of vision was severely limited and often obscured by blinding light and poisonous gas. Jay argues that works such as Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's 1929 short film *Un Chien andalou* and the 1928 novella written by Georges Bataille *Histoire de l'oeil* depict extreme ophthalmic violence which attacks Cartesian subjectivity and the primacy of vision. He uses two main examples for his argument: the graphic depiction of the slitting of a woman's eye in the beginning of *Un Chien andalou* and the enucleation of a priest and the subsequent defilement of the removed eye in *Histoire de l'oeil*. Jay argues that these representations, along with other works in which the integrity of the eye is compromised, show an anti-ocular position amongst surrealist artists. He states that “in certain cases, the crisis of visual primacy expressed itself in direct terms; in others, it produced compensatory vindications of an alternative scopic order to replace the one that seemed lost” (212). This paper aims to take Jay's position further, focusing on that “alternative scopic order” he evokes and to argue that surrealist artists, by use of marine fauna, were not anti-ocular and that nothing had been lost, but rather they had become anti-ocularcentristic due to both wartime trauma and advances in science and technology. To be ocularcentristic means to be in favor of continuing in the dominance of vision above the other senses despite, in this case, recent wartime violence, whereas the

anti-ocular position implies a need to destroy vision altogether. So, the stance of anti-ocularcentrism – where vision does not reign above the other senses: touch, hearing, smell and taste – assumed by the rebellious surrealists would not only allow for the senses to be used in different ways as a method of going beyond what is typically sensed by the human body and mind but also serve as a way to process this trauma. In addition, I aim to explore how the use of marine fauna in surrealist art exemplifies a desire to go beyond western subjectivity, reflects an interest in alternative sensory regimes, and displays a need to question the primacy of vision. Moreover, I address how surrealist art – especially the interwar cinematic work of Jean Painlevé – supports this notion. Lastly, there is the question of how this expresses a desire to move beyond the natural, unenhanced human eye to expand the senses and challenge the primacy of the human, bringing us to blur the human-animal boundary within the question of anthropocentrism. This will be done in two parts: first, a discussion about the materialist science and the marine found in surrealism and second, a look at three early Painlevé films: *The Sea Urchins*, *The Octopus* and *The Seahorse*.

Materialist Science and the Marine in Surrealism

The interest in going beyond normal human vision as the primary mode of sensing is seen in the rapid advances in technology of the early 20th century and in the development and use of prosthetics at this time. Modernist scholar Tim Armstrong in his book *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* discusses both of these at length and shows how they were used to expand the normal sensorial capacities originally accorded to the human. Telescopes, microscopes, remote listening devices, radio, telegraph, aerial photography, surveillance systems, prosthetic limbs, and plastic surgery were all new ways in which humankind was now able to go beyond itself and its own corporeal limitations. These expansions directly resulting from scientific progress from the First World War may have led artists of the time to question the limitations of the human body. As Margaret Cohen states in “Underwater Optics as Symbolic Form,” “Technologies enable new modes of perception, which transform the imagination and inspire the arts” (1). Regardless of who was on the frontlines, these technologies soon became commonplace in Western society, thereby coming to the forefront of the minds of everyone, including artists and other avant-garde minds.

Many surrealists of the time were known to have read popular science journals, which were full of updates on the advances and discoveries in science and were written simply to appeal to the general public (Morrisson

77). Surrealist publications, such as *Documents* and *Surréalisme*, were also publishing science-adjacent articles with the former also featuring images of various scientific subjects. Even the formatting of the journal *La Révolution surréaliste* which belonged to the official founder of surrealism, André Breton, was based not on the layout of a classic literary revue but rather based on the widely read scientific periodical, *La Nature*. This gave indisputable legitimacy to Breton's place and his publication within the new avant-garde movement. "Irony," wrote one historian, but also a desire, as in hard-science periodicals, to offer proofs: Surrealism exists" (Polizzotti 201-202). Moreover, surrealist artists like Roberto Matta and Wolfgang Paalen were also creating works influenced by phenomena such as magnetic fields and quantum mechanics. There has been so far a rich and thoughtfully presented scholarly examination of this period's interest in the hard sciences, particularly when it comes to physics, mathematics and technology. Gavin Parkinson's examination of surrealism, and Linda Dalrymple Henderson's focus on Marcel Duchamp in particular, are both excellent examples of this. Furthermore, the topics of ecology and animal studies and surrealism have also been addressed by scholars such as Kristoffer Noheden and Donna Roberts for the former and Kirsten Strom for the latter. What is not discussed, however, is the interface between surrealism and the domain of the biological science as a whole, marine or otherwise. This gap in scholarship is an opportunity to witness another facet of the scientific world and place it within the context of Modernism. James Leo Cahill's recent monograph *Zoological Surrealism* touches on the lacuna by going in depth specifically on the subject of Painlevé and his cinematic career, and while it leaves no stone unturned, there is still much to explore regarding the overlap of the marine, surrealism and materialist science.²³

The use of marine fauna, with many of them possessing primary sensory modes other than ocular vision, in surrealist art demonstrates a desire to experience and navigate the world in different ways in order to gain new perspectives. Artists such as Jean Painlevé, Man Ray, Robert Desnos and Eileen Agar featured sea creatures and references to materialist science in their work.²⁴ Between the representations in *Un Chien andalou* and *Histoire de l'oeil* and the works by the aforementioned artists, there

23 In addition to the authors cited here, authors of note who have contributed to this subject include Eva Hayward and the article "OctoEyes" as well as Belinda Smaill's "Encountering Animals: Reviewing the Work of Jean Painlevé," and Scott MacDonald's "Up Close and Political."

24 As several works by Jean Painlevé will be discussed in this article, other examples of surrealist works which also fit this description include but are not limited to: Man Ray and Robert Desnos' *Etoile de mer*, Eileen Agar's *Ceremonial Hat for Eating Bouillabaisse*, *Marine Object* as well as her writings housed at the Tate Archives which feature references to anatomical and cellular bodies.

is evidence of a desire to explore that which is beyond visual in order to expand perception and to challenge the established order. My position is that it was more than what Martin Jay calls an “impoverishment of normal visual experience,” but rather an *enrichment* of the senses by an expansion of perception and a desire to explore alternative sensory modes (215), thus bringing us to what he called an “alternative scopic order” (212). The study of these marine creatures may have led these artists to question visual primacy and to question western subjectivity, but they did not seek to destroy ocularity outright. While Martin Jay does highlight the sensorial trauma experienced during the Great War, it is possible to take this discussion further by going beyond ocular violence and looking at marine fauna as a way of reshuffling the hierarchies found within the status quo, a surrealist act in itself.

While this paper focuses specifically on three cinematic works by Jean Painlevé, a similar argument could be made for the other artists previously mentioned in order to demonstrate a simultaneous engagement in art and science – thereby also defying C.P. Snow’s Two-Culture Theory – as well as a challenging of western subjectivity and human primacy.²⁵ The use and depictions of marine life also demonstrate a desire to explore what was beyond human perception. Some of these artists worked together at times, and despite sometimes being in different geographical regions, they all were likely to have crossed paths at some point in time. This would have been either at a social event, a political demonstration or at any one of the group exhibitions featuring the relatively small circle of surrealist artists in the 1920s and 1930s. Painlevé’s own involvement with surrealist cinematic circles even extends to being credited as the “Chief Ant Handler” for *Un Chien andalou*, which further demonstrates how osmotic these artistic circles really were at this time (Hughes 111). What is particular to Jean Painlevé’s work, however, is that it was so scientific in nature that its surrealist quality was likely to have been secondary or even unintentional, at least initially. His dedication to cinema while it was still in its infancy is also something that sets him apart, as opposed to many of the other artists who used other media to create surrealist works in addition to cinematography. Ultimately, though, his natural ability to capture the surreal in his scientific observations is what has made his work so singularly fascinating to behold.

25 In his 1959 lecture and subsequent publication, C.P. Snow claimed that there was a bifurcation in knowledge, with the arts and science as distinct and separate intellectual activities, though he did make the appeal to bridge them.

The Interwar Works of Jean Painlevé

Painlevé enrolled at the Sorbonne in the fall of 1921 in pre-medical studies but changed to comparative anatomy in his second year where he studied under Paul Wintrebert, an embryologist specialized in fish and amphibians. He also studied at the Roscoff Biological Station in Brittany, which at the time was directed by Charles Pérez, an insects and marine invertebrates specialist. Cahill points out that the era in which Painlevé begins creating his other-worldly scientific films coincides with changes in the study of the natural sciences at the Sorbonne (34). In addition to the new technology which allowed for new ways of observation, there was a renaming of the title of Painlevé's program from the Laboratory of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology to the Laboratory of Comparative Anatomy and Histology. This discrete change from the study of the function of organisms to the study of microanatomy indicated a shift in scale as well as the emergence of the focus on cell theory in the life sciences. During this time there was also the influence of neo-Lamarckian-style research, which – amongst other things – emphasized the importance of observation in the wild and pushed scientists to leave their armchairs and laboratories (Cahill 39). While not all of Painlevé's documentaries were filmed at the sea, some were at least in part. For the ones filmed at his studio in Paris, he did go to great lengths to create settings which did not affect the animals' behavior too negatively, especially with regards to the environment, which required a delicate balance to allow the animals to behave as they would outside of captivity and even posed a fatal risk if warmed to dangerously high temperatures by the lights (Painlevé 131-133).

During the time of his studies, Painlevé, by way of his own engagement with a Communist student club and with his friend and avant-gardist Jacques Boiffard, would soon go on to meet other avant-garde minds such as Jacques Prévert and later Ivan Goll who would give him his first opportunity to contribute to the Surrealist movement with a written work of his own titled "neo-zoological drama." The essay appeared in Goll's first and only issue of *Surréalisme*, in October 1924, published slightly before Breton's own surrealist manifesto, and was prefaced with "Mr. Jean Painlevé, who yesterday was honored by the Academy of Sciences for a very realistic body of work, reveals himself to be a Surrealist as well" (Goll). In it, he uses highly technical and scientific language and elevates jargon to something beyond where "the small turbellaria [marine flatworm] knows the embrace of their mouth" and a "sacred little crustacean with short hair ... would prefer to be born of parthenogenesis than to touch

those threads of the ovoviviparous mesostoma [marine flatworm] ... The Turbellarias seized it, broke into it, pierced it and sucked it; an awful scream echoes and rejoins the lapping of the luminous interferences; the cercariae [larval parasite] come out of their stagnant hymns, throw a gleam and terror encysts them" (Goll). He invokes these slime molds, marine worms, alga and other microscopic animals in a way that allows for non-scientists to experience their beauty. Heavy on descriptions and actions, he creates vignettes of the lives of these creatures, which are whimsically scientific and materialist. Cahill describes Painlevé's contribution as coupling "Latin taxonomic and anatomical vocabulary of comparative anatomy observations with a mischievous sensibility that examined the surreal aspects of scientific observation as potentially a science of disorganization and *dépaysement* that broke with received taxonomic orders" (43). Inga Pollman, in her book *Cinematic Vitalism*, compares it to a Dada sound poem, "for which the evocative power lies in the sound and rhythm of non-sensical words; yet in the case of Painlevé's text, these words do have a real denotation" (152). Painlevé successfully recontextualizes these microscopic creatures in order to bring them beyond the real and stages them for the sake of scientific surrealism. Nearly everything published in *Surréalisme*, unlike Breton's *Le Manifeste surréaliste*, featured a materialist quality. It would appear that Goll left the choice of text to those asked to contribute, sometimes not leaving them much time or say in the matter, but apparently a bit of freedom regarding the content.²⁶

In the course of Jean Painlevé's interwar cinematic career, whose subjects consist primarily of marine life but also include vampire bats, pigeons and spiders, there is a rather earnest attempt to bring an intimate knowledge of these creatures to the surface. Both at the seaside and in his studio – complete with a large aquarium where he often filmed the sea creatures – he draws the viewer in by anthropomorphizing the animals, showing pain, eroticism, savagery and comedy in a way that parallels the human condition. In his narrated films, the effect is even more pronounced, as the viewer is guided both visually and aurally to understand the creature and its very nature. These relatable scenarios make it easier for the viewer to make the leap of faith in imagining that they can experience other sensations experienced by these creatures, particularly the ones normally denied to the human. The viewer develops a veritable sense of empathy towards the creature, which allows for

²⁶ This specifically refers to the piece by Pierre Albert-Birot "my bouquet to surrealism" in which he begins "Do I have something to say on surrealism?" (Goll). This presumably appears to serve as a response to Goll instructing Albert-Birot – who had been influential on and present during Apollinaire's decision to use the term surrealism as opposed to supernaturalism – to say something on the topic.

a deeper submersion into its world where for a few brief moments the viewer becomes the marine animal, blurring the line between human and beast, bringing them closer to their own primitive nature.

Jean Painlevé had a deep reverence for sea creatures and wanted to capture them in order to share his discoveries with the general public. He was one of the first cinematographers to film underwater, after having constructed his own waterproof glass case for his camera. This then allowed him to find the beauty and elegance hidden under the surf and to project it onto a screen. According to artist and curator Marie Jager, "Painlevé's principal motivation was the pleasure he derived from creating these two-dimensional, infinitely detailed and large-scale works out of tiny sea creatures normally considered unworthy of attention" (207). This romantic desire to share a hidden world with the masses was what gave his works such poetry and allowed for incredible depictions of creatures rarely seen beforehand. The artist's ability to see what everyone else overlooked was of course aided by microscopes, which enhanced the field of vision tremendously, but it was his own artistic talent that led him to choose his subjects and film them in such a unique manner, giving a special touch to all of his works.

In addition to magnifying his subjects to show small beasts as larger than life on the big screen, another way in which the senses are put into question is the differing speeds at which Painlevé filmed and projected his works, which created an effect of contracting and expanding time. Inspired by the scientific work of Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotography and Jean Comandon's microphotography, this gave the viewer an opportunity to observe the physiological aspects and processes of these animals in a way like never before. This manipulation of vision was part of a greater surrealist desire to use cinema to expand sight. In his book, Cahill discusses how the avant-garde director and writer Jean Epstein "called for the development of a cinema that could open human perception to perspectives and phenomena, that for reasons of speed, scale or ideological blindness, remained outside of the field of everyday perception" (21). Cahill even mentions how the art historian Henri Focillon praised cinema as early as 1935 for "potentially expanding the purview of aesthetics and aesthetic experience, which had "made so little room for other orders of life," toward a renewed curiosity regarding the more-than-human world of plants, animals, and shells" (21). This speaks to cinema's role as an extension of vision and its value in observation. The specifically surreal quality of underwater filming is addressed by Cohen, "In the medium of air, surrealist photographers achieved such effects with highly crafted techniques, such as close-ups from unusual angles, lighting, cropping and the way they developed film. But what required an artist's skill to create in the medium of air is intrinsic to optics at depth"

(18). This acknowledgement of Painlevé's ability to translate vision from one medium to another speaks to his capacities as both a filmmaker as well as a science communicator. Chronophotography and microphotography were both instrumental in Painlevé's work. This was especially the case early in his career, with the former being a precursor to cinema and allowing for enhanced observation of subjects and their movement and the latter permitting observation of processes and details never seen before by the general public. These technologies revolutionized the domains of both science and art, leading to advances in both fields to later develop at exponential rates. Painlevé employed these new technologies and created his own techniques to produce mesmerizing documentaries about underwater sea creatures. Each film used these tools in different ways, creating film after film that was both visually distinct while remaining true to his style.

Analysis of Three Films by Jean Painlevé

Les Oursins

In observing Painlevé's 1927 silent film *The Sea Urchins* (*Les Oursins*), two different types of echinoids are presented. The first one depicted gives the viewer a brief introduction to the animal and its habitat. The second species is featured more in depth where the audience is brought up close and personal in order to see how it moves and feeds. Painlevé brings the camera to 200,000 times magnification, which on a 3 by 4-meter screen would allow the audience to see the functioning of the ends of the urchin's spines, revealing the creature's tools for both eating and locomotion, on a huge scale. The spines and tube feet contain sensory organs, which allow for both tactility and light sensing (Fox 904). In the 10-minute film Painlevé reveals a sea urchin moving upwards onto a rock, likely portrayed with the help of accelerated projection, though nevertheless a remarkable feat for the sea urchin. Without this technique of acceleration, the viewer would have continued thinking of the seemingly sedentary sea urchin as having no kind of locomotion. The film ends with microscopic images of the tube feet, jaws, and claw-like appendages all in wild motion on the surface of the sea urchin's spines, and all typically hidden from the naked eye, before panning out to an image of the whole sea urchin filling the screen. Painlevé has brought the viewer "face to face" with the animal. Cahill brings to light that "*The Sea Urchins* complicates the implicit anthropometrics of cinematography, which, for practical reasons, refers to camera setups based on the anatomy of human actors (close-up, medium shot, full short, etc.), tending to implicitly "humanize" whatever it

films" (81). This further blurs the human-animal barrier; the viewer cannot experience these sea urchins without implicit knowledge of the human body. It is the viewer's innate knowledge of their own bodies that pushes them towards feeling as the animal would have felt. As scholar Caroline Hovanec describes in her discussion on natural history films, they "do not just *reveal* the natural world via an expansion of vision; they also work to *change* viewers' affective responses to nature. They foster a love for strange, pesky, and mundane species..." (246). This connection brings us closer to the animal due to the alchemy between the filmmaker's masterful capturing of the creature's behavior and our own ability to empathize. Moreover, Hovanec continues on this topic pointing out the challenge to anthropocentrism, which she states is due in part to the "inhuman vision of the camera" (246). To further build on this point, the fact that these animals are being viewed through this machine vision annihilates the existential hierarchy between the creature observed and the human due to the fact that it is no longer a question of solely dealing with members of the animal kingdom. We are now one step removed, which levels the playing field, leaving a question of the repositioning of the human in relation to the animal in Jean Painlevé's films.

In Painlevé's 1929 article *Les Films biologiques*, he described the surface of the sea urchin as seen through microcinematography as "the strangest, most surreal decorative theme, evocative of a cataclysm, of a temple in ruins, of vanished flora, the magnifications of the spines presenting Doric columns, the pedicellaria worming their way into the optical field with spasmodic motions – in sum, a bit of a lost world" (Cahill 83). In addition, Painlevé's work as well as his play of scale and speed introduce and allow us to develop a certain intimacy with the sea urchin, which, typically motionless and unremarkable, has now suddenly become livelier and more intriguing. In the unnarrated documentary film, the viewer is given a brief introduction to the sea urchin's way of negotiating stimuli in the world. They are also given insight into the way it senses in its environment as well as the way in which it moves, all otherwise heretofore unknown to most of us terrestrials. This is all thanks to Painlevé's ability to display the animal's dynamic characteristics through magnification and close-ups. "The close-up, as the most visibly manifest technique of Surrealist facts and their discovery by means of the cinematic enlargement of comparative anatomy, may be an instrument of metamorphosis, wherein a critical regard at the different, dynamic aspects of animal life simultaneously effects a potentially transformative shift of orientation and perspective regarding humans" (Cahill 90). The filmmaker uses these shots to communicate with their viewer; the choice of the area upon which is focused is never by chance.

La Pieuvre

Painlevé's 1927 film *The Octopus* (*La Pieuvre*) is an example of a challenge of anthropocentrism. Specifically, there are two examples: first, the depiction of the animal's eye and the way in which it is described as similar to that of a human being and second, the way in which Painlevé anthropomorphizes the octopus throughout the film. It begins with an octopus sliding across a platform. Next, it is escaping out of a window like a teenager sneaking out to join its octo-pals for a party. Then the camera cuts to it quickly moving over a doll, then climbing in a tree and then again over a human skull. Cahill points out that the film "visualizes the productive contamination of zoology and comparative anatomy by its entry into spaces not traditionally associated with it" (63). This placement of the octopus out of its natural habitat and into human scenery creates a liminal space in which the octopus-human line is blurred. After a cut to a sandy beach, the octopus slithers into the surf and swims away. Next, one is shown swimming around in a tide pool, and the viewer is treated to close-ups of its closed eye where it is possible to observe its breathing as well. Then the intertitle: "Open eye, very human." After that: "Breathing" where there are valve-like gills moving in and out in a mechanism similar to that of human breathing – yet nevertheless very strange to witness – especially as the camera brings us to observe close up to the point of abstraction. The uncanny scene is perfectly described by Freud's own definition of the term, from his eponymous 1919 book which is "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (301).

Later in his discussion of the Sand-man, Freud addresses the uncanny in the difficulty to discern whether what is seen is actually animate or lifeless, human or inhuman. There is also the importance of and the anxiety around the sense of intact vision in relation to the uncanny, with Freud's discussion of the self-blinding Oedipus and the blinded-by-sand victims of The Sandman, as well as the role of vision within the concept of what is familiar. Painlevé's image of the octopus and its accompanying intertitle "Open eye, very human" fit in perfectly with Freud's discussion of the uncanny precisely because of the blurring of the human/animal distinction. Given that many surrealists were taken by Freud's findings at this time, it is no surprise that Painlevé's scientific documentaries were so revered by these artists. As Ann Elias confirms, in the early twentieth century the sea "was still surrounded by mystery" and "stood for the unknown" (5). The uncanny quality – where the viewer finds the recognizable in a creature never before seen at this proximity, the unknown being made known – of Painlevé's non-fictional films about marine fauna was what made them so exceptional and worthy of

the viewer's attention, whether it be that of a scientist or of a surrealist.

Despite the visual limitations of black and white film, Painlevé nonetheless manages to depict the octopus's ability to change color. Zoomed out, there are small changes in the grayscale on the screen, but when a highly magnified part of the octopus's skin is shown, it is possible to see the movement of the cells that result in the changing of color. Next, shown together in an aquarium, two octopuses thrash about violently until the viewer is warned by an intertitle: "Death" showing the demise of one of the cephalopods. After tagging along on a brief trip to the beach to catch more specimens, the viewer is brought back to the studio aquarium to see an agitated octopus writhing back and forth in front of the camera. Then to finish the viewer is shown two more octopuses in the tank squaring off against a crab in a fight to the death. Octopuses: 1, Crab: 0.

Compared to Painlevé's film on the sea urchins, which was made the same year, there are some differences visible in *The Octopus*. Given the different natures of these two marine animals, it was certainly easier for the artist to create a more captivating story about the cephalopod due to its mobility and curious appearance. While Painlevé did manage to create more dynamism than could have been expected in the sea urchin thanks to his use of acceleration and microcinematography, the octopus is admittedly more easily engaging to a general audience, something he purposefully sought out while also presenting scientific research before the Academy of Science, which later helped film to be considered as a legitimate tool of scientific observation. For the general public, however, Painlevé's films singularly brought out more than just the animal nature of the creatures. He demonstrated how they negotiated the world around them, and he made them relatable to humans.

The anthropomorphizing of these creatures can be seen as problematic due to what Cahill describes as typically dismissed as "a narcissistic and epistemologically lazy manner of seeing the reflection of man's image and human values in the nonhuman world" (97). On the other hand, I argue that it also has the possibility of creating a point of contact between the viewer and the animal. This potentially leads to not only a more impactful understanding of the science behind the film, but it also displays the commonalities between the human and these creatures, challenging the primacy of the human. The empathic resonance between animal and human appears to have been one of the main aims of the artist; making for a sort of gift of understanding of the marine on an affective level, or at least an introduction to a completely different world. Jean Painlevé's films were concurrently advancing the research, documentation and knowledge of marine life and were as surreally entertaining and beautiful as they were educational.

L'Hippocampe

Just like in *The Octopus*, *The Seahorse (L'Hippocampe)* – which was made in 1934 and was Painlevé's most commercially successful film – uses narrative to anthropomorphize the sea creatures, thereby challenging human primacy by creating a bond between the audience and the seahorses. The film depicts the male seahorse's unique trait of carrying fertilized eggs throughout gestation and later childbirth. The presentation of a reversal of biological roles in which the male seahorse gives birth instead of the female of the species was what struck the general public the most and was reflected in the press reviews after its release. As Cahill points out, "Surrealists were fascinated with the strange eroticism, zoological anomalies, and convulsive beauty of the film; certain feminists recognized in it another model for the sexual division of labor, while traditionalists and conservatives saw in it a celebration of maternity and paternity...*The Seahorse* provided a perfect sign of the "contradictory forces," to borrow Painlevé's description of the creature, at play in the film as well as in inter-war France" (162). Here there is a further blurring of lines, this time displaying sexuality outside of a binary system and placing it within a spectrum upon which the being – regardless of species – is placed individually.

As opposed to his previous films mentioned earlier, which were silent with intertitles, Painlevé has finally given in to "the talkie." The auditive element is added and is used to stimulate the viewer's senses further. This time with music and narration, the world of the seahorse is demystified as the viewer is given a glimpse of Painlevé's aquarium habitat filled with dozens of seahorses. The narrator informs the viewer of the seahorse's prehensile tail, used to anchor itself to objects and attach to each other. Painlevé brings out the animals' tenderness, playfulness and affection when they interact with each other and their tails intertwine. Later Painlevé shows a male seahorse in painful contractions, while the narrator explains the birthing process with both wit and compassion, allowing for the viewer to imagine its pain and sympathize with the poor creature. In addition to the scene of the seahorse in labor, the different anatomical parts of the animal are displayed, including full-screen magnified shots of tiny structures like the eye, heart, swim bladder, dorsal fin, and respiratory organs. Further on, the film speed is slowed down so as to allow the viewer to observe the mechanism of the seahorse's beating heart. It is important to observe the similarity of presenting the way in which the seahorse breathes compared to the way in which it was portrayed for *The Octopus* six years prior. Painlevé deviated from *The Octopus*, however, in how he describes the way in which the seahorse can also change its color, leaving us to take his word for it instead of showing us first-hand in both macro- and micro-vision as he did previously.

Part of the film's success was also from the fact that viewers were seeing new worlds for the very first time. Filming coincided with technological advances in both film and underwater exploration.

The film's primary experimental aspect – in terms of conducting research on and by film – concerned underwater filmmaking and the possibility of pushing the traditions of field research even further than the tidal pools and ship decks on which it relied...it...marked its legacy as one of the “first” films shot fully immersed underwater rather than through a glass-bottom boat, aquarium, or submerged column, as John Ernest Williamson used in the Bahamas in the 1910s (Cahill 168).

Painlevé presents full-screen images of the seahorse's eye multiple times throughout the 15-minute documentary. This brings the human to the animal, erasing the distance and allowing new channels of communication to open. He invites the viewer to see as the seahorse sees and take on underwater vision. Cohen states that “Perception beneath the water [...] would appeal to modernisms that explored an emotional palette of wonder as an antidote to bourgeois aesthetics and society [...] at once otherworldly and completely secular. Surrealism was the most famous of these movements, and a number of surrealists drew on the aquatic world to give this wonder spatial expression” (3). Underwater vision – and those who used it – is nothing like terrestrial vision. Perspective as well as light refraction are completely changed and give the viewer different abilities of sight and light sensing. Human sensory modes are at a disadvantage beneath the water and benefit greatly from adapting to those of creatures who have made the sea their home.

Painlevé interprets the seahorse's body language throughout the film, anthropomorphizing it and tells the viewer that while its eye's movement gives it a worried look, the shape of its mouth gives it more of an appearance of boredom. Comparing the appearance of the animal to a King Charles Spaniel goes beyond anthropomorphism and into what I call *trans-zoopomorphism* as an attempt to familiarize the viewer with the little-known creature. As Cahill describes, “Seahorses evoke the strange encounters, unexpected couplings, exquisite corpses, and juxtapositions that Surrealists placed at the heart of their poetic practices and that filmic montage and superimposition render concrete. Like the creature it studied, the film comprises a series of contrasting elements” (178). Breton's idea of the exquisite corpse was that of a fragmented yet unified body, be it image or text, which embodies the idea of Painlevé's film about the seahorse perfectly (Lyford 25). This emphasizes the film of the seahorse as opposed to the animal itself, as it is the lens through which Painlevé presents the image of the creature that is surreal.

Then later in the film, while the seahorse is giving birth, the narrator speaks of the anguish in the male seahorse's eyes as it breathes laboriously and writhes in pain while its belly ejects newborn seahorses – also known as fry – over the span of several hours. With image and commentary, the viewers are guided through the world of the seahorse and cannot help but to feel its pain as it holds on to a branch with its tail and goes into labor. Once again Painlevé brings the viewer to practically feel the pain of the poor sea creature as it agonizingly expresses first the fry and then later on while expelling the residual gas from its pouch after finishing childbirth. Painlevé genuinely empathized with the animals he filmed, and though he did dissect some of the creatures, he has discussed at length topics of regret, animal cruelty and his questioning of the power dynamics between animals and humans.²⁷ The depiction of the seahorse is not all grim, however, as the viewer is also shown a lighter side of the study of the animal with juvenile seahorses playing with each other, reminiscent of human children at a playground. To continue on the lighthearted note and in his own uncanny maneuver, Painlevé ends the film with a humorous wink while discussing the unique quality of the vertically-swimming aquatic vertebrate while seahorses frolic in the foreground and the shot reveals a televised horse race visible behind the aquarium.

Aside from the wonderfully informative yet entertaining quality of the film, Jean Painlevé's work depicting the seahorse is remarkable also because of the animal's unique quality of being one of the few animals in which sexual role reversal occurs. The transfer of the eggs from the female to the male during mating and their subsequent fertilization leaves the male seahorse saddled with gestation and childbirth. There are even Surrealist parallels to be drawn between the seahorse and the storyline of Apollinaire's *Breasts of Tirésias* in which sexual roles are reversed, and the father bears the offspring. The film and the choice of subject can be seen as a challenge to the gender role where the female human is burdened with these responsibilities. The exploration and consideration of another possibility for procreation in which the functions are reversed allows for further questioning of other previously established modes of life and the status quo. "In his photos, films, and writing, Painlevé was inspired by the way in which the denizens of the marine world thwarted Enlightenment categories, which he also allied with bourgeois morality" (Cohen 15). Additionally, though while it was not rare for women to broach the subject at this time, the fact that a male surrealist artist was exploring this theme can be seen as being even more remarkable. As Patricia Allmer

27 Cahill discusses this in citing a 1935 article (176). Painlevé also addresses the subject in a 1988 interview for the documentary *Jean Painlevé au fil de ses films*.

notes, "whilst surrealist thought radically challenged hierarchies, it often remained blind to its own gender politics, locked in a heterosexual, sometimes homophobic, patriarchal stance positioning and constructing women (and never men) as artists' muses, femmes-enfants, virgins, dolls and erotic objects" (13). More specifically, the leader of the surrealist movement, André Breton, was known for relegating women in surrealist circles to the role of muses, not equals; rarely artists of their own right deserving of respect and consideration.²⁸ British surrealist artist Eileen Agar confirms Breton's ideas for a woman's place within the movement recalling in her memoir, "Amongst the European Surrealists double-standards seem to have proliferated, and the women came off worst. Breton's wife, Jacqueline, was expected to behave as the great man's muse, not to have an active creative existence of her own. In fact, she was a painter of considerable ability, but Breton never mentioned her work" (120-121). As pre-eminent surrealism scholar Whitney Chadwick describes the condition of women at this time within surrealist circles, they were "the image of man's inspiration and his salvation" (13). Painlevé's unconventional desire to depict this role reversal shows yet another way in which he was using marine life to question established and culturally accepted norms.

In fact, Amy Lyford addresses the topic of surrealism and gender at length in her book, *Surrealist Masculinities*. Looking at the larger picture of the condition of masculinity following the carnage of the First World war is essential in order to contextualize the significance of Painlevé's documentary film which depicts the male seahorses giving birth. There was a national campaign within France to assuage fears following the war which highlighted the family unit as a way of healing from the physical and psychological trauma experienced by the masses. As she states, "The postwar society in which the surrealists lived was rife with images promoting traditional social roles for men and women: images of robust manhood and female maternity cropped up everywhere as if they were antidotes to the terrible memories evoked by the sight of veterans' wounded bodies" (4). Lyford points out that this incongruent imagery, with the lived reality of countless widows and so many mutilated bodies and the propaganda from the state featuring strong men and growing families, provoked a reaction from the surrealists who sought to rebel

28 Penelope Rosemont, in her book *Surrealist Women. An International Anthology*, however, challenges this generally accepted notion within the study of surrealism. She points out that Breton and his circle rallied against the enemies of feminism: religion, the state, family, the military, and other things she describes as other "ruling male chauvinist obsessions." She uses this to argue that their position in fact rendered them as allies to feminist ideology (xliv). My interpretation acknowledges a divide between their theoretical ideology and their everyday lives, as their stance appears to have been a rebellion against society and the status quo rather than a fight for equality amongst the sexes.

against the government's efforts and "destabilize the gender roles that had cemented traditional ideas about the family, one of the key institutional building blocks of French national identity" (5). Though she does not specify if Painlevé was particularly reactive to this notion, it nevertheless displays an ongoing theme within the zeitgeist. Looking at the work of Painlevé as a whole, the idea that he was focused on subverting or in any way promoting deviance is unlikely, but rather it appears that he has taken his surreal work one step further by subverting subversion: the male seahorse is depicted fulfilling its parental obligations with a sense of stoicism and duty. Painlevé always kept to the outskirts of surrealist circles, which allowed him to avoid obligations to create from within the confines of surrealist definitions.

Lyford also points out that at this time, "ideas about the existence of a so-called third sex and debates about the rise of an emphatically "homosexual aesthetic" became increasingly popular" (142).²⁹ This means that ideas beyond the binary nature of sex were already being explored to some degree in France, though it is necessary to account for the whereabouts of the discussion's place on either the academic realm or within popular society. There was also the great popularity of Barquette, a popular cabaret performer in Paris who, at the end of each performance would reveal a masculine body which had been hidden under makeup, wigs and fancy dresses. Lyford dedicates an entire chapter to Barquette and sexual metamorphosis in a discussion of "corporeal integration of social and sexual opposites – male and female" (177). The idea of sexual ambiguity was indeed on the minds of many at this time. However, the commercial success of Painlevé's film tells us that many non-scientists were implicated in observing the specific phenomenon of male childbirth for the very first time, and there was a certain amount of novelty for many spectators. Essentially, the film about these funny little fish was taking what was considered to be a simple biological fact and a basic construct within society for humans – that the females of the species are the ones who bear the offspring – and turning it on its head. This went beyond ideas of gender or a male performer in makeup: this was nature showing us that nothing is what it seems.

29 In her own footnote, Lyford includes the following references, "The growing literature on the so-called third sex in France at the time included the work of Willy (Prof. Dr. Lery-Lenz), such as *Le Troisième Sexe* (Paris: Paris-Editions, 1927) and *Encyclopédie de la Vie Sexuelle* (Paris: Aldor, 1934)" (205).

Conclusion

The cinematic work of Jean Painlevé straddles the worlds of both art and science. A talented research scientist in his own right, this son of the famous mathematician and politician Paul Painlevé was also an avid lover of cinema. When he was able to bring these two passions together, though taking neither too seriously, eschewing the label of surrealist and claiming that "science is fiction," he used his love of nature and animals to create some of the most visually marking and otherworldly images of the era (Bellows xiv). In the 1935 article "Feet in the Water," Painlevé wrote of his time as a filmmaker: "The job has its joys for those who love the sea. Wading around in water up to your ankles or navel, day and night, in all kinds of weather, even when there is no hope of finding anything; investigating everything whether it be algae or an octopus...This is the ecstasy of an addict..." (xv). His passion and dedication to his work and to marine life is visible from his many writings and interviews he gave throughout his long life.

Though his application of marine surrealism in the field of cinema is what makes him unique, the work of Jean Painlevé is but one of several examples of surrealist artists using marine animals and other biological subjects in order to explore alternative scopic regimes. Moreover, his genre of film – the documentary – is what set him apart from other surrealist filmmakers like Man Ray, Germaine Dulac, Luis Buñuel or Salvador Dalí. "Documentary surrealism occurs when the haunting presence of the referent (the model) lacerates or irrupts through the filmic signifier (the image), slitting the screen like so many eyeballs, and sparking materialist inquiry into the spectral presence of the strange creatures and estranged circumstances of global modernity" (Cahill 232). As a whole, artists using marine fauna were in search of a way to depict the challenging of western subjectivity, gender roles and human primacy as well as a way to display their engagement with materialist science. Though the questioning of vision at the top of sensorial hierarchy did not necessarily seek to place any of the other modes of sensing in a place of dominance, there was a desire to at least disrupt the primacy of vision as a way of exploring alternative modes of sensation. It was expansion in order to exploit the five senses to better negotiate the rapidly changing world. Looking to these creatures provided reassurance that post World War I society was not trapped in the dark, but that it could continue forward in this new world using other senses to interpret and make sense of all of the new stimuli around us.

Works Cited

- Agar, Eileen. *A Look at my Life*. Methuen, 1988.
- Allmer, Patricia. *Angels of Anarchy. Women Artists and Surrealism*. Prestel, 2009.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology, and the Body. A Cultural Study*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Bellows, Andy Masaki, ed. *Science is Fiction*. MIT Press, 2000.
- Cahill, James Leo. *Zoological Surrealism. The Nonhuman Cinema of Jean Painlevé*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Chadwick, Whitney. *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*. Thames & Hudson, 1985.
- Cohen, Margaret. "Underwater Optics as Symbolic Form". *French Politics, Culture & Society*. Dossier: Technology, the Visual and Culture, Vol. 32, No. 3, (Winter 2014): 1-23.
- Elias, Ann. "Sea of Dreams: André Breton and the Great Barrier Reef." *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 10. University of Manchester Press, Summer 2013.
- Fox, Richard, et al. *Invertebrate Zoology. A Functional Evolutionary Approach*. Thomson Brooks/Cole, 2004.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Uncanny*. Penguin Books, 2003.
- Goll, Yvan, dir. "drame néo-zoologique", *Surréalisme*. Issue 1, October 1, 1924, Paris. Internet: <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb32874286j>.
- Hovanec, Caroline. "Another Nature Speaks to the Camera: Natural History and Film Theory." *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol. 26, nMo. 2 (2019): 243-265.
- Hughes, Helen. *Green Documentary. Environmental Documentary in the Twenty-first Century*. Intellect Books, 2014.
- Jager, Marie. "Sea of Joy." *Jean Painlevé*. IKON Museum exhibition catalog. Birmingham, UK, IKON, 2017.
- Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought*. University of California Press, 2009.
- Lyford, Amy. *Surrealist Masculinities*. University of California Press, 2007.
- Morrisson, Mark S. *Modernism, Science, and Technology*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016.
- Painlevé, Jean. «Feet in the Water» («Les Pieds dans l'eau»). *Voilà*. May 4, 1935. Translated excerpt from Bellows, *Science is Fiction*.
- Polizzotti, Mark. *Revolution of the Mind. The Life of André Breton*. Black Widow Press, 2009.
- Pollmann, Inga. *Cinematic Vitalism. Theories of Life and the Moving Image*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Rosemont, Penelope. *Surrealist Women. An International Anthology*. The University of Texas Press, 1998.

Solarik, Bruno. "The Walking Abyss: Perspectives on Contemporary Czech and Slovak Surrealism." *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 3. University of Manchester Press, Spring 2005.

Snow, Charles Percy. *The Two Cultures*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts

Studia Mediterranea

Edited by: Paula Jurišić

Terror of Acceptance: Mass-Murders and Political Dystopia

Leo Rafolt*

Josip Juraj Strossmayer University, Osijek

Abstract

The paper offers a comparative analysis of Franco Berardi Bifo's treatise on modern terrorism (*Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*, 2015) and its (semio)capitalist background on one side and Montažstroj's theatrical performance, inspired by a half-documentary fiction novel *Jugend Ohne Gott* (1937) by Ödön von Horváth, on the other. Employing some of the contemporary theoretical insights on violence and terror in modern society, Montažstroj's performance is thus interpreted in the context of recent theories of globalization – and its prevalent communication and circulation of capital paradigms – as well as in the light of Breivik's Darwinist and anti-Marxist manifesto.

Keywords: globalization, terrorism, fear, Breivik, Montažstroj, Ödön von Horváth

“Conquistador” writes in a comment: “I know a guy that wants to end himself but the only reason he goes on is because he's looking forward to the next major movie, comic book, and video game release. I kid you not.” (Berardi Bifo 2015: 28).

One man's imagined community is another man's political prison.
(Appadurai 2006: 5)

There are three interconnected discourses present in this paper, occurring and reoccurring in different, fictional and factional modes of their existence, firstly in a half-documentary metafiction *Youth Without God* (*Jugend Ohne Gott*, 1937) by Ödön von Horváth, then in Franco Berardi Bifo's theoretical treatise (*Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*, 2015), and thirdly, in Montažstroj's theatre adaptation of von Horváth's novel. These discourses establish a strong relation to contemporary problems of mass-murders, either under the political semantics of terrorism, threat to humanity, or,

* lrafolt@gmail.com

on the other hand, in the light of the widespread political or even post-political conformism in Europe, mainly its political elites, towards all of the above mentioned topics. Before going into the elaboration of some aspects of von Horváth's oeuvre, as well as their re-emerging structures in Montažstroj's piece, I would like to call upon some well-known thesis on political and post-political *nomos* and its relations to terrorism structures. In one of his essays, Walter Benjamin discusses the nature of legally and politically justified resistance, a force in which, paradoxically, its criticism is contained. The author points out that the most common task of any critique of force ought to be described as a representation of its relation to law or justice, because the cause, however effective, becomes violence only when it engages in moral relations towards law and justice (Benjamin 5). Author emphasizes the importance of the three basic principles of action integrated in legal force: first one, of structural nature, which implies a force that embodies the legal-political order or, on the contrary, abolishes it; second, according to which the most elementary of all relations inside of the legal-political order is that between the goal and the means; and the final, third one, according to which political force could serve both righteous and unrighteous ends, as fore the transcendent mean consequently transcends the ends. Fundamental question of the philosophy of politics, therefore, according to Benjamin, should be that of the justification of force in favor of just ends and not that of the legal and/or political justification of violence *per se*. For Benjamin, political force is always a raw material, a natural product, and can be applied ideologically without any doubt, but the unjust goals, nevertheless, as the author continues, require "just criticism." Benjamin emphasizes the difference between natural and positive law, which is to say that the natural-law thesis of force, thus, as something naturally given, can always be countered by the positive-legal assumption of force as a historical and political side-product, that is, the result of the validity and/or narrowness of interpretation of legal norms, which are, in a way, nonetheless binding. Natural law seeks to justify its ends, although it rarely succeeds, while, on the other side, positive law seeks to guarantee the ends by the pure justification of means. For both assumptions, the blind spots of logics emerge. Positive law is often blind to non-conditionality of goals, while natural law often skips the pre-conditionality of resources. Therefore, Benjamin concludes, there is a necessity to (re)appeal some form of validity and non-validity of political force, beyond any legal-political norm and its axiological and dogmatic interpretations. However, there lies a paradox of the norm itself. General claim of European law could be expressed as follows: natural aims of the individual are usually in conflict with legal aims, if exercised by greater or lesser force. Law considers force in the hands of the individual as a danger that undermines the legal order, a danger that challenges legal

goals and/or all legal executives. One therefore ought to reconsider the sudden possibility that the interests of the system to monopolize force against the individual cannot thus be explained by an intention to protect legal ends, but rather to defend the whole system itself. A force thus established as a pure mean, whether in a legally favorable or in a completely unfavorable case, participates in the problem of law in general, as a creative or mythical force. For Benjamin the mythical force in its primordial form is a manifestation of the gods. It is not a manifestation of their will, and above all a manifestation of their existence, in the ancient sense of a force of punishment that reflects the right, as shown by the legends of heroes, in which the hero as Prometheus provoked with daring fate, struggles with it with changing luck, but the legend does not deprive him of hope that one day he will bring a new justice to people. These kinds of heroes, as Berardi would say, and this kind of legal power, innate to this myth, are in fact what the people still present to themselves today when they admire the villain, such as the modern terrorist (19). The function of the force that “establishes” law, in this sense, is twofold. On one hand, every establishment of order or justice is, at the same time, an establishment of power and an act of direct manifestation of force. Power and force, on the other hand, through involvement in the establishment of rights, transcend justice, which is why the ignorance of the law does not guarantee punishment, nor does knowledge of the law, of course, guarantee a positive effect or, in Foucault’s words, discipline. The mythical force, in Benjamin’s conception, is the one that will establish the order, while the divine one will destroy it, will question it. But, interestingly, Benjamin consequently displaces divine power, as well as all its actions, from the sphere of religious tradition into the sociopolitical order, calling it, however, by various names, as the educational, political, social or moral vertical of the legal order *sui generis*. The existence of such a force could lead to violence, destruction, but Benjamin is against such interpretations, because they reduce a person to a “mere life” or to the mere executioner of something beyond the legal norm – as an exception (23). Carl Schmitt used to believe that state-building consisted in constantly leveling the possibilities of both external and internal hostility. The national *raison d’être* is exhausted in the idea of the potential crisis or conflict that lies ahead. According to him, a crisis is much more interesting than a rule or norm, or a kind of normal state, especially since the state of crisis arises from some form of anomaly and exception. This is not, of course, about legal-political chaos, an uncontrollable state of anarchy, but, above all, a state that cannot be subordinated to anything, because it exists by itself, beyond law and within law, beyond its norms and *nomos* in entirety. The authority of the sovereign, for Carl Schmitt, not only adheres to political or legal order, derives from it, as a norm, but

at the same time – transcending it. Every norm presupposes a normal situation and no norm can thus be applied in a completely abnormal situation. As long as the state is a political entity, this request for internal peace compels it to decide, in critical situations, in emergence of an internal enemy (Schmitt 46). The relationship between the protection of order, discipline and, finally, obedience, is a central theme of Schmitt's philosophy of law and his political theology, and it can easily be applied to modern terrorism, directed towards some imaginary anti-European and/or anti-Christian “mutual enemy.” The decision to attack thus frees itself from all normative elements and becomes an absolute in the true sense of the word. New anti-migrant hostility that re-emerged in a recent decade epitomizes the whole concept of the systematic response to a *common threat*, as well as its problematic nature.

Giorgio Agamben, among many others, has repeatedly attempted to re-conceptualize the basic tenets of Schmitt's philosophy of law, or to incorporate them into his own explorations of relationship between bare life and its superior social and political legislation. On one occasion, he points out that it was certainly difficult to reconcile the idea of divine omnipotence with the idea of an orderly and non-arbitrary, meaningfully non-chaotic rule, i.e. “nomos of the earth” (Schmitt 7). Michel Foucault concludes in a similar manner, when he distinguishes three basic modalities in the history of power: the first considers the state of sovereignty and indicates what enters the legal norm, and what comes out, what is punishable, and what is not; the second relates, in turn, to medical, police or criminal and sociopolitical mechanisms of disciplining, that is, of controlling, supervising and/or correcting the bodies of its subjects; the third, after all, refers to a kind of “security apparatus” or what Foucault calls “rule of the people.” If a ruler rules, according to Foucault, he certainly does not govern, because governance is much more than “a game of sovereignty” (Foucault 76). Governance, therefore, should be defined as a technique over a technique, which implies a secularized concept of the soul-care (*regimen animatorum*). Agamben, thus, points out that the ancient Greek language did not possess a single word to express life. Two terms, *zōé* and *bíos*, explicable by a common etymological root – *zōé*, which expresses a simple fact of life, common to all living beings (animals, humans, and gods), and *bíos*, which refers to form or mode of life inherent to an individual or a group (Agamben 2006: 7), thus imply the gradual incorporation of natural life forms into mechanisms of state power. The bare life in Western politics has been privileged so far, as the one on whose exclusion a community of people is based, which is why the basic categorical pair of Western politics is not *a friend* and *an enemy* but *a bare life* versus *political existence*, *zōé* in conflict with *bíos*, or even *inclusion* versus *exclusion*, *us* versus *them*, and thus *individuality* against

difference. Schmitt's idea of the sovereign is at the root of Agamben's definition, because it situates its subject both outside and within the order, which in turn gives him the power to suspend valid laws and the validity of laws in general. The Roman procedural exception exemplifies this "quality" of the exception procedure – this exclusionary procedure that originally served as a mean of defending an accused in the court – but, at the same time, it excludes the concept of "barbarian otherness". The norm proves nothing and indicates nothing, the exception not only confirms the rule, the rule truly lives out of the exception, which is why there is no *nomos* in the establishment of *nomos*, fixed and/or permanent rules (Schmitt 5-35). The state of emergency is born precisely out of the indecisiveness of the political norm, between absolutism and democracy. As a borderline phenomenon, it implies a suspension of legal order *per se*. Agamben thus uses Derrida's notion of the "power of law" more specifically, derived here from his reading of Benjamin, to show that the exception appears in an *anomic space* that is, at the same time, involved in the power of *the law* and excluded from it, or included in some other force of law without law (Agamben 2008: 51-57).

Global terrorism, nowadays, but merely because of its exception-like semantics – mostly towards the international *nomos* of humanity and ethics – seems not to be only reinterpreted or reanalyzed but, in an utmost perverse way, as Berardi Bifo explains, almost justified and rationalized. Long before Berardi Bifo, several theoretical accounts on global terrorism, by Slavoj Žižek and Arjun Appadurai, underlined this perverse nature of terror as such. In his book *Fear of Small Numbers* (2006) Arjun Appadurai reflects terrorism as a transcendent, although nonetheless universal act, which goes hand in hand with the phenomenon of globalization – economically, culturally, as well as politically. The old joke about the occasional outbreak of peace has become a sobering social fact (Appadurai 25). He therefore rightly points out pedagogical or politically-moralizing functions that the global age of terrorism provides – rightly or wrongly, that is still questionable. Appadurai emphasizes some major differences between the spinal and cellular concept of the world in contemporary globalized and conceptually rounded societies and states. The modern system of nation-states is the most striking example of the spinal structure, because, as much as nations get carried away with their stories of diversity and uniqueness, they bear to function exactly because of the assumption on which they rest, namely that there is an international order guaranteeing diverse norms, not least – the norm of war/peace. This spinal order is symbolized not only by the United Nations, but also by a growing set of protocols, institutions or agreements, as well as treaties that are to ensure that relations between nations function on symmetric principles, regardless of the hierarchy of power, economy or

even wealth, semiotic recognition and communication, made up of simple elements, such as flags, emblems, postage stamps and airlines, as well as a much more complex system of bilateral agreements, consulates, embassies, and other reciprocal political forms of recognition and dependency, neither centralized nor hierarchical, but essentially based on a finite set of rules and coordinates, regulatory norms and signals. It is not difficult to understand why the Treaty of Westphalia and Kant's writings on moral reciprocity and symmetry are so close in time and space (36-38). The cellular system of arrangement of structures is, on the other hand, typical for modern terrorist networks, which the author, interestingly, analyses as "global terrorists". Not so much because of their global and transcultural influence, but because of their most dangerous "trans-reach." The Al-Qaeda 9/11 attackers were not only eager to start a war against the United States but also, as the author claims, to attack the global idea of nation-states, this relict of the nineteenth century political mythology. 9/11 models and algorithms of terrorist sociopathy demonstrated, first of all, how small numbers can quickly alter international politics. Modern terrorism is post-political, forming cellular structures that often use new information technologies to gain transnational support. Or, as the author puts it, small number cells have now reconsidered to utilize all globalization disadvantages, mainly to recruit members – not only allegedly oppressed, but anyone willing to instantly become the aggressor, mass-murderer, etc. A terrorist sect or a cult, ready to attack with any chemical and/or biological weapons, such as sarin or anthrax, or ready to kill "young upper class," like in Breivik's case, is a true example of the utopian "cell form" that Appadurai is talking about. Algorithms for organizing such forms, paradoxically, are quite dispersive. In other words, an acceptance of the situation of unrest is superimposed as a natural state of exception, to put it in Schmitt's or Agamben's words. In this sense, Appadurai refers to an interesting text by Achille Mbembe, written in 2003, in which the author elaborates on the idea of a modern "necropolis." In societies characterized by physical violence and militarized conflict of pure terror, physical brutality, all in the name of collective identity, one can no longer simply oppose nature and war on the global scale. Mbembe invites us to imagine a wicked landscape in which order (as well as regularity, predictability, everyday routines) is organized around the fact of higher likelihood of violence, such as terrorism (42). It is precisely in this state of "non-order" and "unpredictability" – that lies inside of the nomos-matrix – that terrorism finds its existence, thus setting everyday life somewhere beyond space and time of the (super)imposed terror-regimes. Modern sociological theories often put such a state of fluid and pervasive fear under the name of "post-political uncertainty" (Bauman), but nevertheless attributing its own politics to it (Žižek 39-52). Appadurai

continues, it is a terror based on the constant “fear of small numbers,” that represent a hidden or, most often, latent obstacle to the nomos-structure of the majority. A terrorist sect or a cult is a true example of an identity capable of reproducing such fear. Small numbers can disturb the liberal thought. They evoke the classic idea of an oligarch, monarch, leader, tyrant or a sovereign, indicating the possibility of elitism or appropriation of resources, invoking hidden conspiracies of the conspirators, spies, dissidents, revolutionaries. In Norway, Israel and Sri Lanka, as well as in New York, Iraq or London, a suicide bomber or a rifle-armed killer is a darkest version of the liberal emphasis on the true values of the individual – *the number one*. He (or she) completely abolishes the boundaries between the body and the weapon of terror. Whether they tie a bomb to their body or otherwise hide the explosive, a weapon, such as a rifle, suicide bombers are explosive bodies that promise to disperse their own bloody bits and mix them with the bloody bits of the civilians. Not only does a suicide bomber manage to defraud control, (s)he also produces a terrible mix of enemy’s blood and the innocent bodies, damaging not only the “soil of the nation” but the very bodies of the victims that infect the “blood of the martyrs.” Christianity and Islam attach great values to this explosive martyr, who is also an executioner. Suicide bomber, or a random killer, like the brainwashing agent in the film *Manchurian Candidate*, is always portrayed in a paranormal state of conviction, enthusiasm, eagerness or commitment to the main goal, often constructed by quasi-religious technique, such as isolation, indoctrination and quasi-hallucination often caused by ideological drugs consumed *on the eve of the attack*. Breivik was inspired by the Bible as well as by the Japanese Bushido code, interpreted as a salvation point for the alleged purity of the European ethnic-body. This image is thus a complete opposite of the liberal individual that works in his own interest. Conceived as a machine gun killer and/or as a suicide bomber, however frightening an example of an individual is to a liberal politician, the number one is, in fact, always understood as representative of a crazed crowd or mass, a victim of propaganda and irrational conviction, a perfect example of reckless recruitment and dangerous unpredictability of a mob that appraises his ideas. Berardi Bifo is quite aware that there are many acclaimers of Breivik’s manifesto. In pragmatic terms, if we are to follow Schmitt’s ideas, namely, terrorism is never quite, to the very end, a teleological activity. It certainly has a goal, most often a purpose of a political and ideological outlook, but is, in principle, guided by the logic of the rational scenario. Slavoj Žižek approaches the issue of terrorist violence in a similar, but somewhat skewed perspective. He thus considers a dominant political model of today to be based on post-political and even biopolitical foundations, with post-politics defined as a policy that claims to leave behind classical

ideological disputes or focus on professional management/administration, and biopolitics considered as regulating force for the safety and well-being of the individuals. Related to terrorism, he considers biopolitics as a policy of fear, focused mainly on defending against potential victimization and abuse (39). Terrorist is situated somewhere in the abyss between the anemic liberal thinker (who often does nothing) on one side and the passionately, extremely engaged fundamentalist, equipped with racist religious or some other weapons of fanaticism on the other. For many years, European society behaved like an anemic liberal. Although Žižek's claims seem too radical for me, it seems that he is not that far from the truth, as recent terrorist manifestos of Oslo attack or Christchurch attack have shown. This is where Brecht's idea from the *Beggar's Opera* comes to mind, especially if one is to follow Žižek's argumentation. It seems like the real criminals are probably not the ones robbing banks, but the ones that, initially, set them up (100). Simply put, not sanctioning the potentiality of a crime, inside and outside of the system, is not the same thing. Breivik's anger that lead to the fanaticism or, ultimately, his terrorist act, if one uses Žižek's terms again, could also be declared *ancient* and *nomos-centered*, cause it was allowed to sublimate ideas of righteous Judeo-Christian anger and animosity towards non-European otherness. Violence is unevenly redistributed between context and action, which is why the same action can be viewed as violent and non-violent. The fear generated by these terrorist attacks, as it is shown by Bauman, therefore always has two faces, the face of the perpetrator and the victim. And so it has always been, as evidenced by the statement of Lucien Febvre, which Bauman thus underlines, that refers to Europe's early modernity: *peur toujours, peur partout* (Bauman 5-33). This is why fear has become a very fluid fact – a liquid phenomenon that flows from one context to another. But it has, nevertheless, remained a hallmark of the modern age. The basic question, a problem that arises here, is, of course, not the (essential) problem of the existence of terrorism or the act of terrorist attacks, but, on the contrary, of the possibility of human beings thus being able to do such deeds. Causality of terror and uncertainty causes new forms of fascism, emerging, mobilizing people to embrace populist versions of racist sentiments, the most dangerous ones, because this kind of sentiment usually arises out of depression, lack of understanding, and even despair. Nowadays, most of Europeans are willing to defend their privileges gained during long periods of colonial history, although these privileges are being radically reduced, redefined or even transformed by capitalism and the idea of free market, if not demolished, especially in the light of the recent universal economic recession.

Originally published in 1938, short novel *Youth Without God* explores an indoctrination of youth under the totalitarian regime. From the

perspective of a disgruntled school teacher, Horváth's characters narrate a sinister story of disillusionment, betrayal, dark despair. Set in a dystopian world of a pre-military camp for adolescents, all names are replaced by initials, in a time where racial intolerance rages, freedom is denied and everyone is a secret spy for the state. Without any direct reference to the Third Reich, Horváth offers a stark and haunting portrait of paranoia in Nazi Germany (Merriman 334-335). We start with an anonymous narrator in an unknown country where he is a high school teacher, correcting his students' essays. The overall topic of the essays was supposed to be why their country needed outside colonies. As he corrects one of his student's essays, he encounters a very strong, racist remark: "All niggers are dirty, cunning, and contemptible" (Horváth 22). He therefore immediately responds with a small remark: "They're human too, you know" (Horváth 22), which puts him into a fight with student's father who subsequently accuses him for seditious act against the homeland. After that incident the narrator finds his students fighting at the top of the school, surprised by the increasing brutalization of the nation, which he interprets as – fighting for nothing. After that incident the school decides to put students into camp in order to be trained in army life and to serve the national-body of the state. Here I would like to emphasize one more that Breivik was obsessed with his body, same as Yukio Mishima was, before the state-attack, which they felt to be an extension of their ethnically homogenous national-body (*kotokukai*). The narrator of Horváth's novel explains it in the following way:

I think it's an unbridgeable gulf. If these fellows merely rejected everything that's still sacred to me – well, that wouldn't be so bad. What hurts is that they put it aside without even having known it. Worse still, they haven't the slightest desire to know it. Thinking is a process they hate. They turn up their noses at human beings. They want to be machines—screws, knobs, belts, wheels—or better still, munitions—bombs, shells, shrapnel. How readily they'd die on a battlefield! To have their name on some war memorial—that's the dream of their puberty [...] The Greatest Plebeian's birthday meant a holiday today, and the town was decked out with flags and streamers. Through the streets marched the young girls who had searched for the lost airman, the boys who would have left the Negroes to die, and their parents, who believed the lies inscribed upon their banners. Even the skeptical joined in the march and kept time with the rest—spineless divisions under an idiot's command. As they marched, they sang—of a bird fluttering upon a hero's grave, of a soldier suffocating in the fumes of poison gas, of brown girls and black girls who lived on filth, of an enemy that only existed in their minds. With their songs, the liars and the debased celebrated the day on which the Great Plebeian

had been born. From my window too, a flag was waving. I noticed it with a certain gratification: I had hung it out the night before. For if you are ruled by the lawless and the debased you had better adopt their methods or they might flay you alive. You must drape your home with flags—even if you've a home no longer. When submissiveness is the solitary trait in the human character that those who rule will tolerate, truth flies away and lies creep in—the lies that engender sin. But don't wait—hang out the flags. Better bread than death (Horváth 47).

The Austrian writer died in 1938, as a critic of fascism, working in the same epoch as Carl Schmitt. His reputation likely would have grown if he had lived long enough to face political persecution, and his novel might have enjoyed bigger reputation in English. Instead, Horváth is virtually unknown, and his *Youth Without God* unfortunately fell quickly out of print after its initial English release in 1939. Horváth's work evades the rhetoric of fascism in the form of allegory, but his own allegory, emblematic allegory of African colonialism, which creates serious difficulties in the analysis of oppression as a universal affront to human dignity, but also in universalizing it in order to understand persecution as a trauma that happens in a quite specific political context. The novel centers upon the life of a teacher at a boy's school, located in an unnamed fascist country whose leaders appear only at a distance, through different radio broadcasts and memoranda on curricular reform. The teacher, unnamed, wrestles with his students' enthusiastic hatred. The conflict between teacher and his students begins in one of the book's earlier episodes. The simple assertion of humanity loses him the respect and creates trouble with administrators and parents. His weakness and discomfort with his own authority that earns the scorn of his students, who only respect force. Horváth stands to the side of this conflict. Though he is known as a worldly cynical writer in the Viennese tradition, he allows his provincial, conservative, ineffectual narrator to tell the tale (Merriman 334). Teacher is not able to understand his students' hatred or violence, but neither can he understand modern mentality *sui generis*. He tries to make sense of the present only through his knowledge of the classics, speaking ponderously of the timeless indifference of God, and he feels at a relatively young age that he cannot keep up with the pace of life. Therefore, the book's obvious target is fascism, but it could also be understood as a criticism of different opposition(s) to fascism: the opponents fail because they cannot think their way into the fascist mind or match brainless courage of its fervent supporters (ibid.). But this second criticism does not quite succeed, in part because *Youth Without God* remains allegorical, attempting to substitute one specific set of circumstances for another (335). This type of post-political criticism of the novel will be a dominant

strategy in Montažstroj's adaptation as well, but with different stakes. By using black colonial subjects as a stand-in for the more proximate targets of fascism, Horváth creates a lexical problem for himself. Nazism invented extraordinarily hateful and/or dehumanizing rhetoric to refer to Jews, Communists, Slavs, Roma, and many other European groups. Although scientific racism was a central part of the Nazi ideology, hatred of Africans did not have a central place in this rhetoric – in part because the number of Africans living in Germany has always been very small. Both teacher and students refer to Africans as *Neger* – at the time a relatively neutral German word – although now considered derogatory. In the context of fascism's elaborate language of supremacy and hatred, these very divergent political sentiments should lead the characters to speak virtually distinct dialects. That the two sides share a same vocabulary, when they don't even agree about the humanity of Africans, thus threatens to render novel's political language inert. Horváth's use of African colonialism as a failed proxy for fascist speech, nevertheless, does not pose a big problem for anybody attempting to render the text in a modern context of *the European other* (ibid.). In the twentieth century countless writers replaced these or other specific politics with universal stories of extremism and hatred. When the allegory speaks to a current conflict, this may call attention to an essentially more basic form of violence that often rests beneath the particularities of a political discourse; and this is certainly what Horváth wanted readers to understand about true fascism. Yet because allegories enable writers to keep the ideological language off their pages, in time the political stakes may become very obscure. If we did not remember Nazism so vividly today, *Youth Without God* would be a closed book that tells us nothing about where fascism happened, from what kind of ideological paradigms it arose and whom eventually victimized. Montažstroj's performance succeeded to emphasize exactly that semantics of the novel, thus employing Berardi Bifo's analytic connections between capitalism and mental health, between symbolic order of mass murder(er)s and their neo-liberal, post-political, and conformist semiotics.

Berardi Bifo's treatise emphasizes the idea of a failed future – he did so in most of his books – while trying to highlight the utmost terrifying connection between the individual's mental health and the financial nihilism rooted in contemporary capitalism. But, besides its uncomfortable, although convincing arguments brought forward to uncover mass-murders as a kind of “suicide by proxy,” Franco Berardi Bifo is definitely not an optimist when it comes to humankind – and its everlasting obsession with “futures” of all kinds. That gloomy territory dwelled by individuals who decide to take their own lives, but not before ending other's (Pekka-Erik Auvinen, Seung-Hui Cho, Aurora “Joker” killer, Anders

Behring Breivik, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold), without oversimplifying their motivation, Bifo attempts to reconstruct some missing or maybe just conveniently overlooked links and short circuits. He does so by interpreting notions of absolute capitalism that keeps on giving birth to highly competitive and even coldblooded individuals and feeds their compulsion to stay connected all the time, horrified that they may miss something when away from their keyboards, their screens, their virtual realities, sharing and commenting every bit of their lives, as if this was suddenly the most important thing, as if this was something more essential than just pure index-contents for all-traceable browsers and search engines. Montažstroj's characters all live in and inhabit the pre-produced virtual reality on the stage – as some kind of meta-characters – led by far-encompassing ideological goals. Montažstroj's performance is thus eager to deconstruct two dominant modes of global thinking: the first one is a disassociation of language learning from one's bodily affective experience; the second one is a constant virtualization of the experience of otherness. Anders Behring Breivik, responsible for the Norway attacks in 2011, came with his own agenda, which was full of coherent political ideas with ideological connotations. He acted as a neo-conservative automaton, as Bifo often puts it, desensitized by his own delusions – by the way he perceived the current Western civilization as a territory threatened by, first of all, process of feminization, Islamization, and in danger of losing its Christianity and Father figure. Examining Breivik's background, for Berardi Bifo, one thing is of utmost importance, his disconnection from everything outside and inside himself, alienation that could be translated into countless hours spent online, often wired to role-playing games, discussion forums, and niche-websites that did nothing but reinforce his already existing psychic suffering and populate it with menacing avatars of otherness, avatars that need to be defeated in order to claim one's belonging to the “right” community. These avatars will all be impersonated on stage by Montažstroj's performance, inspired by Bifo's arguments that psychic suffering coupled with the extended exposure to the online flow can lead to such tragic attempts to win one's life back, and to re-territorialize a ground that is colonized against one's will and without any visible effects, until it seems almost too late to do anything about it. Berardi Bifo emphasizes the following assumption: “Financial capitalism is based on a process of unrelenting deterritorialization, and this is causing fear to spread among those who are unable to deal with the precariousness of daily life and the violence of the labor market. This fear in turn provokes a counter-effect of aggressive re-territorialization by those who try to grasp some form of identity, some sense of belonging, because only a feeling of belonging offers the semblance of shelter, a form of protection. But belonging is a

delusive projection of the mind, a deceptive sensation, a trap. Since one's belonging can only be conclusively proved by an act of aggression against the other, the combined effect of deterritorialization in the sphere of financial capitalism and of re-territorialization in the realm of identity is leading to a state of permanent war" (Berardi 111). Deep and turbulent changes triggered by capitalism dominance, or semiocapitalism, according to Berardi Bifo, lead to unstable identities, produced and constantly re-semanticized by ideological processes of constant deterritorialization and re-territorialization, caused, mainly, by political immigration and/or displacement. This nurtures constant need for a kind of identitarian belonging, in Breivik's case deeply rooted in aggressiveness against almost anything perceived as a threat to the so-called true and also purified origins of white, Judeo-Christian Europe. Despair emerges out of pure communication short circuit, where "politicians call on us to take part in their political concerns, economists call on us to be responsible, to work more, to go shopping, to stimulate the market. Priests call on us to have faith. If you follow these inveiglements to participate, to be responsible, you are trapped. Do not take part in the game, do not expect any solution from politics, do not be attached to things, do not hope. Dystopian irony (dyst-irony) is the language of autonomy. Be skeptical: do not believe your own assumptions and predictions (or mine). And do not revoke revolution. Revolt against power is necessary even if we may not know how to win. Do not belong. Distinguish your destiny from the destiny of those who want to belong and to participate and to pay their debt. If they want war, be a deserter. If they are enslaved but want you to suffer like them, do not give in to their blackmail" (ibid.).

On this occasion it is impossible to summarize more than 1,500 pages of Breivik's 2083. *A European Declaration of Independence* (with the Latin title, *De Laude Novae Militiae Pauperes commilitones Templique Solomonici*), dated in 2011, under his anglicized pen-name Andrew Berwick, but major points expressed on the first couple of pages, as well as its finishing hypothesis, occur as a dramaturgical essence of Montažstroj's 2019 theatre performance project. Breivik writes:

I have spent several years writing, researching and compiling the information and I have spent most of my hard earned funds in this process (in excess of 300,000 Euros). I do not want any compensation for it as it is a gift to you, as a fellow patriot. Much of the information presented in this compendium (3 books) has been deliberately kept away from the European peoples by our governments and the politically correct mainstream media (MSM). More than 90 per cent of the EU and national parliamentarians and more than 95 per cent of journalists are supporters of European multiculturalism and therefore supporters of the ongoing Islamic colonization of

Europe; yet, they DO NOT have the permission of the European peoples to implement these doctrines. (11)

The author of this manifesto seemed to be eager to cover the following main topics: the rise of cultural Marxism/multiculturalism in Western Europe; several reasons why the Islamic colonization and/or Islamization of Western Europe began; current state of the Western European Resistance Movements (anti-Marxist and anti-Jihad movements); solutions for Western Europe and how the resistance forces should move forward in the coming decades; finally, covering all, highly relevant topics including solutions or strategies for different political fronts. Breivik summarizes his manifesto in two initial sentences, emphasizing that this compendium “presents advanced ideological, practical, tactical, organizational and rhetorical solutions and strategies for all patriotic-minded individuals/movements”, and will thus be of great interest to all of the audience, “whether you are moderate or a more dedicated cultural conservative/nationalist” (ibid.). It is perfectly clear that cultural relativism or under-cover humanism, as he calls it, is another name for cultural-Marxist, as a doctrine, wanting to deconstruct European identity, traditions, culture – and even nation-states. Some of the key-problems of so called European version of humanism, debated and therefore attacked in Breivik’s manifesto and, thus, deliberately put on stage in Montažstroj’s performance, are of following nature: political correctness and its consequences, inaugurated by Marxist thought and Frankfurt school, the Western academic system, European Islamic *negationism*, mythical discourses of tolerance and peaceful ecumenism, rise of the pseudo-intellectual elites, feminist ideology and feminization as severe anthropological process, multiculturalism and immigration policies, politics of labor, etc. A passage from the immigration policy deconstruction chapters warns us:

Do gang rapes boost GDP? Was that an offensive question, you say? Well, according to Sweden’s finance minister Pär Nuder, more immigrants should be allowed into Sweden in order to safeguard the welfare system. However, in reality estimates indicate that immigration costs Sweden at least 40 to 50 billion Swedish kroner every year, probably several hundred billions, and has greatly contributed to bringing the Swedish welfare state to the brink of bankruptcy. An estimated cost of immigration of 225 billion Swedish kroner in 2004, which is not unlikely, would equal 17,5 per cent of Sweden’s tax income that year, a heavy burden in a country which already has some of the highest levels of taxation in the world. At the same time, the number of rape charges in Sweden has quadrupled in just above twenty years. Rape cases involving children under the age of 15 are six times as common today as they were a generation ago. Resident aliens from Algeria, Libya, Morocco

and Tunisia dominate the group of rape suspects. Lawyer Ann Christine Hjelm, who has investigated violent crimes in one court, found that 85 per cent of the convicted rapists were born on foreign soil or by foreign parents. Swedish politicians want to continue Muslim immigration because it boosts the economy, yet the evidence so far indicates that it mainly boosts the number of gang rapes. Meanwhile, research shows that fear of honor killings is a very real issue for many immigrant girls in Sweden. 100 000 young Swedish girls live as virtual prisoners of their own families. (415)

Praising the new knighthood, Breivik often calls upon the re-emergence of the new military order or new Templars, avatars of the nearest future, that will recruit themselves mainly through gaming platforms, virtual reality structures, armed with their own military and militia platoons on-line and business intelligence strategies, their own financial and communication platforms off-line and on the web, as well as self-manufactured chemical and biological weapons, etc. Future allegedly democratic models that Breivik aspires are all of, supposedly, patriarchal, conservative, xenophobic, monocultural nature: "Justification and driving force for the re-introduction of monoculturalism will be based on practical issues and circumstances related to social cohesion and not on hate. This re-introduction of monoculturalism will resemble that of today's Japan, South Korea and Taiwan" (1190). The post-political super-human arising from this kind of discourse is a political and social Darwinist, a natural side-effect of the alleged European weakness to channel all of its capacities against Islamization. Western civilization that was, according to Breivik, supposed to function inside the norms of humanism and/or Christianity, now has to engage its social-Darwinist powers in order to mobilize *the youth*, or *new generations*, willing to unite through different communication platforms. Berardi Bifo connects these school mass-murders, as well as terrorism *sui generis*, with the manipulative and social engagement of contemporary media, but also with contemporary financial, absolute capitalism, tracing it all the way to the realm of nihilism – *the black hole we live in*. From the position of the Left, as Berardi Bifo emphasizes, there is actually no hope, because people can only benefit from capitalism when they sleep or when they kill themselves, and if they do not kill themselves, then they are obliged to live this daily life of media spectacle, as well as their own paid work. Heroes in Berardi Bifo's analysis, as well as those in Horvath's book and Montažstroj's performance, are young men who shoot to kill. Their daily lives are often being depicted as a form of bizarre individual sociopathy, putting young people in a strange context where they are obliged to decide or act, while absorbing the neoliberal anti-humanism around them. These young people are coming back with their own brutal laws, killing out

of pure curiosity, just because they can. Montažstroj's performance has shown that Breivik was a rational thinker, in a perverse way. As Berardi Bifo puts it, it would be perversely simplified to interpret his attack only as an act of a madman. His political or ideological statements, although definitely unacceptable from my own point of view, are nevertheless very clear, even rational, in an utmost terrifying manner. He advocates the need to exterminate Leftists, cultural Marxists – in order to foreshadow the war between Christians and Muslims, because Europe's demographic picture is now radically, rapidly changing and even super-capitalism cannot depreciate it. The benign multicultural Left, as Breivik puts it, as well as a Liberal-leaning pro-immigrant ideologist, clearly supposed to be responsible for these changes. What does a hero do – an avatar on the virtual game-board? He starts shooting, killing not only left-wing politicians, but their youth, which is precisely what Breivik did on Utoyi Island in Norway. Total Darwinism of the mass-killing youth is directed towards extermination of the weak, already vulnerable, wretched, because humans are not able to generate, even to articulate or to conceptualize a sustainable humanist concept for the twenty-first century – that would become a political project. In this context, it is definitely not surprising that, nowadays, even mentally disturbed people can buy weapons, but, on the contrary, the metaphorical density of mass-murders directly committed *in the name of rationality or sanity-projects* is something to be worried about. Furthermore, as Berardi Bifo often puts it in his most recent works, “sensibility of a generation of children who have learned more words from machines than from their parents appears to be unable to develop solidarity, empathy and autonomy” (Berardi Bifo 7). As well as Breivik's, Pekka-Erik Auvinen's *Natural Selector's Manifesto* can also be interpreted in the context of cynical existentialism as active critique of humanism and of social Darwinism, whereby not all human lives are worth saving, especially those lacking intelligence, survival instinct, power to act, self-determination or strong-minded individuality, group or even military solidarity. “Social Darwinists say that benevolent principles cannot stop the affirmative strength of evolution” (40). Their metaphorical *motto* is, at least in Auvinen's case, that *humanity is overrated*. Montažstroj criticizes precisely this kind of complex relations between apathy, lack of empathy, “annihilating nihilism” (88-92), and terrifying accordance with xenophobic movements in all European countries. One more time Bifo gives us an interesting example from the contemporary European political platform: “Only a few days after the Utaya massacre, Mario Borghezio, a representative of the Italian Northern League and member of the European Parliament, lauded Anders Breivik's manifesto. Live on Italian state radio, Borghezio claimed that he shared Breivik's opposition to Islam, including his call for a crusade by Christians against

Europe's drift toward Islam'. He then added that positions like Breivik's "account for 20 per cent of votes in Europe," and that "100 million people think this way." In a separate interview with *Il Sole-24* radio station, Mr Borghezio declared that the ideas expressed by Breivik are generally good – barring the violence – and some of them are great" (Berardi Bifo 97). If he talks like an idiot, looks like an idiot, acts like an idiot, do not be fooled, he definitely is an idiot. Nevertheless, regarding his statistical estimate passage about a terrifying twenty per cent, he is probably right. Digital tribes, manipulated on-line, can easily form an opinion, recruiting members by creating a "phobic ghost of otherness" (118), or even their militia-supporters, cultural relativists and Marxists, that could be easily killed, first in virtual reality of World of Warcraft or Doom gaming platforms, and afterwards in real life. All Montažstroj's performers perform in a semi-virtual environment, surrounded by screens, gaming platforms, mobile phones, etc. They amplify their own experience and killing instincts in a virtual space, with no boundaries, or totally deterritorialized, by capitalism, mass-media and new communication identities of contemporary avatars. End of the performance is, thus, deliberately symptomatic and provocative, not only echoing a summary of Breivik's main political ideas, but, above all, waiting for the probable and even disputable final applause of the audience present in the theatre. Theatre performance convention of the fourth wall, therefore, camouflages the possible accordance and/or acclamation, creating a gap for terror of acceptance to emerge, or terror of pure subjectivity in its purest form.

Works Cited

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Use of Bodies*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers. An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Fear*. London: Polity, 2006.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Uz kritiku sile*. Zagreb: Studentski centar Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1971.
- Berardi Bifo, Franco. *Heroes. Mass Murder and Suicide*. London: Verso, 2015.
- Foucault, Michel. *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume One*. New York: The New Press, 2009.
- Horváth, Ödön von. *Youth Without God*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2012.
- Mbembé, Joseph-Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2003): 1-40.

Merriman, Ben. "Ödön von Horváth, *Youth Without God*." *Chicago Review*, Vol. 58, No. 34 (2014): 334-336.

Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of Political*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Žižek, Slavoj. *O nasilju*. Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2008.

Shipwrecked Migrants: Behind the Current Issues of International Migration, Through *Fuocoammare: Beyond Lampedusa* by Gianfranco Rosi and *Mediterranea* by Jonas Carpignano

Élisabeth Schulz*
University of Angers

Abstract

Catherine Wihtol de Wenden estimates that 244 million people are affected by international migration, or 3.5% of the world's population. Attracted by promises of employment, human beings today are reduced to living in dramatic conditions, as we see in these feature films. This is why, the political scientist denounces the fact that one leaves «people in situation of modern slavery». As we will see, the two films *Mediterranea*, from Jonas Carpignano and *Fuocoammare. Beyond Lampedusa*, from Gianfranco Rosi come against the simplistic images conveyed by the media or political speeches that reduce migrants to numbers and threats.

Keywords: Jonas Carpignano, Gianfranco Rosi, migrant, exploitation, violence, *Mediterranea*, sinking

Mediterranea and *Fuocoammare. Beyond Lampedusa*, are two films, directed respectively by Jonas Carpignano and Gianfranco Rosi. They oppose the simplistic images conveyed by the media or political speeches that reduce migrants to numbers and threats.

The documentary film by Gianfranco Rosi, released in 2016, aims to show the reality of the island of Lampedusa. The director films the physical and moral distress of illegal migrants. He portrays the bestiality of traffickers and shows the distress of rescuers. It confronts the viewer with a tragic reality of the Migrants compared to the peaceful daily life of the

* lizaschulz12@gmail.com

Lampedusians. Like the spectator, they listen helplessly to journalists who talk about shipwrecked migrants stranded a few hundred meters from their homes.

For its part, *Mediterranea*¹ by Jonas Carpignano, released in September 2015, recounts the journey of illegal worker Koudous Seihon, who is the main actor of the film and especially its inspiration. In this journey, we discover Ayiva (played by Koudous Seihon) and her friend Abas (Alassane Sy),² two sub-Saharan migrants who cross the desert of Algeria and reach Libya before embarking on a canoe for the south of Italy. Their integration is proving difficult but the solidarity between migrants as well as the help of a few inhabitants allow them to endure their new condition. They have to overcome an accumulation of difficulties: racism, aggression, economic exploitation or even isolation. The aim of the film is not just to show the origin of the riots which took place in Rosarno (Calabria) in January 2010³ but above all to show why a father turns into a riot.

First, through this communication, we will look at the gap that exists between our perception of migration and the reality with which migrants are confronted. In a second step, we will see how Gianfranco Rosi and Jonas Carpignano teach the viewer to look at images. Of course, they keep him informed, but above all, they seek to raise awareness in him. The impact of these two films was unexpected because it made it possible to reach a large audience. Indeed, *Fuocoammare* won the Gold Bear at the Berlinale 2016 while *Mediterranea* received the Lux 1015 prize in competition and the Munich Festival Special Mention.

1. Sharing the Experience of the Sub-Saharan Migrant

1.1 The Migrant is a Human Being

Fuocoammare in a Few Lines

Is not the essential message of the two films to remember that a migrant is a human being? Pietro Bartolo,⁴ doctor and director of the Lampedusa

1 *Mediterranea* has received the Lux 1015 prize in competition and the special mention of the Munich festival.

2 Koudous Seihon is born in 1986 to a Ghanaian mother and a Burkinabe father. He grew up in Ivory Coast and then lived in Burkina Faso from where he moved to Italy. Actor and model Alassane Sy is born in 1989 in Mauritania, to Mauritanian and Senegalese parents. With his family, he was forced to move to Senegal before going to France for his studies. Then he moved to the United States where he began his career of actor.

3 *Il Corriere della sera* et *La Repubblica* of January 7, 2010.

4 Pietro Bartolo makes this reflection in the bonus of the *Mediterranea* DVD. Read also Pietro Bartolo, *Lacrime di sale. La mia storia quotidiana di medico di Lampedusa fra dolore e speranza*. Mondadori, 2016.

hospital, notes that «we are poisoned with numbers, we lose touch with reality with what is really happening.» He recalls that we talk about the number of migrants who died at sea as if they were not people, «In reality, they are people just as much as we are. These are people who are acquainted with them, their sufferings, their history, (...)» (Rosi, Bonus DVD). It is this danger that the film *Fuocoammare* represents when it portrayed two worlds that coexist without crossing. On the one hand, Rosi films the daily life of Samuele, a ten-year-old Lampedusian. The viewer then shares the daily life of six islanders, whose lives are marked by anxiety. So, for example, at his doctor's, doesn't Samuele complain of feeling his chest compressed? On the other hand, the footage shows the dramatic sequence of migrants rescued by Italian rescue teams. The sea acts as a link between these two worlds. Some, fishermen are fed and nourished from it, others, African exiles, lose their lives. And alongside the rescue of migrants, Rosi intends to tell the story of the island through its inhabitants. The spectator naturally makes the connection: Samuele embodies the Europeans free to move around and ignoring the dramas that are playing out next to him. At the end of *Fuocoammare*, the final «rescue» at sea, the highlight of the film, ends with the tragic discovery in the ship's holds of hundreds of bodies. Survivors suffer from very serious sequelae due to severe dehydration, but also from trauma - especially women and children.⁵ The desperate cries of a surviving woman then embody all the violence and despair these human beings endure, a despair that has long been contained.

Mediterranea in a few lines

In *Mediterranea*, the spectator follows, in a much more intimate way, a group of sub-Saharan travelers drawn into the night by unscrupulous smugglers. Like migrants, the spectator does not know where we are leading him. Their walk through the desert seems endless. They are in Algeria and want to reach Tripoli but are they in the right direction? Are we going to abandon them in the desert? The viewer is subject to the same uncertainties as the protagonists. As Libya is within reach, hooded and armed men appear. They are informed of the group's arrival and they rob them. One of the travelers is killed because he protests. Shortly after reaching Libya, we follow migrants setting out to sea. Left alone by smugglers, they have no other alternative but to steer the canoe themselves despite their total ignorance of the sea.

It is then that cries pierce the night: the boat has overturned in a storm.

5 In the film, by evoking his work with these men, women and children, Doctor Bartolo brings a «professional» light to the spectator. In the bonus film, Doctor Bartolo explains the situation of migrant women, who in Libya are all raped. Most of them get pregnant and if they don't, they have certainly been treated with hormones that cause early menopause. Because for traffickers, a pregnant woman is just a «raw material» that is worthless.

Men, women and children drown. Some survivors, including Ayiva and Abad, are taken to a transit camp in Italy. There, they are granted a three-month residence permit. Equipped with the address of a compatriot, our two protagonists march relentlessly to this destination. When they arrive in Rosarno, they live in an old, disused factory: it is in the insalubrity, the cold and the promiscuity that they live. They work hard, always with the hope of being regularized. But the difficulties accumulate: racism and attempted murder aggravate their difficult living conditions. However, the film never falls into victimization. On the contrary, he presents us with courageous heroes. We see Moroccan or African migrants helping each other or being helped by Italians such as an Italian teacher, a benevolent grandmother nicknamed «Mama Africa» or a paternalistic boss who remembers the difficult emigration of his family to United States.

1.2 Why This Gap Between Perception and Reality?

In his PhD work, Salim Chena underlines the contradictions between official speeches and practices and between interests and actions (27). His research allows us to «understand migrations in their entirety, at the start and at the end of the day, including the socio-spatial transition (...)» (11). With Jonas Carpignano and Gianfranco Rosi, they express the common desire to question «overly general assumptions» (20). As in Salim Chena's fieldwork, through these two films everything that real-life migrants go through is represented on the screen.

This is why these films constitute essential tools for understanding the reality of migration and for avoiding falling into the trap of political or media instrumentalization. Sociologist and political scientist Catherine Wihtol de Wenden⁶ keeps uncovering the complex questions behind the phenomenon of migration. In her work, she highlights the fact that the polarization (or fracture) of migrations between the north and the south of the Mediterranean is aggravated in particular because of a lack of understanding on both sides. Or, precisely, the work of Rosi and Carpignano is to shed light on the migratory experience and on those who revolve around it, whether it be rescue teams or trafficking networks.

Media Representation

Let us first recall that the island of Lampedusa⁷ has a geostrategic value because it represents the gateway to Europe being located in the center of

6 Research director at the CNRS, within the CERI, the international research center of Sciences Po, Catherine Wihtol de Wenden conducts her research on themes such as the globalization of migration and on migration in international relations.

7 It is the most southern island in Europe.

the Mediterranean, between Africa and Europe. As we learn at the beginning of the film, its area is 20 km², it is 70 miles from Africa and has seen more than 400,000 migrants pass over its soil in the past twenty years.

So, for example, on October 3, 2013, a boat with 500 people on board sank 800 meters from the most beautiful beach of Lampedusa. Olivier Favier⁸ denounces the way in which the media presented this shipwreck. Journalists then described the incident as the deadliest in the history of the Mediterranean. Favier points out, in a bitter tone, that two years later, there is still more death «but further from Lampedusa ...» In addition, he notes that the question of the countries of origin of these migrants (Eritrea, Somalia, West Africa) has been excluded from the speeches. Finally, as Gianfranco Rosi points out, «The media always show Lampedusa in the same way, when there is a tragedy there.»⁹ Hence the fact that Rosi declares on the contrary: «Lampedusa is the island of migrants but there are no migrants there.»¹⁰ Moreover on the island, a distance has been created between inhabitants and migrants»¹¹ (as we see in the film) because after 2013, the boats no longer dock on the island but they are intercepted at sea.

In fact, the construction of socio-media images is guided by underlying interests. In his thesis, Salim Chena brilliantly demonstrates the performative character of the language of the press: «the language of security becomes by definition normative, that is to say, it brings about the reality that it claims to describe beforehand» (Chena 45). To this figure of the «migrant-threat» is added, paradoxically, the figure of the «migrant-victim.» Indeed, linguistic practice in the press sets up a «miserable and pejorative scenography of the life of sub-Saharan exiles» (68). But here too, the films of Rosi and Carpignano attempt to deconstruct this figure of the «migrant victim.»

If the media constructions on migrants «lock up» them in an image of «migrant victim,» the films *Mediterranea* and *Fuocoammare* never switch to victimization or misery. The pre-constructed speeches are therefore dismantled in order to highlight the words of the exiles and the diversity of their trajectories. The directors then put the accent on men and women who do not let themselves be defeated but who, on the

8 Reporter, historian and translator, Olivier Favier is the author of *Chronique de l'exil et d'hospitalité. Vies de migrants, ici et ailleurs, Le passager clandestin*, 2016. This book presents reports, interviews and even portraits, written by Olivier Favier between 2013 and 2016.

9 Interview of Gianfranco Rosi with Frédéric Strauss, «Lampedusa is the island of migrants but we do not see migrants there», in *Télérama*.fr, October 28, 2016, online: <http://www.telerama.fr/cinema /gianfranco-rosi-lampedusa-est-l-ile-des-migrants-mais-on-ny-voit-pas-de-migrants,148024.php>.

10 *Ibid.*

11 That we can talk about the thirst for power (election) and money (ratings).

contrary, show their will to live: to laugh, to play or to sing. Gianfranco Rosi, for example, films a group of men and women from Nigeria singing their story. The vibrating voice of a man resounds: he sings his journey through the Sahara and Libya. But the man also sings to declare his gratitude to God who miraculously saved them. Director Jonas Carpignano also chooses to show a soccer tournament that takes place in the courtyard of the reception center in Italy, almost making the viewer forget everything these men have just been through.

Political Speeches and Interest

Repressive policies and the establishment of a rigid bureaucracy are justified by a discourse where the exile is objectified and presented as a threat. On the contrary, by seeking the causes of the revolt of January 2010 in the small town of Rosarno, the director of the film *Mediterranea* operates a deconstruction of the figure of the «threat migrant.»¹² Although no political speech appears in the film, its purpose is to respond to the Minister of the Interior, Roberto Maroni. After these outbreaks of violence provoked by illegal workers, the politician indeed accuses excessive tolerance towards illegal immigration to be responsible for this violence.¹³ His speech has the consequences of making the victims guilty. On the contrary, Jonas Carpignano wants to restore the human side of the migrant's experience.

The director of *Mediterranea* stages what is hidden behind the clashes that took place between residents, police and migrants in Rosarno. In the film, the viewer discovers a real brotherhood around Ayiva and Abas. This helps them to overcome their living conditions, which they did not expect to be so difficult. While the group is growing, friendships are forged. But exploitation, racist provocations and above all physical attacks push their limits. After the death of two African colleagues killed by Italians, their anger explodes. This is how Ayiva and Abas join the procession of emigrants who defend their right to live, shouting, «Stop shooting the Black!» In fact, the film features events that actually took place in Rosarno on January 7, 2010. Moreover, on January 9, 2010, a house where twenty migrants lived was burned down (probably on the order of the *ndrangheta*, a Calabrian mafia). Already in December 2008, armed men shot a group of workers from a car and injured two Ivorians. This had given rise to violent protests from their African co-religionists. A Togolese man was also injured the same year by a blow from an air rifle. In fact, in the film Abas is beaten to death by a gang of young Italians in front of Ayiva who managed to take shelter behind a gate which he

12 This expression comes from Salim Chena.

13 *Il Corriere della sera* and *La Repubblica* from January 7, 2010.

jumped. There is no doubt that for this scene Carpignano drew on the testimonies he gathered. The director manages to show the viewer that the explosion of violence on the part of illegal workers is but a desperate act that reveals a hidden side of Europe.

1.3 An Alert Launched

These two films therefore constitute distress rockets launched for the attention of Western viewers, hence the title *Fuocoammare* («fire on the sea»). Indeed, in 1943, the bombardment of the ship *Maddalena* made the sea appear red. Likewise, the film shows a Mediterranean Sea red with human blood. And for good reason: after Operation *Mare Nostrum* (funded for one year by Italy), we see that there are even more castaways and therefore deaths. Indeed, the traffickers took advantage of the presence of Italian rescue boats that came close to the Libyan coast, to save money.

Instead of real boats, they send migrants on this journey to Europe in simple canoes without keels. But since these boats have only one inflator, as soon as the inner tube is pierced, they sink with the twenty-five or thirty people on board, as we see in *Mediterranea*. With Europeans unable to approach more than twenty miles from the Libyan coast, many people drown.

Marginality and Exploitation

Rosi's film was shot after 2013, that is, after the Italian state decided to take charge of the arrival of migrants on the island of Lampedusa. Previously, residents mobilized and directly helped newcomers. Now they are taken to reception centers making contact between migrants and islanders no longer possible. If, however, residents are always quick to come and help whenever necessary, the experience of illegal migrants is therefore increasingly a distant reality for Lampedusians. However, the more migrants «slide» into marginality, the more they fall prey to exploitation of all kinds.

Indeed, while applications for refugee or asylum seeker status are rejected, the exiles are pushed back to the margins of legality, falling prey to all kinds of predation. Parallel networks appear (as we can clearly see in *Mediterranea*) because migrants generate secondary benefits that many agents take advantage of. The migrant's status leads to a vulnerability that is aggravated by his ignorance of the terrain, which makes him the prey of predators. The *harrag*¹⁴ and the sub-Saharan fall into the nets of

14 The *harraga* are «border burners.» The etymology of the word *harrag* refers to «to burn.» The term today applies more particularly to North Africans. Read Simona Emilia Pruteanu, «Le mouvements des *harraga*- un traumatisme historique et politique qui dévoile la face cachée de l'Europe,» 87-106, in *Études francophones*. (Dé)voilement de Soi, désirs contestés, 28, 1&2, Printemps et Automne 2015. Read the novels: Tahar Ben Jelloun, *Partir*, Paris, Gallimard, 2006 and Boualem Sansal, *Harraga*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007.

the «captive mobility market.» Catherine Wihtol de Wenden asserts that «restrictive migration policies lead less to the deterrence to leave the country than to the development of irregular migration from the Maghreb and Mafia economies of the smuggling» (Chena 8).

This is how Jonas Carpignano films Ayiva and Abas picking fruit in an orangery.¹⁵ As is the case with these two Burkinabese protagonists, illegal workers earn between 15 and 25 euros per day by working a dozen hours (or one euro for a crate of oranges or mandarins). Their objective is to regularize their papers by obtaining an employment contract. In addition to being used for basic needs, is necessary to pay for the costs related to the boundary crossing that they must reimburse relatives and smugglers asking astronomical sums and threatening retaliation if they remain in the country.

Body in Pain

The exile first and foremost experiences hunger, thirst, hard work, stress or violence. While he is often seen as a body and not as an entire human being, both films are a reminder that even this body is that of a suffering being. Thus, in *Fuocoammare*, Doctor Bartolo is the spokesperson for thousands of migrants. He explains, among other things, during an ultrasound of an Eritrean woman pregnant with twins, that the woman and the fetuses suffered a very serious trauma as a result of the border crossing. The young woman even lost a green liquid from it, a sign of very great fetal pain. The viewer then listens to the doctor commenting on the photos: in particular, we see many people suffering from severe dehydration after their passage in the holds of a boat. He coins the term the «canoe disease» which mainly affects women and children, who have been in contact for days with the mixture of gasoline (used to fuel the engines of the canoes) and sea water. This chemical mixture causes severe, even fatal, burns on passengers. During one scene, reception center guards stop Rosi, who is filming the migrants who disembarked hours earlier. They point out to him that the smell of fuel oil that permeates the migrants is so strong that if we lit a fire, the unfortunate people would catch fire like torches ... it is also because of this fuel that during the attempted rescue of October 3, 2013, the migrants were so coated with it that they slipped from the hands of the sailors who were trying to save them.

¹⁵ In the DVD bonus, Catherine Wihtol de Wenden declares that migrants are not competitors in the job market since they take on the arduous jobs (which require being young and in good physical condition) that nationals do not want not. According to the researcher, they fill in gaps and contribute to the economic but also cultural contribution.

2. Two Committed Films: Informing, Raising Awareness, Provoking Empathy

2.1 How to Reach the Spectator?

Pietro Bartolo emphasizes that cinema can become a powerful weapon that touches hearts. For this, the two committed directors, Jonas Carpignano and Gianfranco Rosi, let the scenes «speak» and choose not to develop a political discourse in their film. Gianfranco Rosi's previous documentaries, *Sacro GRA* (2013), *El Sicario Room 164* (2010) or *Below Sea Level* (2008), are already characterized by the same working method which consists of waiting for the right opportunity to capture moments of the life of the protagonists rather than asking them questions. This is why the director spent a year on the island of Lampedusa, establishing close contact with islanders, including Samuele, the child who became the film's main character.

When Rosi starts filming, he does not know where he is going. It is during the editing that the last rescue at sea, which appears at the end, becomes the culmination of the film. After 40 days at sea, Rosi is witnessing a new rescue which turns out to be a tragedy: hundreds of people, men, women and children perished in the holds of the boat. After this tragic episode, Gianfranco Rosi stops filming and devotes himself to editing the film, which he sends to Berlin. He will add just one scene, filmed in the meantime in 2014, where Dr Bartolo comments on photos from a file in which he has recorded the traces of his work with migrants for the past twenty-five years. Armed with his small camera, Rosi discreetly films inaccessible places, including the reception center. In this way, the shoot «is not heavy». Doctor Bartolo says in an interview that «everything we see in the film is very natural and serene» (Rosi, DVD Bonus). The editing only serves to create an atmosphere and a narrative framework.

Rosi's approach is therefore very different from that of Jonas Carpignano, who, to make his film, was inspired by the story of the man who became its main actor, Koudous Seihon. Carpignano also visited Rosarno to carry out his research. It was there that he met Koudous Seihon. Then to write and finalize his screenplay, Jonas Carpignano had the help of professionals, as part of the Sundance Lab program.¹⁶ Her goal is to share the world

¹⁶ During this program, which belongs to the Sundance Institute created by Robert Redford, Jonas Carpignano participated in two workshops: script and directing.

of illegal migrants from an internal point of view while Rosi adopts an external point of view. These two films therefore provide two very complementary perspectives on the migration experience.

2.2 From Distant Information to Violent Reality

During the first third of the film *Mediterranea*, the camera follows the lost gaze of the group of sub-Saharan travelers. The spectator then easily identifies with the migrants. The camera manages to reproduce the emotional shock experienced by the characters. For example, while in a reassuring voice, Ayiva recommends to her sister, who remained in Burkina Faso, not to undertake this journey, his trembling hands holding the phone betraying his inner chaos. The camera tirelessly follows our hero Ayiva and his friend Abas, restoring their hesitation and agitation. This thus creates an intimacy between the main characters and the spectator.

For his part, Gianfranco Rosi gradually leads the viewer to the heart of the tragic. So, at the beginning of the film, a female voice is just heard: it is the voice of an anonymous passenger calling for help: «We are sinking!» There are a lot of small children on board! She cries desperately. Later, we witness the same scene where the panicked voice of a man calls for help as the coast guard asks, «Your position? Your position ... « However, a step is taken when Gianfranco Rosi films the last «rescue» of an arriving boat with 840 people on board. As is often the case, upstairs («the first class»)¹⁷ the migrants are all crowded while those in the «second class» arrive severely dehydrated. But during this scene, we discover that below, there is a third class that we reach through a narrow hatch: this is where the most people are. In this final part, the viewer is confronted with the silence of the helpless rescuers in the face of the tragedy that unfolds before them. The silence of death reigns in the holds of the boat, strewn with corpses. Faced with the horror unveiled in this cargo hold, Rosi feels the duty to show to the world this tragic reality.

In this context, Samuele not only represents the common thread of the film but he is also the key element of the film: his «lazy» eye that he must make work on the advice of the optician becomes the metaphor for the gaze of all Europeans who must learn to look at what they no longer make the effort to see. In the end, Samuele has evolved, he strokes a bird and talks to it, while, throughout the film, he chases his fellows with his slingshot. Rosi's implicit message is to call on the Western world to embrace this change in attitude towards migrants trying to reach Europe.

¹⁷ Migrants pay an average of 2000 dollars for the «first class» and 1000 for the second, hence the fact that most of them have no choice but to accept the «third class» which is the holds of the boat.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the goal of the directors is to make the viewer feel the same feelings as Doctor Bartolo who declares: «I cannot get used to this human distress.» Catherine Wihtol de Wenden estimates that 244 million people are affected by international migration, or 3.5% of the world's population (2016: 12). Attracted by promises of employment, human beings today are reduced to living in dramatic conditions, as we see in these feature films. This is why, the political scientist denounces the fact that one leaves people in situation of modern slavery (ibid.).

In September 2015, the photo of the body of little Aylan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian child, drowned on a Turkish coast moved the whole world. Rosi and Carpignano's films make this image speak by telling the story of these illegal migrants that will leave an imprint on the viewer. Having this knowledge,¹ the latter will be able to better understand the reverse side of these contemporary international migration issues.²

Works Cited

- Carpignano, Jonas. *Mediterranea*. Blaq Out, 2015.
- Chena, Salim. *Les traversées migratoires dans l'Algérie contemporaine. Africains subsahariens et Algériens vers l'exil*. Paris: Karthala, 2016.
- Crépeau, François, Delphine Nakache and Idil Atak (Dir.). *Les migrations internationales contemporaines une dynamique complexe au cœur de la globalisation*. Montréal: Presses universitaires de Montréal, 2009.
- Pruteanu, Simona Emilia. «Le mouvement des harraga – un traumatisme historique et politique qui dévoile la face cachée de l'Europe.» *Études francophones. (Dé)voilement de Soi, désirs contestés*, Vol. 28, No. 1/2 (2015): 87-106.
- Rosi, Gianfranco. *Fuocoammare*. Par-delà Lampedusa: Blaq Out, 2016.
- Wihtol de Wenden, Catherine. *Faut-il ouvrir les frontières?* Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2014.
- Wihtol de Wenden, Catherine. *Migrations. Une nouvelle donne*. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, coll. «Interventions,» 2016.
- Wihtol de Wenden, Catherine. *Le droit d'émigrer*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, coll. «Débats,» 2013.

1 Pierre Maillot, "L'écriture cinématographique de la sociologie filmique. Comment penser en sociologue avec une caméra?" in *La nouvelle revue du travail*, 1, 2012, URL: <http://nrt.revues.org/363>.

2 On the same topic, read Catherine Wihtol de Wenden. *Faut-il ouvrir les frontières?* and *Le droit d'émigrer*.

Politics of Fear and Solidarity Mechanisms in Documentary Theatre Staging Asylum: Žiga Divjak's 6

Katja Grcić*
Independent researcher

Abstract

In the context of the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, contemporary documentary theatre still has a potential to serve as a sophisticated political agon for an in-depth analysis of structural injustice and its causalities. Through the comparative analysis of the performance 6 by the Slovenian director Žiga Divjak and the cult film by Lars von Trier, *Dogville*, I examine the motive of a refugee in two different media by juxtaposing emotions of fear and solidarity. Both phenomena are ideologically highly potent: the first contributes to the rise of racism, xenophobia and restrictive politics, the latter however, if not precisely conceptualized, can further reinforce the neoliberal spectacle of suffering. The aim of this research paper was to provide theoretical framework for the use of solidarity and reflexivity when staging and dramatizing political narratives.

Keywords: refugee crisis, documentary theatre, politics of fear, solidarity, Žiga Divjak, *Dogville*

The Immigrant

Let her cross the border cross the border
not only reaching across not looking across
let her climb across let her cut
her skin on the wire let her claw
at hard dirt let her clasp
a stone and pull it from the ground and throw it
let her flee let her breathe let her not
drown let her beat thirst let her
wait a while longer let her be born a bit
later let her be brave
and not quit let her try again
let her dare and dare and come.
— Uroš Prah, Hunger

* katja.grcic@gmail.com

The Crisis

Migration is not a recent thing – it has been a feature of human existence for centuries. People have always migrated, either in groups or as individuals, to flee from different forms of oppression. Regardless of causes – may it be wars, climate changes or economic reasons – all of these being now more intertwined than ever – the number of refugees and immigrants is on the rise. However, it was only in 2015 that EU, after the long summer of migration,¹ announced the *refugee crisis*. That same year in September, the United Nations General Assembly brought together world leaders to address this new challenge – namely how to respond to large movements of people. Since more than one million registered refugees and migrants entered EU that year, the crisis was reduced to either a *crisis of numbers* or to a *humanitarian crisis*.

For the purpose of this paper, I will continue using the word *refugee* despite its epistemological and ontological complexity (Marino 1). Alternatives like *migrant* and *asylum seeker* pose certain problems too – the latter due to the connotation of opportunistic agent claiming benefits and the former due to an unclear difference between voluntary and forced migration.

It is apparent that the long summer of migration² was preceded by the long history of colonization³ and the *crisis* was in many aspects result of a domino effect of the Western imperialism combined with the global capitalistic system and its structural injustice. In order to diffuse responsibility, the term *crisis* was not only contextually misplaced, but also used as a cover for development of unprecedented restrictive directions by the EU and deployment of new authoritarian measures. When it comes to the reinforcement of neoliberal capitalism and the rapid implementation of policies that further diminish rights of (the most vulnerable) social groups, crisis has already proved itself as extremely effective tool. Agamben defines crisis as a contemporary instrument of rule, one that serves to legitimize political and economic decisions that dispossess citizens and deprive them of possibility of decision – which usually results in a *politics of fear* (García Agustín and Bak Jørgensen 5). Fear is primarily fuelled by a *politics of numbers* – and even though numbers play a significant role in immigration policy-making, they are often used for the purpose of what Nicholas De Genova calls the “the spectacle of statistics” (qtd in: García Agustín and Bak Jørgensen 6). This type of crisis representation directly contributes the outbreak of moral panic, and accordingly, usually results in rise of racism, xenophobia and violence.

On the other hand, reducing the refugee crisis only to humanitarian aspect can be as counterproductive and misleading, keeping us entangled in our own misconceptions on solidarity and empathy.

The comprehension of refugee crisis as primarily the crisis of border regimes and its following immigration policies was addressed in the recent performances made by Slovenian director Žiga Divjak. Both *6* (which premiered on the 31st of March, 2018, at Mladinsko theatre, Ljubljana) and *The Game* (which premiered on the 10th of June, 2020, at Mladinsko theatre, Ljubljana) deal with the treatment of refugees in the Eastern European context.

For the purpose of this paper, I use the performance *6* as an example of how documentary theatre can effectively deconstruct the mechanisms of *the politics of fear* and call for social changes based on horizontal instead of vertical solidarity. While the politics of fear directly reinforce the extreme-right policies, the solidarity misconceptions of the left may often be more enmeshed with coloniality than one is aware, consequently contributing the structural injustice and political violence they allegedly strive to abolish. The aim of this paper is to shed new light on the concept of solidarity by comparative analysis of *6* and *Dogville*, the cult film by Lars von Trier. The critical examination of solidarity and fear is done to provide theoretical framework for new political praxis in theatre and beyond.

Documentary Theatre

Speaking of performing arts, it is documentary theatre that has grown into a major genre for introducing political themes on stage. It uses pre-existing documentary material – newspapers, government reports, interviews, journals and correspondence – as source material for stories about real events and people, frequently without altering the text in the performance. Although its effects may not always match its intentions, documentary theatre often summons the public consideration of aspects of reality in a spirit of critical reasoning. In this sense, it is performative of a public sphere (Reinelt 12). This type of theatre is produced in the interaction between data (as a result of more or less extensive research), performers and spectators. The genre typically includes or is referred to as a verbatim theatre, theatre of fact, investigative theatre, theatre of witness, autobiographical theatre or ethnodrama (6).

Its origins date back to the ancient Greeks (Aeschylus' *The Persians*, Phrynichus' *The capture of Miletus*) and it occurred later in various moments of theatre history (e.g., French revolution). As a major practice it re-emerged in the twentieth century, initially as a type of propaganda

technique used as a post-revolution communist strategy in the Soviet Union. Consisting of dramatizations of current events, social problems and controversial issues this type of theatre became a political tool for indoctrination and re-education. It resulted in agitprop as a part of Lenin's political strategy - combining social inequities with emotionally charged elements it aimed to mobilize broader support and mould public opinion. The approach also affected Germany in the Weimar period under Erwin Piscator, who strongly influenced Brecht and his concept of *epic theatre*.

The complicated relationship between emotion and reason in agitprop theatre was also transferred to Piscator's work. The contradictory performances of his *Proletarian Theatre* were related to the very contradictions of communism, "which drew on the scientific analysis of history as a class struggle, but in practice transformed the idea of class struggle into an irrational myth" (Bregović 8). Brecht's work in this sense showed more sophistication and awareness – strategies he applied working with actors aimed primarily at promotion of critical reflection. His *epic theatre* in the late 1940s embraced a more dialectical approach due to his idea that theatre performance is the most complex form of communication. Emotions and all factors that led to them were not to be abolished, but examined – the goal was to disrupt the habitual empathy and avoid all kinds of emotional exploitation (Gordon 249).

In the USA the Federal Theatre Project's *Living Newspapers* was initiated in 1935. Radical in advocating for social changes and addressing the topics of racism, housing and democracy their work was soon categorized as anti-American propaganda and was faced with resistance of the political elites.

In the second half of the twentieth century various artists continued to further experiment with staging documentary and verbatim material for political effect – among others Peter Weiss, Rolf Hochhuth, Heinar Kipphardt, Robert Berrigan, Eric Bentley, John McGrath and Joan Littlewood (Wilmer 73).

Clearly, theatre has a long history of functioning as a force of moral education and can still be used as a powerful tool to address political issues. In the current age of rising statelessness, it may still offer multiple perspectives and new insights. It is important to mention that the character of a refugee was particularly well-known in ancient Greek tragedy: Medea, Orestes, Oedipus, the children of Herakles, the daughters of Danaus – they not only depict uprooted and homeless persons seeking asylum i.e., protection and help, they also demonstrate the importance of hospitality (*xenia*) (11).

Hospitality

Derrida, as the major theoretician of the ethics of hospitality, makes an essential distinction between two regimes of the law of hospitality – unconditional (absolute, hyperbolic) and conditional (juridic-political). Both are for him grounded in language or the lack of it. He wonders if the unconditional hospitality actually consists in suspending determinative language, where one abstains from asking any questions, not even about the name, origin or the whereabouts of the Other. That may be the only way to avoid “the economy of the circle” (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 135) – the conditions imposed through law and politics. However, keeping silent is already a modality of possible speaking, says Derrida. The paradox of hospitality is that it cannot be offered unconditionally without undermining its own conditions of possibility – namely, the existence of the host with the ability to welcome the guest. Furthermore, one can virtually become xenophobic in order to protect one’s own hospitality, home and ipseity (53).

With high potential for an easy perversion, hospitality remains in the liminal zone of continuous negotiation and everlasting attempts to make it less conditional, not to mention the inevitable collusion of hospitality and power. In the context of the European response to the refugee crisis, the concept of hospitality offers limited guidance if we try to address the fact that receiving societies are actually complicit in producing the conditions refugees and migrants are trying to escape.

Placed outside of the realm of duties, Derrida’s categorical imperative of unconditional hospitality, remains grounded in the ambiguous ethic of infinitive responsibility, which on one hand, risks producing a despondent apathy that does no more to motivate us to take responsibility for the suffering of others than disingenuous theories that merely seek to assuage our guilt. On the other hand, the hubris of this kind of ethic arguably “lends itself to sanctioning neo-imperial ethical doctrines” such as the “responsibility to protect” within the context of human rights, which often demonstrate no sense of equality with those they claim to protect (Chamberlain 96).

Regarding the refugee crisis, Žižek also calls for responsibility of receiving societies, but advocates a certain degree of distance, claiming that forced integration is beneficial neither to the *host*, nor to the *guest*. He does not specify the ideal degree of integration, nor does he offer a deeper analysis of the problem. However, he does pose an important question about class division, inherent both to Europe and the Middle East: “What

if the obstacle to integration is not only Western racism?" (Žižek 42).

The major problem of limitless responsibility derived from Derrida's theory of absolute hospitality is the that it potentially overburdens the very subject of that practice. In her book *Responsibility for Justice* (2011), Iris M. Young proposes *social connection* as foundation for the new forward-looking model of responsibility (Young 69). She argues that all those who contribute by their actions to the structural processes with unjust outcomes share responsibility for that injustice. She names four factors that determine degrees and levels of responsibility: power, privilege, interest and collective ability. The analysis of these factors brings her to the conclusion that responsibility is conditional upon the agents reproducing structural injustice through their acts.

The participation of citizens in structural injustices of the countries the refugees and migrants are coming from, alongside with their (in) direct participation in administrative, financial or military aspect of border regimes is evidence based and strongly contributes the concept of responsibility advocated by Young. Highlighting the global reproduction of injustice and showing the connections between separate and dissimilar actors Chamberlain suggests following perspective for improvement: "Framing responsibility to migrants in terms of solidarity instead of hospitality goes some way to overcoming the hierarchical host-guest relation; rather than regarding migrants as passive victims in need of protection, solidarity emphasizes the agency of migrants and their equal moral standing with members of receiving societies" (Chamberlain 72).

Theatre of Solidarity

Speaking of historical mutations and the genealogy of solidarity in her awarded book *The Ironic Spectator* (2013), Lilie Chouliaraki distinguishes between *solidarity as salvation* (apolitical humanitarian solidarity based on the principles of Henri Dunant) and *solidarity as revolution* (political solidarity of Marxian origin). She argues that neither of the two variations was actually able to avoid the accusations that its "moral certainties were ultimately doing more harm than good to the societies they were applied to" (Chouliaraki 24). The contemporary solidarity of neoliberal capitalism, however departed it may be from the moral certainties of both saving lives (*salvation*) or changing society (*revolution*), is also committed to the suffering of (distant) others, but unfortunately in a much more individualist manner of the 'feel good' activism that easily turns into a mere self-empowerment.

In the West, theatre is no exception to the spectacle of suffering and more often than not, ends up being merely a form of *Betroffenheitstheater*

– one that often lacks objectivity, undermines critical thinking and motivates nobody into action of any kind. The sorrow-stricken or shocked audience is usually emotionally overwhelmed, which leaves very little space for any potential *Verfremdung* benefits. Over time, this approach of well-aimed consternation has generated much suspicion and scepticism towards solidarity in general, as well as apathy towards the mediation of any kind of human vulnerability. Furthermore, this approach contributes dystopian arguments on impossibility of solidarity and “transforms other-oriented dispositions into a cynical hyper-individualism” (40).

Is there a way for the performative arts of today not to undergo these simplistic principles? Are transpositions of theatrical elements possible in a way that could be effective in the contemporary political agon?

Chouliaraki suggests that the capacity of theatre to stage human vulnerability by distancing the spectator through the objective space of the stage (or any other framing device), at the same time enabling the proximity through the theatrical resources, may be one of the most valuable tools in making solidarity nowadays more of a political, rather than consumerist concept. While dramaturgical consciousness of the new media places high demand of authenticity, mostly through expressing one's own feelings about others, Chouliaraki argues that it is not authenticity, but objectivity – seeing suffering others as human others and recognizing ourselves as actors upon their suffering – that should become our central point of interest (Chouliaraki 36-7).

Staging Asylum: 6

I argue that both objectivity and solidarity have been put into practice when it comes to the performance 6. The piece was created in coproduction of Maska collective and Slovensko mladinsko gledališče (Slovenian Youth Theatre) and received the Borštnik Grand Prix (2018) for the best performance.

Highlighting the political instead of emotional aspect of the sad true story' of six minors seeking asylum in Slovenia in 2016, Divjak managed to avoid what Brecht defines as *the exploitation of empathy* and succeeded in creating an omnipotent political narrative. Combining both documentary and fictional material he meticulously shaped polarized tension arising from the anxiety of ordinary people, their basic premise being well known idea that “the threat to their way of life always comes from outside, from foreigners, especially ones coming from a different culture” (Žižek 55). While the fear of the unknown can be deeply irrational, Žižek rightly emphasizes that we should not underestimate the cultural differences between people and instead of advocating for humanistic

utopia or unconditional hospitality, rather look for the deeper roots of fearing the Other. Besides, it is less a matter of a general *phobia* and more the fear of losing specific rights, privileges and benefits, but without an awareness that they are accumulated upon exploitative and unjust global power structures.

6 follows the course of events from the 19th of February 2016, when the head of the student dormitory Kranj gets an unexpected visit from the Deputy Mayor and the Chief of the Civil Protection of the Kranj Municipality. Both of them approach the head with their rising concerns upon the six-underage asylum seekers that may arrive to the dormitory, the capacities of which are only thirty percent full. After the first official attempt to accept the children had failed, due to, at first timid, but eventually severe resistance of the Kranj community – primarily the parents of the children accommodated in the dormitory – the story hits the headlines and through a domino effect leads to further antagonism and rejections, not just towards the six teenagers, but also to the possibility of constructing refugee centre anywhere in Slovenia.

In cooperation with the dormitory head Judita Nahtigal and journalist Maja Ava Žiberna, Divjak made thorough research into the particular case. He used diverse resources in structuring the piece: extracts from various media, e-mail correspondence between the parents and the head, range of interviews with the dormitory employees, public statements of the politicians, as well as random thoughts he collected from the local community of Kranj. Through the implementation of the elements of verbatim theatre, that is based on the spoken words of real people, Divjak created a layered political performance.

It is precisely the separation of the cultural and political dimensions of solidarity that Chouliaraki marks as the most significant. One should take into consideration that this separation privileges the cultural over the political, making solidarity itself much more a matter of “training of the soul” (Chouliaraki 212) rather than a matter of understanding the causes of suffering and debating our response to it, which was, in the theatre context, the essence of the Brechtian approach, whose influences are also visible in 6. Divjak chooses to confront the audience with mechanisms that govern the majority of society, mostly those non-aligned, those who are neither pro, nor contra. His intention was clearly neither to criticize nor to rectify, but to effectively put things into a perspective that enables constructive debate and analysis. While this decision shows a high level of political awareness and the causalities that operate in the background, the decision to put the pre-recorded video of six boys (simply sitting and actively looking) behind the actors, facing the audience in slow motion, had a somewhat different effect. It seems that Divjak wanted to give a human presence to the mere numbers that refugees represent in

the administration of the EU (clearly referenced in the title of the piece), but leaving them without voices he only partially succeeds in this.

Comparable phenomenon on the political scale was the failed EU relocation scheme (2015-2017) – an attempt to institutionalize solidarity between EU member states that started as an emergency response to the rising number of refugees in Italy and Greece, but was extremely exclusive of the refugees, who got no voice in that framing. Dramaturgical decision to leave the six boys completely voiceless seems to me as counterproductive as creating a victimhood narrative that would articulate only their private stories. On the other hand, maybe it was precisely this what Derrida meant when he spoke about suspending the determinative language if one strives for absolute hospitality.

Creating the analytical framework of solidarity, Agustín and Jørgensen refer to it as a “spatial concept” and “relational practice” that primarily consists in connecting *here* and *there*. (García Agustín and Bak Jørgensen 25). The problem with Divjak’s piece is that it also fails to connect *here* (the Slovenian political agon) with *there* (in the context of asylum seekers’ country of origin). Since the limits and risks of unconditional hospitality were previously defined, and hospitality as a concept declared insufficient in addressing the problem of refugee crisis, I will now try to examine to which extent has Divjak’s piece been operating within the framework of solidarity.

Agustín and Jørgensen argue that solidarity is at risk of becoming a “floating signifier” unless one takes a more analytical approach to it. Therefore, they distinguish three types of solidarity: autonomous, civic and institutional. Autonomous solidarity is self-organized (mainly in urban places), implies horizontal participation, equality and direct democracy; it rejects cooperation with the state as well as the idea of supporting “anyone in need” which is upheld by NGOs. Civic solidarity is organized through a vast number of manifestations and actors, such as NGOs, local communities and individuals. The degree of their contention varies depending on its claims and strategies. Finally, institutional solidarity stands for the formalization of solidarity in various degrees and connects the civil society arena with that of policy-making. The contribution of members is mandatory and there is a high expectation to get something in return when in need (39).

What Divjak deconstructs in 6 is primarily institutional solidarity and the means in which it operates on the low level – dormitory, school, town, municipality. Also, he demonstrates how autonomous solidarity, when not coherent and cohesive, easily ends up dispersed or even transformed into fear.

Therefore, the first and most significant characteristic of solidarity, claims Agustín, is its contentiousness which operates at least at two

levels – hierarchical and exclusionary. Grounded in nation-state borders, solidarity fails to become trans-national and therefore remains limited to governments and their strategic calculations of rights and obligations. Frontex, the European Border and Coastline Agency, is a good example for this and shows how attempts to force an (inexistent) political common goal result in solidarity that is neither inclusionary nor progressive (*ibid.*). Therefore, the attempt to define the refugee crisis as a *solidarity crisis* is as wrong as the previously mentioned displacements of the term crisis. Conclusively, the real crisis is actually the crisis of states and their institutionalized solidarity.

When official institutions fail to adequately respond to large-scale problems like the refugee crisis, showing both the lack of political responsibility as well as the willingness to deal with those problems, art can shed some light to the most urgent matters and serve as a political agon.

In the field of the visual arts, the most controversial analysis of misconceptions on solidarity was performed by Lars von Trier in his unfinished trilogy *USA – The Land of Opportunities. Dogville* (2003) and *Manderlay* (2005) both theatricalize a social experiment which explores how an act of solidarity can lead to animosity, punishment and retaliation. While *Manderlay* deals with racial aspect of American society, *Dogville* is placed into the economic and political context of a single community accepting a refugee – the Other who is significantly different than themselves.

The Other

The arrival of the Other into a small community and sequent gradation of hostility towards him/her is not a new motive, but for the purpose of this comparative analysis, the one I chose demonstrates wide range of theatrical and dramaturgical elements in common with Divjak's 6. For instance, in the play *Katzelmacher* (1968) by Rainer Maria Fassbinder, which evolved into a movie a year later, a similar motive was used. The arrival of the immigrant worker Yorgos to a Munich suburb, into a hermetic little clique of men and women whose sexual and social frustrations are tightly intertwined, triggers xenophobia, envy and aggression. Things escalate into an act of physical violence when men decide to beat him up. After the beating they decide to let him stay, as long as he can be further exploited, which resembles the treatment Grace receives in the “welcoming” community of *Dogville*. The eponymous film, just like *Katzelmacher*, deals with the arrival of a refugee into a small community. The film extracts much of its imaginary from theatre – with direct references to Brecht's *Drei Groschen Opera* (e.g., the revenge song of *Seeräuberin Jenny*) and uses variations of the *Verfremdung* concept, together with minimal, stage-like

set. In a highly stylized manner, von Trier places actors on a bare sound stage with no decoration, marking their homes and other buildings in town by simple chalk lines on the floor.

If *Dogville* was Trier's attempt to deconstruct the American myth of freedom, prosperity and equal opportunities, as well as mass media propaganda and cultural imperialism, then Divjak's work in many aspects addresses similar phenomena in the contemporary European context. In 2018, when Divjak created *6*, Europe was celebrating the 29th anniversary of the fall of the 155-kilometre-long Berlin wall, while at the same time a total of about a 1,000 km of walls stood inside and around Europe. (Brunet and Ruiz 5). Clearly, what Divjak deconstructs is the myth of Europe full of duty and moral obligation, Europe where "things go in the right direction" ("Remarks), as Donald Tusk puts it in September 2018 at the EU summit in Austria. By paying countries like Turkey and Libya to stop the migrants before they even reach the EU border, alongside building walls, the EU has proven as the most successful in feeding the media propaganda on the refugee crises. Political response to the increased need for asylum in Europe is not clearly articulated and confirms how paradigms of free movement relate much more to commodities rather than people.

Comparative analysis of *Dogville* and *6* in this paper is used as a framework for the analysis of the concept of solidarity in two different media – film and theatre. Both of them are related to the Brechtian political praxis and while *Dogville* surely demonstrates more formal and political complexity, the motive of a refugee is present in both of them, but with clear detachment from the "*spectacles of commodification* that foster dominant voyeuristic, even pornographic disposition towards suffering other" (Chuliaraki 52). The dominant prostitution of suffering on stage is so common because it uses a predicable approach to extract pity, a power-oriented feeling that draws fuel from its privileged and elevated position that is analogous to the basic principles of institutional solidarity.

Common ground for the following analysis lies in the fact that both pieces force the audience to think beyond drama, which is achieved by showing that characters' reactions and attitudes are as much an outcome of the social relationships as of the psychological mechanisms of the individuals.

From *Dogville* to Kranj

Dogville is a small, fictional town at the bottom of the Rocky Mountains; Kranj, a small, non-fictional town at the bottom of the Slovenian Alps. While Trier sets his protagonists in houses without walls, pointing simultaneously at their false sense of privacy borders, Divjak raises an

awareness of the established antagonism between private and public by creating an interwoven network of personal confessions, administrative communication and sensationalist news. He sharply discloses the mechanisms of fear and their impact on society.

Trier uses frequent shower shots that set his protagonists in some sort of metaphorical prison. In the pervading tone of uneasiness citizens of Kranj become the prisoners of their own fear. For them, stage becomes a place of narrowness with no way out. Shot at ground level, Trier uses a hand-held camera that moves among the characters, as if they were all one, while Divjak decides that his actors will be put on a same level stage with the audience, without any scenic interventions and actors dressed just like the audience they are facing. Both approaches denote oneness and underline the awareness of the community, but Trier's chalk lines additionally underline the motive of borders.

Moreover, Trier's high-angle shots create an atmosphere of powerlessness in which characters seem to be governed by some "higher force" that makes them change their opinions and behaviours. Divjak's meticulous dramaturgy creates similar effect through narration – whereas the shift from initial hospitality to final xenophobia is seen as a result of pressure, propaganda and politics of fear. From media sensationalism to rumours and anguish, fear and the overall feeling of distrust slowly build up. Since the concept of the performance is very minimalist, with subtle music and lighting effects, tension accumulates by juxtaposing different discursive practices: from calm, intimate confessions of workers and their ambivalent emotions over the arrival of six boys and long-term effects it might have, to the overly kind administrative responses to the concerns of the parents, whose communication, over time, become more and more aggressive. Dramaturgically and rhythmically the performance is masterfully guided – from the initial quiet, more personal discourse to the final turmoil and verbal violence.

"I believe we have to help children. It seems normal to me" – says one of the dormitory employees in 6. This tone of duty and moral obligation soon becomes endangered by the awareness of economic reality that calls for different methods. Conflict between the initial idea of hospitality and the final exclusion and rejection shows how solidarity based on *common humanity* (Chouliaraki) – which is a concept of neoliberal philanthro-capitalism – is insufficient and hypocritical response to the political crisis. "Based on universal sentimentalism of pity or the particularistic pragmatism of irony" (15) this approach is misleading and contributes to the false notion that moral reformism can motivate political change.

Without question. Of course. Absolutely. Yes. Yes."

The rhythmical repetition of this self-implied moral standard in 6 gradually becomes completely devoid of its meaning. Divjak gives priority to political rather than sentimental education. He moves the focus from the popular humanitarian imaginary to political responsibility. In *Dogville* Trier is even more dedicated to the “complex seeing” (Koutsourakis 150) which invokes dialectical engagement and is not interested in transmitting a single-minded message.

It is the character of Grace that is the most paradoxical and controversial – by introducing it Trier surely ran the risk of being proclaimed an anti-humanist.’ This particular accusation came from the Grand Jury at the Cannes Film festival and was followed by other moralistic readings of the film. Things became even more complicated when Anders Behring Breivik, a Norwegian neo-fascist perpetrator accused of terrorist attacks and mass murder in 2011, referenced *Dogville* as a great inspiration for his actions (Koutsourakis 147).

The character of Grace is conceptually based on the antonymic notion of *absolute hospitality* – I suggest we call it *absolute graciousness*. Grace stands for an unconditional generosity (with her time and her labour) and limitless forgiveness (which stretches so far that she forgives physical and mental abuse, including rape) upon which she constructs her moral superiority over the deteriorating citizens of Dogville. Her stoic acceptance and passive reconciliation with the underdog role contribute to the reproduction of the structures of the social oppression and injustice. The paradox of Grace is summoned by her father in the final car scene – her condescending arrogance based on unattainable ethical standards combined with no understanding of the real-life struggles of the working class of people of Dogville is what makes the core of her hollow narrative. Furthermore, the powerless victimhood she embodies is eventually revealed to have its counterpart in limitless cruelty and the urge for revenge and punishment. So sweet and seemingly innocent, Grace turns out to be one of the most brilliantly portrayed characters with traits of *covert narcissism* which, precisely for being covert, are so often misinterpreted. Interestingly, Breivik received an overt type of diagnosis after court-appointed psychiatric examination. I argue that von Trier was neither anti-humanist nor amoral cynic when creating the character of Grace, but possibly highly aware of this complex paradox and its private and political consequences, but his insightful approach to this phenomenon (essentially didactic in its nature, just like the rest of the film) was both misunderstood and dismissed. The overall concept of *Dogville* is also far from being limited to individual deviations or shock therapy – every character is a part of the totality and influences the political realm. The idea “personal is political,” rooted in the second-wave feminism, can and should be extended to other phenomena of structural injustice and

systematic oppression and exploitation. The inherent mutuality of micro and macro relations in *Dogville* and *6* can be linked to the global political relations nowadays, especially the ones that contribute the rise of migrants and refugees. Mutuality, claims Fiorenza Picozza, is inherent to the production of asylum and Europe: "Europe produces refugees and refugees produce the space of Europe" (Picozza xxiii), Picozza, who as a volunteer in Hamburg in 2015, witnessed much of what she calls "the spectacle of solidarity" (probably the most obscure was the scene of applauding to the refugees at the main train station in Hamburg) (xix), claims that "coloniality renders refugees objects of someone else's compassion, protection, management and political engagement and in doing so, concomitantly reproduces their exteriority to Europe" (xvii). She defines asylum as spatial and temporal struggle – a transnational movement based in its temporal reality of first becoming and then ceasing to become a refugee. Picozza reveals how the displayed humanitarian inclusion we have witnessed in the media was actually just a performance that concealed the exclusion through illegalization and deportation.

In view of this, Picozza also invokes solidarity as a method in dealing with the refugee crisis, but argues that the concept should be based on understanding of the political production of refugees and awareness of the complexity of their socialization and integration. The long-term temporality and fragmented spatiality are, according to her, two major elements in the existential struggle of a refugee, who is therefore particularly vulnerable subject. In both *Dogville* and *6* we witness the abuse of power towards those subjects.

Gradation of Fear

Divjak's suggestive theatrical language combined with minimalist setting creates a crawling atmosphere of anxiety and angst. The skilful gradation of fear in this performance reaches its climax in a set of irrational social constructs. Arising from the real or fake perception of danger, fear responses cause behavioural changes – when modulated by cognition and learning, fear is rational, otherwise we speak of phobia – an irrational fear. It is a common illusion that progress may take away our fears – some of them will surely disappear, but the new ones always reappear. To deal with fear means to acknowledge it, understand its origins and background, meet it with acceptance and tools to regulate its effects. Furthermore, fear is an underlying force of much of the political extremism we witness. The rapid changes our society fails to process due to its irrational imperative of growth put us in a paradoxical situation of being a part of an irreversible change and at the same time resisting the inevitable

effects of that change. If not recognized and acknowledged, fear can become the most powerful blocking force that usually leads to violence since the tension of the paradox we inhabit must somehow be released.

Denying fear is the best way to become governed by it, may it be in this case, the fear of authority – the police and gangsters in *Dogville* or losing jobs and being excluded from the society in 6, as well as the fear of Other (the Other being Grace in *Dogville* / refugees in 6). When Thomas Edison Jr. claims that citizens of Dogville have “problem with acceptance,” it is not just the acceptance of an unknown woman so different from them, it is also the acceptance of themselves, their own fears, their own nature that they deny.

Therefore, initial trust and hospitality, as a moral imperative that comes out of obligation and not out of understanding, turn to exploitation and abuse, just like in Fassbinder's *Katzelmacher*. The narrative climax of both *Dogville* and 6 takes place in a meeting. In *Dogville*, Grace, encouraged by Thomas Edison Jr., gathers the townspeople to talk to them openly about their abuse and disrespect, which results in denial and antagonism, creating a group dynamic at its worst. Similarly, in 6 the dormitory headmaster, Judita Nahtigal, organizes a meeting with parents hoping to diminish their fears and speak sense to them. Unfortunately, the meeting escalates to an open and loud conflict, aggressive abuse of power, even blackmail. Under pressure, the principal withdraws, since any further communication anyhow seems impossible.

Methodologically, the microphones that Divjak puts behind the chairs of the protagonists create some sort of invisible pedestals, where every once in a while, somebody can enjoy the privileged position of proclamation: the one who appropriates the microphone has the social power, usually with no legitimate or just ground for doing so. Moreover, the straightforward use of the official documents and emails allows the performance to outline the mechanisms of fear driven actions that obstruct social dialogue. Divjak establishes powerful revival of the critical (self-) contemplation as a way to confront fears of all sorts – of foreigners, economic insecurity, aggression of the privileged ones.

Numerous psychological, cultural, historical, ideological and economical forces intertwined with everyday human life are under the influence of fear. It is our capability of narrating and deconstructing fear that can turn it into an effective mode for transformation and growth. This is both ethically and aesthetically the main forte of Divjak's performance, which leads us to what Chouliaraki calls *the politics of reflexivity*.

Agonism Instead of Antagonism

"It's not a crime to doubt yourself Tom, but it's wonderful that you don't" – says Grace to Tom in the final part of *Dogville*, suggesting the reversed point of the director that it is the lack of reflexivity that can deteriorate even the most noble of intentions. Packed in political preaching and analogously superficial aesthetic paradigms, much of politically engaged theatre/film aims at the confirmation one receives of their own righteousness. Deeper analysis is often sacrificed for the sake of motives that fuel antagonism and reinforce binary oppositions in the most sensationalist manner. However, without interdisciplinary approach to the political agon and great deal of (self)-reflexivity, engaged theatre can hardly achieve elementary justification for its own existence, let alone more specific political agenda of solidarity, so often invoked and praised as the highest form of human empathy.

Chuliaraki identifies two aspects of solidarity that fail to reach its potential:

Pity, associated with a solidarity of moral universalism, is challenged by the scepticism towards all given truths, while irony, associated with a solidarity of moral particularism, relies upon utilitarian calculation and is often grounded in private self-doubt nourished by the capitalistic spirit. Whilst ironic response emerges as a critique of pity, neither paradigm offers politically and morally productive proposal for solidarity. (Chuliaraki 219)

Therefore, she introduces the concept of *agonistic solidarity* as a more functional mixture of judgement and empathy that also validates the pedagogical potential of staging the spectator as actor – i.e., someone capable of seeing him/herself thinking with and acting in a collective of other actors for a common cause (Chuliaraki 221-2). This, I claim, is well exemplified in 6.

Solidarity, according to Hannah Arendt, though it may be aroused by suffering, should not be guided by it. Primarily, due to the high risk of pity and its sentimental distancing, which can often lead to the glorification of its cause. Compared to the sentiment of pity, solidarity may appear cold and abstract, for it "remains committed to ideas' rather than to any love' of men" (Arendt 1963/1990: 89).

In that regard, I should mention that neither Trier nor Divjak use their pieces to promote ideology or invoke common humanity. Even though one's judgement always depends on their ideology, both pieces manage

to reach beyond by showing how arrogant and potentially dangerous it may be to consider one's ideals as universal. Žižek summarizes it quite well by saying that ideology resides not only in stories invented by those in power to deceive others, but also in stories invented by subjects to deceive themselves (Žižek 55). In order to diminish the consequences of self-delusion, methods of *agonistic solidarity* may prove useful.

In theatrical staging this concept aims at the communicative structure based on perpetual reflexivity that creates an in-between place where crucial questions on justification, antagonism, otherness and historicity should be asked. This also lies at heart of Arendt's view of public action as theatrical one – defining the theatre as “the political art par excellence” (Arendt 1958/1998: 188) and a space where seeing and being seen are not stable positions, but ones that alternate with one another, which contributes togetherness and dealings of men. Being at the core of Arendt's account of public action as a matter of imaginative judgement, this notion inspired Chuliaraki for her concept of *agonistic solidarity*.

Conclusion

To summarize, the potential of documentary and verbatim theatre to address complex political issues, like the refugee crisis, is still potent, but it is a dramaturgy based on *agonistic solidarity* that can reach beyond the spectacle of suffering and encourage the disambiguation of *ironic spectators*. This kind of approach, methodologically reinforced with perpetual reflexivity, may generate new levels of awareness and reach political agon by illuminating differences between humanitarian assistance and political solidarity, as well as its inherent limits.

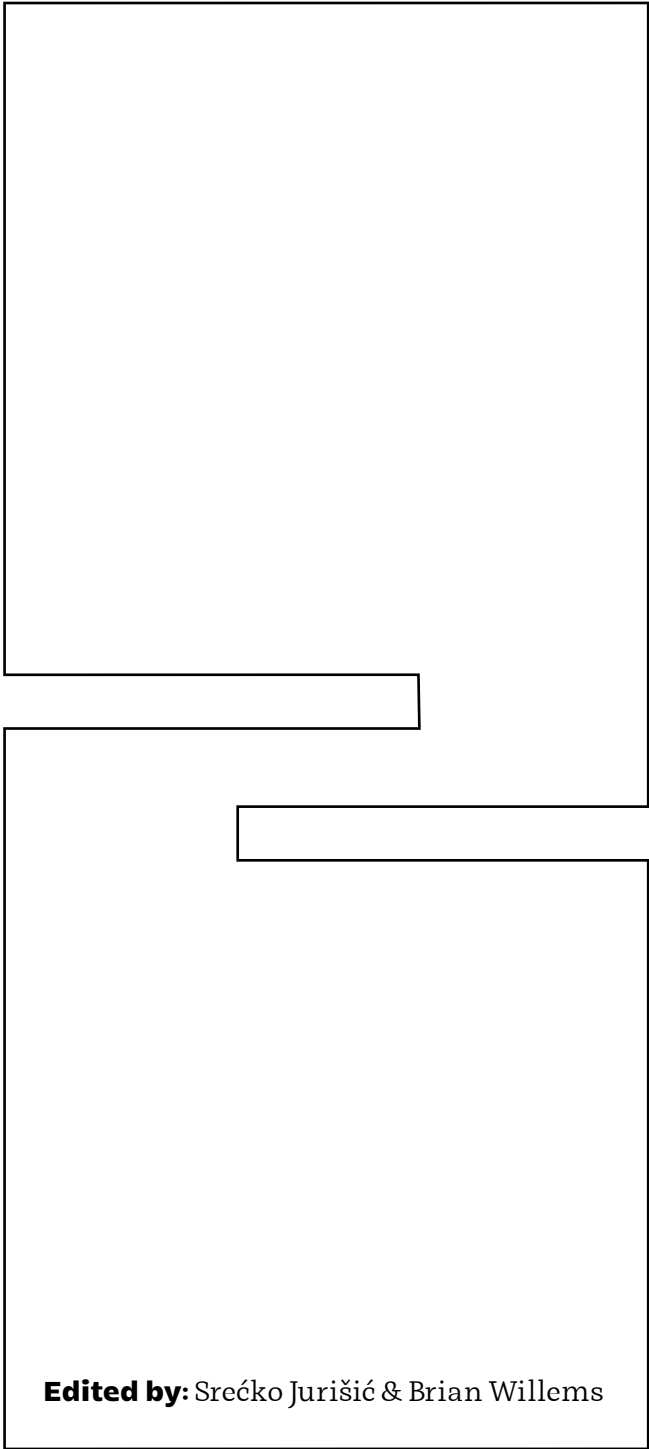
Works Cited

- “Remarks by President Donald Trump Ahead of the Informal Salzburg Summit.” *Europsko vijeće* (Sep 19 2008). Internet: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/hr/press/press-releases/2018/09/19/remarks-by-president-donald-trump-ahead-of-the-informal-salzburg-summit/>.
- Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. London: Penguin Books, 1963/1990.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958/1998.
- Bregović, Monika. “Erwin Piscator's Russia's Day: Agitprop Between History and Myth.” *SIC- Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2015): 1- 18.
- Brunet, Pere. Benedicto, Anihua Ruiz. *Building Walls. Fear and Securitization*

- in European Union*. Barcelona: Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau, 2018.
- Chamberlain, James A. "Responsibility for Migrants: From Hospitality to Solidarity." *Political Theory*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2020): 57–83.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie. *The Ironic Spectator. Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.
- Derrida, Jacques and Anne Dufourmantelle. *Of Hospitality*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- García Agustín, Óscar and Martin Bak Jørgensen, Martin. *Solidarity and the 'Refugee Crisis' in Europe*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Gordon, Robert. *The Purpose of Playing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006
- Koutsourakis, Angelos. *Politics as Form in Lars von Trier. A Post-Brechtian Reading*. New York; London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Marino, Sara. *Mediating the Refugee Crisis. Digital Solidarity, Humanitarian Technologies and Border Regimes*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Martin, Carol. *Theatre of the Real*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Picozza, Fiorenza. *The Coloniality of Asylum. Mobility, Autonomy and Solidarity in the Wake of Europe's Refugee Crisis*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.
- Reinelt, Janelle. "The Promise of Documentary." In: *Get Real. Documentary Theatre Past and Present*. Ed. Forsyth, Alison. Megson, Chris. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009: 6-23.
- Wilmer, S. E. *Performing Statelessness in Europe*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018
- Young, Iris Marion. *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Against the Double Blackmail. Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbours*. New York: Penguin Press, 2017

Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts



Edited by: Srećko Jurišić & Brian Willems

Translations – Jurica Pavičić

Jurica Pavičić or the Chronicle of Croatian Desenchantment

Srećko Jurišić*

University of Split

The Mediterranean crime novel is the fatalistic acceptance of this drama that has hung over us ever since a man killed his brother on one of the shores of this sea.

— Jean-Claude Izzo¹

The year 1989 saw the death of Leonardo Sciascia, the Italian writer and politician who wrote extensively on Cosa Nostra, and very few crime novelists after him have opted for socially engaged fiction. However, Andrea Camilleri, Sciascia's close friend, gained a strong critical approval with his lengthy book series on commissario Montalbano which was a major success both on the local and global levels. The series opens up with the 1994 novel *The Shape of Water* and it touches upon all of the important aspects of Italian reality, from illegal immigration, the Arab Spring, to the violent and deep state-orchestrated G8 turmoils in Genova in 2001. Camilleri was to become one of the harshest critics of Berlusconi's regime – which, rather curiously, also started in 1994. The events taking place in Italy were by no means an isolated phenomenon. In the early 2000s, Massimo Carlotto, the Italian crime novelist and left wing activist wrongfully sentenced to a prison sentence, came up with the definition of the Mediterranean noir' à propos Jean-Claude Izzo, the French journalist, novelist and activist whose sun-lit but dark prose reminded him of Camus when it came to writing about the Mediterranean in the era of late global capitalism; as Oran in Camus or Barcelona in Montalbán, Marseille plays a crucial role in Izzo's work through its constant cross-cultural hybridizations. When Izzo died of cancer in 2000 he was already a legend of sorts in France, celebrated with reprintings of his work, and, very soon, in Italy where Carlotto, at the time at the peak of his literary fame, recommended the publication of Izzo's Marseille trilogy (1995-1998) to his publisher, e/o edizioni, the same publishing house representing Elena Ferrante, to be more precise, and its English speaking outpost, Europa Editions.

* sreckojurisic@gmail.com

1 Jean-Claude Izzo, *Garlic, Mint and Sweet Basil*, New York: Europa Editions, 2013, p. 21.

All these authors – together with the Moroccan writer Driss Chraïbi and his Inspector Ali series and the Greek novelist Petros Markaris with his Haritos series – became prominent in the Nineties and set the majority of their body of work within the Mediterranean basin, exploring the social and political implications of the inner sea which, in the state of growing political abandonment, becomes the playground for organized crime on various levels, from Sciascia's classical mafia novels and evolving into Saviano's *Gomorrah* (2006), depicting the neapolitan camorra. This is the choral *crónica del desencanto*, the chronicle of disenchantment. This expression comes from José F. Colmeiro in his 1995, found in the first book-length study dedicated to the narrative fiction of the Spanish novelist Manuel Vázquez Montalbán and his private eye, Pepe Carvalho, a series that started back in the Seventies, during the last phase of Franco's regime while Spain was transitioning towards its democratic future.

Given this context, Jurica Pavičić's work could be read as an embodiment and a chronicle of the Croatian post-war transition that took place in the Nineties and well into the new millennium, starting with his 1997 novel *Plaster Sheep*, a real-life narrative based on controversial episodes of the Yugoslav war. The book had huge resonance in Croatia and represents a milestone in the Croatian prose of the Nineties. The novel eventually had a film adaptation, Vinko Brešan's *Witnesses*, with Pavičić as a co-writer. Since his debut, Pavičić has written, along with his novels, film criticism and widely appreciated, award winning columns, and his work as a journalist, apart from creating an important fan base, continues to be a constant source of inspiration for his narratives. *The Sunday Friend*, his second novel, was published in 2000 and it is a crime novel dealing with the links between post-communist wild capitalism and corrupted politics, while his third novel, *Minute 88* (2002), revolves, as in the football novels by Markaris or Montalbán, around the corrupt football milieu and its subculture, whereas his fourth (*Her Mother's House*, 2005) features the overwhelming influence of the Catholic church on Croatian Society. After *Little Red Riding Hood* (2006) – another crime novel, this time dealing with the modernization of a generation of Croatian women – and two short story collections, Pavičić published *Woman From the Second Floor*, showcased here with two chapters translated into Italian and English. In *Woman From the Second Floor*, Pavičić again includes powerfully depicted female characters in a thriller. The story follows Bruna, the main character, on her dramatic path through the dynamics of the Mediterranean patriarchal family all the way through to the poisoning of her mother-in-law, and an attempt at redemption after serving a prison sentence. It may well be said that this novel introduces the reader to the new, more mature phase, of Pavičić's poetics with features that used to be the strong point of his short stories – such as poignant psychological insights and

a solid grip of the atmosphere – which expands to all of the dimensions of the novel. A trilogy of sorts follows, starting with *Red Water* (2017), an award-winning crime epic story spanning through roughly thirty years of Dalmatian history, including *The Book About South* (2019), a collection of 23 essays discussing the Mediterranean and the Dalmatian social and cultural heritage facing the contradictions of the post-communist era, and ending with *Prometheus' Son* (2020), a cold-case thriller reprising one of the characters from *Red Water*, former detective Gorki Šajin, who is now a representative of a big real estate fund which acquires land in Dalmatia for tourist development, bringing Šajin into conflict with the island microcosm of his ancestors, his father above all, and then diving into the frictions of the perennially active relationship between the Modern and the Ancient in the Mediterranean, knowing that this is the location of the tragedy of the inner sea. This is a relationship that spills over the limits of genres, and Pavičić's work, just like Sciascia's, defies this type of classification. It is worth mentioning that Sciascia is one of the authors Pavičić looks up to. In that sense, Patrick Raynal, who directed the prestigious 'Série noire' for Gallimard from 1991 to 2005, did something very important. And he did it twice, during his term' as editor regarding the position, greater than the genre itself, of detective fiction. He published a new translation/adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* in 1994 and then again, symbolically, shortly after Jean-Claude Izzo passed away. Here is an excerpt from his editor's note: "Crime fiction aficionados adore the classical poetry of references to tragedy. For them, it's an amusing and provocative manner to claim the eternity of literature in spite of those who see noir as a minor genre destined to disappear. I wanted to use my time as the head of Série Noire to go a little bit further with this provocation by publishing a new translation of the darkest of tragedies, one where this cursed king, who is the assassin of his own father before becoming the lover of his own mother, heads the investigation, leading him to learn that he himself is the perpetrator. Freud made a treasure of it. So did all the authors of Série Noire."²

2 Patrick Raynal, in Sophocles, *Oedipe roi*, Trans. Didier Lamaison, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p. 3, translation mine.

The Woman from the Second Floor, by Jurica Pavičić

Translated by Brian Willems

29.

Anka continued to be poisoned all summer. The whole of June, July, and August Bruna performed the same meticulous pharmaceutical rituals twice a day. She would prepare a meal. She would divide it equally onto two plates. And then she would heap some powder that smells of garlic onto one of them. That was the plate she would give to Anka.

In the summer, Bruna usually used to cook light, boiling green beans and zucchini, putting bowls of radish, wild asparagus and tomato salad together. Now things have changed. It was easier for her to mix the poison into thick, stewey dishes. Although it was hot, she cooked bean and pasta soup, veal with peas, tripe and cod stew all thick, soupy dishes full of garlic and oil, dishes in which the bromadiolone would get lost in a mixture of heavy smells. Anka loved that kind of food. She would dig into it with real pleasure, and with an appetite that made Bruna both happy and scared.

The summer months passed by, and the mouse poison seeped into Anka's body, from lunch to lunch, from dinner to dinner, in microscopic, irrevocable doses. It entered through the palate and irreversibly circulated through the vascular system, toward the lungs, marrow, lymph nodes, and liver. Bruna continued to attend the old woman all day. And she continued to get Anka out of bed, bring her to the table, and still wash her armpits and hair, smelling her skin that reeked of milk skin. In the palm of her hands she held Anka's wrists, scalp, flesh, and skin, feeling Anka's body as she touched her. She watched out for any tiny symptoms, symptoms which only she could read: a slight redness of the eyes, cracked lips, bruises that don't heal. Anka's veins burst and became brittle, and her blood thinned. The bromadiolone traveled through her veins and arteries, finishing off this impossible condition.

Strangely, in those months Anka also became different. She no longer acted with that contemptuous, curt hatred toward Bruna. She became mild, almost grateful, nearly gentle. Instead of a grumpy, one-syllable thanks, now Bruna got a look that was full of some kind of newly found

mildness. Then - when Anka would nearly drown in her dead-calm goodness - Bruna would have a prick of conscience because of what she was doing. A prick, but just a short one. She continued on, to the rhythm of lunch and dinner, dinner and lunch. She would cook stewed green beans, chicken fricassée and chickpea soup, and every time one dish would be spiced with a pinch of poison. She just had to wait. To wait, for the blood to thin, for the artery walls to collapse.

All this time, Mirela still stopped by. She stopped by at least once a month, but just for a bit and always alone - without her husband and child. She would carefully hug her mother, take her out for a walk and help her get changed in the evening. She would clean Anka's apartment, do her laundry, and tidy the yard. But - she didn't cook. From the very first Bruna said that she would cook for everyone.

When she stopped by, Mirela would spend a lot of time on the phone. From afar she guided unknown handymen to install a tub and sand the parquet in the unfinished apartment. Her phone would ring, and then she would be talking in cryptic formulas to someone up in Zagreb, discussing some distant, byzantine office intrigues.

All this time, Mirela treated Bruna guardedly and timidly. She addressed her cautiously, with a mixture of discomfort and obvious guilt.

Mirela would come on Friday and leave on Sunday. She would leave by the afternoon bus, back to her ripped up apartment and a shaky career. And when Mirela would leave, the old woman would sink one more turn into some indefinite indignation. She would look at Bruna with sadness, as if looking at a defective replacement instead of the original. Blood is blood. She wasn't blood, she was a stranger.

Bruna would gaze at that look of indignation, and think. She thought about how life flows on. Everyone's but hers. And then she would tackle dinner, and in the dinner she would throw a pinch of powder that smelled like garlic.

One afternoon in early September, Anka suggested they go for a walk. Bruna got her settled in her wheelchair, lowered her into the yard, and pushed down in the direction of the sea. For a long time they made their way through blocks of new buildings that became uglier and more ornate and as they got near the shoreline. And then, all at once, the road went down into a muddy, grassy plateau that the municipal government filled in long ago, when the Pope came to town. Magnificently imagined, the plateau by the sea now stood as a sad mockery, neglected, and covered with a thicket intersected by tracks from truck tires. Bruna circled the muddy plain, then continued down the road before emerging onto the part of the shore with tended beaches.

They walked for a long time along the graveled beaches, full of bathers, next to the trampolines for kids, tennis courts, and pizzerias. They walked

and reached the nautical harbor. Bruna was pushing the wheelchair along the fence, past the dry-docked boats that smelled of tar, paint thinner, and algae. They walked, then reached a grove along the coast.

There was a restaurant in the woods. It had a winter garden enclosed by glass, which acted like an outside space so the guests could smoke. Ever since they had last been there, the glass lobby grew in all directions, like a metastasis.

Bruna stood in front of the restaurant and looked at the familiar place. The fact is that she is there – and that she is there with Anka – aroused in her an unexpected, painful grief.

We met here for the first time, Anka suddenly said. Does it ring a bell, that day Mirela had the baby baptized? Anka almost said it with a tenderness, with tone that Bruna hadn't expected. Why not - Bruna replied - I remember. I remember very well.

They stood and looked at the glass restaurant. There is a large group of people in the restaurant sitting at a long, festively decorated table celebrating something that looked, from the outside, like a baptism. There was a stroller by the table in which there slept an unconscious child. At the head of the table sat two elderly people, apparently a grandma and grandpa. Grandpa had a tie with a wide knot and a bright geometric pattern, which looked like it was last worn in the 1970s. No voices reached outside through the glass. Bruna was watching the family fiesta as if it were a silent movie. The people inside opened their mouths and gesticulated, but no sound reached her. Those - silent - people in the restaurant seemed indescribably happy.

They moved on, toward the center of town. They took a spin past the sand shoals and reached the tip between the two bays. People in swimming suits under tamarisk trees played chess, children were sprayed by water from the outdoor shower, and somewhere behind – on the horizon - the late afternoon twilight blushed. The red sun was setting on the horizon, somewhere behind two rows of islands, tall trees, and an unfinished apartment complex.

It's nice – Anka said.

And it was nice. So nice that you could freeze that moment and frame to last forever.

And then Bruna snapped awake. We have to go home - she said. We have to go home, it's late. She said that and pushed the wheelchair uphill, away from the sea, toward their neighborhood, street, and house. Toward the kitchen in which an unfinished dinner awaited.

It was the beginning of September. Fifteen days later, Anka Šarić was dead.

30.

Anka died in her sleep. Bruna found her dead one Thursday in late September. Like every day, she got up that morning, took a shower, and got dressed for the office. She went downstairs to put Anka on her feet and get her dressed. When she entered the room, she didn't hear her usual, muffled breathing. She approached the bed and pulled down the sheet. The old woman was milky white, blissfully calm. Instead of her constant expression of everlasting indignation, her face radiated with unexpected serenity.

Bruna sat down in the kitchen and stared at herself for a long time, in complete apathy. And then she got up and picked up the phone. First she called for an ambulance. Then she called Mirela in Zagreb. Finally she sent a message to Frane. Frane, who that morning set sail from Dalian toward Korea.

When she finished the phone calls, she went back to the room. She found some kind of sheet and tucked it under the old woman's chin. She straightened her body folded her arms across her chest. Although dead, Anka still smelled the same, like a mixture of milk scum/curd and sweat. The old woman's limbs were still flexible. It meant that she had died recently, before dawn.

When Bruna laid the old woman on the couch, she sat down in the armchair beside her, waiting for the paramedics. She watched the old woman's body slowly cool and become rigid. She thought she would feel relief, or remorse, or excitement, or fear. But - she felt nothing: if anything, then maybe just a grain of vague, unexpected grief.

She sat like that for an hour and a half, maybe two. Finally, through the closed window she heard the sound of a van in the courtyard. There was a brief silence. And then the doorbell rang.

At that moment, she knew: one period of her life had come to an end. Her life can move on from this impasse.

She got up and opened the door for the coroners. It was the 22nd of September, a little after ten in the morning.

La donna del piano di sopra di Jurica Pavičić

Traduzione dal croato di Srećko Jurišić

29

Ha continuato ad avvelenare Anka per tutta l'estate. Tutto giugno, e luglio e agosto. Due volte al giorno Bruna, con cura, officiava lo stesso farmaceutico rito. Preparava il pasto. Faceva due piatti uguali. Poi in uno di essi versava la polvere che odorava d'aglio. Era il piatto che dava ad Anka.

D'estate Bruna era solita preparare piatti leggeri, i fagiolini lessi o le zucchine; nell'insalatiera combinava insalate di ravanelli, asparagi selvatici e pomodori. Ora le cose erano cambiate. Il veleno riusciva a scioglierlo più facilmente nei piatti brodosi, densi. Nonostante facesse caldo continuava a preparare pasta e fagioli, vitello con i piselli, la trippa, il brodetto di bacalà, tutti piatti densi, a cucchiaino, e pieni d'aglio e d'olio, piatti in cui il bromaldione finiva col perdersi nel miscuglio degli odori forti. Anka aveva un debole per pietanze così. Mangiava abbondantemente e con gusto, con un appetito di cui Bruna gioiva e che le faceva paura.

I mesi estivi passavano e il veleno per topi entrava nel corpo di Anka, di pranzo in pranzo, di cena in cena, in dosi microscopiche, irrevocabili. Entrava attraverso il palato e circolava irreversibilmente nell'apparato circolatorio, verso i polmoni, il midollo, i linfonodi e il fegato. Bruna continuava a servire l'anziana donna per giorni interi. Continuava a tirarla fuori dal letto, aiutarle a mettersi a tavola, lavarle le ascelle e i capelli, a sentire l'odore della pelle di lei che odorava di panna acida. Le sue mani tenevano i suoi polsi, il cuoio capelluto, le carni e la pelle, percepiva il suo corpo al tatto. Osservava i sintomi lievi, che solo lei sapeva leggere: leggero rossore degli occhi, le screpolature sulle labbra, i lividi che non si riassorbono. Le vene di Anka si rompevano e si facevano fragili, il sangue si diluiva sempre di più. Bromaldione scorreva nelle sue vene e i suoi vasi sanguigni approssimando alla fine quell'insostenibile stato di cose.

Per miracolo, in quei mesi Anka era cambiata. Non trattava più Bruna scaricandole addosso quella mistura di disprezzo e di odio. Si era fatta dolce, c'era quasi gratitudine in lei, o persino dolcezza. Invece dei scorbutici ringraziamenti bisillabici, ora ringraziava Bruna con uno sguardo pieno di una dolcezza (blagost) ritrovata. Talvolta – quando Anka, per

brevi attimi, galleggiava nella bonaccia di bontà – Bruna provava rimorso per quello che stava facendo, ma erano attimi. Andava avanti, a ritmo di pranzi e cene, cene e pranzi. Preparava la zuppa di fagiolini, lo spezzatino di pollo, i ceci al brodo e ogni volta un piatto lo condivideva con un pizzico di veleno. Doveva solo aspettare. Aspettare che il sangue si diluísse, che le pareti dei vasi sanguigni si assottigliassero.

In tutto questo tempo Mirela le veniva a trovare. Veniva almeno una volta al mese, ma per brevi periodi e sempre da sola – senza il marito e il figlio. Avvolgeva con un abbraccio affettuoso la madre, la portava a passeggiare e l'aiutava a cambiarsi la sera. Metteva a posto l'appartamento di Anka e il cortile, le lavava i panni. Ma non cucinava. Bruna, già la prima volta, le aveva detto che lei avrebbe cucinato per tutti.

Quando veniva, Mirela passava molto tempo al telefono. A distanza, dava indicazioni all'ignota manovalanza che nel suo appartamento in ristrutturazione stava montando la vasca da bagno e levigava il parquet. Le squillava il telefono e si metteva a parlare con qualcuno, lassù a Zagabria, per formule criptiche, rivangando lontane, bizantine trame d'ufficio.

Tutto questo tempo, Bruna nei confronti di Mirela era premurosa e timida. Le rivolgeva la parola cautamente, con un misto di imbarazzo e di evidente colpa.

Mirela arrivava il venerdì e ripartiva la domenica. Ripartiva con il pullman del pomeriggio verso l'appartamento divelto e una carriera precaria. Quando la figlia ripartiva, la vecchia affondava di un ulteriore giro di vite in un indefinito malumore. Guardava Bruna con malinconia, come se rimirasse la supplente non all'altezza dell'originale. Il sangue del suo sangue era il sangue del suo sangue. Lei il sangue non lo era, era un'estranea.

Bruna vedeva quello sguardo amaro, e pensava. Pensava che le vite degli altri andavano avanti. Tutte tranne la sua. Ma poi si metteva a preparare la cena e nella cena metteva il pizzico di polvere che sapeva d'aglio.

Un pomeriggio d'inizio settembre Anka le propose di andare a fare una passeggiata. Bruna la sistemò sulla sedia a rotelle, la fece scendere in cortile e la spinse verso il mare. Camminarono a lungo tra gli isolati di palazzi appena costruiti, più fronzuti e brutti man mano che si scendeva verso la linea costa. Poi la strada sbucò su una spianata, tutta fango ed erba, che l'amministrazione locale fece fare tempo addietro, quando la città doveva ricevere il papa. Pensata in maniera maestosa, ora la spianata sul mare se ne stava come un triste sberleffo, abbandonato, invaso dai rovi attraversati qua e là dalle tracce di pneumatici dei tir. Bruna fece il giro attorno allo spiazzo fangoso, continuò sulla strada e sbucò nella parte con le spiagge curate.

Passeggiarono a lungo seguendo le spiagge ghiaiose, piene di bagnanti, passando accanto ai trampolini per bimbi, campi da tennis e pizzerie.

Camminando avevano raggiunto il porto turistico. Bruna spingeva la carrozzella lungo il recinto, accanto alle barche tirate a secco che odoravano di catrame, solvente e alghe. Camminando arrivarono fino alla pineta.

C'era, nella pineta, un ristorante. Aveva anche un giardino d'inverno in vetro che si fingeva giardino vero per permettere agli ospiti di fumare. Dall'ultima volta che vi erano venute la parte in vetro si era espansa in tutte le direzioni, come una metastasi vitrea.

Bruna se ne stava di fronte al ristorante e guardava. Stava guardando un luogo noto. Il fatto di trovarsi lì – e di trovarvisi con Anka – risvegliò in lei un'inattesa e forte pena.

Qui ci siamo conosciute, disse Anka all'improvviso. Ricordi? Quel giorno al battesimo del figlio di Mirela? Lo aveva detto quasi con tenerezza, con un tono che Bruna non si aspettava. Come no – rispose Bruna – ricordo. Ricordo molto bene.

Ferme, guardavano il ristorante in vetro. Dentro, un grande gruppo di persone era riunito attorno a una lunga tavolata adobbata a festa e stava festeggiando qualcosa che da fuori sembrava un battesimo. Accanto al tavolo c'era il passeggino in cui dormiva placido un bambino. A capotavola c'erano due persone anziane, probabilmente i nonni. Il nonno portava la cravatta col nodo largo, con un disegno sgargiante e geometrico che dava l'impressione di essere stata indossata per l'ultima volta negli anni settanta. Attraverso la parete di vetro non arrivava alcun suono. Bruna guardava la festa di famiglia come se guardasse un film muto. Le persone all'interno aprivano bocche e gesticolavano, ma a lei non arrivava suono alcuno. Quelle – mute – persone all'interno del ristorante sembravano immensamente felici.

Continuarono a passeggiare verso il centro passando accanto alla rada sabbiosa e arrivarono alla punta tra le due insenature. La gente in costume da bagno giocava a scacchi sotto le tamerici, i bambini si schizzavano addosso l'acqua delle doccie e da qualche parte dietro – all'orizzonte – il rossore serale stava tingendo il tramonto del tardo pomeriggio. Il sole rosso calava da qualche parte dietro le due file di isole, gli alti alberi e i residence costruiti a metà.

Bello – disse Anka.

Ed era bello. Bello al punto che veniva la voglia di congelare l'attimo, incorniciarlo per farlo durare.

Ma Bruna si scosse. Dobbiamo tornare a casa – disse. Dobbiamo tornare a casa, è tardi. Disse quelle parole e spinse la carrozzella in salita, allontanandosi dal mare, verso il loro quartiere, la loro strada e la loro casa. Verso la cucina in cui le attendeva una cena da finire.

Erano gli inizi di settembre. Quindici giorni più tardi, Anka Šarić era morta.

30

Anka era morta nel sonno. Bruna l'aveva trovata morta un giovedì di fine settembre. Come tutti i giorni, anche quella mattina si era alzata, si era fatta la doccia vestendosi per andare in ufficio. Era scesa al piano di sotto per aiutare Anka ad alzarsi e a vestirsi. Entrando nella stanza, non aveva sentito il solito respiro sommesso. Si era avvicinata al letto scostando le lenzuola. La vecchia era lì, color latte e beatamente quieta. Invece dell'espressione di perenne mestizia il suo volto irradiava una pace inaspettata.

Bruna andò a sedersi in cucina e se ne stette lungo tempo a fissare un punto davanti a sé, stordita. Ma poi si alzò e prese il telefono. Chiamò prima l'ambulanza. Poi telefonò a Mirela a Zagabria. Alla fine mandò un messaggio a Frane. Frane che quella mattina era salpato da Dalian in direzione Korea.

Dopo aver finito con le chiamate rientrò nella stanza. Trovò un lenzuolo e lo piegò sotto il mento della vecchia. La mise dritta e le incrociò le mani sul petto. Pur morta, Anka odorava sempre uguale, la stessa mistura di panna acida e sudore. Le membra della donna erano ancora flessibili. Voleva dire che era morta da poco, forse prima dell'alba.

Dopo aver messo la vecchia sul divano, si adagiò nella poltrona accanto a lei in attesa dell'ambulanza. Osservava il corpo della vecchia che si stava lentamente raffreddando, irrigidendo. Credeva che avrebbe provato sollievo, o rimorso, o perfino eccitazione, o paura. Ma non provava nulla: se mai si poteva parlare di sentimento provato c'era giusto un punto di insperato dispiacere.

Era rimasta seduta lì per un'ora e mezzo, forse due. Finalmente attraverso le finestre chiuse le giunse il rumore del furgone dal cortile. Ci fu un breve silenzio. Poi il suono del campanello.

In quel momento se ne rese conto: si era chiusa un'epoca. La sua vita poteva andare avanti.

Si alzò e andò ad aprire la porta al medico legale.

Jurica Pavičić,

interviewed by Srećko Jurišić

— 1

How do you deal with genre boundaries? Reading, for example, *The Woman from the Second Floor*, you get the impression of overcoming the boundaries of a crime novel, but also at the same time a 'pleasure' on your part to move within genre prose?

I have no reservations about being pegged as a genre writer. It's a niche that I love and towards which I don't cultivate any elitist distance. It's something, after all, that I learned through my work as a film critic. In film studies anyone who uses concepts such as "trivial literature" is ridiculed, these are categories that were already considered *ad acta* even in the 50s by *Cahiers du cinema*. When I moved to my current publishing house – Profil – as an author, I insisted that my first two novels come out in their "black" edition, in which genre writers were and still are published: le Carré, Rankin, Camilleri, Dolores Redondo, and Akunjin.

So I love the aegis of a genre writer. Another thing is that I'm aware that my prose inhabits an interspace that is partly and partly not genre-oriented. This is also true for some of the writers I love, such as Patricia Highsmith, for whom *The Sweet Sickness* is a genre book and *Edith's Diary* is not – although both are very similar in spirit, style, theme, and characters. What I love to take from genre writing and that which I strive to take are strategies for reader enjoyment. I love writing books that can't be put down. I want to use thriller stopwatch mechanisms, parallel montages, and suspense strategies; I love it when a book of mine has genre attractions like narrative twists, puzzles, cliffhangers, and conflicts. What turns me off from writing "orthodox" genre books is the schematic nature and repetitiveness of the composition. I love classic detective novels as a reader. But as a writer I avoid them because the structure is too obvious to me. You know it in advance: the corpse at the beginning – the detection process – the point of view of the investigator – the puzzle. In a way, it's like writing a sonnet: you know in advance that there must be an octave and a sestet. It robs me of the part of my job that is my favorite in writing, and that is research into composition. That's why I take what I like from a genre, but I don't like being stuck there. I'd say I'm a writer with one-and-a-half-feet in genre, but not both. But that goes for a lot of the genre writers I love: Gillian Flynn, Ruth Rendell, Leonardo Sciascia.

– 2

Do you consider writing for example a novel or screenplay a hobby in comparison to journalism? Do you have any writing routine? What is your writing process?

Journalism provides me with a salary, it feeds my family. Therefore, it is number one. I always publish three to five articles per week in the daily newspaper I write for. However, I write fast, which is why I have enough time for prose. As a rule, I dedicate the second part of my morning to prose, when I have already finished my newspaper assignments. Also, in the winter – when the day is short and I'm at home more – I write prose in the afternoon and evening. Usually journalism serves me as a warm-up, and then I'm at full speed when I go back to prose. And even if I could, I wouldn't like to be a full-time prose writer. There is something gloomy, or anxious about the fact that you're locked in a room with a single text for two years, and after many months you lose any kind of distance from it, and then you release it into space like a Voyager probe and expect the return "blip" of another intelligence. In my way, this long period is interrupted by small adrenaline stimuli. The daily newspaper is like this: today you write, tomorrow it comes out and everyone comments, and the day after tomorrow it falls into oblivion. The newspaper text is like a cooked, eaten lunch. Preferably: tasty.

– 3

Your texts, novels, and short stories are strongly marked by place. What is the role of the Mediterranean in your writing, as well as the urban, and the, let's call it, rural?

Place is very important to me. Both my journalism and my literature stem from being somewhere – physically, not virtually, on Google. This often happens to me when I go for a walk, let's say I see a house divided in half, one half is beautifully maintained and the other covered with nettles, briars, and rust. And then I think, "This is a good starting point for a story." Most of my prose comes out of such spatial sensations. I can write prose only if I understand the space in which it takes place, if I can physically represent and describe it. In both literature and film, I love works that are fictional, but at the same time a documentary about a world – those in which we find out what these people eat, what houses they live in, what they do, for what salary, how they behave... This is a prerequisite for writing about someone, about the world. That is why I am inevitably a native writer, a regional one. This connotation in Croatian literature has somewhat parochial, negative connotations – but in my opinion it shouldn't. Both Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor were native writers.

– 4

Reading your novels and short stories provides an impression of the strong influence of nature and different meteorological conditions in your prose. How much does the climate (e.g. the dichotomy of the southern/northern winds, the jugo and bura) affect your work?

Yes, this is something I was not aware of until it was once noticed by fellow journalist and writer Ante Tomić. He told me that in my prose the dramatic resolution always takes place simultaneously with the transition of the weather from the southern jugo wind to the northern bura. It has to do with the fact that I'm a bit of a meteoropath, I have a hard time with jugo and I love bura. But it also has to do with the anthropology of the winds in the Adriatic. Jugo is perceived as a muggy, gooey wind that carries rot, disease and stagnation. Bura is dramatic, powerful, cold and strong – but it also brings clear skies, dry air, clear views, and is associated with purification. One proverb says that “bura is a clean woman”.

– 5

Writers usually start with a place or a character. What is the case with you? What is the embryo of one of your texts?

Place. Also the narrative situation, the relationship of the characters, the position in which the character finds themselves, or to which they have been brought. I usually start with a certain dramatic tension, like I'm writing a screenplay. I imagine the abyss in front of which the character is standing at the beginning of the “third act”. I understand that this is largely a screenwriting, dramatic-filmic way of thinking. And my work on scripts has something of a filmic way of thinking opinion. For example, I plan a novel carefully, I usually write a draft in advance, a kind of “model” of a future novel chapter by chapter on about 15 pages. This is very similar to what filmmakers call a sequence- or step-outline.

– 6

When looking at your catalog of characters, it seems that your poetics, to put it crudely, very often gives an active role to the female characters. Is this a commitment to a kind of program, a rational design?

No, although I eventually became aware that this is what I do. I have a friend with whom I go hiking and who is an eager reader, although she is not related to any cultural profession – she's a computer programmer. She once jokingly asked, “will a woman kill anyone again in your next book?” Often it happens that I have a couple of main characters in a book. One of them is intelligent, sensitive, insightful, and their intelligence is used

to illuminate the world – but they are also passive, unsure, conformist, and incapable of action and confrontation. On the other hand there is a character who is not afraid to act and resolve a problem – and, yes, it is usually a woman. And it seems to me that in life this is usually the case. In principle, I like to write a book in which the hero (or heroine) is active, is faced with a problem. It is there which probably exists the nucleus of what was later read as genre writing. Maybe it's a reaction to the tradition of Croatian prose in which a lethargic, inactive, resigned, and cynical anti-hero is too-often dominant. Obviously such characters have historically had a psychological reflex to occupy passive, colonized, and subjected positions, just as the nation itself in the past. My generation confronted this passive inaction and submissiveness first historically in the 90's in the war, and later in a literary manner in the years thereafter.

– 7

In his *Breviary* Matvejević mentioned insulomanija (islandmania), what's your relationship with the islands, Croatian ones and those in general, since they are often a setting you choose (for example the island in *Prometheus' Son*)?

I am originally from an island: my grandfather is from the village of Vrbanj on Hvar. But already my father was born on the mainland in Split, so I have no property on the island, I've never lived there, I've always stayed on the island more or less as a tourist, even when I stay there for a longer period. As a child, I would spend weeks in the summer with my mother's sister on the small island of Zlarin near Šibenik – a small commune of 140 inhabitants, without a car, and at that time without running water. It was kind of my Combray, and a lot of my ideas about islands were formed at the time, and Zlarin provided me with the archetypal image of island communities, a real ur-place. Regarding islands, I'm fascinated by this dialectic of proximity and distance. They are isolated, a bit left to their own devices. Everything that is existentially necessary comes across the sea – often even bread; but historically from across the sea there came the Other, the Unwanted: the tax collector and the pirate. Islands are closed words that can teach us about solidarity, mutual assistance, safe-keeping, and taking care of rare resources (primarily water). They are separated from the “real” world, but this real, authentic world is often one that is close by, within easy reach, since in Croatia inhabited islands are often only a few miles from cities and the mainland, and you can often clearly see the city lights from them. And yet, they are another world, and much is denied them – a world that has cinemas, high schools, specialist doctors, entertainment. In a way, it is as if they are a metaphor for all of Croatia that is (was) so close to great cultural centers such as Venice, Vienna,

and Rome – and yet it remained a suburb of those cultures, a remote periphery where everything arrives with a delay and a distorted echo. All this together creates a kind of island state of mind, an awareness of existential displacement, of grief, of the inaccessibility of illusions. It is no coincidence that there are many great island writers in Croatia, such as Marinković, Šegedin, Nazor, Popadić, S. Novak, Belan – and that most of them have this kind of sadness and existentialism in their prose.

– 8

Given the Croatian reality in which you are immersed as a journalist and columnist, how do you balance the relationship between fiction and faction in your literary texts?

It depends. There are news topics that I would not want to write about as a novelist, and fictional and other themes that I would not be interested in as a journalist. But there is also a space of overlap, where part of their themes is the same. I suppose this includes the land-construction-tourism speculations I wrote about as a journalist, and then I wrote about something similar in the novel *Prometheus' Son*. But when I write about the same in both media, I have to write in opposite ways. In a newspaper column there is a key thesis, an argument, and one must hear your voice and your opinion. In prose you have to let your characters gain autonomy, to have their own reasons, even if you do not like what they're doing. When I work on a new book, before my editor Adriana Piteša even reads the manuscript I tell her to mark all the places where I seem to protrude from the characters, where she feels that my commentator's voice can be heard. That's what I usually try to remove. We prose writers take no pleasure in the concerns of factual writing. I enjoy the imaginative aspect of writing fiction. I've never had a desire to write a documentary novel like Truman Capote: it would deny me my favorite part of the work.

– 9

When you think it is necessary to separate yourself from a real Dalmatian setting: in *Woman from the Second Floor* we are in Split while in *Prometheus' Son* we move to a not-so-well defined island and in *In Red Water* we were also in some unspecified location somewhere along the Dalmatian coast?

When the action takes place in a big city, then I use Split without hesitation (or Zagreb, in *Little Red Riding Hood*) and then it is topographically accurate: every address, house, street, and port are correct. But in smaller locations this is not convenient. If you have a small village priest, and if this is a place is real, then you have a real priest. If you have a

pharmacist, it has a pharmacist. So then I create fictional, heterotopic places, like how Camilleri created Vigàta. I usually take elements of a place, the buildings, topographical features, and historical events that existed somewhere, those that I heard of or saw myself. The island from *Prometheus' Son* is thus a Frankenstein's monster composed of elements of at least 12 island locations.

— 10

Camilleri owes a good part of his fame to his pseudo-Sicilian dialect, and the latest work by Ivica Ivanišević (*Tomorrow is a New Lunch*) is also written in good part in the Split dialect; In *Prometheus' Son* you wrote in a literary language with some dialect inserted: is that because of an impulse to transition to a dying-out dialect and how do you linguistically shape your texts?

I have to admit that I became stylistically and poetically liberated when I decided not to be enslaved to the literary standard. Until then, I'd written in a language that wasn't actually my mother tongue and I always felt that my prose was a bit like a movie you're watching with English international subtitles. Then, at some point, I read Jergović's collection *Inshallah Madonna*, in which he insists on using Bosnian and Bosniak Turkisms more than in other books. I realized that I might not understand every third or fourth word, but that it still contributes to the experience of the text rather than spoiling it. So I decided in my prose to immerse myself as much as possible in the lexicon of the world I am writing about. In Croatian and ex-Yugoslavian prose, from Andrić to Dalmatian writers, the presence of spoken language and dialect was usually reduced to the language of narration being the standard and the language of the dialogue the dialect. I wanted to break this duality by introducing a lexicon from the dialect into the language of the prose narration, which remains the standard: therefore, I will not use a tomato, nightstand, or fork in prose narration, but rather pomidora, kantunal, or pirun. It's a method with which I can write prose in the way that I write and as I like to write, but – of course – it's questionable whether such a linguistic hybridization could be used to write, say, a SF novel. In doing so, the general reversal in language that's been happening in Croatia after the year 2000 probably helped me in this "pollution" of standards. Croatia found itself in a new sociolinguistic situation that urban vernacularisations like in Zagreb and Split become more prestigious than the standard language, and their user-friendliness grew due to the abundance of it in pop music, hip-hop, and TV series in the dialect. Thus, today, the language of journalism is much more open to dialectal vocabulary than it was up to the 1990s. As for *Prometheus' Son*, the principle is the same, I just went maybe two or

three steps further because that book is dominated by old characters, so their language is archaic. In addition, this novel deals with a community stuck in a time that is afraid of change, and their language must reflect that as well.

– 11

Your writing is inevitably permeated by Dalmatia, Split, and southern Croatia in general, which is especially well seen in a kind of trilogy – In *Red Water*, *The Book of the South*, and *Prometheus' Son*. Do you think that you have exhausted this source of inspiration in some way, or do you, for example, have a need to write something about Split (you once announced something in this direction)?

I have written a lot about Split, probably more than any other topic. I have a whole collection of essays (*Split by Night*) that only deals with transitional Split. But, as far as prose is concerned, in my most recent books I've left Split behind to some extent, in the collections of stories and the last two novels I've dealt with the island, hinterland, and the coastal Dalmatia of small places. So it's actually the other way around: my fingers itch to return to urban Split in prose, and the novel I'm writing now will be distinctly Split and urban, and also distinctly about the family, and claustrophobic, minimally reduced to three characters and one apartment.

– 12

Have you, and not only in a literary sense, thought about leaving the Mediterranean, and if so, where? And how do you explain how, for example Split or Zadar, despite a kind of cultural remoteness in relation to the continental homeland, manages to retain some of the most interesting literary voices (Dežulović, Tomić, Mravak, Savičević Ivančević, Periš, etc.) and then even attract some (Baretić, Lujanović)?

I'm not thinking about leaving the Mediterranean, because I'm not thinking about leaving Split. I was born here, I live here, and I hope to die here. I love traveling, but I love it because I have a home. I'm not a nomad. As for Split, I don't have a very clear answer. It is unusual that that same Split had a lot of important culture from the 50s to the 70s – a strong theater, its own indigenous film, great architecture – but it did not have a prose writer at all. With the exception of Smoje and Enzo Bettiza, who are completely different stories (one lived in Italy, and the other was then understood exclusively as a popular media phenomenon), Split in the second half of the 20th century had no prose writers. Most of those who were prominent – say Živko Jeličić – are unfortunately unreadable today.

It's hard for me to interpret that explosion of creativity. With the writers of my generation such as Baretić, Tomic, and, Dežulović, the common factor is perhaps what we all have been, or at the same time were, journalists, and thus Split attracted (kept) us as a strong local media group – through *Slobodna Dalmacija*, which in the 80s and 90s was a powerful, creative, and stimulating place to work. I can say for sure that, if it were not for *Slobodna Dalmacija*, I would live in Zagreb today. But still, if that explains our generation, it's hard for me to explain how that wave of creativity extended to the generation of Olja and Tanja Mravak. It's interesting that in Split, culture works in a way that you rely on yourself. If you need a support system – as in the creative industries, theater, or film – Split is artistically on the edge.

– 13

How do you see the Mediterranean component in contemporary Croatian literature? Are there any books that have caught your eye in that sense and that you would recommend?

I almost don't know where to start. I would definitely mention *Goodbye Cowboy* by Olja Savičević, which is in my opinion the best Croatian novel of the 21st century. Then, the stories of Tanja Mravak. *The Bone-Legged Bride* by the Zadar writer Želimir Periš. *Proximity to Everything* by Zlatko Stolica. *Magnificent Vipers* by Ante Tomić. The stories of Boris Dežulović. *Garbin – Evil Wind* by Anela Borčić. *The Devil Entered the Girl* by Tisija Kljaković. Zoran Ferić's prose of the island of Rab.

– 14

The best crime novels or even thrillers often owe their quality to the author's ability to incorporate a humorous or at least ironic component into them: what is your relationship with laughter when writing?

It's not my thing. I think I'm privately witty, but there are people who are so much wittier than I when it comes to writing so that it would feel like I were playing basketball against LeBron James. In addition, humor needs a dominant narrator, an all-encompassing voice, and I avoid that in prose.

– 15

What was the last thing you learned from a writer dear to you?

By reading, I learn techniques, solutions via craft. From Cormac McCarthy – whom I adore – I learned how to avoid using quotation marks in dialogue (which I hate, and which he hates).

— 16

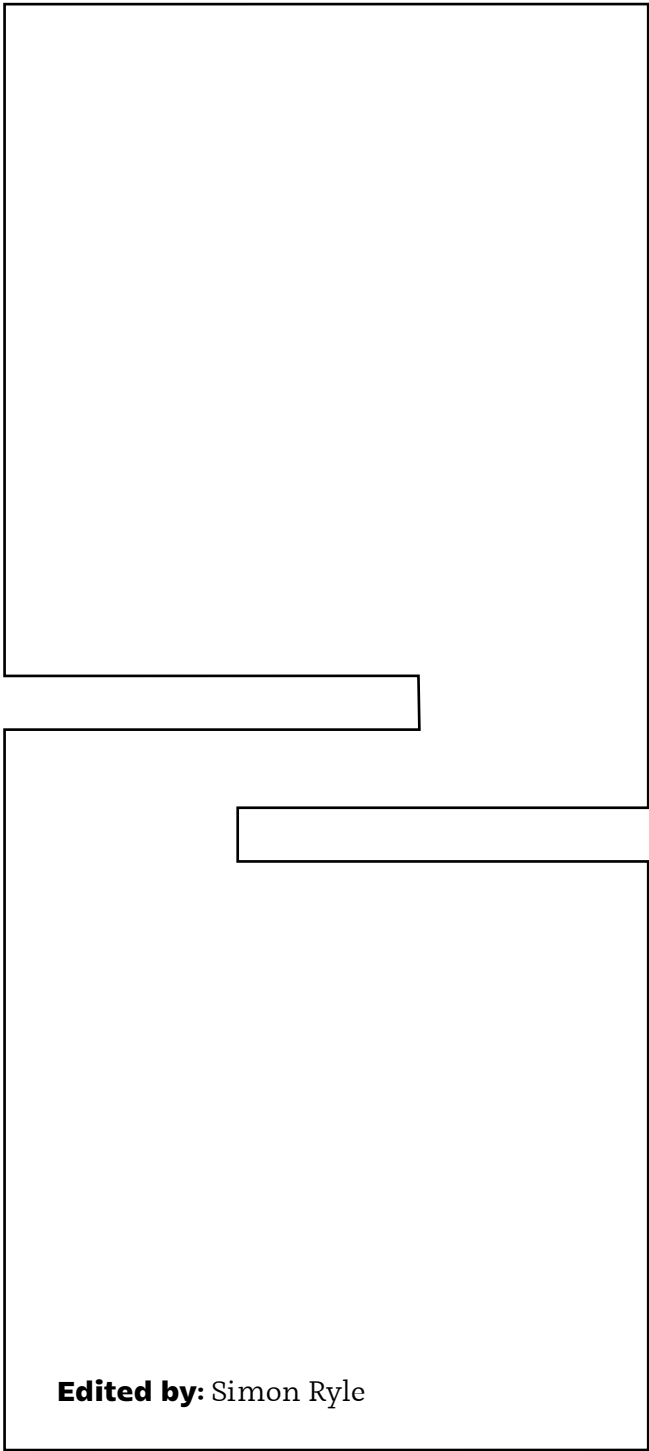
The psychology of your characters catches the eye. In 1941, the American psychologist Harvey Cleckley wrote the book *The Mask of Sanity*, which analyzes certain psychopathological types that are seemingly completely healthy and thus function in society (Kurt Vonnegut, for example, linked this book to the personality of George W. Bush), while they are actually deprived empathy and similar necessary feelings and are harmful to the country in which they live and their fellow citizens. In your opinion, which Croatian psychological type deserves a literary treatment?

Psychopaths are not so interesting to me in literature. I'm more interested in opportunists, people who make mistakes through their actions, words, or by omission, and it bothers them a little, but not so much that they risk the consequences for themselves and their loved ones. It's a Croatian social and character type that I can always write about again and again.

Translated by Brian Willems

Cross Cultural Studies Review

A journal for comparative studies
of culture, literature, and the arts



Edited by: Simon Ryle

Reviews

***Human, Animals, and Biopolitics.
The more-than-human condition.***
**Ed. Kristin Asdal, Tone
Druglitro, and Steve Hinchliffe.**
Routledge, 2017.

Anita Lunić*

The more-than-human condition represents a step forward in employing Foucauldian analysis to explore human-animal relationships. As the title informs us, the focus of this collection is on the biopolitical approach to the animal. The clear association with Hannah Arendt's famous *Vita Activa* (*The Human Condition*) in the subtitle (*the more-than-human condition*) informs us further about the core idea behind this project: to rethink the relationship between animal and human and the impact one has on the establishment and development of the *world* of the other. In that sense, this assemblage of research papers serves both to rethink the place animals take in the human condition as well as the biopolitical strategies humans employ in dealing with non-human animals. The clear demarcation line between humans and animal which has led to the exclusion of the animal from the sphere of politics is now under question.

Choosing biopolitics as a framework to research this shift may, at the first glance at least, seem surprising as Foucault did not pay significant attention to animal research and did not include animals in his biopolitical scheme. Moreover, Foucault's focus on human sciences led to interpretations of biopolitics in an anthropocentric manner with the supposed granted difference between humans and animals, nature, and culture. However, this lacuna was followed not by refusal but rather by its rethinking and new readings that led to the concept of biopolitics suitable for the inclusion of nonhuman animals into the equation. This intention comes alongside the questioning of human triumphalism over nature and a general anthropocentric orientation.

* alunic@ffst.hr

Following this idea, the editors tend to further develop an understanding of biopolitics that can serve as a means to generate a *more empirically driven theorization of a-more-than-human politics* which would function as a helpful tool in rethinking our obligations towards the non-human. Building on previous debates on potentiality and the limits of biopolitics as a framework to research human-animal relationships (Lemke, Wolfe, etc.), the editors follow a reading of Foucault within a material-semiotic framework with the main aim of opening the concept of biopolitics for a new methodological and empirical research.

Developing versions of biopolitics that function for sentient beings is a step forward in recognizing both the need to analyze forms of dominance we impose on the non-human world, power relations laying between as well as recognizing that humans are not alone – *others* continuously co-create our condition which is therefore necessarily always *more-than-human*. This collection of research papers, therefore, is an important step in further developing both classical (human-oriented) biopolitics as well as a step towards articulating alternative (if not more appropriate) approaches in animal research.

In the first paper entitled “The Practices of Fishy Sentience,” John Law and Marianne Elisabeth Lien analyse human-fish relationships in fish farming industries with the example of farmed Atlantic salmon. Their focus is on lively practices in which farmed fish “come into being in tanks and pens” (p. 30). Recognizing the complexity of anthropomorphism in this particular case, they develop a relational understanding of anthropomorphism. This approach allows seeing interactions of fish and people, as well as understanding how fish sentience is produced and enacted as a relational quality (rather than as property) that emerge within heterogeneous assemblages of all kinds. Therefore, anthropomorphism is revealed as a tactic of the relation to animals rather than a simple projection of human features. As they see it, it comes in three different modes: anthropomorphic subjectivism, anthropomorphic teleology, and objectivist (non)anthropomorphism. This is where research of Law and Lien moves beyond the intended scope of the paper by opening three important general insights for animal studies: the first concerns the role of practices within science, the second concerns the importance of non-scientific practices in the production of sentience; and the third deals with the move from treating anthropomorphism as a sin towards analysing how different modes of anthropomorphism function. In the second paper, Vibeke Pihl follows multispecies ethnography on pigs with a special focus on “minipigs” used in a project examining the effects of gastric bypass surgery. Comparing the minipigs treatment at the experimental farm and in the laboratory, Pihl notices the co-existence of two different ways of knowing pigs: as individual personalities at the

experimental farm, and as the material of physiological models at the faculties/in the laboratory. Those two ways are expressed in two practices of transforming pigs into translational models: by naming and by number. The naming took place at experimental farms while numbering was present in laboratories. Those two strategies were employed because of different reasons. Naming functioned as an organizing strategy, rather than as an expression of emotional attachment. It ensured better monitoring and better recognition of individual characteristics of particular minipigs (expressed in names such as Speedy, Houdini, etc). Altogether, naming led to a better research track and added to the production of data. On the other hand, the numbering was used in laboratories to adjust to scientific requirements. Pihl argues that both names and numbers, as practices to transform pigs into models of human patients, serve the successful development of pig research biographies. Even though those two knowledge practices seem incoherent, Pihl discovers their continuity. This research, questions supposed correlations between labelling and emotions, informs us about the complexity of knowledge production tactics as well as about the complexity of anthropomorphizing strategies. It also opens up questions on how anthropomorphism and instrumentalization are related to each other.

The following contribution moves the emphasis from the treatment of particular animal species towards the legal treatment of nonhuman animals in general. In this contribution, Kristin Asdal and Tone Druglitrø focus on the emergence of nonhumans (by way of law) as sentient beings with intrinsic, rather than purely instrumental, value. The starting point is that law, as a moral technology, has a significant impact on both bodies and the biopolitical collective by rewording, differentiating, and expelling. Following the development of animal law in Norway, the authors show how the problem of the legal recognition and treatment of animals is intertwined with human interests and the concept of *humanness*.

Martina Schlünder's paper on the traffic of sheep in modern trauma surgery explores the movements of sheep and humans in biomedicine and agriculture. Schlünder argues that two distinct versions of sheep emerged. She names them by the products they deliver: meat and wool sheep, and bone sheep. While the first is found in the livestock economy, the other is characteristic of the knowledge economy. Even though those two versions are distinct, they are closely related. Schlünder explores transformations and translations sheep had to undergo in becoming bone sheep and the emergence of a trauma-surgery knowledge economy. Building on Fleck, she recognizes sheep as members of a collective, and, radically, acknowledges the role of sheep agency in the translation between animal and human as well as the transformation from biology to the tool. Encounters between humans and animals within (experimental

human) medicine are also the focus of Christoph Gradmann's paper. Gradmann explores the introduction of an animal experiment into pathology as he recognizes it as central to the development of medical bacteriology. In his examination of the history of the pathological animal experiment, Gradmann focuses on studies by Robert Koch and questions *whether a medical-bacteriological style of animal-experimental work exists* (p. 104). More precisely, Gradmann's concern are the concepts of measurement and disease as related to animal experiments.

Alternatively, Robert G.W. Kirk analyses other aspects of experimental techniques and laboratory animal science, with special emphasis on the adequacy of biopower for understanding nonhumans' position in a biopolitical collective. By reconstructing the historical emergence of reduction, refinement and replacement (known as the *three Rs*) as principles that form *a regulatory framework that sustains the moral legitimacy of animal experimentation* (p. 128), Kirk explores the relationship between care and truth as well as how the *human* is developed from the encounter with the *nonhuman*. The nonhuman not only helps to constitute the human as a scientist but also helps to produce humans as biopolitical subjects (and I would add here, as a target) via biomedical knowledge developed through animal experiments. Recognition of the role nonhuman animals have in the production of humans leads to the necessary establishment of more-than-human biopolitical collectives. The problem of health also concerns Natalie Porter. In her paper on *One World – One Health*, Porter addresses the problem of assigning protection in cases when biopower tactics cut across species and livelihoods. She uses the case study of bird flu management "to develop an approach to biopower that accounts for entanglements between species in contemporary global health" (p. 136). More precisely, her research focuses on the analysis of bird flu management in Vietnam. This case study helps locate the spheres of both knowledge and authority/bureaucracy tensions. Not less important, it helps analyse boundaries of the implementation of biopower tactics used to govern both humans and animals: or, as Porter puts it, humans "with" animals. Generally, this entry opens an important discussion on the relationship between human and animal health as well as on the impact of biopower tactics on human-animal relationships, including production practices.

In his contribution, Steve Hinchliffe examines the possibilities of a more collective approach to knowledge and sense. Focusing on the philosophy of Michael Serres but also including empirical research as well as a myriad of interdisciplinary resources, Hinchliffe tends to establish *livelier biopolitics*. To explain his position and develop his argument, Hinchliffe focuses on *knowing birds* as a sphere within which opens a space for rethinking animal roles in knowledge and community. His interpretation of the shift in attitudes that followed a shift in knowledge

after the outbreak of H1N5 avian influenza resembles some shifts we are experiencing today. As the migrating birds transformed from a source of delight and pleasure to source of danger, we are today, while witnessing to the tremendous impact of another zoonosis on our life and future, facing tendencies to undergo similar shifts concerning some other animals.

Finally, the last contribution of the book is by Susan McHugh. In her paper entitled "Loving camels, sacrificing sheep, slaughtering gazelles," McHugh widens the debate by including literary fiction as a critical point to reflect upon relations and coexistence with animals. Her focus is on Ibrahim al-Koni's desert fictions. al-Koni's work represents a picture of a human and animal relationship that falls under what Esposito labelled "impersonal singularity". The importance of this contribution lies in the inclusion of the non-scientific narrative to further explore how enmeshed human and animal lives are, as well as open and redefine biopolitics.

This collection of research papers opens up a lot of debates about the biopolitical reading of human-animal relationships. Even though the nonhuman is the key foci in this book, it is always (and not only implicitly) about the tension between humans and animals. It is about forms of human dominance over the nonhuman. It is about human-induced species extinction and the conditions domestic livestock and laboratory animals are kept in. On the other hand, it is also about our shared destiny and the impact our relationship has on us both. It is, we can say, about a shared environment and shared consequences – it is about shared diseases and the shared destiny of our exploitative tactics. Finally, it is about how our understanding of human (life and health) is conditioned on the nonhuman.

The contributions in this book present a wide array of analyses of mechanisms, intervention strategies, and bodily practices as well as a multitude of case studies that provide a basis for biopolitical research and more-than-human methodologies. Even though it does not put a strong emphasis on theoretical debates on biopolitics, it provides very much needed empirical studies that both show the significance of biopolitical analysis and provide insights useful for further theoretical development. In that sense, this book will be of interest to scholars interested in biopolitics as well as scholars working in the field of animal studies.

Kathryn Yusoff. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Iva Polak*
University of Zagreb

In the past ten years, the academic book market has seen an explosion of book-length studies on the Anthropocene, coming from myriad disciplines, from social and natural sciences to the humanities. The debates resulted in the production of a series of alternative *cen*es such as Agnotocene, Phagocene, Than atocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene, etc., either to provide a more “precise” term which befits corresponding discussions or to signal a specific deficiency in the prefix *anthropos*. The *anthropos* has further been criticised for its gendered bias with the rise of Anthropocene feminism, relying on a well-developed field of ecofeminism. However, no scholar has offered a systematic discussion of a distinctive colour palette of the allegedly uniform *anthropos* of the Anthropocene. In this respect, Kathryn Yusoff’s relatively short but extremely powerful book on the Anthropocene fills in this theoretical gap by adding to the discussion race studies.

Yusoff critically deconstructs the “vanilla” *anthropos* in order to challenge the racial blindness and consequential Eurocentric view of the genesis stories of the Anthropocene. In other words, instead of offering a somewhat anodyne version summed up by Timothy Morton as “I’m the detective *and* the criminal! I’m a person. I’m also part of an entity that is now a *geophysical force on a planetary scale*” (9, emphasis in the original), which has effectively become the grand narrative of the Anthropocene, Yusoff invites the reader to place that anthropogenic *Homo faber* under scrutiny. So, if we want to understand the now of the Anthropocene, it is not enough to rely on the subject-less geology or on some generic *Homo faber*, but on the destructive habits of the colonial *Homo colossus*, the

* ipolak@ffzg.hr

colonial man who has made “a Faustian bargain that mortgages the future [...] as the price of an exuberant present” (Catton 157).

Yusoff's method is simple and efficient: she redresses the “incompletes of the address in the Anthropocene” (Yusoff 4) by introducing its *darker* underbelly into its otherwise universalist semiotics. If we take into account the *anthropos*' toxic legacy such as the extraction of minerals, large-scale forceful movements of people, the movement of plants and animals across territories, the implantation of monocultures in the New World, mining operations, pipelines, coal fields, water management and land management, no matter whether these refer to protocapitalist or capitalist events in the history of mankind, it is clear that the neutral, post-ethnic and post-racial “we” of the Anthropocene hides a clear colonialist endeavour. Yusoff refers to it as the geotrauma of the Anthropocene, wherein the key events of the Anthropocene's origin story always connote the body that profits and the flesh that toils, i.e. the human subject and the inhuman object of the European culture, as Sylvia Wynter, the author Yusoff heavily relies on, calls it.

The resulting study verbalises the erased histories of racism rooted deeply into the story of the Anthropocene because, as Yusoff argues, it is simply impossible to map a serious theoretical field about the causes of the current human condition without the inclusion of “a discourse of settler-colonial rights and the material practices of extraction” (Yusoff 2), where both slaves (and we could add colonial and neo-colonial subjects) and extracted materials are epistemologically recognised only through their inhuman properties – as matter. Moreover, as she maintains, excluding black, brown and indigenous bodies who have been exposed to long-term environmental racism, will “fail to deliver any epochal shift at all. It would be in Césaire's words [...] to think the thought of the other' without the other of thought” (Yusoff 18).

For Yusoff, no term is innocent and devoid of the axis of power and performance, including geological events or what has become known in popular discourse as the Golden Spike, a stratigraphic marker which shows a transition from the Holocene, or the past 11,700 years of the history of mankind, to the Anthropocene. All tentative “Golden Spikes” – European expansion and colonization, the Industrial Revolution and Watt's steam engine, and the atomic tests which caused the “Great Acceleration” – reveal the tension between the human (white), the inhuman (black and brown) and the subhuman (indigenous). The fabulation of these three possible material beginnings show that the colonial man became the explorer and the inventor only after he had forcefully taken the native land, initiated the biggest systematic transportation of African slaves to the New World to create a cost-free labour force, and carried on “material extraction under the guise of exchange” (Yusoff 32). As Yusoff goes further, the

Industrial Revolution in the United States was fuelled by allegedly “free” African Americans who predominantly mined coal, while the mapping of over 2000 nuclear explosions from 1945 which lurk behind the “Great Acceleration” exposes “the displacement and exposure of indigenous peoples in the Pacific Islands and the radiation of Native American and Aboriginal peoples in North America and Australia” (45). This is why Yusoff dedicates a chapter to construct the primary category underscoring the genesis of the Anthropocene, that of the inhuman as the matter without which geology of mankind is unfathomable. As Yusoff argues, it is blackness as “racialized matter that delivers the Anthropocene as a geologic event into the world, through mining, plantations, railroads, labor, and energy” (82). The very core of the Anthropocene exhibits a dehumanizing colonialist geology which, as the author maintains, has deformed the earth *and* the subjects. While the former has been acknowledged by the scholars, the latter still remains to become explicitly recognised.

Hence, Yusoff’s impeccably structured and deeply informative book serves as a manual for any subsequent discussions of the Anthropocene that wish to debunk the naturalisation of the neutral “we”, according to which “we” are all in it together since “we” have been playing the same role in the historical and current settler colonialism. Her book should be on the reading list of anyone who believes that epistemological innocence is not what got us here.

Works Cited:

- Morton, Timothy. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Catton, William R., Jr. *Overshoot. The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*. University of Illinois Press, 1982 [1980].

Through a Vegan Studies Lens: Textual Ethics and Lived Activism. **Ed. Laura Wright. University of Nevada Press, 2019.**

Arthur Lizie*
Bridgewater State University

As I write this, the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown drags into its second month. Amid tweets denying any responsibility for the virus's spread across the United States and recommending the use of household disinfectant to stem the virus, United States President Donald Trump just signed an executive order mandating the nation's meat packing plants to stay open in the interests of national security. This directive was signed despite increasing meat-packing worker deaths at the plants. Or maybe not despite, since these workers are typically poor, often immigrants, and more than occasionally illegal immigrants – three groups for which the administration has shown little but disdain. However, nowhere in the multiple articles I read were the lives that are always sacrificed at meat-packing plants discussed – the animals. This, succinctly, is the prevailing worldview that *Through a Vegan Studies Lens. Textual Ethics and Lived Activism*, edited by Laura Wright, attempts to confront and challenge.

The 14 chapters in this volume follow up on Wright's call for Vegan Studies as a distinct academic field in her 2015 monograph *The Vegan Studies Project. Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror*. The intersectional field and this volume pull together work from scholars working in animal studies, ecocriticism, environmental studies, gender studies, and more generalized areas of the humanities. While loosely hanging together across these disciplines and fields, the break between this current project and past endeavors within each of these fields is the centralization of animals within in the discourse, and the desire to reduce/eliminate animal suffering, especially the physical consumption of animals.

* alizie@bridgew.edu

The volume is broken into four sections sandwiched between Wright's contextualizing intro and closing analysis of Miguel Arteta and Mike White's *Dinner with Beatriz*. In the opening remarks, Wright attempts to operationalize the Vegan Studies concept, one "informed by theory, driven by theoretical inquiry, but also fully engaged in activist praxis, dedicated to establishing a conversation that crosses boundaries and expands both knowledge and social engagement beyond the confines of the academy" (viii). This is the territory in which many recently emerging fields, such as Food Studies or Sustainability Studies, have found themselves – driven to justify social justice projects under the guise of traditional theoretical frameworks when what's really called for is "a lived politics of listening, care, emotion and the empathetic imagination" (viii). But, of course, that requires that others are empathetic and imaginative in ways you value. And when others are listening and caring and emotional, but not in ways that share your empathy and imagination, it's easy to slip from activism to "gotcha journalism," simply pointing out where others go wrong (which is what happens in a few chapters here).

The first section focuses on "expanding ecocriticism(s)." Kathryn Kirkpatrick's "Vegans in Locavore Literature" feels a bit circular in its argument, as looking for positive vegan presences in carnist literature seems like looking for gun critics at a Second Amendment rally. Alexa Weik von Mossner's "How We Feel about (Not) Eating Animals: Vegan Studies and Cognitive Ecocriticism" is one of the volume's stronger pieces, pointing pathway toward purposeful empathy construction. Von Mossner looks at media engagement with vegan themes and tries to figure out if a carrot (almost literally) or a stick (images of abused animals) is more engaging and persuasive. This type of "activist praxis" would benefit from some analysis beyond the humanities – public relations and marketing come to mind.

The second section and third sections broadly falling into area studies, the former tackling the United States and the latter, in an odd dichotomy for a book such as this, "beyond the west." The American section relies heavily on traditional textual analysis, with looks at Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Richard Powers's *The Echo Maker*, Johnathan Franzen's *Purity*, and the film *Soylent Green*, dissecting a number of present and conspicuously absent discourses while including mandatory sentences such as "The absent referent has significant implications regarding the process of identification" (83). The plant-based protein of this section is "The Sexual Politics of Meat in the Trump Era" from Carol J. Adams, author of the 1990 foundational text *The Sexual Politics of Meat. A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. It's less a how-to than a WTF? about what's happened during the Trump reign in the US, with the observation that the historical vegan experience, that is, "feeling alienated from current events, experiencing

deep despair, dealing with challenges to free speech, and feeling powerless in the face of great power,” offers insight into the tools of resistance.

“Beyond the West” includes two straight textual analyses, of Zoë Wiscomb’s *October* and Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*, and the next section includes a study of Helen Macdonald’s *H is for Hawk*, making fully half the volume traditional print/word-based textual analysis. If a goal is to take Vegan Studies beyond the academy, a wider range of analytical artifacts would be useful. That being said, Kadri Aaviks’ “The Rise of Veganism in Post-Socialist Europe: Making Sense of Emergent Vegan Practices and Identities” offers an instructive if predictably disheartening doppelgänger to Adams’ piece.

Philosopher Shanti Chu’s “Nonviolence through Veganism: An Antiracist Postcolonial Strategy for Healing, Agency, and Respect” cuts the widest swath for rational, systemic thinking about veganism, situating it within arguments about slave-master and colonizer-colonized dialectics while drawing parallels between human master and animal slaves (the exploitation situation doubly articulated in this piece’s opening paragraph). Chu urges movement toward ahimsa, doing no harm toward other living beings, as espoused by Gandhi and A. Breeze Harper in *Sistah Vegan. Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. This is the piece that will get read in graduate seminars.

The final section “Hypocrites and Hipsters” is like shooting fish in a barrel, a phrase that could certainly benefit from some analysis through a vegan studies lens. We find out that hipsters, especially isolated Portland, Oregon-based white middle-class hipsters, are selfish, and that one semester of a college course isn’t going to significantly change long-ingrained eating beliefs. Wright’s brief closing analysis of *Dinner with Beatriz* gives a glimpse of what vegan resistance requires and can look like in Trump’s America.

Taken as a whole, *Through a Vegan Studies Lens* is a tentative first step toward a broader understanding of Vegan Studies as an academic field, more an introduction for the uninitiated than a handbook for the committed – like the instructor’s friends guest lecturing for an intro-level class where you put your hand on but never get to see the whole elephant. Someday I hope to see the whole elephant.

Nicole Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2018.

Maria Lux*
Whitman College

Unlike many academic arguments that, as Seymour states, focus only on trying to “expose the problematic or biased elements of a text” and stop there, Seymour succinctly puts her finger on just what is so problematic or uncomfortable about mainstream environmental discourse – its self-righteousness, its seriousness, its “doom and gloom”, its guilt-inducement, its lack of self-awareness, its whiteness and classicism – and then gives us an entire book of examples of cultural production that do otherwise. In other words, her book excitingly offers examples of alternatives, not simply critiques. These case-studies of “bad environmentalism” embrace irony, humour, darkness, a complete lack of knowledge, the bodily and sexual, and “imperfect” authors. Seymour chooses some improbable texts for her archive – from the much-discussed films like Isabella Rossalini’s *Green Porno* and Mike Judge’s *Idiocracy*, to the so-far under-examined “MTV-style” animal show *Wildboyz* hosted by Steve-O, or the documentary *Goodbye Gauley Mountain. An Ecosexual Love Story*. Her archive cuts across genres and formats, too, from the animated sitcom *The Goode Family* to Edward Abbey’s novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. The works in her archive often utilize self-critique, or point their irony inward, at themselves, rather than outward towards an opponent, as traditional environmentalism often does (13). Her book serves to bring works that mainstream environmentalism would find inappropriate, incorrect, or not worthy of scholarly attention, into ecocritical conversations. In a context where many feel helpless, trapped in old arguments and stalemates,

* luxmc@whitman.edu

unable to convince others to hear different viewpoints through the same old appeals, this book offers disruptions, pleasurable alternatives, and refreshingly new perspectives.

Seymour's book is divided into five chapters, centring on themes like "the Problem of Expert Knowledge," "Perverting Nature/Wildlife Programming," "Queer Environmental Performance," "Re-writing Racialized Environmental Affect" and "Toward Trashy Environmentalisms." In other words, she deals with the very intersections that are most difficult, and most needed, in environmental discourse: class, race, sexuality, and necessity (or not) of knowledge. Building off her previous work in *Strange Natures. Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (2013), Seymour uses queer theory broadly, defining it as a focus on "improper attachments and inappropriate feelings" and that "takes pleasure" in what is perceived as "indecorum" ... while re-visiting the "trademark sensibilities" of queer theory that she feels have been lost in queer ecology: "its playfulness, its irreverence, its interest in perversity, and its delight in irony," (24).

Along these lines, Seymour uses her archive as a whole to make an argument against a deeply entrenched assumption about works of creative production that address environmental issues, namely the insistence that they have direct and useful outcomes. Seymour "question[s] ecocritics' tendency to [. . .] to judge artworks primarily by their functionality: their capacity to educate the public or spark measurable change" (7). Later, she continues her concern that dominant ecocritical approaches can over-emphasize "inciting ecological advocacy" and miss other possibilities, and that "this instrumentalism potentially marginalizes artworks that do not articulate obvious or recognizable environmentalist agendas but nonetheless have something to tell us" (27). The possibilities Seymour sees are many, including "... revealing the strict codes of environmentalism, expressing dissatisfaction or *disaffectation* with the environmentalist status quo, bearing witness to crisis, enacting catharsis, raising activist morale, building community, serving as cultural diagnoses, indexing and helping us understand our current eco-political moment [...] inculcating a new range of responses to crisis, modeling flexibility and creativity . . . " (7). It is perhaps this willingness to embrace works that do more than simply educate or advocate that makes her book so stimulating.

Another of the most ubiquitous and taken-for-granted assumptions made by environmentalism, and particularly for scholars and critics of it, is the necessity of knowledge as a pre-requisite for "doing environmentalism." In her first chapter: "I'm no botanist, but . . ." *Irony, Ecocinema, and the Problem of Expert Knowledge* for example, she uses Mike Judge's *Idiocracy* as an example. She uses the "average-Joe" (whose name is actually Joe's) testimony before congress that the corporate-sponsored water-replacement

Brawndo is not working on plants, causing agricultural disaster, and that they should try regular water. But his success is about him *not* being an expert, and not needing to be (40). In Chapter 2, which takes up the genre of wildlife programming, Steve-O seems actively against educating his audience, and incidentally avoids the associated awe, wonder, and reverence typically thought necessary to engender care and empathy for animals, and instead shows that abject, bodily experiences, grossness, or humour work just as well.

Animals themselves are not an explicit focus of Seymour's book, but it has a great deal to offer to animal studies scholars. So many of the critiques she articulates about environmental discourses echo and resonate with critiques directed towards (or perhaps that *should* be directed towards) animal studies and animal activism as well. Seymour's analysis is so perceptive and so well-articulated that it doesn't take much effort on behalf of the reader to see how some of the issues, like self-righteousness, sentimentality, earnestness, an insistence on expert knowledge, whiteness and classicism, and instrumentalist values, are issues animal activists and animal studies scholars need to contend with as well. By calling out these problematic aspects of mainstream environmentalism, Seymour lays the groundwork for the recognition of shared territory between the fields of environmentalism/conservation/ecology and animal studies, which is not an insignificant move since (though these disciplines might be expected to have a great deal in common), they often find themselves at odds.

This book is sorely needed to provide, not templates to be repeated, but instead evidence that other approaches are possible. Seymour doesn't suggest that we all just "flip the switch" to other affective modes, reminding us through her careful and insightful reading of these texts that they are "more complicated than that" (5). Each of the projects Seymour investigates are successful partially by virtue of their novelty or ability to interrupt the norm, sometimes without that even being the intention of their creator. Her analysis of these texts offer a series of examples for how some pieces of cultural production respond to or avoid the common problems of mainstream environmentalism, and leave the next round of responses up to a newly energized audience. For artists, filmmakers, performers, writers, and other people who make things, then, this book can be a highly generative one. And for scholars, it widens the conversation to include new and unexpected kinds of texts. Seymour's book therefore broadens what can count as discourse in the field of environmentalism and activism – opening doors for new things to be made, relieving artists and makers of the expectation that all work be instrumentalist or functionalist in outcome, and allowing for work that is contradictory, hypocritical, imperfect, or otherwise "bad."

Kim Stanley Robinson.
The Ministry for the Future.

London: Orbit, 2020.

Thomas Piketty.
Capital and Ideology.

**Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: The Belknap Press
of Harvard University Press, 2020 [2019].**

Tarun K. Saint and Francesco Verso, Editors.
***Avatar अवतार: Contemporary
Indian Science Fiction/Fantascienza
contemporanea indiana.***

Rome: Future Fiction, 2020.

Brian Willems*
University of Split

A number of books have recently taken India as an inspiration and example for creating the future. This review looks at two non-Indian texts and one from India in order to identify what aspects of the cultures of India are seen as future-oriented. This is vital at a time when the far-right BJP and RSS parties are in control and Kashmir is under a continued communications blackout and security lockdown due to anti-Muslim sentiments. The three books reviewed are Kim Stanley Robinson's novel *The Ministry for the Future* (2020), Thomas Piketty's non-fiction economics text *Capital and Ideology* (2019), and an anthology of Indian science

* bwilllems@ffst.hr

fiction called *Avatar*, edited by Tarun K. Saint and Francesco Verso (2020). Each of these books is looked at briefly in order to highlight how they see a number of aspects of the culture, economics, and politics of the Indian Union, outside of its current political direction, as role models for a way forward.

The Ministry for the Future opens in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh with a wet-bulb event, meaning a deadly combination of heat and humidity, which kills 20 million people. This leads the Indian government to break with the slow-moving environmental protocols of the Paris Agreement and take matters into their own hands, which takes two major forms. The first is to engage in an illegal act of climate geoengineering, or “a solar radiation management action,” aimed at lowering the global temperature by two degrees Fahrenheit for a year or so. The plan is to double the effect of the Pinatubo volcanic eruption in 1991, when the volcano threw enough sulfur dioxide up into the stratosphere for temperatures to drop nearly one degree Fahrenheit for the following few years. In the novel, engaging in this act of geoengineering breaks the demand for consensus stated in the Paris Agreement, although the Indian government does not care. As Chandra, its representative for the Paris Agreement states, “It was Europe and America and China who caused this heat wave, not us. ...we signed the Agreement to do our part. Which we have done. But no one else is fulfilling commitments, no one is paying the developing nations, and now we have this heat wave. And another one could happen next week! ... So we are taking matters into our own hands.” And this is what the Indian government does, sending planes, bought long ago from the Soviet Union, as high into the air as possible to pump aerosol mixes of sulfur dioxide and other chemicals into the stratosphere.

In the novel, the other strategy that comes from India for combating the causes and effects of climate change is more controversial because it is violent. The Children of Kali group is a direct action offshoot of a new political coalition. Kali wages economic (not military) war against the 195 nations that signed the Paris Agreement, as well as non-state actors and individuals. Starting off with suicide bombing, the group moves on to swarm drone attacks, kidnapping, as well as the outright killing of politicians, business people, and citizens who use fossil-fuel burning transportation such as airplanes. The Children of Kali follow the idea of “They killed us so we killed them,” although at first it might not seem like all of their victims are murderers. However, the group foregrounds the often hard-to-see correlation between causes and consequences in relation to pollution and climate change. For example, travelling by plane in Europe today might have consequences for people in India the following decade. Yet the group’s direct action is also based on a specific real-life

Indian model, the idea of integrated pest management, which is part of the Sikkim organic farming model, as well as the work of agricultural reformist Vandana Shiva. Being the first 100% organic state in the world, the northeastern Indian state of Sikkim has achieved a total ban of all pesticides and chemicals, as well as transforming the industrialization of food production as well as aspects of education, culture, commerce. Yet they still need to manage pests. The organic management of pests is taken as a model by the Children of Kali for the management of climate change, leading them to adopt a model of targeted eradication.

Yet climate geoengineering and organic terrorism are not the only two strategies for change adopted from India in the novel. In terms of governance, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is thrown out for having sold India out to the highest international bidder, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) party is dismissed for its “fake-traditional Hinduistic ethnic-nationalist triumphalism.” What comes to power instead is a syncretic “composite party” which composes all kinds of Indians, from every religion, caste, and class, from those both urban and rural, and from those educated and not. This party is called Avasthana, which is Sanskrit for survival. Other important models for reform in the novel are based, for example, on real-world work done in the southwestern state of Kerala (where, for example, Arundhati Roy is from and where here fiction is set). These include land reform, which takes the form of a return to local knowledge and ownership, as well as the nationalization of the country’s energy companies, the construction of large solar power arrays, and the reclaiming of India’s labor force from international companies to local production. All in all, the novel’s imagined polyglot, democratic coalition of India is taken to be the “bold new leader of the world” rather than a place of poverty and victim of history and geography as it is often taken by outsiders.

The second book under discussion in this review, Thomas Piketty’s *Capital and Ideology*, also takes India as a key reference for models for change. The book is a wide-ranging study of different ideologies developed in order to justify inequality. The main goal of the text is to provide a historical overview of many different ideologies in the hopes that readers will see how our current justifications for inequality are impermanent and open to change. India is a key example both for the deeply embedded nature of the caste system as a justification for inequality and because of a number of its current radical measures for challenging this ideology, which are then taken as guideposts for other countries to follow.

In Chapter Eight, “Ternary Societies and Colonialism: The Case of India,” some aspects of the history of the caste system, “which is generally regarded as a particularly rigid and extreme type of inequality regime,”

are laid out. The term “ternary” in the chapter title refers to societies composed of three main groups, the clergy, nobility, and workers. The caste system is not only more complex, but it has also left more obvious traces of inequalities in contemporary society than those left by the status orders in Europe. One of the main reasons for the entrenched nature of the caste system in India is the interruption of the country’s development by a foreign power, the British. Seeing the caste system as a means of control, the British colonizers inaugurated the census in India, conducted every ten years from 1871 to 1941. As Piketty says, “An unanticipated consequence of the census was that it gave the caste hierarchy an administrative existence, which made the system more rigid and resistant to change.” On the one hand Piketty takes one of his main concepts of the book from the Indian caste system, what he calls the “Brahmin left,” meaning the transformation of workers’ political parties into those of the educated throughout the world. However, of greater interest to us here is how since independence in 1947, some of the better aspects of the Indian Union has attempted to use its legal powers to combat the effects of caste discrimination. A number of these attempts, even though they have been weakened under the current government, are taken as lessons from which the rest of the world should learn.

Piketty is interested in ways that governments can intervene and regulate the reduction of inequality, including workers and their representatives making up a third to a half of corporate boards in countries like Germany and Sweden, and implementing the temporary ownership of property and progressive taxation, both of which were an important part of British and American progressivism as well as having been debated during the French Revolution (and all of which make up key elements of Piketty’s idea of “participatory socialism”). Aspects of the Indian Union are seen to be a key although imperfect example of such regulation, especially steps taken in the drafting of the constitution in 1950 which “began by abolishing all caste privileges and expunging all references to religion from the law.” Some of the most important legal tools it has used to overcome the consequences of the British solidification of the caste system are the quotas and “reservations” put in place in order to guarantee places, for those born into disadvantaged social groups (designated as “other backward classes,” or OBC), in universities, public jobs, and elective positions. One of the most contentious aspects of the OBC designation is that it included Muslims, which Piketty argues was part of the reason for the rise of the nationalist Hindu parties of the BJP and RSS. Yet Piketty and Robinson both still see the attempt at regulating inclusion as useful for imagining a more positive future. The next book under discussion takes a more pessimistic approach, perhaps because its writers are living through the current Indian government rather than seeing it from afar.

These first two books under review come from non-Indian authors who are interested in applying what they see as positive Indian solutions to the rest of the world. The final book discussed is a collection of science fiction stories written by authors from India. It is used as a foil of sorts to see what kinds of criticisms, support, and new ideas are found when read along with the previous two authors.

Avatar is a bilingual (English/Italian) collection of newly commissioned stories from India written in English. The editors Tarun K. Saint and Francesco Verso sent out a list of themes for potential contributors to respond to. Instead of focusing on traditional science fiction stories about alien encounters and space travel, the themes included topics such as biopolitics, the rise of big data and algorithms, 3D printing, CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technology, and cybersecurity and surveillance. As Saint explains in the introduction to the volume, the title *Avatar* references both the manifestation of a deity in a mortal form, a concept which has a long history in Indian epics, as well as an icon or figure representing someone in a virtual space. This combination of the traditional with the contemporary informs many of the stories in the collection, even when they do not deal with avatars in any direct fashion. In the context of this review, a number of the stories develop and critique similar concepts to those raised by Robinson and Piketty, as well as raising some concerns of their own.

The first story is “The Man without Quintessence,” by Anil Menon. Ringo Singh Mann, a man living in Chedda Nagar, Mumbai, has fallen through the cracks of the surveillance state. In this near-future world, all transactions, from the simplest purchase to one’s employment, are centralized. This is managed through iris scans which function as unique identifiers that capture the uniqueness or “quintessence” of each citizen. The story features many of the elements found in *The Ministry for the Future*, including miniscule drones, the governmental use of blockchain technology, and heavy centralized regulation. However, Mann is not a figure of revolt who has gone off the grid. Rather, he shows the limitations of such ubiquitous regulation and the biases that it can contain.

The narrator of the story is a journalist who wants to write a story on Mann in order to show his readers what life is like when you are unconnected. When the narrator first meets Mann, he says it is “like staring at a mirror or a mannequin. Actually, even a mannequin has depth. Mann is all surface. Flat, opaque.” The narrator cannot do the future version of googling Mann when he meets him, and this makes Mann seem shallow, unknowable. When Mann needs to make a purchase, or get paid for his menial labor of ironing at a cleaners (a job that has not yet been automated), he temporarily connects to the grid, but this does not work perfectly. Due to his disconnectedness, Mann is seen as “the last representative of

an earlier time, not the future.” Yet this position is not one of personal choice or rebellion. The reason Mann has no “quintessence” is that his ancestors come from the Baluchi and Chitrali communities, who “exhibit a wide-spectrum of eye-colors, because of their large variation in the genetic complexes responsible for iris pigmentations.” The effect of this inheritance is that Mann’s irises “keep changing unpredictably over time,” and thus he is unable to be accurately scanned for “quintessence.” Mann wants this issue corrected, although no plausible solution is at hand. He is unable to obtain his basic needs without problems, let alone treatment for his cancer. The story leaves Mann in this unresolved state, although the tone is not one of complete tragedy, since the alternative of being completely locked into the system of surveillance is not seen as a positive solution either.

In fact, the kind of state intervention touted by both Robinson and Piketty comes under a lot of criticism in a number of the stories in this collection. Shikhandin’s story “Communal” takes the problems of networked lives as its main theme. The story is set in Jaisalmer, known as the “Golden City” because many of its buildings are made from sandstone as it is located in the middle of the Thar Desert. However, the sand has been taken over by an aggressive sort of network of trees which can reach up and knock helicopters out of the sky, and which eventually takes over everything, including people, turning them all into a connected world of greenery. And “Indra’s Web,” by perhaps the collection’s most well-known author Vandana Singh, features a networked power grid which is based on the structure of fungi. Called Myconet, and perhaps inspired by the Peer-to-Peer network of the same name posited by Paul Snyder, Rachel Greenstadt, and Giuseppe Valetto in 2009, this networked set of solar arrays powering what was once a slum outside of New Delhi is starting to malfunction. Yet this problem is not due to a bug in the system but rather to the network becoming something more than its parts by taking charge and reconfiguring itself. Thus the concept of “Indra’s Net” in Buddhist philosophy takes on a new meaning: emergence.

These stories expand and critique some of the concepts put forward by Robinson and Piketty. For example, while Robinson’s new vision of politics is unapologetically syncretic, the networks in Shikhandin’s story leave no space to breath. On the other hand, the networks in Singh’s “Indra’s Web” have emergent sentience, thus becoming more intelligent than the regulatory bodies that have created them. Other stories in the collection, however, reach far beyond these concepts.

The strongest example is Priya Sarukkai Chabria’s post-apocalyptic “Paused.” All life on planet Earth has ended. The narrator is one of a number of life-reactivation pods that have been placed at the bottom of the sea. These pods contain sufficient genetic information to restart life on

the planet. They were created by the Shell Beings, our evolutionary descendants who genetically modified themselves to return to the sea in order to escape the ecological destruction of climate change. Eventually the planet got so bad that the Shell Beings committed collective suicide, as well the annihilation of all other living things. First though they uploaded their collective consciousness into “The Head.” During the time of the story the narrator-pod is deciding whether to risk opening up or not. The decision is not entirely its own, since it is based on the accumulation of sufficient precipitation to support life. But the pod is not sure. “Did the sensors misread a whiff of moisture as running streams and running rain, as life sustaining surge?” it asks itself. It decides to activate, although when it does its fate is not entirely clear. It uses all of the water around it in order to gain enough energy to start the life-rejuvenation process, yet the story ends with the pod needing even more water to continue, and no more water is to be found. “I want water. I want to live. I want to live!” cries the pod, although presumably there will never be anyone to hear its cries.

“Paused” is a powerful story about a possible future. The manner in which the pod is developed, constructed, and employed use some of the features of centralized regulation suggested by Robinson and Piketty. The problem the story foregrounds however is the fear that the type of solutions of Robinson and Piketty will not be enough, nor will more radical changes that future generations might be forced to take. This is one of the strengths of science fiction, helping us not only understand the scale of the consequences of our actions, but using the imagination to map out possible futures, both making a wide variety of futures feel possible and developing the shocking consequences of problems yet to come.

Guidelines for Submissions

The papers should be sent as a Word file.

- For articles, the length is between 20,000 and 60,000 characters with spaces (including abstract, notes and Works Cited).
- For reviews and conference reports, a length of 1,000-2,000 characters with spaces is recommended.
- For translations, a length of 10,000-20,000 characters with spaces is recommended.
- Texts may use British or US spelling
- Please use as little formatting as possible
- Please use footnotes, not endnotes, but only when necessary.
- An abstract of 150-200 words should be included along with 3-5 keywords.
- Use in-text citations and please refer to the current MLA guidelines for all formatting questions. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_general_format.html

Common examples for Works Cited:

- Book: Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. City of Publication, Publisher, Publication Date.
- Article: Author. Title. Title of container (self contained if book), Other contributors (translators or editors), Version (edition), Number (vol. and/or no.), Publisher, Publication Date, Location (pp.).
- Webpage: Author. Title. Title of container (self contained if book), Other contributors (translators or editors), Version (edition), Number (vol. and/or no.), Publisher, Publication Date, Location (pages, paragraphs and/or URL, DOI or permalink). 2nd container's title, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location, Date of Access (if applicable).

Please send your article as an attachment to the journal editors at: cross-culturalstudiesreview@gmail.com

Cross-Cultural Studies Review follows the best practices of peer review as set by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). The Review follows COPE and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) regarding open-access guidelines as well as copyright and licensing.

