CLIMATE

Our Right to Breathe

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Cover image:

Otobong Nkanga, *Whose Crisis is This?* (2013)
Acrylic on paper, two parts, 29.7 × 42 cm each.
Reproduced courtesy of the artist.

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Editors' Introduction

This book is a collection of essays and artistic contributions in response to the two main challenges we face on a global scale, and so, too, within the arts ecosystem: the accelerated collapse of the biosphere under climate change and the increasingly crushing dynamics of a toxic political sphere. Aware that much of the transformation needed to reverse increasingly dire scientific forecasts about our environment must take place on a planetary scale and in the material sphere, *Climate: Our Right to Breathe* is informed by an urgency to imagine common strategies for active solidarity. At a time when several planetary boundaries of the Earth system have already been surpassed, creating feedback loops of intensification, the essential role of the arts must be to speak up and make space for collective action, care, and imagination—which are so often endangered by politics of isolationism and exclusion—as well as for the speculative construction of just, eco-transition-ready paradigms that shrug off the logic of capitalist expansion.

In recent years, L'Internationale has carried out a series of programs and publications related to the ecological question,[1] understood as a complex issue that has to be approached from a scientific perspective, while also requiring a reading of the political climate and related cultural productions. In that sense, *Climate* responds to the need to continue articulating thoughts that challenge the traditional division of disciplines from the intersection of art, activism, and social sciences—by "staying with the trouble," as Donna J. Haraway would say—while also attending to the political and material conditions of the present. We consider both museums and artistic practices to be critical vehicles for debating, promoting, and imagining new worlds to come.

We have seen significant progressive discourses regarding the right to a healthy environment, which first appeared as a concept on the international stage five decades ago at the 1972 Stockholm

Conference on the Human Environment; however, it took almost as long for the right to a healthy environment to become integrated into over 150 legal frameworks around the world. 1972 was also the year that a seminal text of the environmental movement was published, *The Limits to Growth*, a report commissioned for MIT by the Club of Rome, and whose main author was Donella Meadows.[2] Since that time, the inability of the capitalist system to redirect material activity and reduce the extractivist practices that surpass the physical limits of the biosphere, which the report rightly revealed, has become even more evident. The apparent impossibility of reversing the ideological fixation on perpetual growth—a condition that is both material and cultural—has ensured the reproduction of stagnant, nihilist imaginaries. We can confirm that the world that was drawn at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, with complex political, institutional, and technical operations that allowed the planetary expansion of a model based on growth, exploitation of resources, and accumulation, is still active. Thus, a so-called developed world was constructed in confrontation with a so-called underdeveloped one, instantiating a binary that was further used to justify neocolonial practices such as employing debt and financialization and technical and energy dependency for the benefit of a Western-centric expansion of the concepts of freedom and democracy.

The limitations of environmental law stem from the fact that legal systems consider the natural world as property that can be exploited and degraded, rather than as an agent with its own rights to exist and to flourish. The transition toward a new generation of environmental law is apparent in several new legal mechanisms that incorporate and defend the rights of nature and recognize law in the natural world. In March 2017, the Whanganui River in Aotearoa/New Zealand became the first river in the world to be granted legal personhood—an outcome for which the Indigenous Māori began to petition the British colonial government in 1870. The Māori have long cohabited with the river in accordance with the proverb *Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au* [I am the river, and the river is me]. This way of seeing the natural world carries with it the interconnectedness of all living and non-living entities, and is integral to many Indigenous worldviews. In *Our History Is the Future*, Nick Estes, a citizen of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and professor of American studies, portrays the Standing Rock struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline of recent years as an inheritance of the Oceti Sakowin's long legacy of anti-colonial resistance.[3] Standing Rock is not only the greatest Indigenous-led movement in North America in the twenty-first century; it is also the continuation of Indigenous peoples' fighting for 500 years to abolish settler colonialism. Estes notes that this extended practice of decolonization poses a prevailing challenge to the profit-driven powers menacing sustained life on the Earth while offering a way out of climate devastation and colonial violence.[4]

1 Numerous L'Internationale projects have influenced our thinking around this book. We are grateful for the inspired work of our colleagues on *CLIMAVORE: Seasons Made to Drift* (an exhibition and public program at SALT, Istanbul, 7 April–24 October 2021); "The New Reaction: Antidotes and Synergies" (a public program at MNCARS, Madrid, 18–20 November 2020); "Considering Monoculture" (a conference organized by M HKA and VAM at deBuren, Brussels, 27–28 April 2020); "Towards a New Eco-Social Imagination: Narratives and Transitions in the Face of the Crisis of Civilization" (a conference at MACBA, Barcelona, March 2020); "Internationalism After the End of Globalisation" (a conference at MSN, Warsaw, 25–26 October 2019); and "Petroleo" (a conference at MACBA, Barcelona, March 2017). We further acknowledge our co-editors and feature editors at L'Internationale Online for their contributions to the publications *Architectural Dissonances* (2021); *Class and Redistribution* (2021); *Degrowth and Progress* (2021); *Austerity and Utopia* (2020); and, *Living with Ghosts: Legacies of Colonialism and Fascism* (2019), each of which contained concepts that grew into this book.

2 Donella H. Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth* [1972] (New York: Universe Books, 1982).

3 Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso Books, 2019).

4 See also Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises," *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* (2018): 224–42.

5 Achille Mbembe, "The Universal Right to Breathe," trans. Carolyn Shread, *Critical Inquiry* 47.S2 (2020): 61; doi.org/10.1086/711437. Mbembe's text converses with the writings of Frantz Fanon, who saw breath as a site of colonial violence and a symbol of occupation. For Fanon, breath was simultaneously an indicator of epistemic occupation, "an observed, an occupied breathing" that shaped the "dependency complex" that justified colonization—and the reason to rebel against it. See his *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 55.

*

Breathing is more than a mere biological need. As **Françoise Vergès** writes in her opening contribution to this book: "making the right to breathe a revolutionary demand means dismantling the racist economy of exhaustion and suffocation." Drawing a through-line across different temporalities and understandings of breath, Vergès documents the colonial violence exerted on all forms of life—from seven million people dying from air pollution to lives stolen by police and state-sanctioned violence.

Achille Mbembe's recent essay, "The Universal Right to Breathe," has further influenced our thinking on the "commonality" of breath. For Mbembe, modernity has been characterized by an incessant and "interminable war on life," whose contemporary scale of deprivation now menaces all.[5] To open with *our* right to breathe is to

open with the conditions of the breathless; to shed light on the correlations between climate change, colonial, and neocolonial ferocity, and structural inequities caused by transecting schemes of repression; and, to magnify the experiences of those facing ecological collapse. Critically engaging with contributions that denounce the constructs and relations between colonial exploitation and climate change, this book witnesses and interrogates these too-often-silenced amplitudes.

Otobong Nkanga's work *Whose Crisis is This* (2013) guides us into the spirit of the book. Through the poetic mapping of rooted bodies, through the movement of systemizing entangled land assets, Nkanga's image opens up for many of the matters of the publication: the climate emergency, the extraction and circulation of resources, and sustainability. Four interrelated sections—"Commodification, Energy, and Extraction"; "Land and Food Sovereignty"; "Toxicity and Healing"; and, "Shelters"—situate the practice of artists and thinkers in relation to inherited and contemporary forms of socioenvironmental violence in very different contexts and places. As racialized capitalism cannot be separated from ecological disaster, and as vulnerable communities are forced to endure the worst effects of the climate crises, intersectionality is a vital part of environmentalism and ecological thinking. Postcolonial, decolonial, and critical race studies come together with ecofeminisms and artistic research and practice to advance the claim that, due to the causal role of racialized and gendered hierarchies in these environmental catastrophes, it is necessary to confront the "racial blindness" and gender ignorance of the allegedly universal human subject of climate.[6]

The first section of this book, "Commodification, Energy, and Extraction," examines how colonialism and the West's concept of modernity have given rise to and continues to perpetuate extractivist operations that have always meant profit for a few and devastation for many, resulting in ecological collapse and extreme social and economic inequalities that are inherent to capitalist economic structures. It opens with **Ana Teixeira Pinto**'s exploration of concepts including chronopolitics, thermodynamics, conversion, and entropy, wherein the time of modernity is instrumentalized to influence societal behavior, and nature is converted into culture and industry in a human-centered world. **Jaime Vindel** goes back to the nineteenth century to trace the advent of fossil aesthetics as an undercurrent of Western industrial modernity. Examining images, narratives, and cultural projections that served to legitimize and expand colonial systems of dispossession, accumulation, and a productivist understanding of the Earth, Vindel

6 Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

conveys how a nineteenth-century imaginary of endless resources and progress continues to haunt our present and seriously compromises our future as a civilization.

The dependency of European economies on fossil fuels and the geopolitics of energy have been laid bare since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, most notably in the rise of oil and gas prices and their continued importation from Russia by the same countries that have condemned its atrocious acts. Investigating the dire consequences of this ongoing war, **Svitlana Matviyenko** writes about the weaponization of pollution through nuclear terror, the hazard of decomposing bodies, and explosives that cause the degradation of soils and unleash toxic construction particles into the atmosphere, evidencing pollution as a silent form of territorial occupation with long-term ecological devastation.

Artistic practice is a compelling form of activism in the case of **Daniela Ortiz**, whose work focuses on and denounces the repercussions of European colonialism. Through illustrative storytelling, the series of paintings, *Muqui* (2022), is a manifestation of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist resistance that calls out the exploitation of land and dispossessed populations through the tale of a Muqui gold miner that wreaks vengeance on European oppressors.

In her analysis of neo-extractivism in Latin America since the turn of this century, **Maristella Svampa** discusses eco-territorial struggles and new forms of social movement emerging in the region, within shifting political climates and in response to neoliberal policies that have appropriated and commodified nature and the commons.

In Sweden, the Indigenous Sámi community has been active for over a century trying to protect its way of life and the environment. **May-Britt Öhman** discusses recent struggles of the Sámi in the face of a "green"—or, as she calls it "ungreen"—energy push from the government for large-scale wind power production plants that would cut across ancestral Sámi territory, disrupt the biosystem, and threaten the Sámi culture and livelihood of reindeer herding.

The following section, "Land and Food Sovereignty," addresses the role of land rights and agroecology movements with regards to the possibility of environmental management on a human scale—as opposed to large-scale, intensive monocrop production.

The contributions look at seed conservation, land access, and subsistence farming in localized agricultural and rural communities. In the face of the vast expropriation of land and the destruction of its generative characteristics, collaborations between activists, artists, and thinkers fighting to establish or restore the common governance of resources, such as land, seeds, and food, on the basis of their sustainable use and informed by respect for their more-than-human beneficiaries, have the potential to be transformative.

In "Beyond the Naturalist Phantasmagoria, the Pastures," **Fernando García-Dory** considers the history of national parks and mountain landscapes. Interested in sustainable forms of rural living, he confronts how such aims have been objectified and effectively undermined in the past—whether for the sake of profit, the quest of the sublime, or the veneration of "the pastoral" by tourism. Against this background, he proposes a new ruralism, a kind of neopeasant movement, and introduces his own Shepherds School as one hopeful example. Harmonizing the interaction between humans, nature, and food systems is the practice of many artists working with seeds, permaculture, and gardening. Their work offers ways to explore how biology and culture mediate how we approach and interrelate with the land, sometimes converting public spaces in an expanded and renewed form of Land art.

Artist, filmmaker, and researcher **Marwa Arsanios** offers a two-part contribution, consisting of an essay and an interview. "A Letter Inside a Letter: How Labor Appears and Disappears" focuses on embodied knowledge, localized subjectivities, and the manifold risks involved when women are denied the possession of land due to religious and patriarchal structures. Here, she draws parallels between issues of land sovereignty in Colombia and Lebanon, linking counterpart struggles that traverse continents. This generates new characteristics for feminism: an a-centric, transnational, and postcolonial movement running at the intersections between race, gender, sexuality, and class.

Arsanios's subsequent interview with **Samanta Arango Orozco**, an activist and former member of Grupo Semillas [Seed Group] in Colombia, further underscores the need for relationship building in land-based research. Speaking from within the community of rural activists, Orozco shares profound insights in the specifically local political and economic violence. While describing the ongoing territorial displacement and systematic disruption of food security, she also outlines the changes people can achieve when they come and work together. Arsanios employs a specific method of knowledge

7 Forensic Architecture is a multidisciplinary research agency consisting of architects, software developers, filmmakers, journalists, artists, scientists, and lawyers. Founded in 2010 as a research project at Goldsmiths, University of London, the group creates architectural models, films, and 3D renderings which are then used as forensic evidence in exhibitions and legal cases.

8 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

production and authentication employing art historical and feminist discourses through image production in order to map and introduce voices and new analyses.

In an entirely visual sequence, **Munem Wasif** examines the latent traces of British colonialism in contemporary agricultural practices in Bangladesh; in particular, the ongoing production of indigo and jute crops at odds with the (re)instigation of local knowledge and Indigenous farming. Produced collaboratively with the Bangladeshi non-governmental organization UBINIG in 2019, the work places Wasif's cyanotypes of rice in a visual dialogue with archival photographs and documents from a communal seed bank.

Nomusa Makhubu illuminates the intricate connections between food, "histories of power," and the geopolitics of "land and labor relations" that are exhibited in the moving-image work of Nigerian-born artist Zina Saro-Wiwa (and in the poetry of her father, Ken Saro-Wiwa). For Makhubu, "food in Saro-Wiwa's work […] is also about nostalgia, disconnection, detachments, alienation, and estrangement that surfaces in personal narratives and collective histories"—specifically, those of the social imaginary and cultural practices of the people of Ogoniland, in the Niger Delta region where oil exploitation is ongoing.

Samaneh Moafi also engages with environmental devastation through the lens of military conflict and her work with the investigative agency Forensic Architecture.[7] She tells a story of toxic clouds that, once mobilized, over different geographies and lengths of time, take possession of the air we breathe: tear gas, used to clear protestors from metropolitan intersections; the petrochemical discharges that suffocate racialized communities; the smoke from illegal forest-clearance fires, herbicides, and chemical fallout.

The subsequent section, "Toxicity and Healing," probes social and environmental disasters and the racialized surveillance of food and social landscapes across Indigenous territories. As Rob Nixon has problematized in his seminal book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, most environmental degradation happens out of sight, that is, it not only unfolds over long periods of intergenerational time

but also usually lacks the spectacular impact of a sudden disaster.[8] It is in this sense that we must insist and ask: "But out of sight for whom?" By grounding the question in the knowledge and testimonies of communities who are exposed to life within toxic environments, it is possible to begin to untangle the dominant configurations of power and policy that maintain—and too often aim to conceal—the unequal and unjust topographies of contamination—which are nothing else than the truths and legacies of colonization.

An epic poem by **Maria Thereza Alves**—titled "The Umbragiade," to refer to the shade (*umbra*) of trees, protective against heat and destroyed by colonial settlers—brings forth the voices of members of the AMAAIC (Association of the Movement of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents of the State of Acre) who together protect forested areas of Indigenous lands from environmental violence in Brazil. **Elizabeth A. Povinelli** surveys the Indigenous damage, cultural erasure, and ecological crises that colonialism has wrought in Northern Australia. By focusing on two films by the Karrabing Film Collective (of which she is a founding member), *The Family & the Zombie* (2021) and *Alice Henry and the Chronicle of the Collapse of the Western Plateau* (2023), her text traverses worlds of toxicity, alternating between the contemporary now, in which Karrabing members struggle to preserve their physical and ceremonial connections to ancestral lands, and a future inhabited by ancestral beings living in the aftermath of poisonous capitalism and "white zombies."

In "Unuy Quita," we encounter **Cecilia Vicuña**'s liquid universe of scarcity and abundance. On the one hand, water is life, medicine, healing. On the other hand, it can evoke contamination—oftentimes invisibly so. By asking the dirty water of the poem, *who filled you with filth?*, she emphasizes grieving, mournful silence, and death. Liquidity is also present in **Peta Rake** and **Léuli Eshrāghi**'s conversation on their Blue Assembly project which includes excerpts from Eshrāghi's poetry, dedicated to transoceanic forms of reciprocity, creativity, and care in times of planetary health crisis. In "Against Nature: *Cuy(r)* Ecologies and Biodiverse Affectivities," **Eduardo Carrera R** considers the work of certain artists and their kinships, in the spirit of Andean ritual. The essay also challenges various binaries, including those of human/nonhuman and queer/natural.

In the increasingly long, hot summers of "Fortress Europe," the usual functions of some public institutions and administrative buildings in the south of the continent are expanding to serve as "climate shelters"—places where the most vulnerable people go to

alleviate the ravages of heat waves. Museums, due to the climate-controlled conditions necessary for the preservation of the works of art and other objects they conserve, could provide particularly suitable protection to life and health, as well as to heritage. The escalating hostility of the urban contexts in which museums are often found is due not only to high temperatures and drought, but also to the increase in biopolitical control during the pandemic, and to the presence of the extreme right and political fundamentalisms. In addition to air-conditioning, the hospitality and care museums have to offer should surely extend to the fostering of imagination and free thought. If the climate crisis is civilizational, the museum itself is a key artifact of civilization. Hence, the museum must eschew any ambition toward universalizing, salvific policies, avoid any form of protective paternalism, and instead dwell on particularities, centering other possible forms of production, organization, and wealth-redistribution—not only in terms of visibility or "representation," but also in material, relational, and governance terms.

The contributions in the final section, "Shelters," show how the care offered by art institutions must transgress the limits assigned to the museum mission—not least since museum holdings are, in many cases, the result of dynamics of violence and dispossession. The section opens with two poetic and provocative voices. **Mônica Hoff** contributes a performative text on the question whether it is actually possible for the art world to decolonize, act with justice, and adequately address ecological collapse while still relying on those Western intellectual tools that have erased other epistemologies and cosmovisions. In a long list of pressing questions Hoff unmasks important structural paradoxes, including: "How to rethink museums without rethinking the structural racism that shaped them and guides their existence?" **Ayesha Hameed**'s poem "songs for petals" reflects on protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and its prehistories. The poem traverses the ocean, violence, history, and struggle to call for the need of rights and the defense of the living.

Sebastian Cichocki and **Jagna Lewandowska** express their concern for the future by confronting the challenges for a situated curatorial practice in the face of planetary disruption. Taking the exhibition *The Penumbral Age: Art in the Time of Planetary Change* (2020) at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw as their case study, they focus on art practices that engage with climate change and forms of solidarity, care, and empathy. Where Hoff proposes the necessity of unlearning and revising long-held assumptions about the power

of cultural work and artistic production, Cichocki and Lewandowska question the extent of climate-change denial by underscoring the need to also un-see, and then see differently, the entire social organization and entitlement that has been normalized in the so-called developed world.

For her part, **Marina Naprushkina** demands a "future for everyone" and is inspired by evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis's scientific concept of symbiogenesis—the recognition of a radical interdependence and ecological coexistence among diverse organisms. Care without rights is charity, Naprushkina says. But, in sharing her experience of creating an independent artistic space for refugees in Berlin, as a freelance artist and migrant mother, working and "becoming by living together" with others, she shows how care can indeed become an emancipatory practice. This practice can and should challenge the boundaries of the nation state, and will likely transform its participants in the process.

The book ends with "Touching the Earth," a reprint of a seminal text by the late **bell hooks**. In the process of thinking about and editing this publication, it became impossible to disentangle the discourse on climate and toxic politics from its colonial grounds. The deprivation of nature for capital accumulation is tied to the forced exhaustion and destruction of communities and peoples that belong to the exploited lands. By including this historical text in the collection, we—the editors of *Climate: Our Right to Breathe*—wish to honor hooks's words that stress the vital connection between living bodies and the Earth:

> Such work is unifying, healing. It brings us home from pride and despair and places us responsibly within the human estate. It defines us as we are: not too good to work without our bodies, but too good to work poorly or joylessly or selfishly or alone.

Following the logics inherent to this work, it is possible to reconsider how we relate to the Earth, at every scale.

— **Hiuwai Chu**, **Meagan Down**, **Nkule Mabaso**, **Pablo Martínez**, and **Corina Oprea**

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Climate: Our Right to Breathe continues the L'Internationale tradition of publishing edited readers in the framework of certain research cycles: *Glossary of Common Knowledge* (2018); *The Long 1980s: Constellations of Art, Politics and Identities* (2018); *The Constituent Museum: Constellations of Knowledge, Politics and Mediation* (2018); *What's the Use? – Constellations of Art, History, and Knowledge* (2016); and, *L'Internationale: Post-War Avant-Gardes Between 1957 and 1986* (2012). Moreover, this book has been edited with an eye to the future: it opens the next research phase for the expanding coalition, which will focus on climate-conscious art production. Special care has been afforded in selecting a small-scale, ecologically-aware publishing atelier, K. Verlag. To produce this publication, we have been attentive to the environmental impacts of the format and design, and focused on the use of an FSC-certified paper and reducing paper waste.

Françoise Vergès is a Reunionnaise theorist, independent curator, antiracist decolonial feminist, with a long life of activism and different jobs. She has written on Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, colonial slavery, colonial psychiatry, anticolonialism, racial capitalocene, decolonial feminism, or the (impossible) decolonization of the museum. In 2015, she cofounded with five other women the non-profit *Decolonize the arts* and the university Decolonizing the Arts (until 2021). She has written films on Maryse Condé and Aimé Césaire (with whom she published *Resolutely Black*). Vergès works with artists and curates workshops and performances with artists and activists of color (the most recent one entitled "Creating Antiracist Feminist Refuges and Sanctuaries" was organized for the 12th Berlin Biennial in August 2022). Recent publications include: *A Feminist Theory of Violence* (2022); *A Decolonial Feminism* (2021); *De la violence colonial dans l'espace public* (2021); and, *The Wombs of Women: Race, Capital, Feminism* (2020).

BREATHING: A REVOLUTIONARY ACT

Françoise Vergès

The Right to Breathe

> Almost all of the global population (99%) are exposed to air pollution levels that put them at increased risk for diseases including heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer and pneumonia. WHO monitors the exposure levels and health impacts (i.e. deaths, DALYs) of air pollution at the national, regional and global level from ambient (outdoor) and household air pollution.
>
> — World Health Organization, 2022[1]

When I read this information, and when I learned that between six point seven and nine million deaths per year are estimated to be caused by air pollution,[2] I wanted to understand, from a decolonial feminist anti-racist and anti-capitalist position, what such a sustained attack on breathing meant. When I learned that these deaths could be attributed to both indoor and outdoor pollution, which causes cardiovascular diseases as well as cancer; when I learned that air pollution kills far more people each year than Covid-19, and about as many people a year as smoking,[3] I started to look at climate disaster from the focal point of air pollution. That is, the impact of the burning of fossil fuels, industry, and wars and militarization on the air.

Racist and capitalist politics of *unbreathing* reflect Ruth Wilson Gilmore's definition of racism as: "the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death."[4] Indeed, air pollution produces a

toxic deadly environment in "distinct yet densely connected geographies"[5]—the geographies of poverty, of Indigenous, Black, and non-white communities in the Global North and South.

There is no alternative to unbreathing. If I cannot breathe, I die. The lungs of humans and animals, as well as the "lungs" of forests, plants, and oceans, have long been under assault. Now, across the globe, breathing has become a privilege of class and race. The Global South cannot breathe. The respiratory nature of Covid-19 infection, combined with severe structural inequalities affecting access to healthcare and vaccines, have further exacerbated the crisis of breath that many live within. The consequences of climate disaster contribute to this uninhabitable world. At the time of writing, in April 2022: parts of India and Pakistan reach fifty degrees Celsius, the Philippines suffers the destruction of another strong hurricane season, and floods devastate the Durban region of South Africa.

The economy of extractive exhaustion of bodies and minds is compounded by the economy of suffocation. Exhaustion and suffocation are consubstantial with slavery, colonialism, and capitalism, which mined, and continue to mine, Black and Brown bodies, lands, rivers, and oceans until they have no life energy left. What remains is an uninhabitable and irrespirable world, whose politics of unbreathing deplete its populations, albeit unequally. These are what Dionne Brand has described as "the corpses of the humanist narrative."[6]

Even before being born, children in the Global South and in poor, Indigenous, Black, and non-white neighborhoods in the Global North are more vulnerable to premature death. Studies have found "air pollution linked to harm to children while they are still in the womb":

> The Southern California Children's Health study looked at the long-term effects of air pollution on children and teenagers. Tracking 1,759 children who were between ages 10 and 18 from 1993 to 2001, researchers found that those who grew up in more polluted areas face the increased risk of having reduced lung growth, which may never recover to their full capacity.[7]

Children exposed to air pollution in the womb are born with more respiratory disease and less resistance to further respiratory and car-diovascular disease.

The afterlives of slavery and colonialism affect breathing. There is a link between the last words uttered by Eric Garner, when put in a chokehold by an NYC police officer—"I can't breathe"—words

1 World Health Organization, "Air pollution"; who.int/data/gho/data/themes/theme-details/GHO/air-pollution. DALY is the acronym for "Disability-adjusted life year."

2 Estimated by the World Health Organization and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's Global Burden of Disease study, along with a more recent study by *The Lancet Planetary Health* journal. See Max Roser, "Data Review: How many people die from air pollution?", *Our World in Data* (25 November 2021); ourworldindata.org/data-review-air-pollution-deaths; and Richard Fuller, Philip J. Landrigan, et al., "Pollution and health, a progress update," *The Lancet Planetary Health* (17 May 2022); thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(22)00090-0/fulltext.

3 Tyler Cowen, "Air Pollution Kills Far More People Than Covid Ever Will," *Bloomberg* (10 March 2021); bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-03-10/air-pollution-kills-far-more-people-than-covid-ever-will; "Pollution kills 9 million people a year, new study finds," *Deutsche Welle* (18 May 2022); dw.com/en/pollution-kills-9-million-people-a-year-new-study-finds/a-61833303.

4 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 28.

5 Ibid.

6 Dionne Brand, *The Blue Clerk* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), verso 16.3.

7 American Lung Association, "Children and Air Pollution"; lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/who-is-at-risk/children-and-air-pollution.

that have since become the resounding slogan of the Black Lives Matter movement—and the sense of this phrase when said in relation to poor air quality caused by indoor and outdoor air pollution, and its concomitant breathlessness.

The politics of unbreathing are historically racist, tied to capitalist industrial growth and environmental degradation. In the nineteenth century, cities in the Global North were heavily polluted—London was known for its contaminated smog—but today, with much industrial production outsourced to China, India, and countries in the Global South, and with these countries' development, it is Southern/Eastern cities that have dangerously high levels of air pollution. What has become a pressing issue for countries in the North/West, meanwhile, is how to keep externalized pollution from reaching its "clean" areas.

How then do we turn the right to breathe into a struggle that is decolonial, feminist, queer, anti-racist, pro-Indigenous, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and internationalist? The right to breathe is a call for revolutionary action.

De-Poisoning Practices

Deliberate and long-standing politics of poisoning by states throughout the world—with their economic ties to the arms, cattle, chemical, and

clothes industries, among many others—require us to imagine *de-poisoning* practices, and what these might involve.

What is taken for granted in the Global North or West—running water, electricity, rail travel, open schools and hospitals with staff and medication, cheap fashion, avocados in winter—is the exception rather than the rule. It is a way of life made possible by a regime of exploitation of the many. The "good life" reserved for the few requires, in Christa Wichterich's words, a "transnational care extractivism,"[8] organized so that women of the Global South compensate for a crisis of care in the Global North (care for children and the elderly, the labor of cleaning and cooking, sex work), while their own needs, and those of their families, are not respected or fulfilled. Lives are wasted for the comfort of a few.

The word "waste" usually refers to rubbish, but it is important to consider the expression "to lay waste." Histories of slavery and imperialism, leading into colonial capitalism, have laid waste to lands and peoples. The slave trade through which capitalism was built not only destroyed the cultural and natural world of Indigenous peoples and of the continents colonized by European powers, it made some humans disposable. The slave trade laid waste to the African continent, bringing filth, desolation, and death. The slave ship too was a space of filth, feces, blood, and flesh rotted by the shackles of slavery. When a foul stench drifted onto the shore of a colony, people knew that a slave ship was coming in to dock. In this system, race became a code for designating which peoples and landscapes could be wasted.

Today, racial capitalism perpetuates a division between those who have access to clear air and water, to good hygiene, green parks, and well-serviced neighborhoods, and those without access to either healthy living circumstances or adequate healthcare. The prior group experience circumstances that support good health, and so are granted a longer life expectancy, while the latter group are condemned to bad health, susceptibility to disease, and premature death.

High-income countries collectively generate more than a third of the world's waste, although they only account for sixteen percent of the world's population.[9] Waste generated by Western imperialism or as a by-product of the consumption of privileged white people ends up being dumped on racialized people, either in impoverished neighborhoods in the North/West, or in the countries of the Global South. In this way, waste treatment is closely aligned with racism against certain communities.

The Israeli settlers who continue to drop garbage on Palestinian soil implicitly understand the relationship between

8 Christa Wichterich, "Who Cares about Healthcare Workers? Care Extractivism and Care Struggles in Germany and India" *Social Change* (March 2020), 50/1: 121–40; journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0049085719901087.

9 Approximately two billion tons of solid waste is produced globally per year. See The World Bank Data Topics, "Trends in Solid Waste Management"; datatopics.worldbank.org/what-a-waste/trends_in_solid_waste_management.html.

10 Ramzy Baroud, "Water crisis is poisoning Palestine," *Gulf News* (30 April 2019); gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/water-crisis-is-poisoning-palestine-1.63626108.

11 Doug Weir, "How does war damage the environment?", *Conflict and Environment Observatory* (4 June 2022); ceobs.org/how-does-war-damage-the-environment.

12 George Black, "The Victims of Agent Orange the US Has Never Acknowledged," *New York Times* (16 March 2021); nytimes.com/2021/03/16/magazine/laos-agent-orange-vietnam-war.html.

colonization, racism, and polluting a place. With the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007, the State of Israel leaves untreated sewage to be dumped into the sea and restricts people's access to water.[10] This also produces a visual culture of contrasting images: here, a dreamy vision of Mediterranean beaches; there, overcrowding and sand as sewage-dump; white Mediterranean vs. Black-Arab Mediterranean. In the racial geopolitics of cleanliness/dirtiness, racialized waste-dumping makes clean homes and public spaces brightly visible, while dirty neighborhoods are buried and forgotten under rubbish. The racist visual culture of clean/dirty perpetuates the idea of a civilized/clean white world vs. an uncivilized/dirty black-and-brown planet.

Another significant level of contamination that should not be forgotten is that caused by imperialism—what armies leave in their wake; the countries and bodies wasted by war, invasion, and colonization. The environmental impact of wars begins long before they do and lingers long after. As the Conflict and Environment Observatory summarizes, military forces consume great quantities of resources: common metals and rare-earth elements, water and hydrocarbons. Military vehicles, aircraft, vessels, buildings, and infrastructure all require energy, and frequently this comes from low-efficiency oil.[11] Military bases and facilities, whether on land or at sea, for testing or training, are highly polluting, and in their environment, cancer and respiratory diseases are common. The deadly contamination of bodies and the environment by military activity is intimately tied to racial capitalism and its uneven effects on life span.[12] The aftermath of military damage persists for generations: one has only to think of the ongoing detriments to health caused by Agent Orange in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Imagining and practicing strategies of de-poisoning contributes to the struggle for the right to breathe. De-poisoning practices include:

Indigenous struggles for the preservation of forests or against the privatization of rivers; Indian peasants fighting against the construction of dams that damage both the natural and the cultural environment; or people around the world boycotting or protesting against the polluting industries of weapons, fast fashion, agribusiness, and on-demand e-commerce. Making the right to breathe a revolutionary demand means dismantling the racist economy of exhaustion and suffocation. The revolutionary right to breathe means asserting this vital function, which is hindered by capitalism: if we can breathe, we can talk, shout, and sing; we can express, in words, our anger, sadness, or joy. If we can speak, we must be breathing, and so, we must be living. Fighting for the right to breathe, by striving to reduce air pollution, is fighting for the right to a dignified life.

COMMODIFICATION, ENERGY & EXTRACTION

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FIRE & FUEL: ENERGY & CHRONOPOLITICAL ALLEGORY

Ana Teixeira Pinto

The Racialized Time of White Modernity

As Allen MacDuffie details in *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination*, from the eighteenth century onwards, Western science began to tap a large, yet non-renewable, capital store of energy.[1] This shift from agricultural production dependent upon the flow of energy cycles (the Sun) to industrial production based on the usage and subsequent depletion of energy stock (the burning of fossil fuels, initially coal) roughly coincides with what genocide scholar Dirk Moses has dubbed "the racial century"—that is, the period between the mid-eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century. The question I am asking is: Why does the transition to fossil fuels entail an intensification of (already ongoing) processes of racialization? The answer I put forth is that both processes work in tandem with, and under the aegis of, a chronopolitical schema.

What do I mean by "chronopolitical"? Why use this term rather than "geo-theology," a term introduced by Cara New Daggett in *The Birth of Energy*, or "hyperobjects," a term coined by Timothy Morton to describe concepts that emerged in the Victorian era concurrently to thermodynamics, like geologic time, evolution, electromagnetism, or meteorological phenomena? My answer is that neither of these terms can capture the structuring force of what Charles W. Mills has called the "racialized time of white modernity."[2]

Chronopolitics is a relatively recent term, whose usage remains ill-defined. In his 2020 paper "The Chronopolitics of Racial Time," Mills claims to have found only three sources. I repeated his research and came back with the same result: in a 1970-paper, George W. Wallis offers the first definition of chronopolitics as "a term descriptive of the relation of time-perspectives to political decision-making," predicated on "certain views toward time and toward the nature of change."[3] But one could also opt for the more straightforward definition of politicized time. The way I will use this term reflects Mills's own definition of chronopolitics as "the multiple different ways in which power relations between groups—whether formally acknowledged in recognized systems of governance or not—affect both the representations of the relations between these groups and the world, in their specifically temporal aspect, and the material relation of these groups to the world, in their specifically temporal dimension," leading to a perpetuation of "hegemonic structures of group domination."[4] This is my preferred characterization of chronopolitics because it foregrounds the notion that time itself is a cultural construct, and can thus be mobilized on behalf of a political project. Racism, as Mills argues, is a political ideology—arguably the most important political ideology of modernity—not just the cultural backdrop against which political ideologies play out. It would therefore be fair to assume racism "does thus not remain siloed,"[5] or limited to explicitly racist theories like polygenism, craniometry, or eugenics, but bleeds into the entirety of the semantic field, whether this field concerns social, economic, or scientific life.

If anything defined the modern era, it was the belief that the future would be different from the past. Modernity, unlike other epochs, entails a forward-looking and unidirectional temporality, predicated on the differentiation of time into two separate moments: that which has been and that which will be. But this articulation of difference hinges on and intersects with other articulations of difference, namely racial difference.

All the markers of modernity—progress, development, modernization, industrialization, and urbanization—suggest a comparative chronology. The term "modernity," as Naoki Sakai argues, can never be properly understood without reference to the opposition between the premodern and the modern.[6] The premodern is defined by a lack (of technology, hence of modernity) and this lack needs to be ratified; the premodern needs to be modernized.

The notion of "the future," as predicated upon and ultimately identical with technological development, also hinges on this

1 Allen MacDuffie, *Victorian Literature, Energy, and the Ecological Imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8–9.

2 Charles W. Mills, "The Chronopolitics of Racial Time," *Time & Society* 29, no. 2 (May 2020): 297–317.

3 George W. Wallis, "Chronopolitics: The Impact of Time Perspectives on the Dynamics of Change," *Social Forces* 49/1 (September 1970): 102.

4 Mills, "Chronopolitics of Racial Time": 299.

5 Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1.

6 Naoki Sakai, "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism," *Multitudes* 6 (September 2001).

7 See Tobias Becker, "Chronopolitics: Time of Politics, Politics of Time, Politicized Time," *H-Soz-Kult* (24 February 2019); hsozkult.de/event/id/event-89282.

8 Wallis, "Chronopolitics," 102.

9 Siraj Ahmed, *The Stillbirth of Capital: Enlightenment Writing and Colonial India* (Stanford University Press, 2011), 55.

10 Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 123.

11 Ahmed, *Stillbirth of Capital*, 4. The author is referring to Marx's *Grundrisse* and its critical reception.

12 Ibid.

chronopolitical representation of time. The very categories of political differentiation—progressive versus conservative—in the modern era are temporal ones.[7] From this perspective, the crucial modality of power is the power to seek or shape the "future" one wishes to obtain. As Wallis argues, this "relation of temporality to political decision-making" leads to a view of the present as a "time of transition" during which epochal choices could be made, and, as a result, "alternate futures could be attained."[8] This, I want to suggest, gestures to the point of intersection between the chronopolitical dimension of modernity and its efforts to influence social behavior on a large scale, in order to engineer desired characteristics in the target populations. The Enlightenment, with its civilizational mission, and imperialism come together here, but this assembly is not without friction. To inhabit a temporality organized by birth, rank, or status is not the same as to inhabit a temporality organized by exchange.[9] The relation between chronopolitics and capital is not a straightforward one.

Capital & Conversion

The term "capitalism," Jean-Joseph Goux argues, names the divorce of economic practices from their symbolic valences, and the dominance of the "depersonalized, disaffected, asignificant" relations that undergird a market economy.[10] But these relations need manufacturing. As a great many authors have argued, capital takes on a universalizing role in modernity.[11] It "wants to reproduce itself everywhere" and thus needs to "subsume all other modes of production into itself."[12] But processes

of conversion, and the anxiety they elicit, find expression at multiple levels and not simply at an economic one.

Siraj Ahmed's book *The Stillbirth of Capital* details the entanglement and attrition between patriarchal values and exchange value by looking at the eighteenth-century novel, in which the theme of conversion takes center stage. In *The King of Pirates*, Daniel Defoe describes the tribulations of Captain Avery, a pirate who seizes the dowry of a Mughal princess. At first euphoric at the sight of the immense wealth he has captured, Captain Avery will soon be bitterly disappointed: the goods he has seized cannot be converted to monetary value in European markets. The pirate's bounty is, as Ahmed observes, "caught between the diverse economies of the premodern world." The impossibility to estimate its value marks the limit of European modernity, by pointing to "other worlds."[13] Whereas capitalism demands these other worlds be subsumed into the world of international trade monopolies, the conversion of all forms of value into monetary value threatens to entail the breakdown of age-honored patriarchal values at the heart of imperial centers. Hence the paradox at the heart of modernity: asignificant market relations are hard to reconcile with patriarchal hierarchies. To borrow from Sylvia Wynter, a "ceremony must be found," in order to reconcile the former and the latter.[14] This is also the reason why the "salient conversion that accompanies capitalism" does not simply "take place at points of exchange like the stock market where elicit wealth reappears as legitimate property,"[15] but also crops up inside the walls of the university. The university is here a point of conversion where the friction between values and value is elevated into a metaphysical scheme.

Reconciling spiritual value with monetary value, G.W.F. Hegel will conceptualize processes of conversion along a chronopolitical axis, whereby nature is converted onto culture: to be human, for Hegel, is to negate the given, to free oneself from nature.[16] Nature is an alienation in which spirit does not find itself: nature negates the idea. The spirit must negate this negation. The function of culture is to undo nature, in order to create a (man-made) second world: "Man appears on the scene as the antithesis of nature; he is the being who raises himself up."[17] The failure to free oneself from nature is thus conceptualized as a cultural failure, which Hegel attributes to conceptual inadequacy. From Hegel's perspective, race is an index of failure and inadequacy; "whiteness" is thus not a race, but the absence thereof. By playing race "against a falsely transparent humanity," Hegel makes the notion of openness to history "into the measure of authentic development,"

13 Ahmed, *Stillbirth of Capital*, 20.

14 In her two essays "The Ceremony Must Be Found" (1984) and "The Ceremony Found" (2015), Sylvia Wynter describes the difficulty in reconciling the emancipatory processes and subjugating processes that together define modernity as an "endemic contradiction" or aporia. See Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, eds. Jason Ambroise and Sabine Broeck (Liverpool University Press, 2015), 184–252; 189.

15 Ibid.

16 Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 28.

17 G.W.F. Hegel, "B: The Realisation of Spirit in History" (1837), in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 44; cited in Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World,* 190.

18 Rei Terada, "Hegel's Racism for Radicals," *Radical Philosophy* 2/5 (Autumn 2019).

19 Mills, "Chronopolitics of Racial Time," 13–14.

which he then uses to generate racist images of those who are defined by its "lack."[18] Patriarchal ideology can thus be sublated into a meta-political plot and reappear under the guise of universal history.

Evolution & Entropy

Hegel makes the notion of conversion—converting nature into history—into the measure of "authentic development" and hence authentic humanity. In the second half of the nineteenth century, this excessive preoccupation with the conversion of spatiality into futurity finds its way into the natural sciences and their representations of nature, with the introduction of the theories of evolution in biology and entropy in physics. Both theories, I would argue, mobilize the physical world on behalf of imperial politics, though evolution lends itself to politicization in a more straightforward manner. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* was first published on 24 November 1859.

It was common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to use the words "race" and "species" interchangeably, and Darwin did not mean human races here, yet he also did not foreclose the possibility to interpret his writings that way. As Charles W. Mills maintains, "pre-Darwinian scientific racism had trouble finding a plausible mechanism for the corporeal backwardness of its subjects […]. Post-Darwinian scientific racism, on the other hand, above all in the form of social Darwinism, had a much more powerful and convincing set of

explanatory tools," introducing the category of "dying races" that are "only weakly attached to the world [...], their days numbered, their *time running out*."[19]

The theoretical framework introduced by evolutionary theory also opened up "the frightening possibility of degeneration,"[20] of regressing to a former—savage—state. Race and class function as emblems for the fear of moving down the evolutionary ladder; that is, moving backwards temporally. Hence the moral panic surrounding racial miscegenation and the mobilization of state and state-sanctioned violence to combat it.

Things are more opaque when one turns to entropy. Before the development of thermodynamics, physics had no intellectual tools that would enable it to specify temporal directionality. Newtonian equations cannot distinguish between processes that move backward or forward in time. Thermodynamics, however, deals with irreversible processes, more specifically with the dissipation of heat. Warm objects will spontaneously cool in the absence of an external source of heat, but this process will never occur the other way around. A perfume bottle will fill a room with its scent, but the scent that wafts through the room will never find its way back into the bottle. A river cannot flow upward and a burnt log will not revert back to an unburnt state. People grow older; they never grow younger. In the physical sciences, entropy is the only movement that seems to imply a particular direction, something like an arrow of time. The second law of thermodynamics thus introduces an irreversible time-arrow into physics, just as evolution had done for biology. As a result, in the nineteenth century, nature, "traditionally seen as cyclic or timeless, became increasingly temporal, or progressive,"[21] represented either as an upward motion (progress) or as a downward spiral (decay).

Inflation & Entropy

The condition of possibility for the second law of thermodynamics to emerge, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was the widespread availability of conversion processes and the engines that sustain them, most saliently the steam engine, whose low thermal efficiency gave rise to the concerns with conservation and/or dissipation of energy on which the second law is predicated. But the relation between the

20 Mills, "Chronopolitics of Racial Time," 14.

21 M. Norton Wise, "Time Discovered and Time Gendered in Victorian Science and Culture," in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. Bruce Clark and Linda Dalrymple Henderson (Stanford University Press, 2002), 55.

22 Bruce J. Hunt, *Pursuing Power and Light: Technology and Physics from James Watt to Albert Einstein* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 25.

23 The Belgian mathematician Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874) called his new science of statistics "social physics," the scientific study of society by means of quantitative elements. Auguste Comte had also initially called his approach to the study of society "social physics," in spite of the fact that his "positive philosophy" was devoid of quantitative elements. When Quetelet adopted that term, Comte abandoned it for fear of being regarded as a mere follower, instead introducing the term "sociology."

steam engine and the global economy is not only material; it is also metaphorical. The Newtonian universe described by eighteenth-century physicists had a multiplicity of forces. Thermodynamics would introduce the idea that "all the forces and powers of nature are manifestations of a single pervasive but impalpable quantity," and that by unifying this world of disparate phenomena, one finds the novel concept of *energy*.[22]

It is important to note that the concept of energy, which thermodynamics introduces into the lexicon of physics, is equivocal. It conflates two different meanings, vitality and strength, in the sense of muscular strength and power, on the one hand, and electrical or mechanical power, on the other. Victorians scientists do not disambiguate between these different meanings. On the contrary, since the human body was described as a thermodynamic system and the social body was conceptualized via the analogy with the human body, it came naturally to nineteenth-century scholars to refer to society as a thermodynamic system.

In 1882, entropy acquired a further ominous connotation, this time of chaos and disorder, as Hermann von Helmholtz combined the idea of entropy with the kinetic theory of gases (developed between 1867 and 1872), identifying the notion of entropy with the measure of molecular disorder. Helmholtz's observation was appropriate in the specific context of the rapid irregular motion of gas molecules, but the conflation of physical entities and social entities was at the time fairly widespread.[23] Because in a thermodynamic system work is obtained from ordered molecular motion, the amount of entropy is also a mea-sure of the molecular disorder, or randomness, of a system. Operating on the basis of this analogy, conservative commentators could argue that political power ought to manage and recycle various energies (sexual, spiritual, and muscular), framing them as part of a totalized network of conversions and transformations, always under threat of

potential dissipation. But the term dissipation also needs unpacking. William Thomson (later knighted Lord Kelvin), one of the first physicists to theorize entropy, also contributed to the gradual changes of scientific terminology. The term dissipation had never been used to refer to energy losses, and did not belong to the vocabulary of the natural sciences. Instead, it was used to refer to a lack of fortitude, carrying moral connotations. Thomson, according to Barri J. Gold, was likely inspired by the letters his own father wrote to him, in which he complained about how his students indulged in habits of *dissipation*.[24] By adopting this term, Thomson seemed to suggest that the universe itself was also indulging in habits of dissipation—that the universe was *sinful*.

This is where allegory enters the picture: the concept of energy suggests that different forces can be converted onto one another without any loss of absolute quantity. Yet empirical observation makes apparent that conversion carries a cost: in 1824, Carnot showed that the efficiency of the conversion of heat in a heat engine has an upper limit.[25] Energy is rendered unusable throughout the chain of its conversions. Entropy is, in this sense, energy converted into forms that are irrecoverable for industrial work. This would amount to a trivial observation about engineering and the optimization of resources, were it not for the equation between time and energy that the concept of entropy suggests: what the second law of thermodynamics says without saying is that if you run down the batteries you run out of time.

And that carries ominous metaphysical connotations. Lack of thermal efficiency is a negligible problem, materially, yet significant symbolically: it reinscribes indefinite growth within the Malthusian logic it was designed to escape. Imperfect engines are not simply wasting investors' resources. Rather, they provide a terrifying glimpse into the disorder and wastefulness of the universe. They are a creaking and wobbling manifestation of a much larger metaphysical truth: "There is a tendency in the universe," Victorian physicists Stewart and Lockyer will argue, "to change the superior kinds of energy into the inferior or degraded kinds."[26] Superior and inferior carry moral connotations; the terms also betray an anxiety about status, a fear that change might mean downward mobility or a loss of station—or, even worse, that it might lead to corruption and racial degeneration. Above all, these terms lend themselves to fictional treatment, to dramatization or personification, with great ease.

Thermodynamics also allows imperial and industrial expansion to be couched in the language of moral urgency. It suggests that turning the compressed time of fossil deposits into the accelerated time

24 Barri J. Gold, *ThermoPoetics: Energy in Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010).

25 See Sadi Carnot, *Réflexions sur la puissance motrice du feu* (1824), translated into English as *Reflections on the Motive Power of Heat and on Machines Fitted to Develop that Power* (New York: J. Wiley, 1890).

26 Balfour Stewart and Norman Lockyer, "Sun as a Type of the Material Universe," *Macmillan's Magazine* (August 1868), 322.

27 Cara New Daggett, *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 75.

28 See M. Norton Wise and Crosby Smith, "Work and Waste: Political Economy and Natural Philosophy in Nineteenth Century Britain" (III), *History of Science* 28/3 (1990): 221–61.

29 Wise and Smith, "Work and Waste," 231.

30 Wise and Smith, "Work and Waste," 227.

31 See Bruce Clarke, *Energy Forms: Allegory and Science in the Era of Classical Thermodynamics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

of propulsion engines is the royal road to cosmic salvation: if the sun is about to die, the only path to survival is to create a new one, a mechanical furnace able to brighten up the galaxy.

Against the backdrop of a wasteful, uneconomic natural world, mankind's only resource is to work its way through dissipation and loss. To wrestle whatever (masculine) order is possible out of the feminized natural chaos.[27] All the lifeworlds laid to waste will ultimately serve a higher purpose: to stave off entropy. Thomson himself is quite candid about this: the energies of nature, he argues, offer human beings the wondrous opportunity to convert them into industry. Failure to do so is not only uneconomic, it is arguably sinful. If set in motion, resources can yield profit; if idle, they are wasted.[28] Even worse, as M. Norton Wise details, "they might suffer depreciation, devastation, destitution, dissipation." To not harvest available resources, to leave the "coal, oil, or gas in the ground," would thus be to abandon the earth to the dissipative forces of entropy.[29] It is mankind's duty to put resources to work in order to avoid them going to "waste."

"Material and moral dynamics are interrelated"[30] in Victorian musings about work and waste, which tend to tie these notions to economic considerations about profits and losses, conflating energy and capital. So much so, in fact, that one often wonders whether they mean the latter when describing the former. In a century characterized by stock market upheaval and recurring economic crises, convertibility, increasingly unstable, demands a toll. Inflation is a form of entropy, economically speaking. Conjectures about extinction betray an anxiety about the life cycle of industrial products and the boom-and-bust structure of the budding financial markets, the irreversible direction of non-renewable resource consumption, and the accrual of ash and soot resulting from the burning of fossil fuels. Whereas energy functions as an analogue for the commodity,[31] entropy could be construed as the obverse of the market economy: value is lost, not gained, throughout

the sum total of its transactions. Much like energy, capitalism is a multi-dimensional force whose properties can only be grasped partially.

Imperialism inheres in the conceptualization of entropy: if its energy dissipates over time, in order for a thermodynamic system to be replenished it must suck energy from without, otherwise it will simply grind to a halt. Whereas for a steam engine inside and outside are fairly self-evident, when it comes to a social system, what constitutes one or the other is not at all a technical question. It's a political one. The political answer to the question of energy depletion within a closed system is imperial aspiration—or, in more concrete terms, the scramble for Africa, which had its apex in the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. The ever-expanding colonial frontier is very saliently narrated, at the time, as an attempt to replenish the voracious, energy-consuming industrial systems of Europe. What the collusion between sovereign power and monopoly commerce sets in motion is not so much development or growth but, to use Andreas Malm's expression, a "fire that demands its fuel"[32]—the metabolizing of all nature, including human nature, into universal value(s).

But thermodynamics is entwined with patriarchal ideology at multiple levels, not simply at an economic one. In the gothic novel, the anxiety about conversion is figured as a deformation or trans-mogrification, and all economic and geopolitical flows, however mobile, are fixed within an imperial frame. In the same manner, any conversion that runs counter to the colonial norm is figured as an unnatural inversion. The gothic representations of monstrosity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, show how monstrosity is mobilized to connote energy conversions via their embellishment with racialized inscriptions of difference, in order to strengthen colonial categories of Self and Other. Figures of speech do not stabilize or categorize observations, allowing for *association without substantiation*. In spite of being incompletely articulated, or perhaps precisely because of this, these analogies will acquire a structuring force, and preoccupations with energy, or lack thereof, will earn a salient biopolitical character.

Before it became a political force, as Zeev Sternhell argues in *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, fascism emerged as a cultural movement. Though this movement was composed of eclectic—and at times contradictory—elements, it cohered around the notion that history is "not so much a chronicle of class warfare as an endless struggle against decadence."[33] Rather than a revolution against the capitalist class,

32 Andreas Malm, "The Origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry," *Historical Materialism* 21/1 (2013): 15–68.

33 Zeev Sternhell, Mario Sznajder, and Maia Ashéri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 3.

34 Sternhell et al., *Birth of Fascist Ideology,* 38.

35 Alia Al-Saji, "Decolonizing Bergson: The Temporal Schema of the Open and the Closed", in *Beyond Bergson: Examining Race and Colonialism Through the Writings of Henri Bergson*, eds. Andrea Pitts and Mark Williams Westmoreland (New York: Suny, 2019), 13.

36 Daggett, *Birth of Energy*, 69.

37 Ibid.

fascism "presented itself as a revolution of another kind,"[34] a revolution that worshipped energy, potency, and technology.

Let us return to chronopolitics, in the guise of a conclusion. Underlying the geographical orders imposed by colonialism, as Alia Al-Saji notes, are temporal frameworks or economies of time that persist largely unquestioned.[35] And the chronopolitical expression of these economies of time is saturated by colonial formations. As Cara Daggett details, the consolidation of the concept of energy meant that "making something count as part of an energy assemblage" was from the outset a political process.[36] But this political process did not simply entail "becoming visible", as Daggett suggests.[37] Rather, I would argue that this political process implies becoming valued, or devalued, as either *expenditure* or *efficiency*. The instituting of differentials between the inside and the outside of a thermodynamic system is reflected in the production and reproduction of other differentials—between energy and entropy, capital and labor, male and female, mind and matter, nature and culture, and the West and the rest. Within each pair, one concept becomes the condition of possibility for the other, developing dialectically in a mutually reinforcing manner. Each term declines either in the direction of *entropy* or *energy*, and comes to be described as either conservative/restorative or as a wasting agency.

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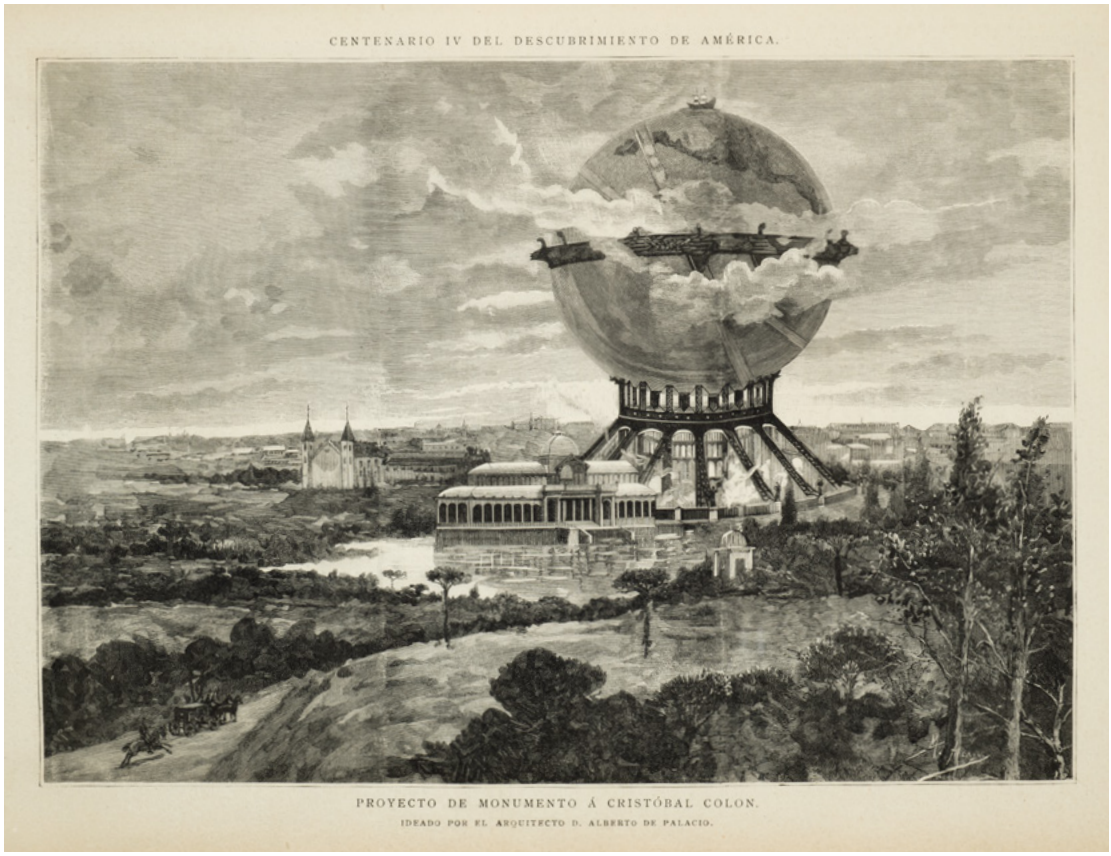
THERE WILL BE NO "THIRD EARTH": COLONIAL MODERNITY, FOSSIL CULTURE & COSMIC IMAGINARIES

Jaime Vindel

There was great zeal for energy around the dawn of industrial modernity (a historical era that extends to the present day), and this was reflected in images with a strong libidinal charge. In order to discuss the imaginaries that chart the rise of fossil modernity in the nineteenth century, I would like to focus on the monument to Cristóbal Colón designed by Basque engineer Alberto Palacio. His proposal was published by the magazines *Scientific American* and *La Ilustración Española y Americana* in 1890 and 1891 respectively, and was later put forward for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, although, ultimately, the monument was never built. Palacio's design imagines planet Earth as a vast steam-powered machine, running on coal; its cast-iron inner structure harnessing all the potential of fire. The monument is itself a fossil-fueled furnace, a burning symbol of industrial civilization. In the illustration, the smoke billowing from this globe-factory blends in with the clouds above the Retiro park in central Madrid, the name of which paradoxically refers to the rest and retreat enjoyed there by the Spanish aristocracy. (The gardens were originally the initiative of King Philip IV's favorite Don Gaspar de Guzmán, Conde-Duque de Olivares (1587–1645), during the first half of the seventeenth century.) The design thus normalized a productivist understanding of the natural environment, as if coal combustion were just another harmless part of it. This energy-centered depiction of the planet, of Gaia, was created at a time when a new climate dynamic was emerging, one that would turn out to be potentially catastrophic for the course of humankind. The advance of industrial coal power has had critical consequences: in the development of fossil modernity, visions



Proyecto de Monumento a Cristóbal Colón [Design for a Monument to Cristóbal Colón] by Alberto Palacio. From *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, vol. XXXV, no. XXXI (22 August 1891), 101. Image courtesy of Biblioteca de Catalunya.

of universal domination (like Palacio's) were combined with the triggering of certain environmental processes that, today, are far beyond our control. Absolute power comes at a price: we now face absolute disaster.

Industrial modernity thus produced a specific geological imaginary. In fact, the idea of turning the Earth itself into a geological machine, adapted to the aims and desires of humankind, had already been suggested by geologist James Hutton in the early days of industrial civilization (his *Theory of the Earth* was originally published in 1788). Hutton was a shareholder in the company that built the Forth and Clyde Canal, while also serving as the project's director. He made a lot of money from it. Opening in 1790, the canal connected Glasgow and Edinburgh, boosting transport links and the circulation of goods—including coal itself—between the two cities. The digging

1 Peter Linebaugh, *Red Round Globe Hot Burning: A Tale at the Crossroads of Commons and Closure, of Love and Terror, of Race and Class, and of Kate and Ned Despard* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 72. In relation to the debates on the origin of the Anthropocene, my position follows the thesis of political Marxism, which, in line with the work of Andreas Malm, places it at the transition to the use of fossil energies during early industrial modernity. See Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016).

2 See Vaclav Smil, *Energy and Civilization: A History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017).

works permitted Hutton to observe the geological strata of the terrain below. Hutton's machinic understanding of the vast fireball underfoot was inextricably linked with the capitalist concept of profit and the exploitation of workers.

This vision of the planet is perfectly summed up by Palacio's illustration: Earth as a thermodynamic device at the service of the overarching capitalist endeavor. As Peter Linebaugh recently noted, the very foundation (by Hutton) of geology as a modern scientific discipline cannot be separated from the Anthropocene: "a geological epoch [that] commenced with a machine, the steam engine, at the same historical moment that the study of the earth, or the science of geology, conceived of the earth as a machine with heat energy at its heart."[1] This industrialization of geology highlights the fact that cultural imaginaries played an active role when it came to fossil excavation and consumption being established as a socioenvironmental relation. Fossil culture is not a representation of the fossil economy, but rather an inherent part of its libidinal make-up.

This is not to say that the main energy source used to fuel any given society, be it fossil-based or otherwise, in and of itself reveals anything about that society's forms of political organization or cultural production. Each of two societies with similar levels of energy consumption and oil dependency can have a very different political system than the other, be it a liberal parliamentary system, a one-party state, or any form of "democratic" authoritarianism.[2] All the way from the United States to China, as well as in countries like Kazakhstan, fossil societies have arisen in vastly different contexts with distinct historical trajectories. The universal emergence of fossil modernity tells us very little about the intrinsic value of the compositions of an Armenian musician, for example, or the affective conventions observed within a permaculture commune in Argentine Patagonia. Nevertheless, we must still keep trying to identify any crossovers between the main energy source and the transversal organization of the cultures of globalized societies, understanding "culture" here in two ways: both as a cultural sphere, and in terms of ways of life.

Within this definition, we can regard fossil culture as a libidinal (infra) structure of social life, driving and shaping both the development of certain cultural institutionalities and the appearance of well-being imaginaries that very much rely on the necrosphere's resources. Bilbao and Abu Dhabi belong to states whose political regimes and most notable historical cultures have hardly anything in common. Nevertheless, they each possess the relevant material infrastructure, economic assets and legitimization discourses whereby franchises of the Guggenheim Museum could be built in both cities. Similar observations could be made about the passion shared by high-flying executives and car fitters for top-of-the-range cars (or for a certain football club, or for Caribbean beaches), even though their respective access to energy is conditioned by the fundamental inequality of capitalist economic structures.

Trying to pinpoint the historical genesis of this idea, i.e. that fossil culture is a libidinal infrastructure of globalization, is not a straightforward task. Its emergence can be traced back to the creation of a new socioenvironmental relation between modern societies and the whole of nature, a relation that consists of a range of different elements. The first one is strictly metabolic. The abundance of energy contained within fossil fuels is an undeniable fact, and their capacity to generate explosive energy—as exploited for the production, transportation and distribution of goods—is unparalleled in history. Coal and oil are key constituent elements in the modern-era ramping-up and geographical expansion of productivity and consumption. However, neither productivity nor consumption are inevitable realities. Quite the opposite: they are economic devices for the production of bodies and subjectivities.

This leads us directly to the second aspect of the fossil-based socioenvironmental relation, namely its political side. The copious amount of energy contained within fossil fuels tells us nothing about their efficiency or cost. As Lewis Mumford explained, the paleotechnic phase of early industrial modernity was in fact characterized by the wasting of energy.[3] Also, coal was more expensive than other energy sources, such as the water currents that powered the wheels and spinning frames in the early days of the textile industry. There must therefore be another reason why coal won out over water. Andreas Malm has described how the intermittent nature of river currents turned out to be incompatible with a new productive regime based on the intensification of work per unit of time—the so-called relative surplus value. The successful campaign fought by the British labor movement for the ten-hour work day (the Ten Hours Act, 1847) forced

3 See Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1934).

4 See Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital*.

5 See Peter Linebaugh, *Red Round Globe Hot Burning*.

the capitalist class to use an energy source that was easier to transport and far better-suited to an intensive work regime.[4]

Since coal could be hoarded in cities, the urbanization of industry further exacerbated the metabolic gap between cities and the countryside, following centuries of enclosures of the commons. Forests, hills, rivers, and coastal areas underwent a process of privatization that predated the creation by the industrial regime of production of "free" labor—i.e., of workers who, without their own means of subsistence in the agrarian environment, were "free" to sell their labor power for a wage, to any employer in the urban factories.

Meanwhile, cities became sites for the stockpiling of fuel and materials brought in from peripheral areas. The rise of fossil industrialism and urbanism brought together the exploitation of waged workers in the manufacturing context of the metropolis with the unpaid work that was characteristic of the plantation economy. Following the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), cotton replaced sugar as the main crop for producing surplus value on plantations. As a raw material, cotton could be efficiently processed by the new machines used in textile manufacturing, and was thus well-suited to the rising industrial demands for scale and speed. In turn, linen or wool, which had been so important in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution, were no longer as valuable.[5] The synthesis of slavery, race, and cotton was the Atlantic requisite for the division of plantation work along social and racial lines, a division that would become typical of industrial civilization.

Throughout the twentieth century, when the nineteenth-century concept of imperialism had been rocked by both the First World War and the decolonization processes taking place after the Second World War, there would be attempts to bridge the chasm between North and South (a rupture created by Western colonialism) by means of the ideology of development. The unequal spread of the fossil economy and its trajectory towards mass consumption would end up causing unprecedented subjective homogenization, affecting many sectors of the subaltern classes in different parts of the world.

Cultural imaginaries play an active role in the shaping of industrial worldviews and cosmovisions. Over the last two centuries,

the fossil economy and fossil culture have acted like a kind of Möbius strip of the era, a material and libidinal device in which both sides feed back into each other, constructing a perception of reality in which the whole cosmos is likened to an immense storehouse for energy.[6] According to this cosmovision, the fate of the universe was just to hold out, over many centuries, for the right combination of fossil fuels, industrial development, human labor, and thermodynamic science to come along and channel perfectly all the energy required to kick-start the exponential production of human wealth. Back when early industrial productivism was booming, those bodies and subjectivities who dared resist this energy regime came to be viewed as morally suspicious.[7] Refusing to become a cog in the productive machinery of the factory or embodying a non-normative sexuality were regarded as symptoms of social decline, of a life squandered due to an unwillingness to take part in the civilizing project being driven by fossil ideology.

I would now like to reflect upon two additional aspects of Palacio's proposed monument, namely the elements placed within its plinth and at its top. The first relates to the restaurants, museums, libraries, and other leisure spaces that the Basque engineer had imagined for the base of the monument. These spaces presaged the close relationship between fossil production and consumption that, in the second half of the twentieth century, was to spread across the whole planet. From the Crystal Palace to the shopping mall, the association between industrial modernity, fossil fuels, and leisure architectures allows us to read, through a new lens, the relationship between mass culture, cultural imperialism, and the rapid advance of consumption that so characterizes capitalist globalization. The (fossil) fetishism of commodities is a culture of transparencies, bodies, and reflections, the blind spot of which is colonial ecological extractivism. Furthermore, fossil consumption has accelerated democratic decline: its overwhelming force has not only tended to dilute distinct cultural identities, it has also played a part in shifting the fight for political equality away from (the revolutionary *egalité* of) subjects and towards the homogeneity of desires as provoked by objects.[8] Perhaps the clearest example of this fetishistic phenomenology of the industrialized world took place during the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851, when workers' organizations were refused the right to have their own space at the exhibition. As Pablo Martínez, one of this book's editors, has pointed out to me, "the masses were only allowed to enter as consuming masses, not as political subjects."[9] A visit to the exhibition inspired Karl Marx to write an article about the fetishistic

6 See Jaime Vindel, *Estética fósil. Imaginarios de la energía y crisis ecosocial* (Barcelona: Arcadia, 2020).

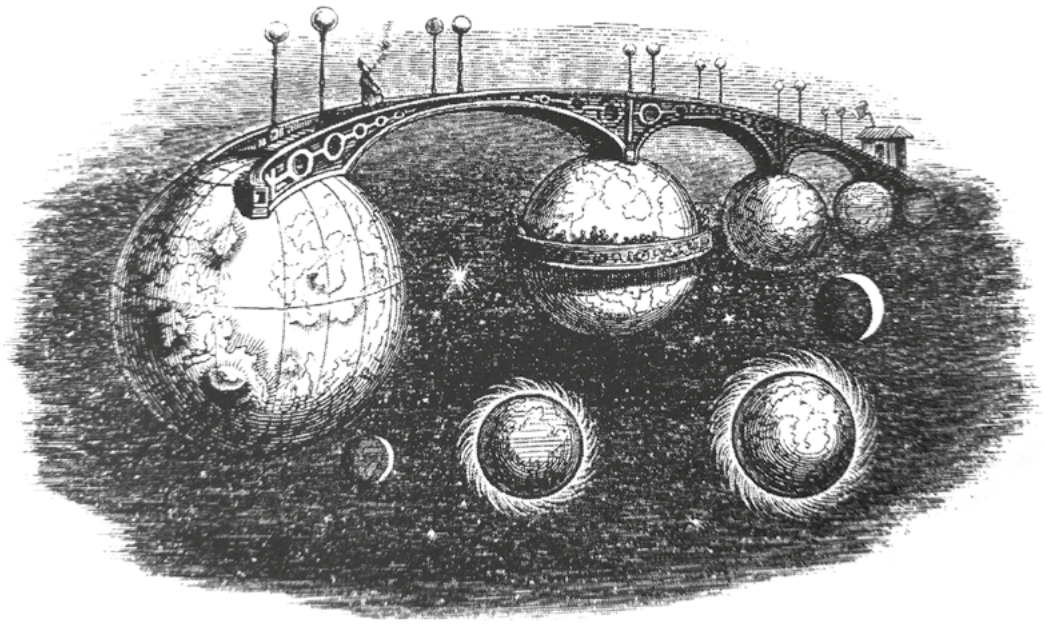
7 See Cara New Daggett, *The Birth of Energy: Fossil Fuels, Thermodynamics, and the Politics of Work* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

8 "Benjamin spoke of the 'phantasmagoria' of '*egalité*,' wherein the political concept of equality was displaced onto the realm of things, the consumer replaced the citizen, and the promise of commodity abundance became a substitute for social revolution." Susan Buck-Morss, "Benjamin's Passagen-Werk: Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution," *New German Critique* 29, *The Origins of Mass Culture: The Case of Imperial Germany (1871–1918);* (Spring–Summer 1983): 211–40.

9 Pablo Martínez, personal correspondence (2 April 2022).

secret of commodities, in which he described how the laborers' *Arbeitskraft* [labor power] is itself embedded in the objects they make, via the capitalist mode of production. The commodity, that composite of sensuality (its use value) and supra-sensibility (its exchange value) took on a life of its own, while social relations began to be treated like objects. Designed by Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace showcased objects from all around the world, decontextualized from their social functions. This encouraged a detached aesthetic gaze, in sharp contrast with the brutality of imperialism's economic and ecological relations.

Before designing his monument to Colón, Palacio was involved in the preparations for the Philippines Exhibition of Bourbon Restoration-era Spain, created as a way of keeping up with the most industrially advanced nations of Europe and the kind of grand events they were putting on at the time. Directly inspired by the Great Exhibition in London, the exhibition replicated its architectural typology (emulating the greenhouse-style buildings of iron and glass) as well as its colonial character, albeit on a more modest scale. The event was held at El Retiro in Madrid, in 1887. Palacio was involved in the construction of the Palacio de Cristal and the Palacio de Velázquez, buildings at the center of the park that, during the exhibition, housed a so-called "human zoo" of people from various ethnic groups in the Philippines, amid displays of exotic plants. The Palacio de Cristal, a near-copy of the London prototype, can be seen in the background of Palacio's illustration for his monument to Colón. This combination—i.e., of the-world-as-a-steam-machine alongside these cultural glass buildings—spoke volumes about how the triad of fossil



Le pont des planètes [The Bridge of Planets] by J.J. Grandville. From J.J. Grandville, *Un autre monde* (Paris: H. Fournier, 1844), 139. Image courtesy of Rare Books & Manuscripts Department, Boston Public Library; RARE BKS NC1499.G66 A42 FOLIO.

modernity, the spectacularization of culture and the commodification of the gaze was conspiring to take over the whole universe.

The second aspect of the proposed monument to Colón that I would like to highlight is the caravel placed at the very top. The presence of this ship forms an inextricable link between colonial and industrial modernity: it evokes both the colonial endeavors of the Spanish empire, and the desire to establish a historical throughline from the "discovery" of America to the new colonialism driven by imperialism, trade, and industry. These pretensions were spelt out by Emilio Castelar, ex-president of the first Republic (1873–74), in a text written for *La Ilustración Española y Americana* to accompany Palacio's designs.[10] The caravel included yet a further element, one that projected Palacio's monument not only back into the past, but also into the future: an astronomical observatory would be set up inside the ship. There, Colón's spyglass would give way to the telescope so that stargazing visitors could explore the new routes to be embarked upon by the "universal spirit." Palacio's monument, his fossil Gaia, thus

10 Emilio Castelar, "Proyecto de monumento a Colón, ideado por el ingeniero D. Alberto Palacio," *La Ilustración Española y Americana* 35/31 (22 August 1891): 99–100.

11 See Donald Worster, *Shrinking the Earth: The Rise and Decline of American Abundance* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

12 This civilizational dynamic is also the historical origin of the current discussion on the "full world," a notion used by the Spanish philosopher Jorge Riechmann to describe the way in which the depletion of the planet's resources, as well as the clash against its biophysical limits, implies shifting economic debates from the expansion of supply to the regulation of demand. See Jorge Riechmann, *Biomímesis. Un buen encaje de los ecosistemas* (Madrid: Catarata, 2014).

13 Emilio Santiago Muíño, "Cuatro décadas perdidas. Los límites del crecimiento, la crisis socioecológica y sus escenarios de futuro," *Revista de Occidente* 425 (October 2016): 40–76.

sought to emphasize the historical link between the colonization of America and the colonization of the cosmos.

The opening of the so-called New World was a precursor to the universalization of the Anthropocene as a civilizational logic. The conquest of America was a critical event—a genuine, historic catastrophe for human ecology and its conflictive relationship with Earth's inherent planetary dynamics.[11] The borders of the Anthropocene—understood here as the impact upon biomes of a Eurocentric rationality aiming to hoard and exploit natural resources—expanded across the Atlantic. The promise of abundance following the colonization of America became a threat of scarcity after Gaia was colonized by industrial civilization.[12]

Today, the reduction in available resources corresponds to a shrinking of the utopian imagination. If politics seems to have given up on its revolutionary urge to storm the heavens, the space race has largely abandoned its aspirations to seize the cosmos (they seem to survive only in the delusions of elite neoliberals thirsty for distinction, like Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk). As Emilio Santiago Muíño has noted, technoscience has seduced us with dreams of terraforming Mars, yet all we have to show for it are 280 (Twitter) characters.[13] Even so, we shouldn't overlook the allure of cosmonautical imaginaries throughout industrial modernity. If the "discovery" of America (the so-called New World) represented the finding of a "Second Earth," as some cartographies of the era put it, then some twentieth-century cosmo-utopians identified, in the idea of the whole universe so-colonized, a kind of "Third Earth." According to this particular cosmovision (in the literal sense), the exploration of this new inhospitable territory (no less than the whole of outer space) more or less expressly implied

its techno-scientific adaptation to the human scale, and the universal artificial reproduction of terrestrial biophysical conditions.

Back in the nineteenth century, the industrial urbanization of the universe was considered a utopian form of the new zeitgeist, as caricatured in an 1844 visual allegory by J.J. Grandville (see fig. 2). Bruce Clarke has identified in this image the isomorphic relationship between energy and capital, a recurring theme throughout the century: "Energy as cosmic capital has funded the construction of the universal ether-bridge. It is erected upon and across the natural planets […] turning the universe itself into an arcade or mall, an artificially illuminated stage for the procession of commodities and wish images."[14] Colonial modernity prolonged became industrial modernity, with its energy-based imaginaries and the libidinal devices of fossil culture; in turn, industrial modernity was projected onto cosmic modernity. Palacio's monument shows this shift between three cosmovisions: while his metal planet resembles a steam machine (industrial modernity), the inclusion of Colón's ship (colonial modernity) heralds the future possibility of colonizing outer space (cosmic modernity).

Here, then, is a triple movement: 1) the conquest of America as a horizontal colonization of the planet; 2) fossil modernity as a colonization that burrowed deep down into the Earth's necrosphere; 3) the space race as a colonization upwards, into the cosmos. After plundering Earth's own "subterranean forests," humans begin readying themselves to abandon the depleted planet.[15] It's as if the fiery glow coming from the plinth of Palacio's monument is announcing this Gaian steam machine's transformation into a space rocket, soon to blast into the stratosphere, with Madrid's Retiro park as a proto-Cape Canaveral of the industrial-cultural subconscious.

This is not just rhetoric. In fact, the plans for the monument coincided exactly with the designs for the first spaceship by Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, often considered the "father" of modern cosmonautics and the inspiration for the Soviet space program. Tsiolkovsky was an adherent of the theories of Nikolai Fyodorov, the founder of Russian Cosmism; they met at the Rumyantsev Museum in Moscow, where Fyodorov worked as a librarian. In 1880, Fyodorov wrote a text about the future of astronomy and the need for resurrection. In it, he set out the relationship between the observation of the skies and the bio-cosmic project to colonize the universe, both to be undertaken by human life. Later, Fyodorov would link astronomic observatories and museums to the tasks of regulating the climate and the atmosphere, and reviving past generations, as the true project of communist fraternity.

14 Bruce Clarke, *Energy Forms: Allegory and Science in the Era of Classical Thermodynamics* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), 45.

15 See Rolf Peter Sieferle, *The Subterranean Forest: Energy Systems and the Industrial Revolution* (London: White House Press), 2001.

16 Nikolai Fyodorov, "Astronomy and Architecture" (1904) in ed. Boris Groys, *Russian Cosmism* (Cambridge: MIT Press/e-flux, 2018), 55–58. In the same vein, Alexander Svyatogor would advocate for moving on from aeronavigation, in favor of navigating the cosmos: "Our Earth must become a spaceship steered by the wise will of the Biocosmist. It is a horrifying fact that from time immemorial the Earth has orbited the Sun, like a goat tethered to its shepherd. It's time for us to instruct the Earth to take another course. In fact, it is also time to intervene in the course taken by other planets too. We should not remain mere spectators, but must play an active role in the life of the cosmos!" Alexander Svyatogor, "Biocosmist Poetics" (1921) in ed. Groys, *Russian Cosmism*, 83.

In various passages of his texts, the Russian bio-cosmist alluded to Colón as the prototype for the techno-scientific conquering of the universe, which would be led by astronomy and aeronautical engineering. In these writings, the whole of the Earth becomes a spaceship fueled by solar energy, destined to traverse and colonize the cosmos and its constellations. Fyodorov wrote:

> Imagine that this solar energy, once directed earthward, might alter the density of its new home, weaken the bonds of its gravity, giving rise in turn to the possibility of manipulating its celestial course through the heavens, rendering the planet Earth, in effect, a great electric boat […]. Science will come to be defined as knowledge of the Earth as a heavenly body, coupled with the knowledge of other planets that resemble it […]. The building up of Earth, too, will be accomplished by that same application […] and the other planets into new dwellings […]. Those men, animated and transformed […] those sons of humanity learn to travel to other planets, and now on each they will duplicate exactly what has been done on Earth—that is, by the instrument of the lightning-rod aerostat, all of the energy of the Sun will be directed onto each planet, thereby freed of gravity's bonds and turned into a great, electric boat.[16]

Today, we must give up on the idea of conquering a Third Earth and, where possible, undo the colonial effects of the discovery of the Second. The bio-cosmists' Spaceship Earth must come back down to

the actually existing Earth, via a bio-economic reconceptualization of the eco-social metabolism in which the economic flows and materiality of technological infrastructure (including cultural infrastructure) do not exceed the planet's own biophysical limits.

The current business-as-usual approach of globalized capitalism is incompatible with a bio-economics that seeks to reintegrate human activities with the planet's natural material cycles, and of whose postulates fossil modernity and its universalist ambitions represent the exact opposite. Fossil culture is an ultimately reckless enterprise of political economy (whether classical or neoclassical), whereby the future ecological and energy-based sustainability of industrial civilization is put at risk in the interests of resource accumulation in the here and now. The present abundance of energy serves to cover up its inevitable future scarcity (stock is, by definition, exhaustible), while also reproducing a regime of ownership that fuels the state of capitalist schizophrenia wherein there can be shortages at times of prosperity. Fossil culture is the material rendition of a teleology of progress whose promises will be broken, and broken sooner rather than later.

And this, by the way, is not something that the increased use of renewable energy will change in any substantial way, if and when it is merely an adjunct, simply substituting for, or complementing the existing use of fossil fuels. If renewables do not take biophysical limits into account, then all they do is prolong fossil culture by other means.[17] Green capitalism offers us no more than the veneer of greenwashing: the social, political, and cultural transformation must go far deeper. It urgently requires a transition from the bio-cosmic delusions of Spaceship Earth to a bio-economic realism that contributes to mitigating the environmental effects created by the fossil economy. Rather than that scientifically formulated in the work of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen,[18] *this* bio-economic realism goes back to the underground history of "ecologism of the poor,"[19] for whom recognizing the integrality of productive and reproductive activities to the biosphere as a whole has been more than a moral or aesthetic choice. It has embodied a vital necessity and a desire for survival, a mode of resistance to the history of Western colonialism and its industrial cosmologies.

17 In this sense, we must remember that so-called renewable energies require non-renewable devices to capture renewable energy sources, whose material composition therefore does not escape the biophysical limits of the planet.

18 See Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *Ensayos bioeconómicos* (Madrid: Catarata, 2021).

19 See Joan Martínez Alier, *El ecologismo de los pobres* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2009).

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POLLUTION AS A WEAPON OF WAR

Svitlana Matviyenko

Any war is an assault on the entire ecosystem in which all forms of life and non-life interact, via nutrient cycles and energy flows within and beyond their immediate environments, in "geosomatic communities." This makes their erasure by war the crime of "geosomatocide," as Ukrainian researcher Oleksii Kuchanskyi has described the unfolding catastrophe in Ukraine.[1] Each war is different in how it disturbs and demolishes the assemblages of symbiotic coexistence. But there are similarities, too, and these are crucial to consider when trying to understand the environmental damage involved. Due to lack of data and situational changes too rapid to grasp, the nature of knowledge in wars, including knowledge about pollution, is often partial. When military action is ongoing, it is often not possible to acquire the necessary data to assess the impact of a war on the environment; in other cases, the data acquired is too tactically sensitive to publicize or share between institutions, organizations, and the public.

While data on the humanitarian and environmental consequences of the years of warfare waged in Ukraine by the Russian Federation is scarce, we can turn to what was learned during the wars in Syria and Iraq, as well as to pre-conflict data, to envision how to deal with this heavy impact in the future.[2] At the time of writing (midsummer 2022), it is already possible to distinguish two phases in the spread of war-related pollution in Ukraine; these differ in terms of speed and volume. Phase one dates from 2014, with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the subsequent military action in the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. Phase two began with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, after which the spread and volume of pollution—with both short-term and long-term impacts—greatly and dramatically accelerated and increased.

The partial nature of knowledge about pollution during wars lends itself to the possibility of pollution itself being weaponized,

turning it, literally, into a weapon of war; and this tendency is also present in the Russian war in Ukraine. "Pollution as a weapon of war": the formulation invokes rape, another well-known form of wartime violence and terror, adding ecological crimes to a long list of war atrocities. It highlights the ferocity of war's interference in urban and rural ecosystems, agricultural land and rivers, coastal areas and the sea as well as biospheric reserves and other unique natural environments.

The weaponization of pollution during the Russian war in Ukraine has been happening in at least two ways: First, there is the release of hazardous chemicals and the subsequent formation of dangerous chemical compounds such as carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO2), water vapor (H2O), nitric oxide (NO), nitrous oxide (N2O), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), formaldehyde (CH2O), cyanic acid vapors (HCN), nitrogen (N2), and water vapor (H2O),[3] along with large amounts of toxic organic matter, both during direct combat and, more typically, in this war, during shelling. Targeting the civilian population and the military alike, these chemical compounds also damage life and non-life assemblages at large, causing the oxidization of soil, wood, and turf: just one of many forms of ecocide. Another way the weaponization of pollution has occurred is at the level of misinformation and its communication in the media: reframing, distorting, and instrumentalizing reported incidents, either with the purpose of inducing fear and panic in order to weaken the population's potential to resist the occupying forces, or to engineer inadequate, and thus dangerous, responses (to the release of chemicals, for example).

The attack on Ukraine and its more-than-human environment—exceeding in all dimensions the territorial horizontality that is often predominant in one's imagination when one thinks of a war—was launched by land, sea, and air. At dawn of 24 February 2022, the eight years of warfare waged thus far by the Russian Federation in Ukraine escalated to erupt into a full-scale invasion, the first major land war in Europe in decades. Following heavy shelling and airstrikes, the main infantry and tank attacks spearheaded four incursions to create a northern front that spread towards Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, encircling the city from the north-east and east. Although the Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border in several waves and from several directions, north, east, and south, it was the movement of this northern front through the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone that brought the Russian Federation its first impressive achievement—the fast and easy occupation of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant (ChNPP). Aware of the consequences of a confrontation there, the Ukrainian military on

1 Oleksii Kuchanskyi, "Digital Leviathan and His Nuclear Tail: Notes on the Body and the Earth in the State of War," in *Dispatches from Ukraine: Tactical Media Reflections and Responses, Theory on Demand* 44, ed. Maria van der Togt (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2022), 94; networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ToD44_withCover.pdf.

2 There are several organizations now operating in Ukraine that are committed to collecting environmental data to assess the impact of war pollution. These include the State Environmental Inspectorate of Ukraine (Ekodia), created to record all environmental damage, and a few others.

3 Oksana Omelchuk and Sofia Sadogurska, "Природа стогне від війни. Як воєнне вторгнення Росії впливає на довкілля України," Дзеркало Тижня (27 March 2002); zn.ua/ukr/ECOLOGY/priroda-stohne-vid-vijni.html.

4 "Russian Forces Capture Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, Says Ukrainian PM," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (24 February 2022); rferl.org/a/ukraine-invasion-russian-forces-chernobyl-/31721240.html.

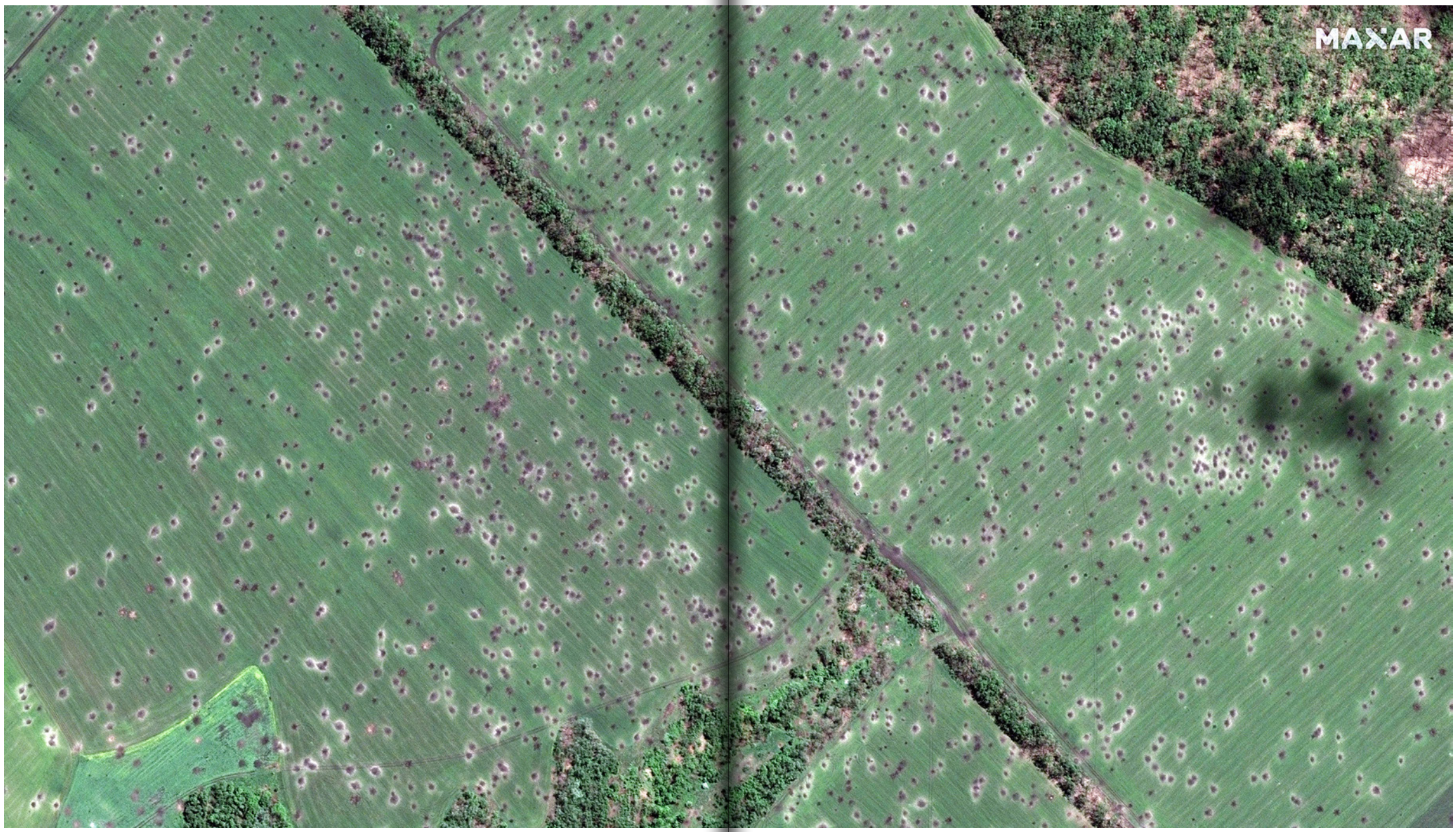
5 Dyer-Witheford, Nick and Svitlana Matviyenko, *Cyberwar and Revolution: Digital Subterfuge in Global Capitalism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2019).

6 See the graph depicting the calculation of cloud arrival-time performed by the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority using the atmospheric dispersion model "MATCH (JRODOS), hrs," Energoatom, post on Telegram channel (4 March 2022); t.me/energoatom_ua/1951.

the premises did not engage in combat. In addition to the threat to lives there at the hands of the invaders during the occupation of the ChNPP, the reckless actions of the Russian military in the Zone threatened both local and global communities.

The takeover of the ChNPP, which some Ukrainian officials described as "absolutely senseless,"[4] generated an overwhelming number of responses and interpretations in the news, on social media, and in public debates, evidencing its undeniable potential to impose terror. Followed by the plant's disconnection from the internationally accessible automated radiation monitoring system (ARMS), the takeover event revealed a core nexus of the current cyberwar (a militarized assemblage of digital and kinetic actions, wherein commercial and military technologies are mobilized simultaneously for murder and destruction).[5] AI operators such as those of the DSA, the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, pre-emptively envisioned the meteorological prognosis for winds and rain by modeling a hypothetical accident and the potential dissemination of deadly nuclear fallout should the Chernobyl NPP's New Safe Confinement (covering the insides of the decomposed Fourth Block) be suddenly hit by a rocket.[6] The occupation of the ChNPP was followed by the subsequent takeover, on 3 March 2022, of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Station in the south-east of Ukraine; the largest in Europe, with six active reactors. This event materialized the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe: weaponizing the infrastructure of a nuclear power plant would turn it into a bomb with the capability to trigger a planetary-scale environmental disaster, resulting in the partial or full erasure of numerous geosomatic communities.

In the eyes of the world, the nuclear edge of the Russian war in Ukraine often appears to obscure numerous other forms of damage caused by pollution to the socio-material assemblages of geosomatic



Maxar satellite imagery of fields peppered with artillery craters northwest of Slovyansk, Ukraine. 6 June 2022.

communities, including to the layers of soil and what rests and moves within and beneath them. According to Ukrainian scientists, the environmental damage caused by this war will result in biodiversity loss, and already constitutes a serious threat to endangered species. Chemical pollution from shelling and missiles impacts land and sea. Serious consequences have already accrued as a result of fires at industrial sites as well as forest fires, including those arising every spring and summer within the Chernobyl Zone, whose containment this year was made impossible by and during the ChNPP's occupation by Russian forces and remains limited at the time of writing, three-and-a-half months since the Russian forces withdrew from the area, due to the landmining of surrounding territories. The demining process is ongoing. Fires caused by bombs and direct airstrikes have also been recorded at oil and fuel storage depots, gas stations, landfill sites, and low-level radioactive waste facilities like those targeted near Kyiv and Kharkiv.

The flooding of mines and the subsequent dissemination of toxic chemicals carried by groundwater was already a problem before the full-scale invasion, existing since the beginning of the war in 2014, when mines in the occupied territories were abandoned after the interruption of regular production processes in the Donbas area, and the water was no longer pumped out of them. As this toxic flood water spreads to large surface areas it leads to soil collapse.[7] This process has been greatly accelerated by the onset of intense military action in the south-east of Ukraine, including bombing and rocket strikes. At the time of writing this is still ongoing. The presence in the soil of heavy metals from the abandoned remnants of military weapons will cause significant long-term damage to the ecosystems of various regions of Ukraine.

Because it is now impossible for Ukrainian and international ecologists and other experts to conduct fieldwork in order to assess the scope of pollution and design future strategies to deal with the environmental damage, they are remotely estimating the volume of emissions from the detonation of high-explosive munitions (either on the surface of the earth, or slightly submerged in it) using satellite images and studying what open-source environmental data they can find. They cross-examine footage uploaded to social media, public satellite imagery, and various optical and pollution-level sensor data that changes daily, geolocating and verifying the open-source information against the location of industrial facilities. All of these forms of data are then combined.

In one such instance, a satellite image produced by Maxar Technologies at the end of May 2022 was analyzed by the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG). The image captures the Izyum

7 Maryna Slobodyanuk, "«Шанс на порятунок існує». Як війна на сході впливає на ґрунти та що з цим робити" #ШОТАМ (17 October 2021); shotam.info/terytoriia-donbasu-mozhe-peretvorytysia-na-pusteliu-yak-viyna-na-skhodi-vplyvaie-na-grunty-ta-shcho-z-tsym-robyty.

8 Oleksiy Vasylyuk and Valeria Kolodezhna, "Яка доля пошкоджених вибухами українських територій?" Українська природоохоронна група (UGG) (6 June 2022); uncg.org.ua/iakoiu-maie-buty-dolia-poshkodzhe-nykh-vybukhamy-ukrainskykh-terytorij.

9 See, for example, Emma Beals, "How the Lessons of the Syria War May Safeguard Lives in Ukraine," Malcolm H. Kerr Middle East Center (27 April 2022); carnegie-mec.org/2022/04/27/how-lessons-of-syria-war-may-safeguard-lives-in-ukraine-pub-87005; Megan A. Stewart, "What can the Syrian civil war tell us about the war in Ukraine?" Middle East Institute (12 April 2022); mei.edu/publications/what-can-syrian-civil-war-tell-us-about-war-ukraine.

10 Max Fisher, "Russia's Brutal Bombing of Aleppo May Be Calculated, and It May Be Working," *New York Times* (29 September 2016); nytimes.com/2016/09/29/world/middleeast/russias-brutal-bombing-of-aleppo-may-be-calculated-and-it-may-be-working.html.

district of the Kharkiv region, where heavy military action was (and, at the time of writing, still is) ongoing. Noting that "even without appropriate qualifications, it can be assumed that the use of such a field after the war will be difficult and dangerous," their experts "counted 480 funnel-shaped holes made by 82 mm caliber shells, 547 made by 120 mm shells and 1025 made by 152 mm caliber shells. Only (!) 50 tons of iron, 1 ton of sulfur compounds and 2.35 tons of copper entered the soil in this square kilometer of the field." These explosions, the UNCG experts concluded, "uprooted at least 90,000 tons of soil." This ecosystem is already severely damaged and will require a long time to recover, provided it doesn't suffer irreversible erosion after the upper level of soil loses its fertility, releasing the organic matter into the atmosphere.[8] What remains invisible, though, and thus unavailable for evaluation, is the reportedly rather high number of undetonated shells that are stuck in the soil, an estimated 3 to 30 percent of those that are there. These constitute a delayed form of damage, a fold in the complex temporality of the ecocidal trauma of war in Ukraine.

In tactical and strategic terms, the violent assault on the urban areas of Ukraine by the Russian forces is not anything novel. The bombing of Iraq by a combined force of troops from the United States and Great Britain, or that of Syria by Syrian and Russian forces, immediately come to mind. Various news reports and experts acknowledge Syria as the most recent military campaign to have served to contribute to Russian tactics and strategies.[9] What they did in Syria, they have repeated in Ukraine: the besiegement of cities to starve them into submission under ongoing shelling; the attacks on civilian targets; the bombing of refugee exit routes. The brutality of the Russian forces' onslaught against Mariupol is often compared to that of their bombing campaign in Aleppo, when "massacring Aleppo's civilians [was] part of a calculated strategy, aimed beyond this one city."[10]

The significant use of heavy explosive weapons in residential areas quickly reduces settlements to rubble. In the course of the

breakage of construction materials, large amounts of dust containing particles of asbestos, titanium, and different heavy metals are released into the air, that, when inhaled, cause such diseases as asbestosis, or scarring of the lungs; and mesothelioma, a type of lung cancer. Damage to heating and water supply facilities, such as sewage pumping stations, filter stations, water pumps, and other public utilities, leads to the contamination of water with organic substances.[11]

This war has engaged some of the most complex and diverse technological assemblages seen thus far—ranging from techniques and technologies of psy-ops and old-fashioned propaganda to those of extensive drone warfare, Starlink satellites, artificial intelligence, long-range and short-range rocket systems, and, as of June 2022, the M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), a lighter, wheeled, multiple-launch rocket system—and yet it has been frequently referred to as "medieval." This perception is mainly due to the overall brutality of this war, and partially also to the consistent weaponization of human bodies after death. As reports and witness accounts reveal, all of Mariupol was covered with the bodies of those killed, and the minimal time between intervals of shelling did not allow for proper burials.[12] People had to put the bodies in the ground everywhere in the city very close to the ground surface, as they were unable to dig deeper graves. Here, the presence of decomposing bodies creates an ideal environment for anaerobic bacteria and the accumulation of botulinum toxins that can migrate with groundwater and rainfall, getting into water intake systems, or by being carried away by animals, to name just a few ways. These bacteria and toxins might well be described as the oldest biological weapon to have been used against humans during wars, and they remain very dangerous to us today. This is especially the case for the wounded, for whom contact with such bacteria carries a serious risk of developing life-threatening gangrene or tetanus (a bacterial infection caused by *Clostridium tetani*, largely characterized by muscle spasms).

In scholarship, pollution has been described as a form of "slow violence."[13] Writing about the "gradual velocity of slow violence," British environmental and political geographer Thom Davies also describes the violence of environmental pollution.[14] Davies employs the conceptual framework of "necropolitics" theorized by Cameroonian historian and political theorist Achille Mbembe who wrote:

> [...] the notion of necropolitics, or necropower, to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximally destroying persons and creating death-worlds,

11 "Випадки потенційної шкоди довкіллю, спричинені російською агресією," Екодія (3 May 2022); ecoaction.org.ua/warmap.html.

12 See "Ukraine: 200 bodies found in basement in Mariupol's ruins," *Politico* (25 May 2022); politico.com/news/2022/05/25/ukraine-bodies-mariupol-ruins-00035019; Darya Kurennaya, "Escape From Mariupol: The Dead Were Buried In The Yards," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (26 March 2022); rferl.org/a/mariupol--escape-russian-siege-ukraine/31771645.html. Isobel Koshiw, "Makeshift Graves and Notes on Doors: The Struggle to Find and Bury Mariupol's Dead," *The Guardian* (1 June 2022); theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/01/makeshift-graves-and-notes-on-doors-the-struggle-to-find-and-bury-mariupol-dead-ukraine.

13 See for example Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Thom Davies, "Toxic Space and Time: Slow Violence, Necropolitics, and Petrochemical Pollution," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108/6 (June 2018): 1–17; Thom Davies, "Slow Violence and Toxic Geographies: 'Out of Sight' to Whom?" *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 0/0 (April 2019): 1–19. Pollution has also been described as a form of colonialism; see for example Max Liboiron, *Pollution Is Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

14 Davies, "Slow Violence and Toxic Geographies," 3.

15 Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 92.

16 Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 2.

17 Ibid.

18 Davies, "Toxic Space and Time," 4.

> that is, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead.[15]

In war, however, pollution spreads—and violence occurs—at various speeds. In addition to the fast, or extremely fast, violence of the rocket strikes, bombs, and various explosions that cause immediate harm and destruction and lead to the release of toxic chemicals, there are also these other, slower forms of violence occurring "gradually and out of sight," whether independently or as a consequence of these faster forms.[16] Understandably, it is their slow and subtle nature that often renders them unnoticeable, elusive to human attention. Paradoxically, extreme cases of fast violence in war may also be made "invisible," but by their overwhelming number and their capacity to produce shock and trauma: witnesses of war and war crimes often report that their memories collapse days of violence into one undifferentiated continuity. Together, cases of fast and slow violence compose the chaotic reality of war, whose production of necropolitical "death-worlds" does not lend itself to easy comprehension.[17]

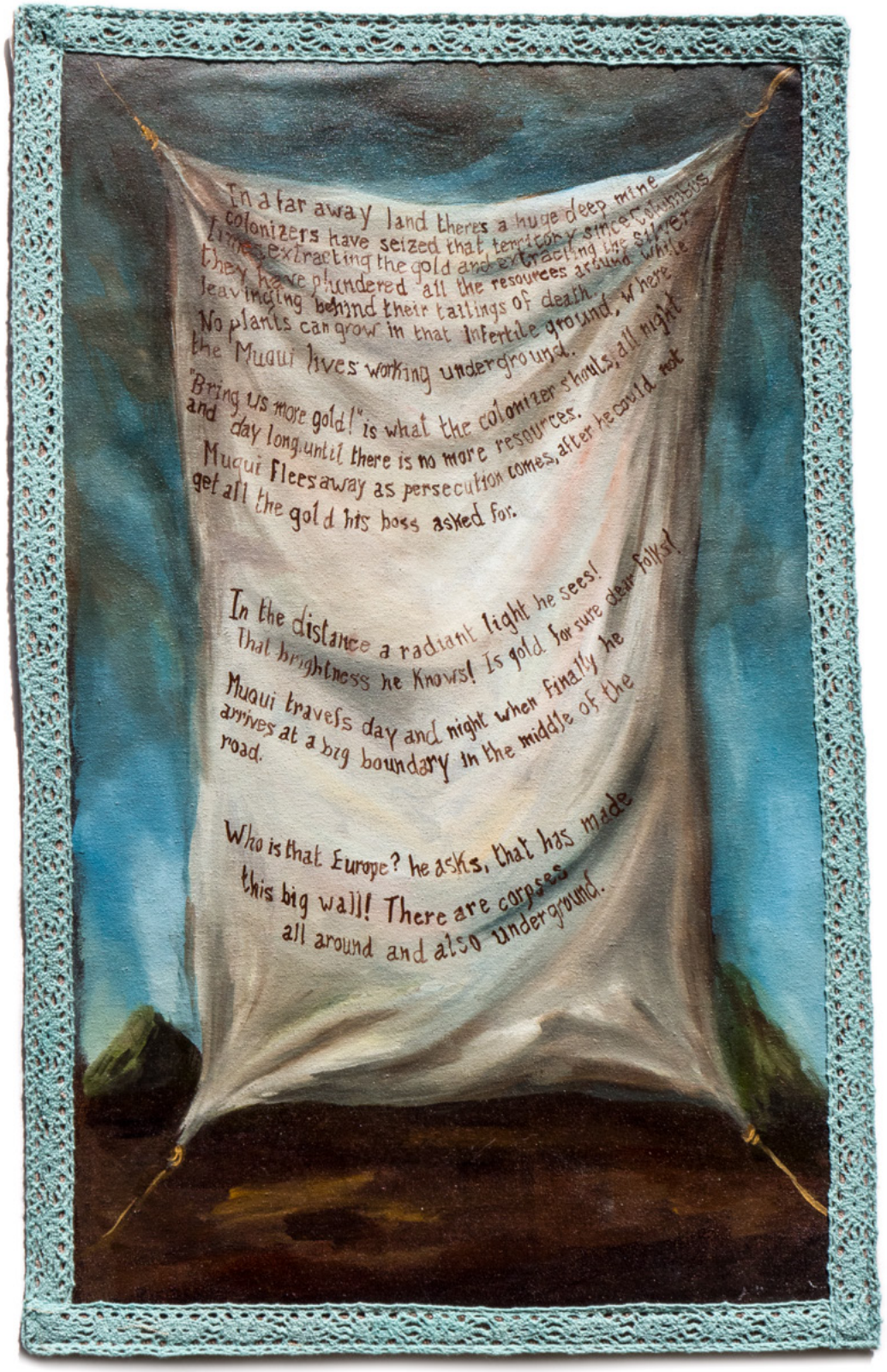
Thus, theorizing pollution as a weapon of war entails not only accounting for the "drawn-out temporal reach" that the notion of slow violence opens up for critical thought, nor only recognizing the paradoxical invisibility of fast violence and its terror;[18] but also understanding how the entanglement of these two regimes of violence, fast and slow, allows for the exploitation of international law so that, too often, environmental war crimes go unpunished.

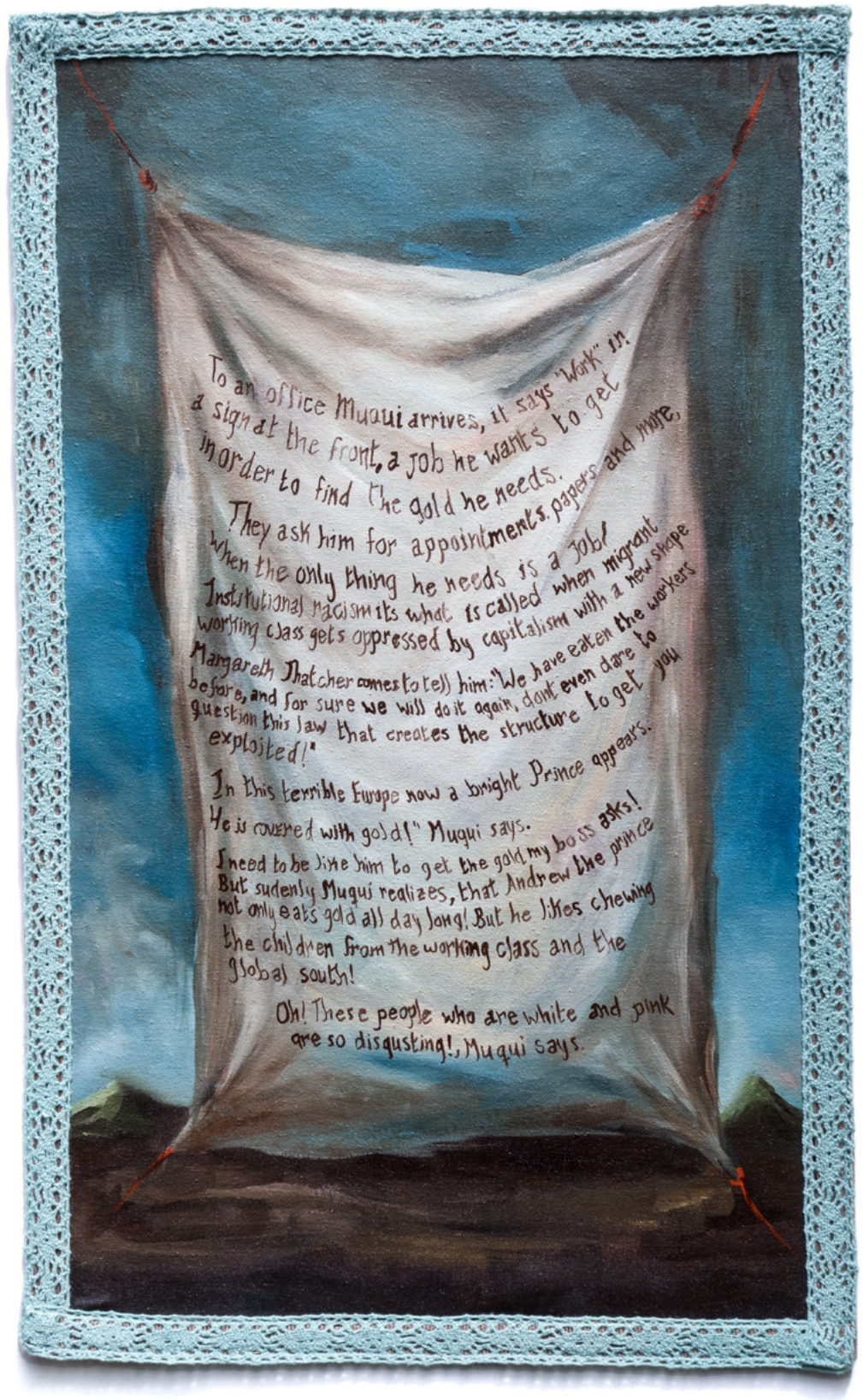
Daniela Ortiz aims to generate visual narratives exploring concepts of nationality, racialization, social class, and genre in order to critically understand structures of colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist power. Her current projects and research revolve around the European migratory control system, with its links to colonialism, and the legal structures used to inflict violence on racialized communities. She has also worked on projects on the Peruvian upper class and its exploitative relationship with domestic workers. Her artistic practice has since turned back to visual and manual work, using ceramics, collage, and formats such as children's books in order to take distance from the aesthetics of Eurocentric Conceptual art. Besides her artistic practice, she is a single mother, gives talks and workshops, and participates in various discussions around and struggles against institutional racism and the judicialization and legal persecution of mothers and infants.

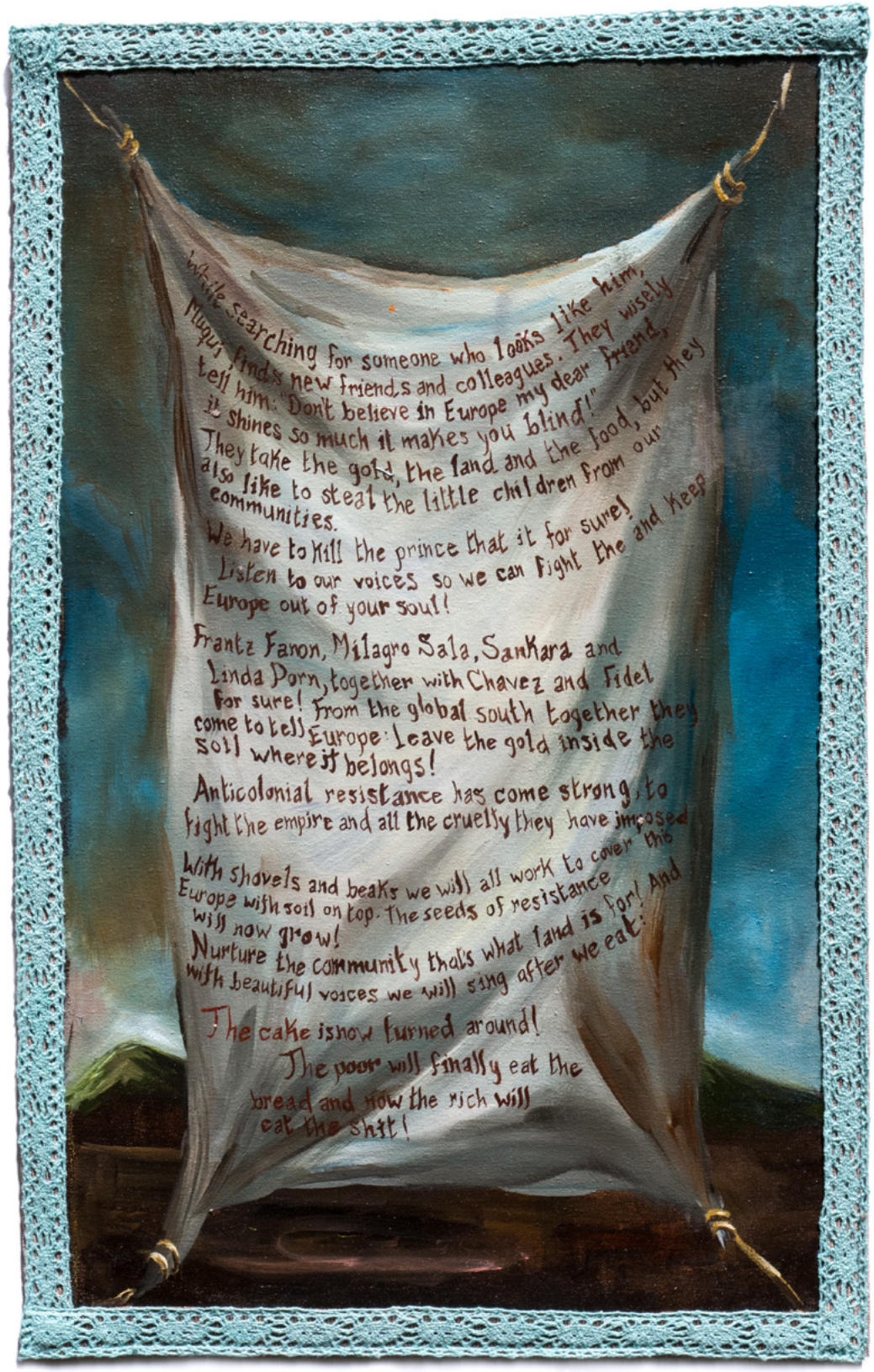
MUQUI

Daniela Ortiz


THE CAKE SHALL TURN AROUND
LET THE POOR EAT BREAD AND
MAKE THE RICH EAT SHIT


In a far away land there's a huge deep mine
colonizers have seized that territory since Columbus
Times extracting the gold and extracting the silver
they have plundered all the resources around while
leaving behind their tailings of death.
No plants can grow in that infertile ground, where
the Muqui lives working underground.
"Bring us more gold!" is what the colonizer shouts, all night
and day long, until there is no more resources.
Muqui flees away as persecution comes, after he could not
get all the gold his boss asked for.
In the distance a radiant light he sees!
That brightness he knows! Is gold for sure dear folks!
Muqui travels day and night when finally he
arrives at a big boundary in the middle of the
road.
Who is that Europe? he asks, that has made
this big wall! There are corpses
all around and also underground.


To an office Muqui arrives, it says "Work" in a sign at the front, a job he wants to get in order to find the gold he needs.
They ask him for appointments, papers and more, when the only thing he needs is a job!
Institutional racism its what is called when migrant working class gets oppressed by capitalism with a new shape
Margareth Thatcher comes to tell him: "We have eaten the workers before, and for sure we will do it again, dont even dare to question this law that creates the structure to get you exploited!"
In this terrible Europe now a bright Prince appears. He is covered with gold!" Muqui says.
I need to be like him to get the gold my boss asks!
But sudenly Muqui realizes, that Andrew the prince not only eats gold all day long! But he likes chewing the children from the working class and the global south!
Oh! These people who are white and pink are so disgusting!, Muqui says.


while searching for someone who looks like him,
Muguet finds new friends and colleagues. They wisely
tell him: "Don't believe in Europe my dear friend,
it shines so much it makes you blind!"
They take the gold, the land and the food, but they
also like to steal the little children from our
communities.
We have to kill the prince that it for sure!
Listen to our voices so we can fight the and keep
Europe out of your soul!
Frantz Fanon, Milagro Sala, Sankara and
Linda Porn, together with Chavez and Fidel
For sure! From the global south together they
come to tell Europe: Leave the gold inside the
soil where it belongs!
Anticolonial resistance has come strong, to
fight the empire and all the cruelty they have imposed
With shovels and beaks we will all work to cover this
Europe with soil on top. The seeds of resistance
will now grow!
Nurture the community that's what land is for! And
with beautiful voices we will sing after we eat:
The cake is now turned around!
The poor will finally eat the
bread and now the rich will
eat the shit!


THERE IS NO DECOLONIZATION
WITHOUT ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Maristella Svampa is an Argentine sociologist, activist, and writer. She studied philosophy at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba and has a Ph.D. in sociology from the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris. She is a researcher at the Conicet (National Center for Scientific and Technical Research), Argentina. Her research is on socioecological crisis, socioenvironmental conflicts and resistance in Latin America, neo-extractivism, and the challenges of the ecosocial transition in the South. Among her books are *El colapso ecológico ya llegó: Una brújula para salir del (mal)desarrollo*, coauthored with Enrique Viale (Siglo XXI Editores, 2020) and *La transición energética en Argentina*, edited with Pablo Bertinat (Siglo XXI Editores, 2022).

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EXTRACTIVISMS & ECOPOLITICAL NARRATIVES IN LATIN AMERICA

Maristella Svampa

The concept of "neo-extractivism" has a great descriptive and explanatory power. Denunciatory in nature, it also has a strong rallying power. As a model of accumulation, extractivism has a long history that can be traced throughout Latin America's collective memory, and is linked to the birth of modern capitalism via the demand for raw materials generated by large cities. More recently, the term "neo-extractivism," or *neo-extractivismo*, was coined in Latin America, both to indicate the continuation of these historical processes and to account for their resurgence in the context of the global ecological crisis and the North–South divide.[1]

In what follows, I define neo-extractivism, or twenty-first-century extractivism, as a nature-appropriation mechanism and a development model based on the over-exploitation of natural resources which are, for the most part, non-renewable. Neo-extractivism is characterized by its large scale, and by its being export-oriented, as well as by the vertiginous expansion of exploitation frontiers into new strategic territories and ecosystems that were, until recently, deemed worthless by capital. The term must be used in the plural, in fact, as it refers to a plurality of activities, or *neo-extractivisms*, including open-pit mega-mining; the expansion of the oil and energy frontier (through fracking and offshore operations); the construction of large hydroelectric dams and other infrastructure (waterways, ports, and interoceanic corridors, among others); the various monoculture or single-product models of agribusiness (cultivating soybean, palm oil, and other crops); overfishing, and monoculture forestry.

This expansion and updating of the concept is in response to an accelerated increase in social metabolism within the framework

of the neoliberal globalization of the last thirty years, marked by an intensification in the use of raw and other materials. This has put greater pressure on strategic territories and ecosystems, especially in the global South, resulting in the appropriation and destruction of common goods as they are transformed into commodities, and the displacement and/or criminalization of local peoples. In the name of progress and development, these processes have intensified social and environmental asymmetries between the Global North on one hand, and those emerging nations and Southern countries whose governments, regardless of their ideological differences, bet heavily on top-down territorial interventions in order to export raw materials and natural goods on a massive scale on the other. Thus, the expansion of large-scale, predatory, and highly polluting extractive activities have had strong sociosanitary and environmental impacts, increasing the North's ecological debt and expanding sacrifice zones in the Global South.

It was around the year 2000 that Latin America witnessed a return of the imaginary of development and progress associated with extractivism, in line with a steep rise in the international prices of raw materials (commodities boom). When faced with the opportunity to realize extraordinary profits, society reached what I have previously dubbed the "Commodities Consensus," which blurred the ideological differences between governments.[2] Whether articulated in the crude language of dispossession (neoliberal perspective), or through the discourse of state-controlled surplus (progressive perspective), what was witnessed was a multi-scale partnership between global corporations and governments that expanded and multiplied large-scale extractive projects (such as open-pit mining, agribusiness, hydrocarbon, exploitation, mega-dams, deforestation, and other projects affecting heavy land use change), characterized by a top-down intervention model that excluded any form of consultation with local peoples.

Within the framework of the Commodities Consensus, Latin American governments sought to justify neo-extractivism and environmental depredation on grounds of development and reduced inequalities, creating a conflict between social and environmental issues that resulted in a paradox. On the one hand, the aim was to minimize the link between pollution and poverty, which is a constant in Southern countries, in order to delegitimize socioenvironmental causes by associating them with the actions of foreign NGOs and/or middle-class sectors. On the other hand, socioenvironmental demands were selectively expelled from the human rights agenda in an attempt to render a large portion of Indigenous peoples, as well as farmers'

1 See Maristella Svampa, *Neo-Extractivism Dynamics in Latin America: Socioenvironmental Conflicts, the Territorial Turn, and New Political Narratives* (Elements, Cambridge University Press, 2019); Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale, *El colapso ecologico ya llego: Como salir de los modelos de (mal) desarrollo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2020); Eduardo Gudynas, "Diez tesis urgentes sobre el nuevo extractivismo," *Extractivismo, política y sociedad* (November 2009); extractivismo.com/2009/11/extractivismo-politica-y-sociedad.

2 Maristella Svampa, "Consenso de los '*Commodities*' y lenguajes de valoración en América Latina," *Nueva Sociedad* 244 (March–April 2013); nuso.org/articulo/consenso-de-los-commodities-y-lenguajes-de-valoracion-en-america-latina; English version "The 'Commodities Consensus' and Valuation Languages in Latin America", *Alternautas* 2/1 (2015); journals.warwick.ac.uk/index.php/alternautas/article/view/1003. See also Maristella Svampa, "Commodities Consensus: Neo-extractivism and Enclosure of the Commons in Latin America," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 114.1 (2015): 65–82; saq.dukejournals.org/content/114/1/65.refs.

3 Gabriella Benza and Gabriel Kessler, *La nueva estructura social latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2020).

demands for land and territory, invisible. The economic growth over the first years of the commodities boom was most certainly steep, and this translated into a significant reduction in poverty. Unfortunately, we now know that this was an ephemeral process that did indeed reduce poverty but not inequality. As noted by more recent studies, the extraordinary profits generated by the commodities boom were absorbed by the wealthiest sectors of society, whose fortunes increased by 21 percent annually between 2002 and 2015, an increase six times higher than that of the region's GDP (3.5 percent annually).[3]

Since 2000, one of the consequences of the neo-extractivist model has been the outburst of socioenvironmental conflicts throughout Latin America. In fact, given the characteristics of neo-extractivism (social fragmentation, displacement of other economic models, top-down decisions, the trampling of local peoples, strong impacts on ecosystems and territories), socioenvironmental conflict is better understood as one of its inherent traits, rather than one of its consequences, even if it does not always result in the emergence of explicit social resistances. Over the years, and in the heat of the new modalities of extractive capital expansion, conflicts have multiplied while forms of social resistance have become more active and organized, giving rise to a more comprehensive counter-hegemonic ecopolitical narrative that questions the dynamics of current capitalism and the relationship between society, capitalism, and nature.

As a result, for more than twenty years we have witnessed an eco-territorial shift in struggles, visible in the strengthening of

Diana Dowek, *Bajo la Alumbrera I (minería a cielo abierto)* [Under the Alumbrera I (open-pit mining)], 2013. Acrylic on canvas, 180 × 200 cm.
Photo by Dardo Fabian Flores. Image courtesy of the artist.

ancestral fights for land by Indigenous and farmer movements; in the emergence of new forms of demonstration and citizen participation, and of environmental NGOs with the logic of social movements, critical networks of intellectuals and experts, autonomous collectives of various kinds in small and large cities, and different agro-ecological experiences with a focus on the protection of land and territories.

Socioenvironmental movements against large-scale open-pit mining; networks of activists denouncing the sociosanitary effects of agrochemicals used by the farming industry; farmer-Indigenous or urban poor organizations denouncing environmental racism and opposing the conversion of their territories and/or popular neighborhoods into sacrifice zones; farmers who resist deforestation and advocate for the consolidation of an agro-ecological model; territorial assemblies and networks of lawyers and activists who multiply environmental and climate litigation to defend critical ecosystems such as glaciers, forests, moorlands, and wetlands; social organizations fighting for free rivers threatened by dams or extractivist routes (waterways); national and Latin American alliances against fracking; groups of self-organized neighbors questioning the expansion of the offshore hydrocarbon frontier in defense of their seas; youth collectives rejecting large-scale pig and salmon farming: multiple issues give rise to these conflicts, and they are all linked to the different aspects of the socio-ecological and climate crisis.

On the one hand, they evidence the expansion of environmental struggles, their heterogeneity and their tendency toward transversality. On the other hand, they have many elements in common, as they follow a line of discursive accumulation, originating in relation to the first socioenvironmental movements, that emphasizes alternative languages of land valuation and the climate crisis. All of this has spawned an ecopolitical narrative that stresses the need to transform our relationship with nature, in defense of common goods and biodiversity.

In recent years, the eco-territorial turn has been strengthened by the disruptive and mobilizing action of eco-territorial feminisms. Indigenous women, female peasants, women of African descent, and poor and/or vulnerable rural and urban women are speaking up, fostering public movements and creating relations of solidarity and new forms of collective self-management and care in the face of the negative impacts of industrial and extractive projects already in place, the threat of new megaprojects, and the expansion of the extractive frontier.

Initially, many of these eco-territorial struggles were not recognized as feminist struggles because they were happening away

from the urban feminisms associated with the middle classes. This initial reticence shows that, far from being the product of automatic labeling, their eventual status as such evidences the reappropriation of feminism and the criticism of patriarchy as part of a cultural and collective construction process. It is through the dynamics of these struggles, and largely as a result of a powerful intergenerational dialogue in which the young play a crucial role, that these causes have begun to be redefined as feminist and anti-patriarchal. The possibility of giving a name to the domestic and family oppression and the patriarchal violence that was previously naturalized and/or silenced empowers the fight to defend land and territory by adding a feminist dimension to it. At the point where all these struggles meet, through collective movements, women formerly confined to the domestic sphere, with few inter-class contacts of a non-hierarchical nature, have forged major subjective changes, finding voices of their own and giving birth to new concepts: environmental impact and environmental justice; water for lands; body-land and body-territory; territoriality and care; healing, Mother Earth, and rights of nature; access to land, and food sovereignty, among others. Numerous regional coordination spaces have also emerged, including networks of female environmental leaders, with the support of NGOs and university activists, which has contributed to a more egalitarian knowledge exchange. We are therefore witnessing a major shift, in terms of social relevance: we are witnessing the passage from the Indianist moment to the feminist moment.

During the early rise of progressive governments in Latin America with the commodity boom (2000), both critiques of neoliberalism and the new language of valuation then being created and developed (with topics like *buen vivir*, the rights of nature, autonomy, the plurinational state, territory) figured Indigenous peoples as a major player. However, toward the end of the progressive cycle (2015), and the beginning of a new era marked by the deterioration of the climate and ecological crises and the expansion of new authoritarian right-wing movements, the growing relevance of women—via the different eco-territorial and urban feminisms, and with a significant presence of young women from different social and ethnic backgrounds—stood, and continues to stand, out. We are witnessing the development of a new, inclusive and diverse ecofeminist space, the narratives of whose various layers and plots are intertwined: environmental justice and sacrifice zones; water for life; rivers and forests as sentient entities; the defense of the rights of Mother Earth and the rights of nature; the denunciation of patriarchal, colonial, and extractivist violence;

the defense of body-territories; autonomy and healing; access to land; care for seeds and the transmission of ancestral knowledge; food sovereignty and agroecology.

The Covid-19 pandemic widened the inequality gap in Latin America in all its dimensions. Between March 2020 and November 2021, the wealth of the most affluent sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean increased by USD 97 billion or approximately 52 percent.[4] Meanwhile, existing social and territorial inequalities (overcrowding and lack of access to health, inadequate healthcare structures, informal labor, the gender gap) increased even further, resulting in a potentially explosive cocktail. With only 8 percent of the world's population, Latin America became the region with the most casualties due to the pandemic, accounting for 30 percent of global deaths. The pandemic also highlighted the unsustainability of current pandemic management models, which rely mainly on women and especially poor women. In Latin America and the Caribbean, even before the pandemic, "women spent three times as much time as men doing unpaid care work, and this was aggravated by the growing demand for care and the reduction in the supply of services caused by lockdown and social distancing measures adopted to curb the health crisis."[5]

Finally, the pandemic brought to light the close link between socio-ecological crises, underdevelopment models, and human health. One of its structural causes was deforestation, i.e., the destruction of ecosystems in a way that displaces wild animals from their natural habitats and releases zoonotic viruses that had been isolated for millennia, bringing them into contact with other animals and humans in urban environments and allowing them to make interspecies leaps. In sum, the Covid-19 virus has exposed to what extent the model of the Anthropocene or Capitalocene applies not only to the general narrative of the climate crisis, but also to neoliberal globalization and the different extractive models that are implemented on a local and national scale.

During 2020, some celebrated the fact that the shutdown of different economic activities led to a temporary reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. However, neo-extractivism never stopped. On the contrary, in Latin America, a large proportion of extractive activities (such as mining) were declared essential; deforestation advanced, and so did mega forest fires, resulting in the destruction of strategic ecosystems. The assassination of environmental activists also continued during the pandemic, proving once more that Latin America remained the most dangerous place in the world for them. The Global Witness report released in September 2021 shows that 227 lethal attacks were

4 Nabil Ahmed et al., "Inequality Kills: The Unparalleled Action Needed to Combat Unprecedented Inequality in the Wake of COVID-19," Oxfam International (17 January 2022); oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-kills.

5 Alicia Bárcena, "Cuidados en América Latina y el Caribe en tiempos de COVID-19. Hacia sistemas integrales para fortalecer la respuesta y la recuperación," CEPAL and UN Women (19 August 2020); cepal.org/es/presentaciones/cuidados-america-latina-caribe-tiempos-covid-19-sistemas-integrales-fortalecer-la.

6 Global Witness, "Last line of defence" (13 September 2021); globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/last-line-defence. Note that, after Columbia and Mexico, the Philippines was the third most dangerous individual country.

7 Portuguese acronym: Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais; See BBC News Mundo, "Pantanal: 7 impactantes imágenes de los incendios en el humedal más grande de Sudamérica" (11 September 2020); bbc.com/mundo/noticias-54124696, cited in Maristella Svampa, "La pandemia desde America Latina: Nueve tesis para un balance provisional," *Nueva Sociedad* 291 (2021): 80–100; nuso.org/articulo/la-pandemia-desde-america-latina.

8 Spanish acronym: Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales.

recorded throughout the world in 2020, exceeding historical figures for the second year in a row. Three quarters of those murders occurred in Latin America (165 persons). Colombia was once again the worst-affected country in the world, with sixty-five recorded killings, and Nicaragua, with twelve deaths, was the deadliest place for environmental champions on a per capita basis.[6]

Likewise, neo-extractivist policy continues to overcome any ideological rift or difference between conservatives, progressives, and extreme right-wingers. In 2020, the Brazilian Pantanal, the largest continental wetland on the planet (which covers a large portion of the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul), experienced 16,000 fires, making it the year with the largest number of individual fires according to data from the National Institute for Space Research [INPE].[7] In 2022, in the context of drought and various economic activities that involved burning and cutting, a fire destroyed 40 percent of the Iberá Wetlands in Argentina, another of the world's great wetlands. In Mexico, in September of the same year, Victor M. Toledo, one of the most important figures in Latin American political ecology, was forced to resign from his position at the Office of the Secretary of the Environment and Natural Resources [SEMARNAT].[8] His resignation exposed, once again, the limits of progressivism. Finally, while the struggle against the installation of fracking in Colombia continues, the mega-mining onslaught has deepened in both Ecuador and Argentina, despite the lack of social license and the fact that mobilized citizens are seeking to engage using existing institutional arrangements (public consultations in Cuenca, Ecuador, and citizen initiatives in Chubut, Argentina), efforts that are either denied or begrudgingly granted by local authorities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also exposed the importance of care and the roles of women, in multiple dimensions: First, in the general sense of caring for the land, its life cycles and ecosystems. Thus, during the pandemic we have witnessed a veritable explosion of workshops and discussions on care led by various female leaders, activists, and organizations from different feminist, territorial, community, and socioenvironmental currents throughout Latin America, covering topics such as care for, and relationships with, bodies, lands, and territories; care practices regarding seeds and agroecology; care and food sovereignty; and care and community self-management tasks. Thus, analyses of care as a right have multiplied, driven mainly by feminist economics. The need to actively rethink public policies through comprehensive care systems that see care as a right and reduce the gender gap is key to thinking about recovery after the pandemic.

The pandemic and its effects have also revealed the need to transform the relationship between society and nature, overcoming the dualistic and anthropocentric paradigm that is at the core of bad development models—an instrumental and objectivist vision of the world that conceives of humanity as independent from, and external to, nature. It is no coincidence, therefore, that current environmental movements rely on other-relational paradigms or narratives that emphasize the importance of interdependence, care, complementarity, and reciprocity. In the heat of the climate crisis, therefore, struggles have become more comprehensive. They no longer exclusively oppose predatory activities, but actively defend strategic ecosystems seen as integral territories (such as glaciers, wetlands, jungles, forests, rivers, watersheds, seas, and mountains) that are threatened by a large number of extractive activities (such as mega-mining, oil extraction, livestock farming, agribusiness or real-estate development, among others) whose effects accumulate with, and are strengthened by, the effects of the climate crisis (droughts, fires, and other extreme phenomena). Relationships between human and nonhuman factors are redefined in relational terms that are more, and more naturally, integrated with the different languages of valuation, in contrast to the dominant binary and objectivist language.

From this perspective, one of the great contributions of Southern eco-territorial feminisms and feminist economics, together with Indigenous peoples, is the recognition of those alternative valuation languages, those potential alternative links between society and nature, that place care and the sustainability of dignified life at their core. In this sense, the care paradigm can be thought of as the basis for an eco-social transition, conceived from a multidimensional

9 "Re-primarization" refers to the return to primary commodities as the main source of export revenues. "Parastatal" applies to entities that are not part of the state, but that operate on behalf of it, while having relative autonomy.

perspective that articulates the different spheres of social life: care and health, care and education, care and work, care and access to housing, and care and community management, among others. Thus, far from being a fad, the care paradigm as the keystone of the eco-social transition reveals the power of the various feminisms currently socially and politically mobilized in their radical questioning of patriarchy, in their denunciation of capitalism as a war machine against life, and in their commitment to the sustainability of dignified life.

In short, extractivism has been present throughout the history of the continent and its struggles. The term defines a nature-appropriation model, a pattern of colonial accumulation associated with the birth of modern capitalism. In the context of the socio-ecological crisis, twenty-first-century extractivism, or neo-extractivism, has brought with it new dimensions of extractivism at different levels: global (expansion of the commodity frontier, re-primarization of economies, depletion of non-renewable natural resources, worldwide socio-ecological crisis); regional and national (relationship between the extractive export model, nation-states, and extraordinary income); territorial (intensive use or occupation of the land, destruction of ecosystems, new socioenvironmental conflicts, eco-territorial struggles with the participation of different collectives); and political (increased criminalization, state and parastatal violence, and emergence of a new anti-establishment political grammar).[9] Finally, within the framework of the continent's anti-extractive struggles, the eco-territorial turn has been expanding hand in hand with the prominence of eco-territorial feminisms and native peoples, putting alternative ecopolitical narratives and potential alternative links between society and nature on the public agenda, with an emphasis on interdependence, care, and the need to go beyond critical diagnoses to suggestions for a desired future and a dignified life.

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SETTLER COLONIALISM IN UNGREEN, CLIMATE-UNFRIENDLY DISGUISE & AS A TOOL FOR GENOCIDE

May-Britt Öhman

More recently, the concept of settler colonialism has come to be used increasingly in analyses of the colonial relationships between the Swedish state, the Swedes, and the Sámi. The history of interaction is complex, as the territory has been shared for millennia. The concept of settler colonialism is nevertheless useful to apply to strategies that aim to displace Indigenous rights to the lands and waters and replace them with those of the settlers, as if the settlers hold equal and/or authentic rights as heirs. Furthermore, a specific way of life—that of the settler—takes precedence, whereas nomadic lifestyles are considered to be outside of the normal way. The colonial state's ethnic cleansing of Sámi forms part of these settler-colonial practices, within which racism has been, and still is, used as a tool.

In this essay, I discuss some of the perspectives on "climate change" and "green transition" I have come across within my research and supradisciplinary collaboration over the last two decades. I also argue for the use of the concept of (cultural) genocide as a basis for discussing the Swedish state's actions and policies regarding the Indigenous Sámi.

Wind Power as a Tool of the Settler-Colonial Destruction of Sámi Livelihoods & of Sámi

> Over the course of more than ten years we have fought against wind power on our calving lands, around Hällberget. We lost the case and now the future seems dark. I have promised Vasa Vind that nothing will be built as long as I live. If they start building, they will have to run me down. I will use every day to stand in the way with my body, to stop this destruction. We have used the legal path as long as it is possible, it seems. As we cannot protect the calving grounds, it must be the legislation that is wrong. It is 2022, and we are about to lose the nursery for our reindeer. #greencolonialism #wewillneedhelpheresoon #flakaberggroup #theSámivillagehasopposedfromday1 #onefeelslikeshitwhenonecannotdomore[1]

The above quote is from a social media post made in March 2022 by Henrik Andersson, reindeer herder of the Gällivare Forest Sámi village in Norrbotten, the northernmost county on the Swedish side of Sápmi, the Sámi territories. In February 2022, after a decade of legally opposing the establishment of a wind-power industrial area within their calving grounds, the Gällivare Forest Sámi lost in court when their appeal against an earlier ruling was turned down by the settler-colonial (Swedish) Land and Environmental Court of Appeal. For Henrik Andersson and the Gällivare Forest Sámi village, this was but one of many struggles they continue to pursue to protect the reindeer from complete extermination by the Swedish state; to protect traditional Sámi livelihoods, to protect the lands, the waters, and the climate.

The Gällivare Forest Sámi currently have several court processes underway. Apart from the Vasa Vind wind-power industrial establishment (owned by Dutch pension fund APG),[2] the Swedish state power company Vattenfall also plans to produce wind power on a large area within the territory of this Forest Sámi village.

As well as protecting their lands against *ungreen* and destructive wind power, the time and energy of Sámi villagers and reindeer herders is also taken up by having to deal with several other issues that undermine the possibility of long-term sustainability for us all. The fact there are too many predators that kill the newborn calves causes constant work for the Sámi each spring, when they must report to the

Gällivare Forest Sámi village, April 2022. One of the good days; life as it should always be. Flakaberg group herders Hendrik Andersson and Michael Guttorm Eriksson gently follow their reindeer as they move back to their summer grazing lands and calving grounds. Photo by Tina Eriksson. Image courtesy of the author.

county administrative board to apply for permits to hunt down certain individual predators that cause major havoc, each one killing several reindeer. There are railways that kill thousands of reindeer every year, yet little to no work is done to change this for the better.

Twice per year, the Gällivare Forest Sámi village herders need to cross the E4, the highway that runs through the whole of Sweden, with their reindeer. When Henrik Andersson started as a herder about twenty-five years ago, this was rather easy. But today the fences and the increased traffic have turned the highway into a death trap, for both the reindeer and their herders.

Most Sámi villages, including the Gällivare Forest Sámi village, have one or several mines with tailing dams within their territories.[3] Furthermore, there are local inhabitants who pursue settler colonial logics by attacking their reindeer; shooting or hitting them with cars, trucks, or snowmobiles. In schools, in society, and online, there is outright hate and racism directed toward those who openly display Sámi identity, and this is encouraged by those Swedish state representatives, of both local and regional authorities, that ignore and render Sámi culture and history invisible.

The Sámi Work to Protect the Environment, Their Culture & Long-Term Sustainability

The Sámi's labor to protect their livelihoods, along with animals, the environment and nature—that is, their work toward long-term environmental and social sustainability—has been ongoing for more than a century. Reindeer herding has become increasingly difficult over the last century due to multiple factors including settler-colonial theft of lands and waters, legislation, and increasing industrial exploitation. Never silent, ever since the early Sámi human rights defenders Elsa Laula and Karin Stenberg published their books in 1904 and 1920 respectively, the Sámi have continuously challenged the aggressions of the settler colonial state.[4] Supported by the Sámi community, they promoted the rights of the Sámi to their own lifestyle, education, and the opportunity to influence policy-making.

In the last decade, Sámi have had to start mobilizing to challenge what is commonly referred to as a "green transition" in the name

1 Facebook post by Henrik Andersson on 19 March 2022. Translated by the author.

2 See vasavind.se/agare.

3 Elaine Mumford, "Marginalized Indigenous Knowledge and Contemporary Swedish Colonialism: The Case of Reindeer Husbandry in Gällivare Forest Sámi Community" (M.A. thesis, Uppsala University, 2021).

4 Elsa Laula, *Inför lif eller död? Sanningsord i de lappska förhållandena* [Life or Death? True Words Concerning the Situation for the Sámi], (Stockholm: Wilhelmssons Boktryckeri, 1904); Karin Stenberg and Valdemar Lindholm, *Dat läh mijen situd! – Det är vår vilja: en vädjan till den svenska nationen från samefolket* [This Is Our Wish! – An Appeal to the Swedish Nation from the Sámi People], (Stockholm: Svenska förlaget, 1920).

Reindeer herder Hendrik Andersson explains to the camera the consequences of wind-power plants built on the Sámi village reindeer grazing lands of Gällivare Forest. He is standing in a quarry dug to build forestry access roads. Wind power will require more roads and quarries—intensifying the encroachment on grazing land. Operating the camera is Petri Storlöpare, filming for the Dálkke research group's documentary *Ungreen Windpower: Sámi Indigenous and Scientific Perspectives on Fossil Dependent and Environmentally Destructive Designs* (2021); youtube.com/watch?v=vMq-Yah4RL0. Photo by the author.

Gällivare Forest Sámi village reindeer owner Elle Eriksson, calf-marking in Vuoskon. Photo by Tina Eriksson. Image courtesy of the author.

5 Åsa Össbo and Patrik Lantto, "Colonial Tutelage and Industrial Colonialism: Reindeer Husbandry and Early 20th-Century Hydroelectric Development in Sweden," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36/3 (2011): 324–48, doi.org/: 10.1080/03468755.2011.580077; May-Britt Öhman, "Taming Exotic Beauties: Swedish Hydro Power Constructions in Tanzania in the Era of Development Assistance, 1960s–1990s" (Ph.D. dissertation, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, 2007), 52.

6 Öhman, "Taming Exotic Beauties," 70.

7 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, CERD/C/SWE/CO/18 (21 August 2008); opinion approved by the Committee under Article 14 of the Convention concerning communication no. 54/2013, CERD/C/102/D/54/2013, in November 2020.

of what is claimed to be a fight to stop climate change. In Sweden, the exploitation of rivers in Sámi territories to produce hydropower started in the early twentieth century, as the Swedish state aimed to become less dependent on imported coal for energy consumption. Most rivers in Sámi territories were affected, causing severe negative impacts on the local communities, to whom, however, little or no compensation was offered.[5] Since the 1990s, when calls for renewable energy began to emerge, the Swedish state power board has promoted hydropower as renewable and environmentally friendly, despite the extensive negative environmental and social impacts that result from hydropower exploitation.[6]

Over the last decade, the push for "greening" has become a major threat to the livelihoods of Indigenous Sámi. The Swedish state has been taking over Sámi territories by unlawful means for more than a century. Starting on a large scale in the nineteenth century and increasing over the twentieth century, the last decade has brought the most forceful encroachments yet. Similar experiences are reported on both the Norwegian and Finnish sides of the Sámi territories, where climate change and greening discourse are being used as a tool—an excuse—for outright cultural genocide.

Reframing Swedish State Policies of "Fighting Climate Change" as Cultural Genocide

Sweden has been questioned and criticized several times by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination over the treatment of the Sámi.[7] However, the application of the concept of genocide is commonly avoided and rejected in this regard. This is in

part due to the fact that Sweden and the other Fennoscandian countries are widely considered to be democratic defenders of human rights, and also that knowledge about the situation experienced by the Sámi has not yet been presented to the International Court of Justice. (This would be a difficult and costly procedure to undertake, both in terms of funds and in terms of the personal energy and capacity required to do so. It is not something a few individuals are likely to attempt on their own, without knowing that they have massive support.) Certain authors, activists, and politicians have indeed applied the concept of genocide, but with the addition of the term "cultural"—thus, "cultural genocide"—a slight modification, but one that might appear to soften it.[8] While "genocide" is commonly understood as outright killing, "cultural genocide" is commonly understood as "the systematic destruction of traditions, values, language, and other elements that make one group of people distinct from another."[9] Genocide as such was first recognized as a crime under international law in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly. It was codified as an independent crime in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, often shortened to "the Genocide Convention."[10] The definition of genocide as stated in the Genocide Convention, Article II:

> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
> Killing members of the group;
> Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
> Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
> Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
> Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[11]

To meet this definition of genocide requires that one or several of these acts have been, or is being, committed. It is therefore reasonable to discuss certain actions taken towards the Sámi during the last century as actual genocide. While the outright killing of Sámi by the Swedish state is not known to have occurred during the last couple of centuries, occurrences of others of these acts are documented. The causing of serious mental harm to members of the group is well-known of, along with "deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part."[12]

8 Mats Jonsson, *När vi var samer* [When We Were Sámi], (Stockholm: Galago, 2021); ed. Bo Andersson, *Samer: Om Nordmalingdomen och om ett urfolks rättigheter och identitet* [Sámi: About Nordmalingdomen and about the rights and identity of an Indigenous people], (Norsborg: Recito, 2013); Jenni Laiti and Florian Carl, "A victory over Sweden's colonialism," *Aljazeera Opinions*; aljazeera.com /opinions/2020/2/12/a-victory-over-swedens -colonialism.

9 Elisa Novic, *The Concept of Cultural Genocide: An International Law Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2016); hdl.handle.net/1814/43864.

10 See Damien Short, *Redefining Genocide: Settler Colonialism, Social Death and Ecocide* (London: Zed Books, 2016).

11 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), Document A/RES/96-I; documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN /NR0/033/47/PDF/NR003347.pdf.

12 Ibid.

A 200-meter-high wind turbine in Markbygden, Norrbotten county, one of 314 covering 140 square kilometers of the herding grounds of the Forest Sámi village Östra Kikkejaur with access roads and cables. 75 percent of this wind-power plant is owned by the Chinese state-owned company CGN. Photo by the author.

Sámi have worked hard to make known and challenge such acts since the 1904 publication of South Sámi woman Elsa Laula's book *Inför lif eller död? Sanningsord i de lappska förhållandena* [Life or Death? True Words Concerning the Situation for the Sámi]. In this book, Laula describes the harsh conditions of life for the Sámi, bereft of their lands by the Swedish state and thereby of their means to survive. In 1920, forest Sámi woman Karin Stenberg published another strong critique of the Swedish state's treatment of the Sámi, calling for the strengthening of the Sámi people's rights to survival and well-being.[13] Evidence for the forced transferal of Sámi children to another group may need further investigation, but the forced placement of Sámi in residential schools where they were not educated to the same extent as Swedish children, while also being forced to unlearn Sámi traditions, culture, and language, has been documented and challenged by Sámi.[14]

Throughout the twentieth century the Sámi mobilized and repeatedly demanded their rights to life and well-being, and they continue to do so to this day. It would have been impossible for Swedish state representatives to avoid hearing at least some of these calls and demands. That they did hear some, at least, is reflected in the fact that, in 1977, the Swedish parliament came to refer to the Sámi as Indigenous; in 2000, the Sámi were granted rights as a national minority, and in 2011 their status as a people was granted within the Swedish constitution.[15]

Over the last century, Swedish state policy-making generally has neglected the spatiality of Sámi livelihoods, in regard to reindeer herding and other everyday practices.[16] One of the consequences of the government policies that have resulted from this neglect is that reindeer herding is near collapse in certain areas, and thereby an important part of Sámi traditional culture is also threatened.[17]

The ultimate consequence of this aggressive neglect is a negative path toward the total eradication of Sámi livelihoods.[18] Again, when compared with international experiences of similar actions, the resultant extermination can be interpreted as genocide. If successful, it will fulfill earlier attempts by the colonial nation states to push the Sámi away, eradicating the Sámi lifestyle and leading to further forced assimilation and destruction. Furthermore, the physical and mental health situation for many Sámi, reindeer herders in particular, is already severe, as documented and verified in several studies.[19]

Meanwhile, the absence of Sámi representation in Swedish government inquiries and commissions that are dealing with issues that concern Sámi livelihoods—the 2017 Energy Commission, the 2019

13 Stenberg and Lindholm, *Dat läh mijen situd!*.

14 Sten Henrysson, "Darwin, ras och nomadskola: motiv till kåtaskolreformen 1913" [Darwin, Race, and Nomadic School: The Motivation for the Nomadic School Reform of 1913] (Forskningsarkivet, Umeå University, 1993); ed. Kaisa Huuva and Ellacarin Blind, *"När jag var åtta år lämnade jag mitt hem och jag har ännu inte kommit tillbaka": minnesbilder från samernas skoltid* ["When I Was Eight, I Left my Home and I Have Not Yet Returned": Memorial Pictures from the Sámi School Days] (Stockholm: Verbum, 2016).

15 "Samerna i Sverige," Sametinget [Sámi Parliament], (2021); sametinget.se/samer.

16 See Stefan Mikaelsson, "Winds of Change: The Role and Potential of Sámi Parliamentarians," in *Re:Mindings: Co-Constituting Indigenous/Academic/Artistic Knowledges*, ed. Johan Gärdebo, May-Britt Öhman, and Hiroshi Maruyama (Hugo Valentin Centre, Uppsala University, 2014), 79–87; May-Britt Öhman, "Embodied Vulnerability in Large Scale Technical Systems: Vulnerable Dam Bodies, Water Bodies, and Human Bodies," in *Bodies, Boundaries and Vulnerabilities: Interrogating Social, Cultural, and Political Aspects of Embodiment*, ed. Lisa Folkmarson Käll (New York: Springer, 2015), 47–79.

17 Birgitta Ahman, Kristin Svensson, and Lars Rönnegård, "High Female Mortality Resulting in Herd Collapse in Free-Ranging Domesticated Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*) in Sweden," *PLOS ONE* (30 October 2014); doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0111509.

18 See Marie Persson and May-Britt Öhman, "Visions for a Future at the Source of the Ume River, Sweden," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Andersen and Jean M. O'Brien (New York: Routledge, 2017); Stefan Mikaelsson, "Winds of Change," in *Re:Mindings*, 101–17.

19 Maria Furberg, Birgitta Evengård, and Maria Nilsson, "Facing the Limit of Resilience: Perceptions of Climate Change Among Reindeer Herding Sámi in Sweden," *Global Health Action* 4 (October 2011); Lotta Omma, Mikael Sandlund, and Lars Jacobsson, "Suicidal Expressions in Young Swedish Sámi, a Cross-Sectional Study," *International Journal of Circumpolar Health* (2013), 72.

20 Energikommissionen 2017; *Havs-och vattenmyndigheten* 2019; *Det Nationella Skogsprogrammet* 2018–present.

21 *Renmarkskommittén* 2021.

Inquiry on Water and Hydropower Related Activities, and the ongoing National Forestry Program,[20] for example—seems to be a general trend, yet one that currently does not seem to be regarded as an important issue for consideration by state representatives or the Swedish parliamentarian majority. And while there is Sámi representation within the ongoing inquiry into the reform of legislation on reindeer herding,[21] among the government-appointed experts there are only Swedish scholars. That no Sámi scholars were invited indicates that Sámi scholarly expertise is being ignored while the Sámi are restricted to occupying those positions within the inquiry wherein they can more easily be controlled.

Wind Power & Ungreen Transition—Pursued to Terminate the Sámi Way of Life

As a member of the ongoing research group and project Dálkke: Indigenous Climate Change Studies at Uppsala University, I have been involved in investigating the consequences of wind power exploitation

for the Sámi reindeer herding community of Gällivare Forest Sámi village.[22] It is of importance, first of all, to challenge the "green" in the so-called "green transition" of today. Looking closely at wind power, we have noticed that the planning processes do not reckon with all the relevant aspects of wind power's own fossil-fuel dependency and other environmental consequences. Firstly, a large part of what is needed to establish, maintain, and eventually decommission wind power plants and industrial areas is never taken into account within their so-called "life-cycle analyses" (LCAs). These estimations are made by the parties that wish to construct wind power, and they are not verified by any objective party. Secondly, most of what is needed to produce wind power is excluded from LCAs. This is what makes it possible to (falsely) claim that wind power within the current design paradigm is green.[23] Thirdly, the establishment of wind power is a serious threat to the Sámi way of life. This case has been argued by Sámi villages on the Swedish and Norwegian sides for many years now, both in opinion pieces and court processes. Yet, the Swedish court system continues to give wind power companies the right to establish production on Sámi grazing and calving lands, while ignoring Sámi rights, as in the case of Vasa Vind and the Gällivare Forest Sámi village.

I end this essay with the words of a young Sámi woman of the Gällivare Forest Sámi village, Elle Eriksson, posted on social media after the decision by the Land and Environmental Court of Appeal to reject their complaint against Vasa Vind in February 2022:

My present, past, and future. These are threatened by the planned establishment of a wind power farm on Hällberget, which is situated within the traditional calving grounds of my reindeer herding group, Flakaberg.

My present is threatened because I, my family, and my relatives will be affected. For more than ten years, the reindeer herders of the Flakaberg group have tried to prevent the establishment of this wind power facility, since it will bring about devastating consequences. The female reindeers who have used this area for hundreds of years will not be able to give birth there anymore, the livelihood and the mental well-being of the reindeer herders are at stake, and the Sámi culture is infringed and disparaged. We will never experience a traditional calf-marking on our customary lands if this wind power establishment is realized.

My past is threatened as the traditional knowledge that my *áddjá*/grandfather and my *áttje*/father have will be lost if the nature that the knowledge is connected to is destroyed. The forests, lakes, mountains, and mires that my ancestors have used, and all the accumulated knowledge that they have passed on from generation to generation will be impoverished, and ultimately vanish. Will my *áhttje* be forced to carry the burden of belonging to the last reindeer-herding generation of the Flakaberg group?

My future is threatened due to the risk that I will not be able to continue with reindeer herding. The chain of reindeer herders that I am a part of will be broken. The legacy that I wish to preserve and pass on to future generations will be destroyed. The forest Sámi tradition that we are keepers of will be endangered. The history and posterity of an entire lineage will be ruined, all in the name of the "green transition." Sámi rights, our rights, must be respected and our intrinsic value as an Indigenous people must be seen as self-evident. Sámi rights should not be considered as an interest to be "balanced" against other interests.

Lastly, I want to thank all the Sámi and non-Sámi who stand up for us and fight on our side. Your solidarity gives us more strength to continue our work to protect the present, past and future of the Flakaberg group.[24]

22 "Dálkke" means "weather" in Lule Sámi. The project Dálkke: Indigenous Climate Change Studies is financed by FORMAS within the Swedish National research program on climate. Within the project, we work for the establishment of the research field Indigenous Climate Change Studies, in Sweden and on an international level. (The text in this footnote is quoted from: cemfor.uu.se/research-projects/dalkke--indigenous-climate-change-studies.)

23 May-Britt Öhman, Henrik Andersson, and Petri Storlöpare (Dálkke research project and research group, Uppsala University), *Ungreen Windpower: Sámi Indigenous and Scientific Perspectives on Fossil-Dependent Designs* (2021); youtube.com/watch?v=vMq-Yah4RL0.

24 Facebook post by Elle Eriksson on 6 March 2022. Translated by the author. The post was also published as an online article by Amnesty Sápmi; amnestysapmi.se/elle-eriksson-var-slakts-historia-krossas-av-den-grona-omstallningen.

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LAND & FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Fernando García-Dory's work engages with the relationship between culture and nature, from landscape and the rural to the dynamics of identity, crisis, utopia, and social change, via an interest in biological forms and processes. Since 2010 he has been developing a project around a para-institution called INLAND. García-Dory founded Bajo el Asfalto está la Huerta [Under the Pavement, the Orchard; BAH] in 1999 and initiated the Escuela de Pastores [Shepherds School] project in 2004. He won Creative Time New York's Socially Engaged Award (2012), the Chamberlain Award (2016), and was a finalist for the Rolex Prize (2010). García-Dory is preparing his Ph.D. on art and agroecology at the Institute of Sociology and Peasant Students at the University of Andalusia, Spain, as well as exhibitions at BALTIC Newcastle, Serpentine Galleries London, Madre Napoli, the biennials of Istanbul, Kosovo and Urals, and documenta fifteen.

BEYOND THE NATURALIST PHANTASMAGORIA, THE PASTURES

Fernando García-Dory

A Mountain Romance

To approach the different layers, genealogies, uses, gazes, and projections of the Cantabrian Mountains one has first to follow a rugged and discontinuous path, avoiding rocks, cracks, and bushes, so as to define those points and elements that could help one to map, or read—in order to cross—this landscape. Relatively small in size when compared with the Alps, for example, the mountains themselves are limestone deposits of ancient sea beds that, as they emerged and wrinkled, raised the Earth's crust to an altitude of up to three kilometers in close proximity to the sea.

Of the millions of people who visit the region every year, the landscape is its main attraction for the vast majority. Its geographical and geological peculiarities, coupled with its climate: the mountains' heady peaks, craggy outcrops of limestone sculpted by glaciers and cut through by rivers and torrents; their gorges and narrow passes. Against their sharp relief, and in the face of the delicious horror of their sublimity, the exuberance of vegetation and the coastal cliffs enthrall the visitor, while, on the other hand, an undeniably evocative patchwork of meadows, woods, bushes, shrubs, and paths, dotted with hamlets, villages, huts, and winter stables with their ash trees stakes a claim for this landscape to be considered picturesque.

Besides this coming-together of the eighteenth century categories on the sublime and beautiful of Edmund Burke, another

key to the success of this region's landscape can be found in German psychologist Willy Hellpach's (1877–1955) theories of the psychological influence on peoples of what he called "the geopsyche."[1] According to this forerunner of environmental psychology, the articulation of changes and the movements of habitual forms, combined in different ways with the landscape's coloration, transmit fertility and abundance to our subconscious (green, for example, is soothing to the eye because of its wavelength and its radiation on the skin, producing a pleasurable feeling). By instilling the landscape with a (geo-)psychic dimension over and above its merely geographical features, Hellpach formalized the feelings of romantic travelers in search of freedom, the untamed, and the natural powers that underscore human smallness—their sentient experience of the voyage and its landscapes. The Argentine historian Fernando Jorge Soto Roland describes this experience as follows:

> The romantic traveler became one with the vital surroundings he [sic] journeyed through. Therein lies the importance he gave not only to visual perception, but also to *interior perception*, considered as the victory of expression and feeling over rules and laws. It is unquestionably the romantic traveler who has come closest to the contemporary tourist.[2]

This closeness is evident in their shared yearning. Nowadays the range of media available to satisfy the desires of the tourist is completely different, yet in return for their endeavors, the traveler might struggle to find more than well-trodden paths.

In the case of the Cantabrian mountain range, a paradigm shift in the perception and construction of the landscape occurred when a new aesthetic-philosophical interpretation of the territory arose that underscored new problems and social values. It was the time of the Industrial Revolution, when mismatches between concepts of nature and culture began to be forged. There is evidence of pastoralist communities having inhabited the territory for six thousand years. In the transition from hunting to herding wild herbivores, following their seasonal movements to profit from the nutritionally richer grass of the summer pastures of glacier-carved valleys, their tribal organization developed a form of commoning, in terms of land use; a system that, to a certain degree, still exists today.

The mountains form a natural fortress that served as a refuge for local communities during the Roman invasion. Three legions and the presence of Julius Caesar himself were needed to conquer the

1 See Willy Hellpach, *Geopsique: el alma humana bajo el influjo de tiempo y clima, suelo y paisaje* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940).

2 Fernando Jorge Soto Roland, "El viajero del romanticismo. El siglo XIX y la experiencia sensible del viaje," *Monografias* (n.d.); monografias.com/trabajos21/viajero-romanticismo/viajero-romanticismo2. Translated by the author.

3 By this time, of course, the geographical and geological exploration and mapping of the Earth and its species by scientists and aristocrats from all over Europe was well underway, as part of imperial expansion.

4 Ludovic Fontán de Negrín, *En los Picos de Europa* [1906] (Gijón: GH Editores, 1986).

region, motivated by the presence of gold and other metals soon exploited thereafter. When the Roman Empire collapsed, the Visigoth monarchs based on the Castilian plateau had constantly to endure strikes from the transmountain tribes, and had trouble collecting taxes. Later, when Muslims ruled the entire Iberian Peninsula, a successful guerrilla action taken against troops in the mountains by an alliance between part of the exiled Visigoth elite and tribal leaders paved the way for the institution of a Christian proto-kingdom. This same action would go on to be exploited by successive Spanish monarchs and Francisco Franco's National Catholicist dictatorship (1939–78) as a "birth of a nation" narrative.

A Clash of Civilizations

On 4 August 1904, a day on which the nineteenth-century exploration of the Cantabrian Mountains by Casiano de Prado, the comte de Saint-Saud, and the young German geologist and mountaineer Gustav Schulze was taken to another level by Pedro Pidal, Marqués de Villaviciosa de Asturias and intimate friend of King Alfonso XIII.[3] According to Ludovico Fontan de Negrin, himself an aristocrat and consecrated alpinist, it was then that "Spanish mountaineering was born with the conquest of the most emblematic summit of the national territory, especially for the 550 meters of the vertical wall of its west face. The pioneers climbed the North slope and opened what is still today called the Pidal-Cainejo route."[4]

Pedro Pidal obsessively had it between his eyebrows to be the first human being to reach the summit of Urriellu. "El Cainejo,"

Shepherds School project, initiated by Fernando García-Dory in 2004, ongoing. Image courtesy of INLAND.

Gregorio Pérez, was a goat herder (called “El Atrevíu,” or “the courageous one,” by his neighbors). Pidal had a hard time convincing El Cainejo to go with him, not because he was afraid of the adventure, but because he insisted that the aristocrat answer one question: “Why are we going to the Picu?”[5] Gregorio was then fifty-one years old and had five children to support from his marriage to Francisca Cuevas.

Pérez and Pidal spent the afternoon of 4 August 1904 with binoculars inspecting every millimeter of the rock for alternatives. They slept at the end of the Canal de Camburero, accompanied by a herd of goats, and at eight o’clock the next morning they were breakfasting by a spring at the base of Urriellu. According to Fontán de Negrín, El Cainejo “had very large and very strong hands with which he held on to the holds, leaning on his legs with short and powerful muscles and progressing on the rock as if he were an orangutan.” Pidal had physically prepared himself during the winter by “lifting the big weight, the ‘Sultana,’ at Sánchez’s gym in Gijón” and, having

5 *Picu* = peak, in the regional dialect.

6 Fontán de Negrín, *En los Picos de Europa*.

7 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Bachelors’ Ball: The Crisis of Peasant Society in Béarn* (Chicago University Press, 2005), 83.

“traveled to London in search of the best materials of the moment,” had just then returned “from training in the Alps.” Together, Fontán Negrín continues, and not “for money, glory or fame,” they would go on to make “a climb that still amazes today for its daring and for having been made with very rudimentary means. El Cainejo climbed barefoot and Pidal […] wore espadrilles.”[6]

One would think it likely the local goatherd did climb for some material compensation. The cultural capital assigned to “dominating” a mountain had no currency in the culture of the shepherds by whom the peaks of nude rock are called *la tierre mala* [the evil land], mostly because their sheep (or goats) cannot graze there. Fontán Negrín’s description of the shepherd, his body in movement tailored to climb a mountain, is reminiscent of Bourdieu’s text “The Peasant and his Body,” where he writes of the country ball as “the scene of a real clash of civilizations,” one in which “the whole urban world, with its cultural models, its music, its dances, its techniques for the use of the body, bursts into peasant life.”[7] Today, this clash of civilizations is more present than ever (along with its forms of cultural apartheid—urban Enlightenment culture versus rural culture, the state versus the village), and precisely because the subject of their domination and dismissal is reacting back, articulating a response. A shepherd’s contestation movement is birthing, with its own terms, vocabularies, expressions, that even the traditional left is unable to understand.

Sanctuary, Sanctuary

The world’s first national park was established at Yellowstone in the United States in 1872. In 1877 to 1901, the aforementioned king and marquis were instrumental in the construction of the Basílica de Santa María la Real de Covadonga, a sanctuary reminiscent of Lourdes that was to attract pilgrims from all over, and Europe’s first national park

was created at Covadonga in 1918. The idea behind the park was to protect a "natural wonder" for the edifying enjoyment of the ever-growing urban population, displaced shepherds-turned-proletarians-and-miners. Like the clearances and enclosures in Scotland that earlier served to increase the labor forces at the new industrial poles of Manchester and Birmingham, the establishment of this national park effectively secured and alienated landscapes created by millennia of pastoralism. The construction of a railway to Covadonga and a road leading to the lakes at the park's heart made these spots accessible. Nowadays they are well known through television coverage of the famous annual cycling race the Vuelta a España, another milestone that punctuates our "natural paradise."

In 1911, in the context of the Spanish Republican impulse for regeneration, in a divergent thread of history that appears today partly as a lost opportunity, the Alvarado brothers had toured this same mountain range making observations on the surrounding villages, the living conditions of the pastoralist communities, and the rich and diverse dairy culture in which they saw the main potential for rural empowerment (cheese being the millennia-old form of biotechnological storage of the summer pastures' protein surplus). Connected to the Institución Libre de Enseñanza [Free Teaching Institution] through the Escuela mercantil agrícola de Villablino [Commercial and Agricultural School of Villablino], and guided by the idea of *institucionalismo rural* as proclaimed by Francisco Sierra-Pambley,[8] Juan and Ventura Alvarado prepared a report whose recommendations and proposals remain relevant a century later. Propounding an integrated vision of the landscape in "P" format—*pastos, pastores, paisaje y paisanaje* [pastures, pastoralists, the peasant landscape, and its populace]—they proposed the strategic importance of native livestock and autochthonous breeds while proposing a certain modernization of traditional cheese-making procedures.

As the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship replaced the exclusivist land management of the aristocracy with a conservationist technocracy, the Covadonga sanctuary came to figure as a politicized representation of the Spanish nation with its affinities with the Virgin and Catholicism, its very existence echoing the victorious crusade, whether against "the moors" or "the communists." Commons management and other aspects of native pastoralist uses of the land were suppressed by ICONA (Institute for the Conservation of Nature) rangers, based on a simplistic and erroneous interpretation of the "wilderness" as just the forests alone; by selective reintroductions

Shepherds School project, initiated by Fernando García-Dory in 2004, ongoing. Image courtesy of INLAND.

of fauna, and even by clear attempts to suppress pastoralism in the mountains, considered as negative and harmful to that landscape. On the contrary, not only had cattle not harmed the environment as the managers of the national park in Picos seemed to think, they were a central and essential founding factor. To the extent that they have facilitated the maintenance of ecosystems and rebalanced the relationships between populations of wild species and domestic ones, the mountain landscape is not only a biological fact but also a cultural artifact whose architects have been herders, including the women who, historically, were often in charge of the *reciella* [smaller livestock]. From the endangered grouse that come to the meadows to feed on the insects that are drawn to the cows, to the semi-extinct bearded vulture that eats mostly the inner part of the bones of sheep carcasses, or the amphibians that rely on the cattle fountains being cleaned, the whole agro-ecosystem of the national park has effectively been modeled by the teeth of herbivores.[9]

Disneyfication: Bear or Cow?

Around the turn of this millennium, in a moment of opulent mass romanticism, a territorial marketing campaign identified the Cantabrian Mountains with Yellowstone native Yogi Bear at a cost of almost six million euros.[10] Thus, at peak *totum revolutum*, a confusing alienation was effected via acculturation based on references that exploited the spectacular dimension of the landscape even while dislocating it from its own proper aesthetic category. With the erasure of all real historical references to actual land use or collective populations, the business of the park became that of a simulacrum, reflecting—as do all of Disney's replicas of not only castles, jungles, and glaciers, but also urban surroundings such as those of the utopian Celebration—the shortcomings of industrial development to a point of no return.

Now, in the midst of the brutal reconversion of the rural environment, strewn with facilities for sporadic entertainment, sport, leisure, and with rural tourism advocated as a lifestyle choice, there is a dangerous tendency to regard existing realities as dead and buried, mere ghosts in a postcard or theme-park landscape. In a text accompanying the exhibition *Pastores, Nómadas, Trashumantes* [Shepherds, Nomads, Transhumants], the Galician artist Antón Reixa said something (in relation to the mad cow disease crisis) that sums up the situation perfectly:

> I don't know whether the cow is going to disappear altogether from our geographical and human landscape. [...] I believe that identity should be connected with the production of something, and I don't see how rural tourism is going to save the countryside. One part of the world wants to set us aside for the service industry, and that is a trap. Something must be produced, but we don't know what it is they have prepared for us.[11]

That the institution of the national park originally entailed a revaluation of its pristine nature and totem animal is at once an understandable reaction to general environmental deterioration and a tribute to the economic growth of developed industrial societies. Nonetheless, when fencing off a certain portion of an ecosystem in an attempt to save it, the complexities of existing land use and management were—and

8 *Institucionalismo rural* = rural institutionalism.

9 See Pedro Monserrat, *La cultura que hace el paisaje: escritos de un naturalista sobre nuestros recursos de montaña* (Estella: La Fertilidad de la Tierra, 2009); Ramon Reiné et al., eds., *La multi-funcionalidad de los pastos: producción ganadera sostenible y gestión de los ecosistemas* (Huelva: Sociedad Española para el Estudio de los Pastos, 2009). T. Rodríguez-Ortega et al., "Applying the ecosystem services framework to pasture based livestock farming systems in Europe," *Animal* 8 (2014): 1361–72.

10 "El oso Yogui y su inseparable Bubú, nueva imagen de la campaña turística del Principado," *El Comercio* (14 November 2006); elcomercio.es/prensa /20061114/asturias/yogui-inseparable-bubu -nueva_20061114.html.

11 Antón Reixa, text accompanying the exhibition of photographs by Tino Soriano, *Pastores, Nómadas, Trashumantes* [Shepherds, Nomads, Transhumants], curated by Fernando García-Dory, Oviedo, 2008. Translated by the author.

Shepherds School project, initiated by Fernando García-Dory in 2004, ongoing. Image courtesy of INLAND.

are—very often overlooked. The *raison d'être* of Yellowstone Park (home to Yogi Bear—as well as the ancestral land of the grizzly and dozens of tribes of Indigenous people) was to preserve a landscape "free from commercial exploitation, dedicated to the satisfaction of the public."[12] In Europe, as in much of the world, we find largely anthropic landscapes, agro-ecosystems resulting from the co-evolution of the "natural" environment and the communities that sustainably managed their resources. Meanwhile, in the field of art and culture, the symbolic battle rages on. The transcendental question: Is the park's totemic animal to be a cartoon bear, or a cow?

Post-Agricultural Peasants

Recognizing endogenous rural knowledge is one of the premises of agroecology, a multidisciplinary framework that combines the design of sustainable agricultural systems with the strengthening of the same communities that are affected by them, as by land-zoning plans and restrictions intended to protect the environment. This is the central thesis of Jaime Izquierdo and Gonzalo Barrena, who describe three distinct periods of environmental management in the century of the Picos de Europa national park: aristocratic, technocratic, and biocratic, all preceded, of course, by six thousand years of communal herding and land self-management that "has been repeatedly ignored by official versions of history […] and still remains invisible to the gaze of public institutions. The last one hundred years' lack of cultural understanding, far from alleviating the secular mistakes, has produced a shocking result."[13]

In fact, this lack of understanding can be traced back to at least the sixteenth century and the anti-peasant prejudice then influenced by dominant streams of European thought. Voltaire described the peasant class as "rustics living in huts with their women and animals […] speaking a jargon no one can understand in the cities, given that they have few ideas and, as a consequence, few expressions […] savages like this exist all over Europe."[14] A couple of centuries later, the ideologists of the so-called Green Revolution espoused very similar views. In his 1960 book *Social Change in Rural Society*, the neoliberal social scientist and advocate of agricultural modernization Everett Rogers defined peasants (or small farmers) as:

12 This conservationist mentality connects with the biocentric deep ecology that idealizes wild nature unspoiled by human traces and has been connected with eco-fascism. Social ecology and agroecology, on the other hand, look for ways of harmonizing social uses and environments.

13 Jaime Izquierdo and Gonzalo Barenna, *Marqueses, funcionarios, políticos y pastores* (Oviedo: Ediciones Nobel, 2006). Translated by the author.

14 Josep Fontana, "Los campesinos en la historia: reflexiones sobre un concepto y nos prejuicios," *Revista Historia Social* 28 (1997), cited by Marc Badal in "Viejas herramientas para nuevas agriculturas. Conocimientos campesinos, una herencia despreciada," *Revista Raíces* 2 (2011): 19–43.

15 Everett M. Rogers, *Social Change in Rural Society* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960). See also Eduardo Sevilla Guzmán and Manuel González de Molina, *Ecología, campesinado e historia* (Madrid: La Piqueta, 1993), cited by Marc Badal in "Viejas herramientas," 2011.

> […] suspicious of personal relationships; perceiving good as limited; hostile to government authority; confined to the family; lacking in innovative spirit; fatalistic; limited in their aspirations; very unimaginative, or lacking in empathy; non-savers because of the absence of unsatisfied desires; with a local outlook and a limited vision of the world."[15]

At least from the perspective of production, the land in Cantabria has often been perceived as disadvantageous, difficult, and inhospitable (probably since the Roman conquest brought an end to the cults of nature gods including forests and mountains). From the late Middle Ages to the 1950s, small farmers subservient to landowners of the privileged classes barely managed more than subsistence living. Production was made possible by the accumulation of their efforts and a sophisticated system of land use based on the association and rotation of crops, the use of livestock to maintain the fertility of the soil, and collective work around the nucleus of the village or hamlet. Various institutions were developed alongside this, regulating the commons and reinforcing solidarity. Agricultural tasks were also combined with celebrations and festivals; with gastronomy, with music, and dancing.

Today, while the region is still classified by EU Agricultural Policy as "disadvantaged," and almost half of the landowners still possess no more than one hectare or so for crops or pasture, the rural per se is no longer broadly positioned as a poisonous, culturally barren land impregnated by authoritarianism, traditionalism, conservatism,

Shepherd Alfonso Martinez was a renowned guide for alpinists and climbers in the Cantabrian Mountains. Image courtesy of Gonzalo Barren.

16 See Francisco Entrena Durán, *Cambios en la construcción social de lo rural* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1998).

17 Francisco Entrena Durán, *Cambios en la construcción social de lo rural*, 6. Translated by the author.

18 "At the end of the eighteenth century, in a socially fractured England immersed in a crisis of traditional agriculture and the exodus of the poorest rural population to the new industrial towns, great houses were decorated with bucolic scenes which bore no similarity with the absolute misery of the majority of English peasants at the time." Ibid.

19 Antonio Gómez Sal, "La Naturaleza en el paisaje," *Paisaje y Pensamiento* (Madrid: Abada/CDAN, 2006).

20 Ian Hunter, at the symposium "Linking Culture and Agriculture as a Strategy for a Meaningful Countryside," Groeneveld Forum, Sweden, November 2008.

and ignorance.[16] On the contrary, in a translocation of values, it is newly appreciated precisely because "all that smacks of rural or natural clichés partakes in the seductive power of the exotic."[17] Perhaps this view could be called neopastoral?[18] Far removed from the reality of rural communities, this kind of rosy folkloric overlay can serve to drown out the possibility of any real contemporary rural cultural expression.

Now in this "post-agricultural" era, it must be recognized that radical changes have taken place in the relationship between rural inhabitants and their landscape often erasing that, or those, that went before. Nonetheless, this rich heritage remains an essential feature of rural landscapes that cannot be overlooked, replaced by suburbanization or disregarded in the designation of natural and/or theme parks. The more we advance in this direction, the more work we will eventually have to do to recreate a feeling of belonging and community in and around these landscapes. Thus, for Antonio Gómez-Sal, "it is essential to maintain uses, or at least equivalent uses, that facilitate the validity of basic processes constitutive of the essence of each landscape. Many of them have their analogy in natural processes, while others are more cultural or historical (forms of exploitation, elaboration of products, crafts, food, festivals)."[19] And perhaps ultimately the dismantling of such agro-ecosystems is an inefficiency we can't afford, paid for as it is by the productive intensification of others?

It is a challenge for society and the artist both not to deal with these fundamental themes in a superficial fashion, as has been a common problem; nor to treat them merely as material for works of art, as too often has been the case in the "environmental turn." New movements in environmental art include collaborative interventions where the artist, as agroecologist, attempts to catalyze social and cultural processes within wider rural strategies. The question is, as Ian Hunter, defender of new rural culture, frames it: "Can sustainability, in the sense of respect for nature and environment, be advanced by reconnecting culture and agriculture?"[20] Inasmuch as site-specific

works open up the possibility of reflection on the present and future management of this landscape, they can involve a whole range of players and meanings in questioning how we position ourselves in the face of such challenges.[21] What Stephen Wright terms 1:1 scale projects can enable re-encounters with the landscape. For example, La Escuela de Pastores [Shepherds School], the ongoing INLAND project that I founded in 2004, has what Charles Esche has called a "double ontological status," in that it exists at once as both a functional school and a conceptual operation.

Nature Craving the New Rural

Now, in the time of post-pandemic "nature craving" and a possible wave of rural colonization by urban liberal professionals ready for remote work, shall we belie the promise of degrowth and slowness and return instead to a state of permanent mobilization, combining the vertigo of our displacement to nowhere with the tourist's obsession with "having been there"? As Nietzsche wrote of tourists, "they climb mountains like animals, stupid and sweating: one has forgotten to tell them that there are beautiful views on the way up."[22]

From landscapes of production to landscapes for the consumption of the late-romantic imaginary, to lab-created rewilding and the rhythm of motorized quad bikes just like those in Jurassic Park… Meanwhile, in the current debate on industrial thermo-capitalism as the main agent of the climate crisis, promoting forests and disdaining pastures is simplistically posed as an "easy solution." The lack of nuance in attacks on any form of animal husbandry (or the consumption of animal products) without considering the difference between models of production such as pastoralism and intensive livestock systems only serves to reinforce the gap between urban and rural views.[23]

More than six thousand years of shepherding in the Cantabrian Mountains highlights the need for conceptual renewal and reform in the field of so-called nature conservation. This is a group that has been scorned, ignored, or treated with Christian charity, as if they were paupers begging at church doors when, in fact, the cathedral of the mountains belongs to them. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this millenary path along which villages,

21 Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Wanderer and his Shadow," in trans. Walter Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 202.

23 Jabier Ruiz and Guy Beaufoy, *Informe sobre la elegibilidad para pagos directos de la PAC de los pastos leñosos españoles* (2015): 225; ganaderiaextensiva.org/InformeElegibilidadPastos.pdf.

24 Like the successful and incendiary shepherd and YouTuber Nel Cañedo.

meadows, winter pastures, and sheepfolds appear was traveled by a thousand shepherds making cheese in the summer pastures. Nowadays there are no more than twelve left.

In this moment, maybe a pedagogical mission is called for to recover the possibility of an extra-academic rural thinking, a neo-peasant knowledge capable of redefining local development strategies on its own terms. Using this, the main instrument of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, intended to equalize the city and countryside, perhaps it will be possible to make visible to urbanites, politicians, civil servants—marquises, even—a reality that has been hidden for almost a century. Then come forward, new shepherds, shepherds from the city or of migrant origins, alumni of La Escuela de Pastores,[24] to mediate between the current reality and its—and their—transition to a sustainable future.

Marwa Arsanios is an artist, filmmaker, and researcher from Beirut. Arsanios's practice opens up questions of structures and infrastructures. What is common? How can we make use of it together and defend it? From architectural spaces, transformed and adapted through conflict, to artist-run spaces and temporary conventions between feminist communes and cooperatives, her practice seeks to make space within and parallel to existing art structures in order to experiment with different kinds of politics. Here, film serves as a key medium for connecting struggles, as a space in which images refer to other images. Over the past four years, Arsanios has been attempting to think these questions from new materialist and historical-materialist lenses through different feminist movements involved in land struggles. She looks at questions of property, law, economy, and ecology from the perspectives of specific sites and lands, the main protagonists in her work becoming these lands and the people who work them.

A LETTER INSIDE A LETTER: HOW LABOR APPEARS & DISAPPEARS

Marwa Arsanios

The Sun: Overexposure & Underexposure

The sun hits hard at 38°C when I visit Claudina's farm in Coyaima, south of Tolima, Colombia, on 29 February 2020. She gives me a letter that solicits money for the building of ten new wells for the community, asking me to deliver it to an organization that supports small farmers. Claudina Loaiza is one of the first seed guardians I got in touch with through Grupo Semillas,[1] inviting her to lead a meeting on the relationship between creole seed conservation and land recuperation in her territory. Another seed guardian I spoke with was Mercy Vera, who had traveled with Samanta Arango Orozco from Grupo Semillas to attend a convention of women farmers and ecological feminists in the summer of 2019.[2]

After our meetings, we came to understand that being a seed guardian was a threat to armed forces in the region from all sides—whether the paramilitaries, dismantled guerrilla units, governmental forces, or the so-called private security companies enlisted to protect agribusiness. Mercy wept while talking about the moment of the *limpieza* [the cleansing], when the paramilitaries had lists of people to eliminate, in a purge of farmers and Indigenous people. Seed guardians, social leaders, and organizers are still, at present, considered a threat, and therefore a target. This, of course, was not the first purge that they or their ancestors had known about or lived through.

The creole seeds are beings with nonlegal status; the seed guardian is an undesired being with a legal status. She knows that

the beings with nonlegal status are her only allies. In this desertic territory, there is a real water scarcity: the little water there is, is either sucked by the hydroelectric mechanism already in place or the one in the process of being built, then diverted through a government-built irrigation system to endless hectares of rice plantations. Under these conditions, the farmers have two choices: either to lease their lands to the plantations where they end up working for a very low wage, or to stubbornly stick with the land, if they can. Seed guardians have opted for the latter and have developed seeds that adapt to the desert climate. As Samanta says: *This is revolutionary.* In a way, the world order has forced Claudina and her community to wait for international funds and other humanitarian aid to assist their livelihood. In exchange for the historical and ongoing robbery of their land and resources, they are paid back the value of one or two wells for their survival. The letter Claudina gave me is still with me as I write, and I will soon give it to the friend who works at the organization. But this letter represents the tragedy and farce of history, its cruelty.

As we walk in the surroundings of Claudina's farm, the sun is high. We try to take some landscape shots but the light is very strong, and our Panasonic camera doesn't adapt to shifts in light so well. "We should have brought ND filters," I tell Juma Hamdo. "And a reflector," he responds. We stop at a spot to recall the murder of a seed guardian, and I notice that what is designated as the site of the crime cannot be captured fully by the camera lens. It's not quite that the site cannot be framed in its totality, but that it seems somehow off-frame, or that something is lost inside the frame. Perhaps this is because one should not be able to capture this crime scene or perceive it as a particular place; or perhaps because the whole territory is a site of crime.

Blocking or inviting the sun too much would be the path to sight without seeing, or to seeing otherwise. The energy of the sun enables that path to sight. As McKenzie Wark writes in *Molecular Red*, the energy of labor and the elemental energy of nature are inseparable in the process of production and vitality.[3] It is important to keep in mind that the inherent relation between labor and nature is the basis for the dynamic of production fed by the energy of the sun. The labor of seeing entails a relation between human labor and sunlight; the labor of making something appear or disappear.

1 Grupo Semillas (Seed Group) is a nonprofit organization in Bogotá that works with farmers and seed guardians across different territories in Colombia.

2 "The Convention of Women Farmers and Ecological Feminists" is a project initiated by Marwa Arsanios that took place during the Warsaw Biennial in June 2019, bringing together seventeen farmers, ecological feminists, lawyers, activists, musicians, and artists.

3 McKenzie Wark, *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene* (London: Verso, 2015).

The Surplus of Sight

The world economy we function within has opened up a space of sight and vision that allows at once for too much and too little seeing. In the same way that the crisis of capital lies in a surplus of production rather than in underproduction, we could say that the crisis (of sight) is in the surplus of the production of images—in the accumulation of images that end up unseen because they are too much seen. The intervention of the light—the sun—in combination with unsophisticated technology, produces images that are either too dark or too bright. The images I took refused to represent the crime scene with any accuracy, because the site exceeds the scene, and because, among an excess of information, we stopped being able to see it. The site mistrusts this surplus of production, and resists it.

Why does one need to capture a perfect representation of the crime scene if one knows that it exists? Photographic evidence that could have been taken to court might have helped, but the juridical fight is lost most of the time. It seems there is a need for another fight: another sight, or another labor of seeing.

In the darkroom where one develops photographic images, losing full vision is a necessary step in order to be able to see the images that appear on the negative after the acidification process. *In order to see, one needs to go into the dark room*. It almost sounds like a Christian theological path, which encourages you to walk through darkness in order to see the light of God, but it is a scientific process of image development. Indeed, the path of Christianity and the pursuit of scientific seeing have a faith in being "enlightened" in common.

In my early teenage years, I attended a Jesuit Catholic college not far from Beirut, my hometown. One day when I was in fifth grade, I saw many students standing in line in the headmistress's office, taking turns to look at a piece of paper. Curious, I joined them in the office to

discover that the paper featured a photocopied print of some woman saint, perhaps the Virgin Mary herself. The students were waiting to sit on a chair, stare at the paper for one minute, then look back at the wall. The headmistress then asked them to make a wish. I could see their faces change the moment they looked at the wall, and when they stood up from the chair to let the next pupil sit down, their bodies and attitude also seemed altered. When my turn came, I took a long breath, and after staring at the paper for one minute, lifted my head swiftly to look at the wall to observe the shadow of the saint or the Virgin Mary appear before me. I was so amazed I forgot to make a wish before having to vacate the chair for the next classmate. I could still see her shadow as I stood up, until she eventually disappeared. It left me dazzled.
The next day in biology class the professor announced in a sardonic tone that he had heard from students about the "apparition" of the Virgin Mary. It was merely an optical illusion, he stated, and the fallacy should be brought to an end. I felt slightly better for not having made a wish, and saw the disappointment on the faces of my peers. After class, this disillusionment opened up a long discussion on whether or not we believed.

Sight was part of the mechanisms involved in the colonization of land by the Christian missionaries. Pictures of saints, perhaps like that in my headmistress's office, were held up to Indigenous peoples in order to try to subdue and convince them to give up their land and goods. The sight of the shadow of the Virgin Mary on the wall is part of the same tactics of conversion and awe practiced by the Church. Whether, for the rationalist non-believer, the sight is an optical illusion, or, for the believer, it is a true miracle, it requires a labor of seeing: staring long enough at the same spot. This puts into question the neoliberal politics of visibility and invisibility, or of recognition through being visible. Appearance and disappearance fall in different registers: of labor, of religion, of chemistry.

The labor of seeing becomes an intrinsic condition for believing, and subsequently, for the dispossession of lands via religious conversion. The labor of seeing becomes the ultimate tool for colonization, extraction, and accumulation.

Marwa Arsanios, still from *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part III – Micro Resistencias*, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist.

The Labor of Seeing; Reverse Shot

In Chantal Akerman's documentary *Sud* (South, 1999), the inscription of a site of crime within a territory is striking. The film focuses on the murder of African American James Byrd Jr., who was dragged behind a truck in Jasper, Texas, by white supremacists. The final sequence consists of a slow reverse shot, as if we are moving backward in time through the traces of the crime scene. The surrounding landscape becomes painful in its beauty and cruelty. We see its distortion.

Akerman's intention to inscribe the memory of this violent incident in the landscape is quite contrary to the prerogatives of investigative work. It is not about making sense or searching for evidence. Akerman knew too well, from her own Jewish family history, what genocide is; she knew too well that investigative legal or journalistic work does not in itself guarantee justice. She understood that a new way of seeing the landscape would be necessary, for us to perceive it in its utmost cruelty. The reverse shot imposes another labor of seeing, flips time, and reverses history, in order to see its ghosts.

How to film the land?

If the representation of land is a kind of property, how could one film it without owning it? Is the ownership of the image of representation of land a property inside a property? Property is contained in infinite squares, which begin from a legal system that turns unbounded nature into land and land into property. Infinite squares of property.

An image inside an image
A struggle inside a struggle
A letter inside a letter

How to Measure the Void?

The hole dug in the ground to access water—the well requested by Claudina in her letter—must be at least fifty meters deep. For that

reason, it is very costly, as the labor of digging takes time and there are many obstacles on the way. Tons of earth must be removed and the labor of such removal costs 100,000 Colombian pesos per day. It will take at least ninety days to do so, if not more. The cost of digging the well will amount to 50,000,000 Colombian pesos. This is the cost of making a void. The false idea of emptiness, *terra nullius*, void, was the ultimate excuse for conquest and colonialism. A physical void for survival and an illusory void as the basis for speculation, accumulation, and conquest.

Peering into the void inside the earth that has been dug for the well is like staring into the dark; it is like losing sight in order to gain water; it is like staring at the saint's picture only to see the shadow on the wall, or like entering the darkroom in order to later be able to see the photograph. The labor of digging is similar to the labor of seeing in that its outcome requires a kind of voiding—a faith in losing sight only to recuperate it.

If one thinks from the perspective of more-than-human matter and physics, the void becomes an energetic space. According to Newtonian physics, a void is an absence of matter, a space that has no properties or laws, which means that it has no energy. Karen Barad updates this science to claim that in quantum physics, a vacuum is where particles are created, therefore there is an inseparability between matter and void. The vacuum, she says, is not silence, it is speaking, murmuring. It is a space of constant energy formation, where new organizations of particles take shape; a space to watch and listen to closely.[4]

How to measure the land?

When you need to measure areas directly in the field, divide the tract of land into regular geometrical figures, such as triangles, rectangles, or trapeziums. Then take all the necessary measurements, and calculate the areas according to mathematical formulas.

4 See Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Extension

She extends her body to perform care tasks for others and to maintain the land. The gestures of care that women perform every day to take responsibility for other people's lives, other people's mistakes, other people's work. In order to conceal, or to expose. She extends herself, stretches herself to perform responsibility. Her body is a tool for others. Her body is a threat for others. Her body becomes an obstacle to the expansionists. She holds the world. Holding the world from below is threatening.

Mariam, my caregiver when I was a child, used to stockpile bread in the fridge and hide bags of rice and lentils in the cupboard, surveilling them closely to make sure supplies never became low. Having lived through the First World War, the locust infestation of 1915, and the deadly embargo on Mount Lebanon by Jamal Pasha (known as "the slaughterer"), she was forever afraid of running out of food. She transmitted the history of the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon to me and my siblings through the vivid images of her stories of her two dead brothers. One brother choked on a blade of barley grass when he tried to swallow it because of hunger, and the other was beaten on his forehead by the priest and the schoolteacher until he was dizzy and could no longer hear. "He came back home, went to sleep, and never woke up," she recounted. We asked her again and again what happened to the priest and if he was held accountable; she always ignored our question or yelled at us saying that no one holds a priest accountable. Mariam understood there was an injustice; she knew life was unfair to her, as it had been to her brothers, but she accepted her lot—she was a woman, a secondary creature. Her brother died after beatings by a representative of God on Earth, and that was unjust, but no one holds a priest accountable. And the lives of the peasant families who were not given access to land was not fair either. As writer and researcher Wissam Saade recounts:

> Land ownership would witness a total overhaul in the nineteenth century: the passage from the tax rental system to the recognition of the right of the soil's hereditary appropriation. Families who exercized a certain role within the framework of the Ottoman tax renting system would then claim their appropriation rights as farmers.[5]

Marwa Arsanios, still from *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part IV – Reverse Shot*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.

Marwa Arsanios, still from *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part IV – Reverse Shot*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.

5 Marwa Arsanios, "Property Laws in Mount Lebanon During the Ottoman Empire: An Interview with Wissam Saade" (2021), publication forthcoming.

6 Arsanios, "Interview with Wissam Saade."

Mariam understood that the fact she couldn't read or write had led her to work in people's houses as a caregiver and cook. Despite all of this, she never stopped extending herself to others; it was her only way to survive, to make a living. Maintaining other people's land when she worked in the olive groves before being sent to work in houses in the city, where she would take care of other people's lives. In the 1986 economic crisis during the civil war, her money, her only possession, was devalued. After years of hard work, she again found herself powerless before her own family, from whom she had tried to run away.

An image of her natal village reveals the history of its mountainous landscape in a reverse shot. The land is poor or infertile, as they say; not arid, but only good for a certain type of agriculture.

> In the Lebanese mountains, there was an important consequence of the peasant revolution, even though the country was heading toward a mad mercantilism, and an increasingly pronounced social inequality. The peasants claimed that they were the ones who had established an intimate relationship with this land, an intimacy of proximity, of cultivation, and therefore that this land was part of their identity, their experience, their life in common.[6]

Despite this redistribution of land, Mariam did not have a right to inheritance because she was born a woman. Inheritance law in Lebanon clearly states that it is legal to disinherit a child, and this tended to be used against women to keep inheritance in the patriarchal bloodline. So, Mariam was disinherited, like many other women from her generation.

Who Works the Land?

What do you inherit when you inherit a piece of land? You inherit its trees, the trees' olives, all the produce that grows on it. We inherit the soil: its microbiome of bacteria.

Inheritance is also a formation of different alchemical components that work to render value possible. The bacteria work together to maintain the life of the soil, the fertility of the land, and so its value.

Inheritance is chemical and alchemical.
The void is not lawless, the void is a chemical and physical formation.
The space without property is where particles form.

Now the only plausible history is a history of disinheritance.
The free labor of the microbiome and bacterial formations that work the soil and help the land keep its fertile values. Disinherited beings are considered secondary. Even though recognized as citizens for the sake of control and reproduction, they are written out of any inheritance.

The emotional and affectual economy of debt that women inheritors have to carry is heavy. They should feel thankful not to have been disinherited. The law always threatens to disinherit them.

Disinheritance is not a defeat, disinheritance is a flood in the system.
She inherits a flood or a drought.
She is disinherited because of a flood.
She inherits a flooded system.

What is inheritance outside of property laws?
Or what is property when it is emptied of inheritance?
Property appears and disappears through inheritance and disinheritance.
Labor appears and disappears through liquidity.
Liquidity evaporates with sun exposure and overexposure.
Abstraction melts when liquidity ends.
She inherits a sun that hits hard.

Marwa Arsanios, still from *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part IV – Reverse Shot*, 2022. Image courtesy of the artist.

Samanta Arango Orozco was born and raised in Quindío, Colombia's main coffee-producing region, surrounded by mountains and rivers, flora and fauna, and cultural diversity. She studied anthropology and dedicated herself to developing communication processes that allow for reflection and expression, while supporting people's struggle for defending their territory and dignified life. At the time of the interview printed here, she was working with Grupo Semillas [Seed Group], an organization devoted to the protection of native seeds. At present she works with the NGO Amar Es Más (Love Is More), formed from a collective of friends who work for the protection of ecosystems and communities threatened by mining and large-scale agroforestry. She is also a member of the Setas Libertarias [Free Mushrooms] collective, which aims, through the production of fungi, to develop feminist economies.

MICRO-RESISTANCES: AN INTERVIEW WITH SAMANTA ARANGO OROZCO

Marwa Arsanios

Marwa Arsanios Samanta, could you introduce yourself and Grupo Semillas [Seed Group], the organization you work with?

Samanta Arango Orozco My name is Samanta Arango and I'm part of Grupo Semillas. Grupo Semillas is an organization that has supported Indigenous and peasant organizations for the last twenty years in a range of territorial advocacy processes, specifically relating to the defense of native seeds and community-owned forms of production. We are currently working in two regions of Colombia: in the northern part of the Cauca with Afro-descendant communities, and in the south of Tolima with Indigenous and peasant communities. We provide technical and political support to these communities, including through traditional education, economic solidarity, strategies for territorial defense, and community support, where we focus specifically on women's autonomy.

MA Can you talk a little bit about the most urgent struggles in the territories?

SAO We are in a very complex and diverse country, with much wealth in terms of the commons and natural resources. One of the biggest problems is, therefore, the fight for the right to the land. Historically, the government and the private sector have dispossessed the inhabitants of the countryside and attempted to take over the land. In order to appropriate the land they have used all sorts of methods, from institutional methods (such as public policies) to direct violence against

communities. So, although historically in Colombia there has been a single recognized conflict between the guerrillas and the state, what we have seen is in fact an ongoing war against the communities that inhabit and protect the territory. While it's true that there are some illegal armed groups that have generated huge problems here, there is a bigger systemic problem in the way the central government has stripped the periphery through violence—not only physical violence, but also economic and structural violence.

So, we find ourselves in territories such as the south of Tolima, where there are very particular ecosystems. We have a desert next door, which makes the ecosystem especially fragile, meaning that any intervention is felt very strongly. And although it's true there is a process of natural desertification, it's also true that external actions have accelerated this process. It is the local communities that are most strongly affected by these drastic changes in the territory. This is on top of the whole problem of the struggle for land and against its intensive exploitation by economic projects that see the territory as a form of profit, and not as a place inhabited by people and animals and plants. In this territory, there are many interests that converge, and there are many conflicts due to differing economic interests. This has led the communities currently living here to defend and protect it. Finally, of course, this is a territory that has historically been affected by the Colombian conflict. There has been a constant presence of armed actors—paramilitary and guerrilla groups, as well as militaries and legal armed groups—which has produced a number of very complex situations and overwhelming pain for the local communities. These communities have always been trapped at the crossroads, in the middle of all these interests, including the economic interests of large corporations.

Under these complex circumstances, there is an alternative panorama that gives us hope as an organization, which is the political project that the communities have developed to protect and defend a dignified life in the territory—because it's not simply about staying here, but about staying and living decently. In this complex situation, full of violence, they have set the goal of continuing to implement their traditional knowledge and their own forms of economy and agriculture. These knowledges and forms of economy are, let's say, much

An image of Betsabe Alvares de Balant, 2020. Image courtesy of Juma Hamdo.

more integral: you can't think about the economy and culture as two separate things. On the contrary, these communities' strategies involve more comprehensive economic models, which themselves entail ways to inhabit the territory without affecting it intensely and in ways that protect it and allow dignified ways of living in it.

Due to the historical conflict, women are the ones who have faced a lot of these problems. When men in their families were killed in the conflict or went to war, women remained, guarding and keeping the territory. They did this in part through the protection of creole and native seeds. The purpose of these seeds is not only to be sown and to produce food for us, however, it goes much further than this. These seeds can also help to stop the process of desertification; they are the memory of their ancestors, representing the adaptation to drastic changes in the territory. Communities have even developed seeds that have the ability to adapt to the drought. The protection and development of these seeds might be seen as something simple, but it's revolutionary—especially in this context, where there are conflicts over water and an environmental crisis. So, rural women are not only feeding their families, but allowing humanity to have a future in this land. They also represent a long-term achievement in tackling climate change.

Taking care of the seeds requires a lot of courage and strength: although most armed groups don't see these seed projects as a direct threat, this is only because they don't understand them (and this is a good thing). Yet the protection of seeds is a form of indirect resistance against these groups, because by protecting the seeds you are protecting the territory. It is a way to say to the community: "We will not leave our territory. Here we have the food, here we have the nourishment, here we can continue living, here's how to protect the water through the seed process." So, for me, it's poetic and very magical to see the power that emanates from these small places that are normally inhabited and defended by women. These initiatives serve as inspiration for rethinking the economic and social dimensions of life more generally, in a way that departs from voracious and destructive economic models. I think that what we can call "home economics" applied in a wider context provides an alternative, comprehensive model

for how we can organize economic life. Such economic alternatives tend to be despised because they don't generate large amounts of money. But they enable sustainability over time, prevent irreversible effects on the environment, and create a more balanced relationship with the territory.

> **MA** There is political and economic violence, and also systematic gender-based violence in the territories. Mercy Vera (a seed guardian from the south of Tolima and part of Grupo Semillas's network) said once that protecting seeds can be a risky business as it is a threat to big corporations. It got me thinking about the power of seeds, about how such a small thing can help us resist these forms of systematic violence. How can we resist through a thing as small as a seed?

SAO I heard a phrase here once: "The first territory in conflict is a hungry stomach; if there's no food there's no way to keep resisting." Once others control the food, there's nothing left to do. When communities depend on supermarkets or on the mass food system, it's very difficult to generate a strong enough organizational process to resist this system. If they have autonomy with their seeds and their food, however, it's easier to develop other types of economies that allow them to be independent and prevent them from having to put up with violent situations. If the community has autonomy in its food, in its seeds, they also have more strength to resist government projects that want to strip them from their territory. So, it's about seeing how in a territory where there's a water problem, where there's an armed conflict, and where there are the interests of very powerful groups and social actors, women manage to feed their communities. And it's understanding the feeding process as a more integral process of feeding a community and maintaining the territory. This means saying no to dispossession, saying: "No, we have a political project, we do not depend on you." Of course it's much more complex than this; it's not as if everything works because they have food and they're going to be able to change the conditions under which they live right away. But it's certainly a start, and it opens the door for these women to make decisions about their bodies, their territory, their communities, and their organizations.

It should also be noted that the issue of saving and protecting the seeds is not isolated but involves an organizational process, because there's no point in me having seeds if my neighbor doesn't have seeds. This has led to very strong forms of organization in which people have joined together, exchanged knowledge, and said, "We have to unite." So it has implications for the social relations in the area, prompting people to begin to recover relations that have been destroyed by violence. For example, we work mostly here in the southern plains of Tolima, Natagaima, and Coyaima, but last year we also started to work with organizations in the mountains, where the majority are peasant organizations (*campesinos*, although there are also Indigenous communities there). While there is an intense conflict over water here in the southern plains, in the mountains they have a very strong conflict over food sovereignty, because coffee monoculture came in and wiped out everything. Through this whole process, communities of the mountains and the plains have begun to meet again. We've seen that, again, women have been the ones who have generated friendly relationships; they've started exchanging seeds and taking seeds to the women in the mountains so that communities there, too, can begin these processes of autonomy. We start to see how apparently simple actions have begun to reconnect territories that had been separated by conflict.

Finally, in these initiatives, women have been using their own knowledge to strengthen other women's processes. The purpose of the seed guardians is not to establish a relationship of ownership or institutionalization—it is not about creating a seed bank. For us, rather, the way to care for and preserve the seeds is by planting and growing them.

MA Could you say more about this practice, which rejects preservation in an accumulative sense?

SAO Politically we believe that seeds should be free, because seeds should be understood as a common good and not as someone's property. This implies that there has to be a community that protects that common good, but that also benefits from it. To privatize seeds is to privatize life itself. When something is privatized it means that there is an

owner and if there is an owner, there is corporate control and management, which does not allow the community to benefit from that common good. Usually the existing seed conservation projects (which I would rather call seed control projects) do it through banks, where they accumulate a quantity of seeds. They do this not to ensure food sovereignty but to control how those seeds are used, and to generate economic benefits from them. On the other hand, for the communities we work with, defending seeds is a long-standing historical process. They understand that the seed has to be planted, and that in economic terms this is the best way to preserve it. If one keeps the seed in a drawer or wherever, it is not the same type of conservation process, and neither adaptation nor improvement processes can be generated. When I say "improvement," I mean the kinds of improvement that emerge from community and collective practice, not improvement as institutions have understood it, with regard to transgenic or certified seeds.

These communities concluded that the seeds are better off "walking"—and walking means that they need to be planted and produced rather than stored. If seeds are stored they won't accomplish their main function, and accumulation practices will emerge. Such accumulation practices are, politically, what is being fought against, because the same accumulation is what has led us to have these problems of land, water, and so on. The accumulation of something results in another group not having it, or not having access to it. So, from a non-accumulation perspective, to be constantly sowing the seeds is the best way to preserve them. The seed, as a common good, should be reproducing itself; it should be immersed in a dynamic where it generates benefits collectively, to all people and not just to certain sectors.

MA Could you explain what is happening with the fish farms?

SAO The south of Tolima is a dry territory with limited water resources and very strong economic pressures surrounding them. Within these pressures are the monocultures, which are extensive and access the water illegally, because there's a huge problem with the governance of the South Tolima irrigation district. But we have another huge problem, which is the fish farming pools that have been developed both

intensively and extensively. Firstly, these fish farms have been implanted on the territory without authorization—they have no environmental license. Secondly, their water usage is leading to significant resource degradation. This is all for the benefit of a few international corporations and on the back of many vulnerable people here in the territory. Since there's so much unemployment and so few job opportunities or other alternatives to stay in the territory, these companies have taken advantage of their situation and hired people to work under conditions that I would almost compare to modern-day slavery. They pay very little for work that is extremely hard, both physically and psychologically, in an environment where average temperatures are around 30°C and can reach 38–40°C. These fish farms have also led to a political reconfiguration and militarization of the territory through private security. The fish farms' private security are armed men with no identification, without uniforms. Indeed, you could say that they are paramilitary groups, because there is no clear organizational structure behind them, and because they know the business they are carrying out has a lot to hide.

The fish farms are very intensive productive systems that generate soil degradation, the degradation of water sources, as well as the degradation of communities. However, the latter is a very complex and risky issue to discuss, because you don't even know who the people behind these businesses are. Their identity is not clear, but the power they have is: they demonstrate this through their weapons, through the magnitude of their projects, and through the way they come into the territory without asking and simply install their business. They hoard water to raise fish that are not even destined for the local market, but for export. They come, destroy the waters, destroy the territories, destroy the communities, and take everything away. All they leave behind is misery, trouble, and deepening inequalities. These fish farms were initially proposed as an economic opportunity, to generate employment. And employment is indeed being generated, but for jobs lacking in decent working conditions, which simply exploit people and strip the territories, their resources, and their commons, and deprive communities of their dignity. It makes me nervous to go deeper as these are subjects that are very delicate to talk about. It's a very sensitive issue.

MA How is the banking system involved in this systemic violence? And is there an autonomous economic system being built?

SAO Within all these conflicts, there's the issue of bank debt and of the "drop by drop." The "drop by drop" are, in Colombia, illegal organizations that lend money at very high, unpayable interest rates, and then when loans can't be paid people end up losing their homes, their businesses, their farms, and so on. People are constantly being stalked, pressured, and intimidated by armed groups that make up these moneylender mafias. Many Indigenous farmers have lost their land because of debts with banks or these criminal organizations. To deal with this problem, communities began to look for alternatives so as not to have to resort to banks or the "drop by drop," but also to allow the economy to be rethought from a more collective and supportive perspective, rather than in an individualist way. In response to this, we started working with the rotary savings and fund groups, and the self-managed savings and credit groups, which have enabled social organizations to plan with their economic resources in a much more sustainable and collective way, and in a way that will benefit their own productive systems. It's been a very important experience here in Natagaima and in Coyaima, and one which has been replicated in other parts of the country.

Mincho and Nubia, who are the leaders of this initiative, have already been in other parts of the country to advise organizations on how to form self-managed savings and credit groups, and also rotating funds with the political perspective of strengthening their own production systems. This has generated a revolution, at least here in Natagaima.

The banks and the "drop by drop" take advantage of the fact that in many communities oppressed by this economic system, we don't know how to plan our finances in a way that will allow us a sustainable and dignified life. The economic methodologies people have developed in response to this have allowed us not only to have a broader and more comprehensive perspective on the economy, but also to strengthen organizational processes, allowing people to have autonomy over their money and over what they produce in a sustainable way.

This has brought many benefits for communities that have been able to move their productive projects forward, and also for women heads of households who can avoid ending up in huge debt and losing their home. Having economic autonomy gives these women the independence necessary to get out of many violent situations. Women involved in the initiative have the opportunity to participate in the public sphere and to make decisions about the economy, an aspect of society that has been usually dominated by men. These solidarity economy strategies started out as small initiatives like the seed projects, but have been reproducing themselves in a very accelerated way. Today they are having a significant impact on how communities see themselves, and how they plan for a future in which they do not have to depend on these money-lending institutions, both legal and illegal. Because even though banks may be legal, they end up having the same repercussions and effects as the illegal ones, with the aggravating circumstance that the banks are protected by the law.

A portrait of Claudina Loaiza, 2020. Image courtesy of Juma Hamdo.

Munem Wasif's photography and film investigates complex social and political issues with a humanistic language, by getting close to the people, physically and psychologically, and dealing with multiple questions and contradictions. He is especially interested in the concepts of "documents" and "archives," and how such concepts influence how politically and geographically complex issues are addressed. Wasif's work has been included in exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Whitechapel Gallery and Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Gwangju Biennial, Singapore Biennial, and Sharjah Biennial. Wasif was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Germany (2020–21). He was a regular curator for the Chobi Mela International Festival of Photography (editions VIII–X) and will co-curate the Biennale für aktuelle Fotografie in Mannheim in 2024.

SEEDS SHALL SET US FREE II

Munem Wasif

In the context of the fraught history of rice cultivation and distribution in Bangladesh, this work juxtaposes Wasif's cyanotypes of rice grains and plants with archive documents and photographs from one of the largest community grain banks in the country. In Bangladesh rice production was curtailed by indigo and jute cultivation imposed for the world market by the British colonial system. The artist collaborated with the research-based organization UBINIG, founded by a group of activists in 1984 to support the new Naya Krishi Andolan agricultural movement, which currently includes more than 100,000 farming families. This movement promotes local and non-chemical agriculture and Indigenous agricultural knowledge to protect biodiversity and workers' well-being.

কামিনীশালি

তুলসীমালা

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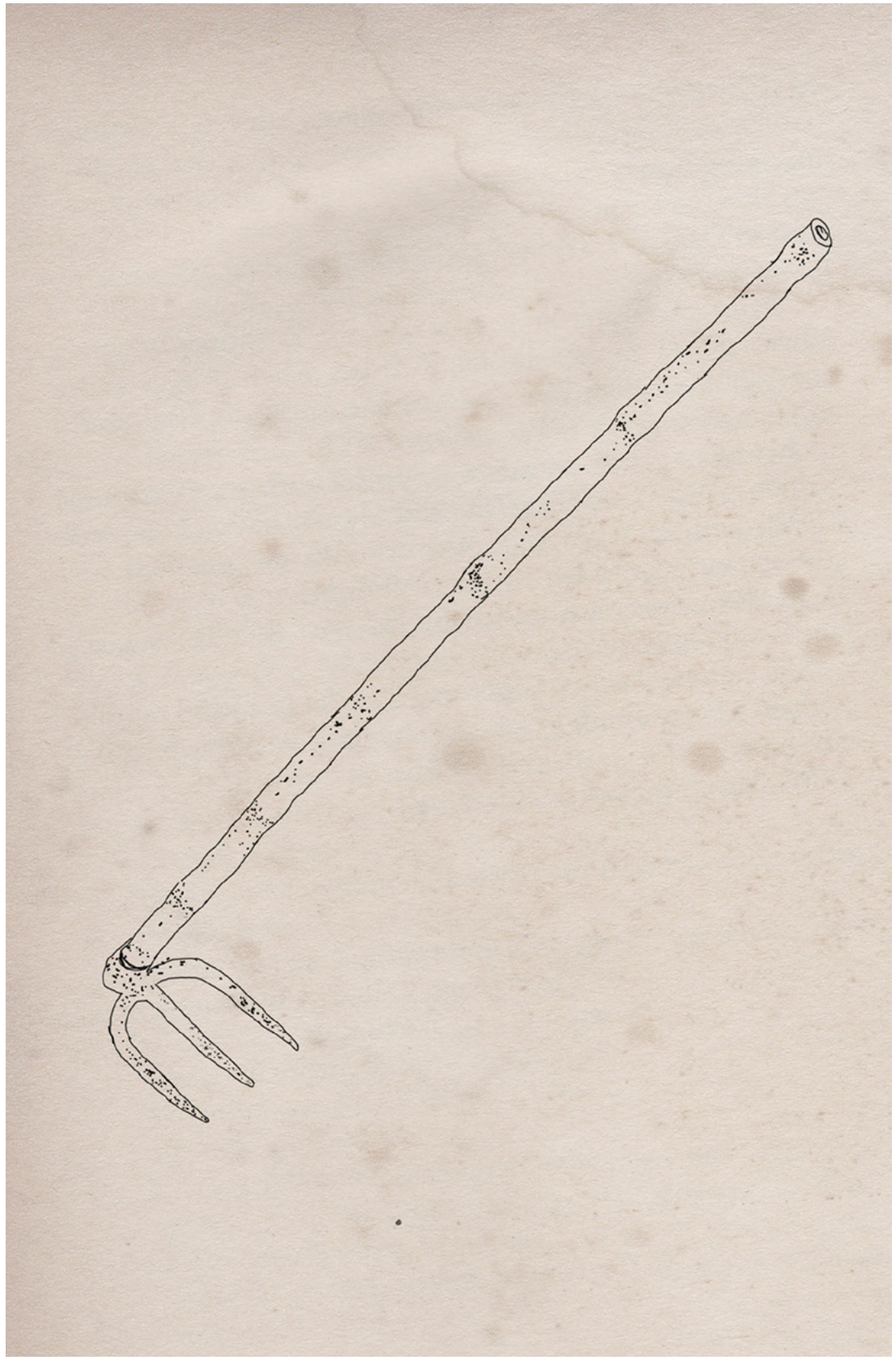


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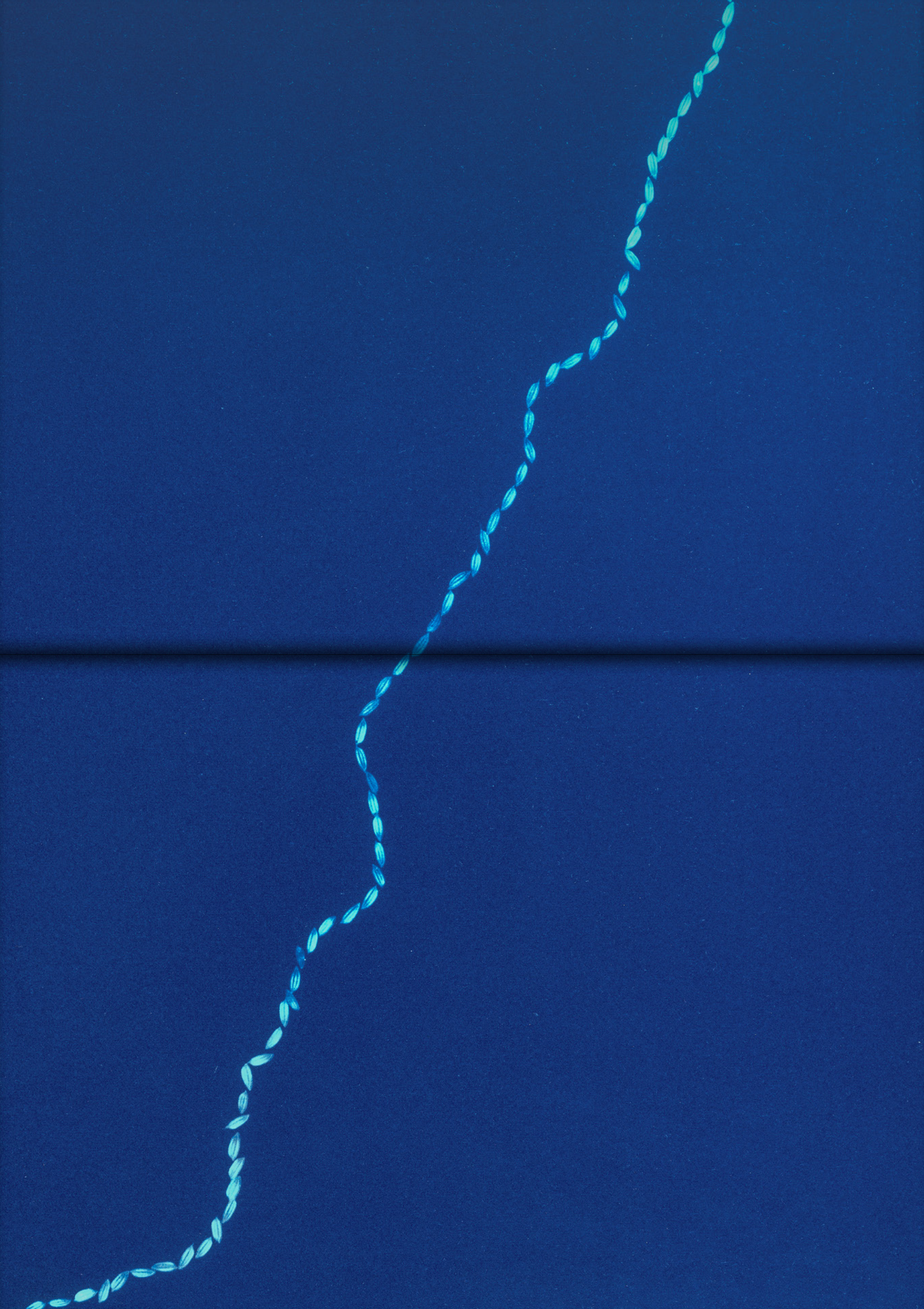

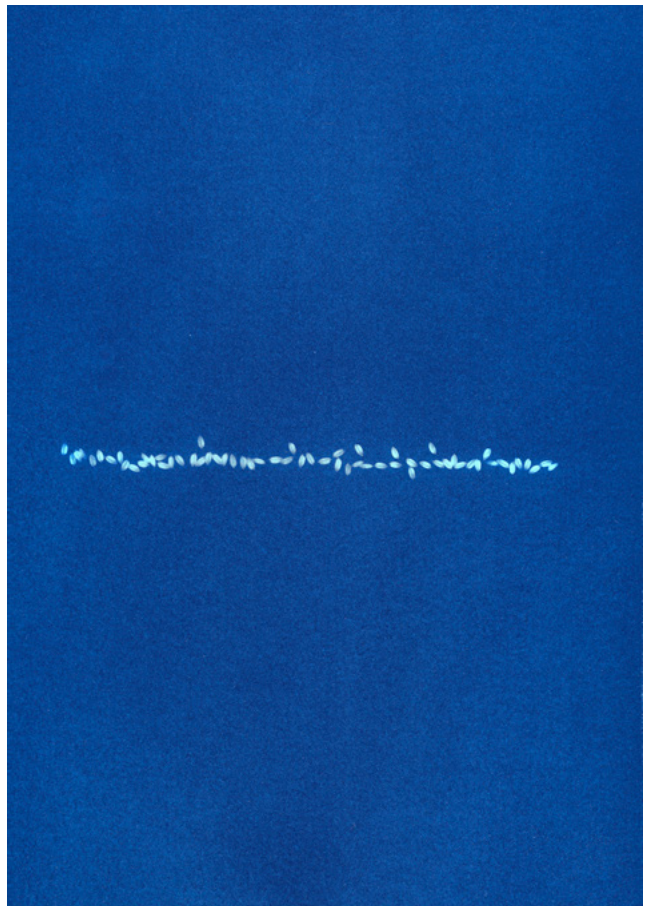

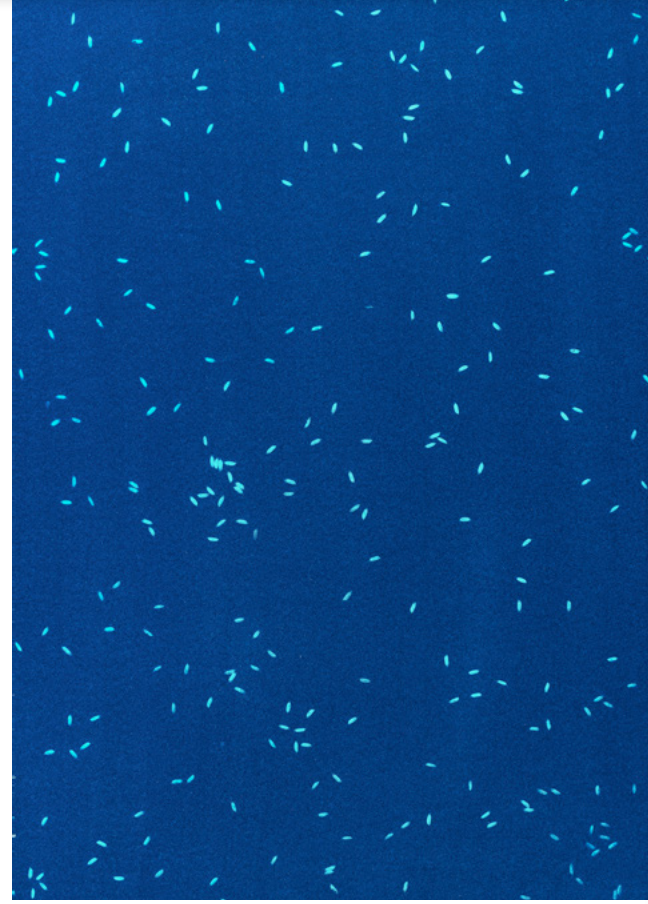

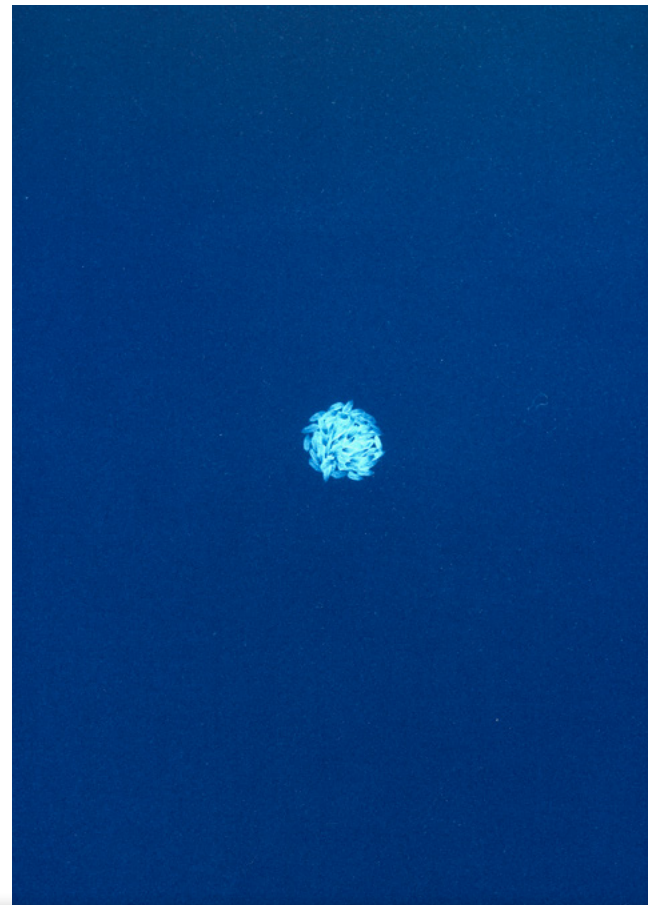

Nomusa Makhubu is an associate professor in art history and deputy dean of transformation in humanities at the University of Cape Town. She was the recipient of the ABSA L'Atelier Gerard Sekoto Award in 2006 and the Prix du Studio National des Arts Contemporain, Le Fresnoy, in 2014. In 2016 she was an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) African Humanities program fellow and an African Studies Association (ASA) presidential fellow. She was also a UCT–Harvard Mandela fellow at Harvard University in 2017. Recognizing the need for mentorship and collaborative practice in socially responsive arts, she founded Creative Knowledge Resources.

THE POETICS OF ENTANGLEMENT IN ZINA SARO-WIWA'S FOOD INTERVENTIONS

Nomusa Makhubu

Introduction

> "Ah, Mr. Tladi, what did you think about the dinner?"
> "You know, one of the most important things about this dinner is that I recognised for the first time that my tongue was programmed to *pap* and *vleis* [porridge and meat]... in the townships, the role of eating is just to fill your stomach..."[1]

In a public lecture in April 2016, South African artist Lefifi Tladi shared an experience he had in Norway. Invited to an upmarket restaurant, he was treated to lobster, caviar, and other exorbitantly expensive foods. He recalls the nausea and the urge to run "to the toilet and spit it out." Tladi believes that the South African apartheid experience deprived Black people of "a cognisance" of food through statutes that prohibited land ownership.[2] In the South African context, food marks race and class stratifications. Barred from owning land and growing their own food, Black South Africans became dependent on cheaper low quality commercial foods. Two decades after South Africa transitioned into democracy in 1994, the socio-economic conditions created by apartheid policies remain and racial tensions are escalating. Tladi's anecdote illustrates that food is intricately linked to histories of power and, as

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *New West African Kitchen*, Paladar at Third Streaming Gallery, New York, 22 February 2012. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

a geopolitical issue, is rooted in land and labor relations.[3] The global traffic of food sustains static conceptions of, for example, "Chinese," "Mexican," "Indian," or "African" food. These cuisines can be produced and consumed almost anywhere, but, in this traffic, there are vestiges of relations forged by imperialism. So, while food seems to solidify class and culture differences, it also fosters collective ways of being and embodies human commonalities in entangled histories; it has the potential to tap into the persistent emotive histories of the colonized body in contemporary social life.

This is the position from which I interpret Zina Saro-Wiwa's food interventions and the reason I find this work particularly regenerative. In 2012, Saro-Wiwa conceptualized *New West African Kitchen* (22 February 2012) at Third Streaming Gallery in Soho, New York for a paladar curated by Yona Backer. Unlike the conventional restaurant, a *paladar* is a Cuban family-run, home-kitchen turned public restaurant. Saro-Wiwa defines her intervention as a palate of West African cuisine

1 Lefifi Tladi, *How Art Beholds the Senses: An Applied Conversation with Lefifi Tladi*, public lecture, University of Cape Town, 5 April 2016.

2 The 1913 Land Act, which prohibited Blacks from owning land, preceded *apartheid*—a segregationist system officially enforced by the National Party from 1948.

3 Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

4 Zina Saro-Wiwa, zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects/new-westafrican-kitchen.

5 Zina Saro-Wiwa in Amy L. Powell et al., eds., *Zina Saro-Wiwa: Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), in collaboration with Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, Texas and Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois, 2016, 102.

that "engage[s] the heart, the mind and the belly" and sees it as a performance, which enables "transformation through communion."[4] There is emphasis on the social possibilities that food engenders, where familiar/unfamiliar food is socially coded. Involving eating together as situational art practice, the work brings together forms of cultural, racial and class difference as a web of entanglements. Food, after all, is about ways of belonging, identification, nostalgia, affinities to place/land and histories of labour. Eating "West African cuisine" in the context of a banquet, in an art gallery in the United States, I imagine, one becomes acutely aware of the politics of cultural difference. Culinary styles and practices that seem at once distanced, different or unfamiliar coalesce into familiar, often common, nostalgic experience.

A person might relate to how a grandmother planted a particular vegetable and cooked it a certain way, or a specific taste may arouse recollection and emotion. People make connections or find new conflicts over a meal. Saro-Wiwa's work examines geopolitics as well as the deeply personal or, as she states, "private symbolic space." She mentions that she used to think of eating as "very sad and mournful."[5] Food, when tasted, evokes the compression of past and present experience. In the book (2016) that accompanied the exhibition by the same title, *Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance* (Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, 26 September 2015 to 16 March 2016; and Krannert Art Museum, Illinois, 17 November 2016 to 25 March 2017), Zina Saro-Wiwa writes a recipe for bread and butter pudding with *pawpaw* [papaya] custard and palm-wine glaze which includes her vivid recollection of her father Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa. This is intertwined with the political situation that necessitated travelling between the UK and Nigeria, fighting against the persistence of global oil exploitation and trade. Zina was born in Port Harcourt but grew up in Surrey and Sussex in the UK. Having battled against the Nigerian military government, the writer and activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Zina's father, moved his family to London in 1978 but continued his creative

and political work in Nigeria.[6] In 1990 he established the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) which aimed to protect the rights of the Ogoni people against the ecological destruction inflicted by oil companies in the Niger Delta. As a consequence of exposing this exploitation and working against the damage caused by companies such as Royal Dutch Shell, the members of MOSOP, Baribor Bera, John Kpunien, Saturday Dobee, Barinem Kiobel, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Felix Nwate, Paul Levura, and leader Ken Saro-Wiwa, known as the Ogoni Nine, were hanged by General Sani Abacha's military government on 10 November 1995.[7] Zina's description of the bread and butter pudding in the book poignantly points to deeply felt connections and latent psycho-emotional struggles. It is this poetic aspect of entanglement that seems to me to be most encompassing in Zina's work: as a concept it defines racialized historical dependencies on land and labor. In describing entanglement and colonial frontiers, Sarah Nuttall observes that "whites' search for land" was accompanied by "the process of acquiring labor and, in this process, whites became dependent on blacks, and blacks on whites…as this dependency grew… whites tried to preserve their difference through ideology—racism."[8]

Nuttall traces various discourses in which entanglement illuminates the notion that "traditions" are constructions of "modernity" in the sense that they are reproduced and repackaged by modernity, or that marginalities are reproduced by centres, and centres are dependent on marginalities.[9] For Nuttall, entanglement is a "condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited" that "gesture[s] towards a relationship, or set of social relationships, that is complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness."[10] Here, she also draws from Achille Mbembe's argument that the post-colony "encloses multiple durées made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another: an entanglement."[11] Entanglement, in this sense, paves the way for thinking about spatio-temporality in Saro-Wiwa's food interventions where historical narratives collide, mingle, or coalesce.

Food elicits personal and collective historical narratives of colonial expansion, dispossession, and cultural imperialism. Since food symbolizes ties to place and bonds between people, it not only charts points of connection and affinitive senses of community but also points to a disconcerting chain of conflicts. Using food as a way to mediate cultural politics is often associated with canonical examples of relational aesthetics where art facilitates social encounters.[12]

6 See Onookome Okome, ed., *Before I am Hanged: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Literature, Politics and Dissent*, (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2001); Roy Doron and Toyin Falola, *Ken Saro-Wiwa* (Athens/USA: Ohio University Press, 2016).

7 Doron and Falola, *Ken Saro-Wiwa*. See also Basil Sunday Nnamdi, Obari Gomba, and Frank Ugiomoh, "Environmental Challenges and Eco-Aesthetics in Nigeria's Niger Delta," *Third Text* 120.27, issue 1 (January 2013): 65–75.

8 Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 2.

9 Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement.*

10 Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement*, 1.

11 Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14. Cited in Nuttall, *Entanglement*, 4.

12 In her discussion of artists whose works epitomize Nicolas Bourriaud's relational art (some of whom, like Saro-Wiwa, use food to facilitate social encounters), Claire Bishop poses important questions regarding the quality of the social relations produced as the process of relational art. She asks: "what is cooked, and for whom? Who is the public? How is a culture made and who is it for?" Artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija who, in a work realized in 1992 (*Untitled, Free*), cooked and served Pad Thai at the 303 Gallery in New York, are exemplary. Tiravanija's and Felix Gonzalez-Torres's works, among others, are emblematic of Bourriaud's notion of relational art as "art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space." That is, the works whose very form is the social are somewhat detached from the broader fragmented, volatile and potentially conflictual social space beyond the art social circuits. Unlike Tiravanija or Gonzales-Torres, among others, Saro-Wiwa is not emphasizing "free service" to gallery visitors for a duration of time but rather creates a one-time dinner, often paid for and for a limited number of guests. Instead, Saro-Wiwa's food interventions direct us to the unsettling complexities, as she affirms, of the "black and African experience" and how "food contributes to the dislocation" (personal communication). The focus is not on charity but on the perpetuated economic inequalities represented in those social encounters in the postcolonial neoliberal order. Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (2004): 65.

13 delfinafoundation.com/programmes/publicand-thematic-programmes/theme-the-politics-of-foodseason-3.

14 Roger Sansi, *Art, Anthropology and the Gift* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Saro-Wiwa's work shifts from that Euro-American "art as social practice" genealogy. It is also hard to see it in the same light as the more provocative interventions where food operates overtly in the politics of advocacy. For example, *Conflict Kitchen*, the restaurant project led by Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski that was established in 2010 in Pittsburgh, USA, challenges cultural imperialism by choosing culinary styles from the countries that the United States is in conflict with. Other radical examples include the *Diggers Free Store*, established in 1960s San Francisco, which offered free food and community services. More recently, the Delfina Foundation based in London has featured a range of artists and art collectives who tackle urgent issues in the global food economy through a series of programs entitled *The Politics of Food: Markets and Movements*.[13] These and other food interventions often operate in a "gift economy" and seek "open communities" without economic exclusion.[14] Saro-Wiwa's interventions do not necessarily follow the principles of these art practices.

Reflecting on the postcolonial condition, food in Saro-Wiwa's work is not only about people and place being fruitfully interwoven for advocating specific politics: it is also about nostalgia, disconnection, detachments, alienation, and estrangement that surfaces in personal narratives and collective histories. Saro-Wiwa's work presents a paradox, where the "postcolonial" contemporary is deeply entangled

with the colonial such that the food interventions are haunted by colonial bondage. While the interventions allude to the effects of oil trade in the Niger Delta, they appear more focused on discovering the cultural wealth of people in Ogoniland than overt advocacy. Her own artistic practice is often inescapably tied to how the (art)world sees her work in relation to her father's political work and in relation to Ogoniland. Interviewing her, I realized that Saro-Wiwa shares the deep concern for the continued ecological devastation by oil companies in the Niger Delta but does not necessarily dedicate her artistic oeuvre to an explicitly anti-oil trade campaign. Rather, she tries to find ways to redeem or regenerate the global image of the Niger Delta by focusing on its "cultures" and innovations despite the devastation; highlighting the perseverance of life.

While this may be critiqued, especially in light of the ongoing exploitation of oil and the capitalist terrorization of lives and livelihoods, it engages with the politics of representation, image, and imaginary. Another critique might follow Kwame Anthony Appiah, who critiques those working under the banner of postcoloniality who might be described as a "Western-style, Western trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery."[15] Such figures are "known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa."[16] Having been raised in exile and having lived in "different worlds," Saro-Wiwa's practice is bound geopolitically to a place that symbolically evokes familiarity and unfamiliarity, attachment, and detachment. Her interrogation of trauma or the psycho-emotional struggle in relation to land and labor through food is intended to shift register from the tragic image of the postcoloniality knotted in the political ironies of neoliberal democracies, and yet seems inextricably immersed in it. This, I argue, presents a poetics of entanglement in Zina Saro-Wiwa's work—a conundrum most of us find ourselves in, globally.

Below I will discuss how Saro-Wiwa's five-channel video installation, *Karikpo Pipeline* (2015), in relation to her father's poetry, engages with the cultural and spiritual entanglements to land. These connections are linked with what land produces: food. Through an analysis of *The Mangrove Banquet* (Blaffer Art Museum, 19 November 2015) and *New West African Kitchen* (2012), I discuss the politics of land and labor in the production and consumption of food. Finally, I consider the 2014–16 video series *Table Manners* and how it subverts

15 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?", *Critical Inquiry* 17.2 (1991): 348.

16 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?"

17 Saro-Wiwa, in *Saro-Wiwa*, ed. Powell et al., 91.

18 Ibid.

19 Marcilene K. Wittmer and William Arnett, *Three Rivers of Nigeria: Art of the Lower Niger, Cross, and Benue from the Collection of William and Robert Arnett* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, Museum of African Art, 1978), 48.

internalized colonial power relations, food, and social conduct as well as politics of identity. These interventions map what Saro-Wiwa calls "emotional landscapes" where what lies beneath the surface can be transformed. This is apparent in *Karikpo Pipeline* where a network of underground pipelines, often branching out onto the surface, creates a metaphor for entanglement in which the reticulated pipelines replace tree roots and symbolise the disruption of people's relations to land and the food that grows on it. Yet, at the same time, there is a sense of possibility, the potential to transform the material or symbolic landscape that resonates in the enactment of deep-rooted Indigenous knowledges.

Changing Terrains

I came for the oil. The other oil. The red oil. Her blood.[17]

Pathways through a lush green landscape lead to a barren terrain. Here, a wellhead rises out of the ground as if it were a tree. Like roots, underground oil pipelines often surface. In the uncanny landscape depicted in *Karikpo Pipeline*, the inseparability of people and land is keenly felt. This video work portrays, more explicitly, entanglements with land. Overwhelming oil narratives and the effects of its extraction by international companies are woven together by Saro-Wiwa to reveal stories about other oils, such as palm oil and its rich cultural significances. In this work she points out that she "celebrate[s] what the ground in the Niger Delta has to offer the region and the entire world."[18]

Karikpo Pipeline refers to Karikpo masquerades in which horned wooden Karikpo antelope masks are worn by dancers at the "beginning of the farming season in ceremonies honouring the local founding ancestor"; the dancers perform somersaults that symbolize the animal's agility and grace.[19] The sound of bells hung around the

waist as the performer moves punctuates pulses of the drumming. These performances are ceremonies related to planting or "ensuring the fertility of the land" and food production in the coming seasons, symbolizing its regeneration.[20]

The high-angle shot of the video was achieved through a drone camera, connoting the position of the star representing Ogoni ancestry in spite of the colonial apparatus of surveillance over land and people. In Saro-Wiwa's video installation, the Karikpo dancers silently survey land that has metal roots of underground pipelines and implanted decommissioned flow stations. Rather than somersault, they crawl on barren land, stand still, or perform a subdued version of the Karikpo dance on partly scorched ground. Instead of the resounding dramatic presence that dancers have in Karikpo masquerades, the dancers in the video appear as apparitions, becoming visible then invisible, sometimes appearing on top of an oil wellhead. These corroding metallic implantations replace and reflect the destruction of food that grows from the ground, where oil palms are displaced by crude oil pipes. The pipelines represent the entrenched and ongoing colonialism of extractive industries in Ogoniland. The dancers seem ghost-like, at rest and silent, they suggest the resilience and continued survival of Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies that have the potential to redeem the land and revive it. While the fading Karikpo dancers may be seen to represent "fading traditions," they also appear to negate the outmoded assumption of creative practices in the Niger Delta as unchanging, static "traditions." When reading the silent Karikpo dancing in Saro-Wiwa's work in tandem with a poem written by her father in detention, this fertility dance, which takes up Ogoni creative forms, evokes emancipation, redemption, and decolonial resistance. In the poem "Dance," Ken Saro-Wiwa writes:

> Dance your angers and your joys
> dance the military guns to silence
> dance their dumb laws to the dump
> dance the injustice and oppression to death
> dance the end of Shell's ecological war of thirty years
> dance my people for we have seen tomorrow
> and there is an Ogoni star in the sky.[21]

The context for this potent rendition of the Karikpo dance is the environmental devastation of the Niger Delta, which followed the theft of people from the Niger Delta in the fifteenth century when slaves were

20 Marcilene K. Wittmer and William Arnett, *Three Rivers of Nigeria*, 48.

21 See the anthology of poems, Nii Ayikwei Parkes, Kadija George, Ken Wiwa, eds., *Dance the Guns to Silence: 100 Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa* (London: Flipped Eye Publishing, 2005).

22 Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil in the Niger Delta* (London: Verso, 2001), 7.

23 zinasarowiwa.com/video/karikpo.

24 Ken Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 2.

25 Ken Saro-Wiwa cited in Charles Lock, "Ken Saro-Wiwa or 'The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger'," in *Ken Saro-Wiwa: Writer and Political Activist*, ed. Craig W. McLuckie and Aubrey McPhail, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 3–4.

26 Ibid.

traded to work in plantations in the Americas, and the shift to the palm oil trade in the 1840s when "European traders no longer found the trade in slaves profitable," followed by the "discovery" of crude oil by Royal Dutch Shell in 1956.[22] The enduring effects of the slave trade and colonial exploitation are registered in the seemingly unpeopled landscape. Zina Saro-Wiwa depicts the presence of lush, green vegetation and its disappearance, as well as, as she states, "roads where the pipelines still exist but are buried."[23]

Terrains that once represented communal displacement and dispossession are made visible or unearthed and experienced in new ways. Ken Saro-Wiwa writes that "to the Ogoni, the land and the people are one and are expressed as such in our local languages."[24] A poem, "Ogoni! Ogoni!" (1994) written by Ken Saro-Wiwa while in prison states:

> Ogoni is the land
> The people, Ogoni
> The agony of trees dying
> in ancestral farmlands...
> Ogoni is the dream
> Breaking the looping chain
> Around the drooping neck
> of a shell-shocked land.[25]

A violation of the land is experienced as a violation of the people. Charles Lock defines the Ogoni as "a people doomed by their immobility, their rootedness: not just an indigenous people but an ecosystem, almost an ecosyntax."[26] This sense of entanglement of people and land is apparent in Zina Saro-Wiwa's video. However, that rootedness in her work is presented not as "immobility" but as versatile energy. It is not just the energy from crude oil or palm oil taken out of the land or from

Zina Saro-Wiwa, video still depicting masquerade dancers on top of an abandoned oil-flow station in Ogoniland, from *Karikpo Pipeline*, 2015.
© Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

the trees, but also that taken from the people whose immortality lies in their consanguinity with land.

Zina Saro-Wiwa defines land as a person who bleeds: the black oil that seeps up through the earth and the red oil processed from palms is the blood of the land. However, the focus on red palm oil as an ingredient in her food interventions emphasizes the beauty of the land and the creativity of the people in the ways in which they prepare food. Entanglement with land echoes Ken Saro-Wiwa's observation in *Genocide in Nigeria* that "'tradition' [*doonu kuneke* in the local Ogoni tongue] translates as the honouring of the land (earth, soil, water)" and that honouring of the land is also an honouring of people.[27] In Zina Saro-Wiwa's work, land symbolizes the "web of life" above and below the ground.

The contemporary presence of massive bridges, dams, oil rigs, and pipelines, which stand as the "monuments" to colonialism, are not only an environmental and aesthetic despoliation of the landscape but also an interruption of integrated ways of being. Colonial power was expressed in the drastic alteration of the landscape through the

27 Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy* (Port Harcourt: Saros International, 1992), 12–13.

28 Ann Laura Stoler, "Introduction – The Rot Remains: From Ruins to Ruination," in *Imperial Debris*, ed Stoler, 7 and 14.

29 Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 45–46.

30 Rosemary Okoh, "Conflict Management in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Participatory Approach," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 5/1 (2005): 93.

construction of technologies and infrastructures that negate older technologies and pervade social, environmental, and cultural life, shaping deeper psycho-social conditions. Metal veins that run beneath and above the soil alter cultural consciousness and sever the bonds between people and the land on which they live. Reminiscent of Ann Laura Stoler's observation that there's an "ongoing nature of imperial process" and that imperial ruins, as "the 'rot' that 'remains'," are the "ground on which histories are contested and remade," the Karikpo dances on pipelines symbolize contestation.[28]

The aura of incompatible and incongruent systems emerges in Zina Saro-Wiwa's work: one, a human-centred agricultural communal system, suffocated by the other, a capitalist commodity-centred system; one gets this sense in looking at the agricultural land in the video, *Karikpo Pipeline*, only to find pipelines as antithetical interjections. Ken Saro-Wiwa emphasizes this incongruence by stating that "so long as the nation gets her royalties [from oil drilling], nobody bothers what happens to the poor rural farmer."[29] In contemporary capitalism, exploitative food production conceals the violence implied in replacing one system with another by presenting diverse food in supermarkets as "organic," "authentic," and "cultural." One could indulge in "authentic" food from the Niger Delta purchased in a supermarket without thinking about the effects of oil dumping on local food production and livelihood.

Over time, capitalist colonialism ravaged agricultural synergy. Oil trade politics render land as a space of conflict rather than agricultural production. The Niger Delta particularly is often represented as a place plagued by perpetual conflict and death. As Rosemary Okoh asserts: "agricultural activities usually grind to a halt in communities where violent conflicts take place…houses, farm lands and fishing ponds are often burned down or destroyed and usually abandoned as villagers escape into safer areas where they do not have access to farm lands or fishing ponds."[30] Environmental devastation is also addressed by Basil Sunday Nnamdi, Obari Gomba, and Frank Ugiomoh who, through an analysis of Nigerian art, eco-ethics and environmental discourse, advocate for aesthetic education as "education that recognizes

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *What He Saw,* from the *Karikpo Pipeline* video and photo series, 2015. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

the interconnectedness of body, mind, emotions, and spirit."[31] *Karikpo Pipeline* departs from the image of this devastated land as a site of perpetual violent conflict. The transcendent dances of the Karikpo suggest instead the possibility of regeneration. In this way, food, land, and body become a terrain in which historical narratives are contestable, not simply accepted and consumed. In this intervention, land is portrayed as a site for making connections, finding and abandoning personal, cultural, and political convictions, and *re-imagining* firmly embedded social beliefs.

31 Nnamdi, Gomba, and Ugiomoh, "Environmental Challenges," 75.

32 Saro-Wiwa in *Saro-Wiwa*, eds. Powell et al., 91.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

Communion

> I tell her: I make food to tell stories. I make food so that people receive whatever alchemy or magic happens when eating another culture's food. To tell them something. Or perhaps it is just my way of telling myself that the land belongs to me too. That it is not worthless. That the labour of so many women is not for nothing... She does not care if you celebrate her or not. She does not want this fanfare. She simply wants to go to farm. *Why are you here, Zina? What is this feast you want to make of me?* I tell her that I want her to give me her seeds for a future that she may have given up on.[32]

In this poetic overture to her set of recipes in the book *Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance for The Mangrove Banquet*, Zina Saro-Wiwa creates an entrancing concept of Africa as a laboring but infinitely wise woman. In this text, she states: the land "cares nothing for all [the] ancestors buried in her…she is not my mother nor my father… she is just land."[33] Here Saro-Wiwa draws attention to communion, not just as the sharing of food among people but as ancestral communion through which land is an important medium. In fact, it seems that land is embodiment. She refers to it as a body and as a collective body (ancestors who are buried in her). It may be a "tired and cantankerous" body but it is also one that regenerates.[34] In the overture, the land, Africa, may be embodying those who have passed, some whose deaths have become canonical and those that have gone unnoticed, but she can still produce "seeds for the future."[35] In this work, food, land, and body are a regenerative inseparable/indivisible system.

Saro-Wiwa's *New West African Kitchen* and *The Mangrove Banquet* are structured as communion. Styled as a paladar, *New West African Kitchen* evoked home and family, even though there were paying guests. *The Mangrove Banquet* deals directly with the conditions of the Niger Delta. It was served to approximately fifty

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *The Mangrove Banquet, Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance?*, Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, Texas, 19 November 2015. Photo by Lynn Lane. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

people who acquired tickets through a first-come-first-serve raffle system administered by the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston, Texas, where Saro-Wiwa's solo exhibition *Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance* was installed. Guests were seated for dinner in a marquee at formal tables with printed menus. The tables were decorated with flowers and gold-painted pineapples. Juxtaposed with the dinner was a performance by a masked woman wearing a *kanga*,[36] sweeping the floor with a short, grass broom and pounding grain—creating sounds that were aimed at unsettling the bourgeois banquet.

The location of the ostentatious banquet is, however, ironic: this museum's founding patronage is linked to major oil corporations. It is named after its patron Sarah Campbell Blaffer whose father, William Thomas Campbell, was one of the founders of what would become Texaco, and whose spouse, Robert Lee Blaffer, was a founder of a company that was eventually incorporated into Exxon.[37] These oil companies, together with Royal Dutch Shell and others, formed a cartel

36 The word "*kanga*" is generally used to refer to colorful printed cloth worn mostly by women in East Africa, whereas "*pagne*" refers to similar textiles in West and Central Africa.

37 See blafferartmuseum.org/about-us.

38 Zina Saro-Wiwa, personal communication, 5 October 2016.

39 Mel Evans and Kevin Smith, "Imagining a Culture Beyond Oil at the Paris Climate Talks," posted 17 November 2015; internationaleonline.org/research/politics_of_life_and_death/46_imagining_a_culture_beyond_oil_at_the_paris_climate_talks.

40 Mel Evans, *Artwash: Big Oil and the Arts* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

known as the Seven Sisters and monopolized global oil trade. Hosting the banquet in Texas—the heart of oil production—seems to contradict the principles of the struggle against oil exploitation in the Niger Delta.

Saro-Wiwa argues that the location itself was not key to the conceptual framework. She states that having dinner or a banquet in a gallery or museum is not new and has certainly become part of "the language" of the contemporary gallery scene. She indicates that initially, the space on offer for the banquet was an old Shell oil garage and had this been taken up, the work would have been more subversive and engaged in the political paradoxes of location.[38] As a space ritualized by a particular class of people, the museum is detached from broader senses of "the public" and often functions as a privatized social space operating within the edicts of private patronage. It has, like many museums, major oil companies as patrons. It is what Mel Evans and Kevin Smith of Liberate Tate call the "social licence" which companies like BP use to mask their questionable business and ethical conduct while imposing gallery and museum decisions where they are sponsors.[39]

The banquet, offering food of the Niger Delta to the middle-class patronage of the "art public" and the patronage of oil companies is unsettling, but presents precisely the paradox of entanglement as colonial bondage that operates in a *system of representations*. For example, the gallery and the art "washes," to borrow from Mel Evans, the evil face of the oil industry such that it seems to present the space for amicable, developmental encounters.[40] Meanwhile, the artist, Saro-Wiwa, exchanges aestheticized images of Niger Delta. What is striking about Saro-Wiwa's stance is that it reflects the predicament we all face: many who are vocally opposed to oil extraction or the general brutality of capitalism, at some point or another succumb to the banal evils of capital. She intimates that simply living everyday life in New York, London, or Port Harcourt is linked in some way to capitalist oil exploitation (how food, clothes, and so on are transported) and how thus does one live in a world that seems to continue operating as it does? This is captured in Nuttall's notion of entanglement as

Zina Saro-Wiwa, roasted fish with sorgor salad at *The Mangrove Banquet, Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance?*, Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, Texas, 19 November 2015. Photo by Lynn Lane. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

Zina Saro-Wiwa, scene from *The Mangrove Banquet, Did You Know We Taught Them How to Dance?*, Blaffer Art Museum, Houston, Texas, 19 November 2015. Photo by Lynn Lane. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

dependency, the condition where there is inescapable involvement with "the enemy" even if resisted. The banquet is conceived, as Saro-Wiwa states, as a "love letter to the Niger Delta" aimed at changing the stubborn representations of this region as irredeemably poor, pitiable, and spellbound in unresolved violent conflict. It is as if to say, without denying the material realities of the Niger Delta: look at what we create and not only at how we are destroyed. However, in the simulated space of representations and Mandela-esque "dining with the enemy," the entanglement of the Saro-Wiwa name with the oil-related history of the Blaffer Art Museum reflects the atrocious continuities of colonial economic relations in neoliberal democracies in postcolonial Africa.

Within this entrapment of representations, there are hidden relations in a capitalist system which heighten the glamorous allure of "peculiar" food. This reflects David Harvey's view that food is "mute"

since "we can in practice consume our meal without the slightest knowledge of the intricate geography of production and the myriad social relationships embedded in the system that puts it upon our table."[41] The table is a middle- and upper-class setting and a stage that renders the consumption of food as an elegant and luxurious experience removed from labor processes and political geographies. Harvey argues that "the interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds (of commodities) in the same space and time."[42] In the capitalist system of representations, food always seems to "just appear" from other worlds and onto shelves. African, Thai or Indian cuisines are easily available and consumed globally but these culinary practices do not always signal the (often forced) migration, labor, struggles, and inter-cultural dynamics between people. Commercial mediascapes accelerate the traffic of images that cast food as a spatial imaginary.[43] Food consumption has come to be characterized by assemblages of idealized images of far-away places which often conceal "the social relations implicated in their production."[44] The formal dinner or banquet implies leisure, excess, indulgence, and gratification in such a way that is usually premised on concealing the labor processes involved in growing, preparing, and cooking food.

The Mangrove Banquet also reflects the predicaments of labor and gender through a masked performance, which is part of the banquet. In the performance, a woman holds a tall wooden pestle in a grinding pot. This performance is a reminder that the meaning of food is not only related to supermarkets, prices, and dinner tables, but is also deeply embedded in social processes of planting, producing, and creating. The masked performer wears a *kanga* or *pagne* (a printed cloth worn as wrapper) and her body is painted white. Although she comes across as a theistic element of the work (evoking cosmology and ancestry), she also *demystifies* the banquet in that she makes the labor that is often concealed visible. Gender and the division of labor are central in the banquet. Saro-Wiwa portrays specifically women's labor (in working the land and in cooking). She also characterises the land as a laboring woman who produces future seeds. This alludes to sexuality but also signals an unspoken gender discourse in the colonial shattering of African family structures and the imposition of nuclear family structure and patriarchal domestic relations. Anne McClintock makes a powerful argument about "that peculiarly Victorian and peculiarly neurotic association between work and sexuality" mapped in "relations among imperialism, industry and the cult of domesticity."[45] These relations, intent on "disciplining female reproductive power,"

41 David Harvey, "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination," *Annals, Association of American Geographers* 80.3 (1990): 422–23.

42 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 300.

43 Coined by Arjun Appadurai, the term "mediascape" refers to the creation of an imagined world by media platforms such as magazines, newspapers, television, and radio; see Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 298–99. Appadurai argues that "if globalization is characterized by disjunctive flows that generate acute problems of social well-being, one positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics of globalization is the role of imagination in social life"; see Arjun Appadurai, "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination," *Public Culture* 12/1 (2000), 6.

44 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 300.

45 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, New York and London, 1995), 77, 246.

46 Ibid.

47 The derogatory term "coon" refers to a Black person and to nineteenth-century Blackface minstrelsy performances. One of the stock characters of minstrelsy was Zip Coon, who was often performed by the American stage actor, George Dixon. See Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, Brooks McNamara, eds., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1996).

48 Saro-Wiwa in *Saro-Wiwa*, eds. Powell, et al., 97.

symbolically dichotomized race, gender and class identity where Black women's sexuality, as laboring women, was pathologized.[46] This performance signifies the fetishization of food, place/land and body.

The multi-sensorial approach of *The Mangrove Banquet*—a work that can be felt, tasted, heard, seen, and smelt—parodies the simulation of place by setting an interplay between enacting social roles and image/imaginary. Although the masked performance seems to be counterposed to the "formal" setting of the tables, it is intricately linked to it. The formal dinner is a performance, and to some extent, a masked performance by the middle-class art crowd. Regulating social behaviours through "etiquette" implies a masking of other forms of expression, gestures and eating. The images of palm trees and pineapples as well as the witty names of food on the menu alongside glistening silver cutlery relate to masculine colonial exploits and colonial production of desire. Saro-Wiwa's banquet tables are also lined with actual gold-painted pineapples. Like palm trees, bananas, and watermelons, pineapples have been characterized in Western media images as "exotic" fruit. The images of these foods are often hyper-sexualized and conjure up nineteenth- and twentieth-century "coon" caricatured minstrel performances.[47] In a recipe for making pineapple tea, Saro-Wiwa states:

> A wave of sadness comes over me whenever I deal with pineapples. I have a habit of feeling sorry for them. In my anthropomorphizing mind's eye, pineapples are laughed at for their flamboyance. They are too exotic, too spiky, too fancy. But they are as outrageously wonderful on the inside as they are on the outside.[48]

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *The Invisible Man*, sculpture and photo series, 2015. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

To some extent, colonized food, body, and place are simultaneously fetishized, even in the postcolonial condition. Africa might be laughed at for its flamboyance; Africans may be as "outrageously wonderful on the inside as they are on the outside." By creating these moments, where the socio-political bigotry of culinary spatial imaginaries is uncovered or surreptitiously revealed, Saro-Wiwa parodies the weight of social status in practices of eating.[49]

Saro-Wiwa remarks that since pineapples are "curiously expensive in Port Harcourt, up to N800 ($4) per fruit," it is advisable to buy them "in rural Ogoniland, which is an hour outside of Port Harcourt." She buys them "at the roadside on Bori Road around Yeghe village" from "stalls that sell pineapples that have been plucked right from the farms which are just a few meters away…for around N300 ($1.50)."[50] This attests to what Saro-Wiwa terms "a triumph of nature… over political despair."[51] The "cheaper food, better quality" testimony is far removed from deceitful commercial international adverts and returns to social material reality.

49 In a recent exhibition curated by Saro-Wiwa, *The Pineapple Show* (Tiwani Contemporary, London, 2016), the meanings of pineapple arising from, as stated in the gallery notes at Tiwani, "the encounter between Western European colonial powers and the tropics from the 16th century onwards", are explored. The pineapple was "'a status symbol' connoting 'successful expedition'." In this exhibition, its connotations relating to the tropical, the body, gender, violence, love relationships, and hair reveal power relations embedded in historical entanglements.

50 Saro-Wiwa in *Saro-Wiwa*, ed. Powell et al., 97.

51 zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects/themangrove-banquet.

52 zinasarowiwa.com/photo/the-invisibleman.

53 Zina Saro-Wiwa, personal communication, 5 October 2016.

54 zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects/newwest-african-kitchen.

Satirical juxtaposition in *The Mangrove Banquet* is clear in menu items such as "cold smoked snapper cured in Zina's Invisible Man Tree Bark." There's a comical element to this fish item on the menu that is *cured* in another artwork. The artwork it refers to, *The Invisible Man* (2015), however, embodies personal narratives of loss that reflect broader politics of dispossession. *The Invisible Man* is a wooden Janus-faced Ogele mask sculpture and photographic series. It depicts three blindfolded men beneath a tree. One side is a bright pink-and-black stylized face showing, as Saro-Wiwa states, "anger associated with abandonment," while the other side is black-and-white "representing the sadness of loss."[52] Over the years, masks have come to be worn only by men. Like the mask in *The Mangrove Banquet*, this mask is made to be worn by women only. The blinded men hold various things such as flowers and represent an absence. This artwork, steeped in melancholy, is re-imagined in *The Mangrove Banquet* as a "cure," as an ingredient for preservation, as would be used in food curing processes. This re-appropriation and interweaving of artworks regenerates older poignant meanings and creates possibilities for new, buoyant ones.
The banquet is defined by Saro-Wiwa as an evolving work—an "art organism"—which will have different iterations in the future.[53]

The mangrove as metaphor, where salt-tolerant plants grow, not out of hard ground, but in water and mud, connotes adaptability and endurance. It is also a metaphor for colonial bondage as a system of representations, both seen and unseen. The "visible" entanglement of roots and rootedness in saline transparent water, as opposed to underground, provides an analogy for the interconnectedness with ancestry where the transparent surface also mirrors life above it: there are relations, continuities, and connections.

Saro-Wiwa's food interventions propose that eating collectively enables social transformation or, as she terms it, "transformation through communion."[54] In Asia, Africa and Latin America there is still

a lingering ethic against eating alone; regarded as "a sign of arrogance, greed and egotism," eating alone violates traditional communal eating.[55] In Saro-Wiwa's food interventions, collective labor, food production and consumption is transformative. Shifting social meanings of food consumption and production are linked to a sense of belonging. Food, land/place and body are poetically entangled by Saro-Wiwa to reveal how power operates in processes of labor. Saro-Wiwa asserts that a work like *The Mangrove Banquet* is "an assertion of life…the life that is everywhere, that is neglected."[56] So when she makes food for others, she shares "a worldview" or a sense of common fate.

Conversations: Decolonizing the Tongue

> So many of our ingredients are so stubborn. Will not do what I want them to. Laugh or react with disgust or with inertness at my suggestion that they should mix with this or exist in a brand new way. They don't give much up. They say very little. But if you take the time and ask questions, those herbs, plants, seeds, and spices all have a story. As with so much in Africa, their reasons and reasonings are buried and they don't care too much to reveal themselves to you.[57]

Barisuka looks straight into the camera as she eats roasted ice fish and *mu*. Saro-Wiwa explains that *mu* is pounded unripe plantain that is good for pregnant women or women who have just given birth because of its iron content. Barisuka's gaze is not necessarily a confrontational look but a didactic one, as if to say: "let me show you how it is done, this is how it should be done." Zina Saro-Wiwa's 2014 video works, *Felix Eats Garri and Egusi Soup* (*Table Manners* #1), *Barisuka Eats Roasted Ice Fish and Mu* (*Table Manners* #2), as well as *Victor Eats Garri and Okro Soup With Goat Meat* (*Table Manners* #3), are characterized by this didactic gaze and tête-à-tête setup. There is an affirming certitude conveyed by all three characters as they eat with their hands. These works, collectively titled *Table Manners*, reclaim complex identities that might be suppressed in contexts where table etiquette, fancy cutlery and crockery are part of social regulation.

Table Manners parodies bourgeois table etiquette. Unlike those of *The Mangrove Banquet*, the tables are not meticulously set; there are

55 Howard B. Rosing, *La Comida Vacía: Neoliberal Economic Restructuring and Urban Food Access in the Dominican Republic*, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, doctoral thesis (Binghampton: State University of New York, 2007), 17.

56 zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects/themangrove-banquet.

57 Saro-Wiwa in *Saro-Wiwa*, ed. Powell et al., 91.

58 Pedro Neves Marques, ed., *The Forest and the School: Where to Sit at the Dinner Table* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2014), 308–9.

59 Pedro Neves Marques, director, *Where to Sit at the Dinner Table?* (2012–13), 35 minutes, HD video, spoken in English and Portuguese (excerpt); vimeo.com/79986026.

no menus, nor silver. Symbolically, tables mediate conversation. The idiom "lay your cards on the table" alludes to laying one's feelings bare and having a frank conversation. In Saro-Wiwa's work, however, the table is awkward, and perhaps "sets apart" and inhibits. The colonial associations of the phrase "table manners" implies sanitizing or silencing where certain gestures are not acceptable. It also implies structure or a process of ordering and classifying objects, people and other sentient beings. The table in that sense evokes Pedro Neves Marques's observations of anthropophagic predation in relation to capitalist predation where the latter is a destructive "unilateral view of consumption."[58] Symbolizing a cannibalistic order of predator/prey, exploiter/exploited, the table betokens bodies consuming and bodies consumed. Ecology "became less focussed" on "consumption and production" and more on "digestive ordering."[59] In this sense colonialism consumed, in a cannibalistic manner, the people it colonized, and defined itself through this consumption. The colonial table and whatever (or whoever) lies on it not only symbolize the consumption of appropriated food as commodity, but also the metabolization of labor time and, by extension, the consumption and annihilation of the bodies that labor.

In the videos of Barisuka and Felix, the tables they sit at are bare, while in the video of Victor, there is no table at all. Thus, all three videos devalue "the table" as a location of manners. Victor eats comfortably and skilfully from his lap. There is, in this work, a subtle but direct confrontation with coloniality and notions of propriety and impropriety. Saro-Wiwa's work accentuates gestures that might otherwise be suppressed in the ways in which complex identities are manifested in different postcolonial contexts. In this work, eating with one's hands are *the* manners and mannerisms (the "reasons and reasonings") referred to, rather than the bourgeois notion of etiquette. In *Felix Eats Gari and Egusi Soup* the bourgeois etiquette is counterpoised to Felix's consumption. As Felix digs in with his hands, one notices the painted image behind him that portrays what, by Euro-American standards, would be a typical

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *Table Manners: Felix Eats Garri and Egusi Soup*, video still, 2014. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *Table Manners: Victor Eats Garri and Okro Soup with Goat Meat*, video still, 2014. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

Zina Saro-Wiwa, *Table Manners: Barisuka Eats Roasted Ice Fish and Mu*, video still, 2014. © Zina Saro-Wiwa. Image courtesy of the artist.

middle to upper-class home and car. Felix's assertive presence makes the "ideal" behind him seem absurd, empty, and meaningless. The imagery in these videos is potent for Africans who experienced prolonged official and unofficial colonialism (South Africa, for example). Loss of access to food through loss of land profoundly alters relations to the body, both individual and collective. The assertive gaze in these videos has an emancipatory aesthetic. I recall Sidney Mintz's observation that slaves who were shipped to the Americas to work on plantations, grew, prepared, and cooked food that they would not eat.[60] Although there was a food ration system, there was also what Judith Carney and Richard Rosomoff call "botanical transfer" where slave owners acquired African staple food produce for slave voyages to "decrease the mortality" of slaves until they arrived, and slaves then took leftovers from those provisions and planted these in "slave food fields" on their arrival—an initiative driven by "resilience in adversity."[61] Food marked social superiority and inferiority; and over time slave communities created cuisines and cultural exchange that reclaimed their sense of freedom. Mintz suggests that "slaves not only

had taste and canons of taste, but also…their taste in food influenced the tastes of the masters, they created the Caribbean cuisine."[62] Saro-Wiwa's mode of, as she asserts, "telling new stories about Africa" through cuisine, challenges the limiting image of Africa as a continent of perpetual wars and famines.[63] The once commonplace "first world" admonition to children: "finish your food, there are starving kids in Africa," comes to mind. Yet, the image of hunger in Africa is less often thought of as mirroring, and being a concomitant of, the greed or insatiable hunger of international monopoly capitalism.[64] Jean-François Bayart's expression, "politics of the belly" sheds light on the appetite for power:

> "Politics of the stomach" refers in the first place to situations where there is a dearth of food, and which continue to prevail in Africa...More often, however, the term "to eat"... refers to desires and practices other than those related to food. Above all, activities of accumulation which open the way to social advancement and which allow the holder of positions of power to "stand upright" [sic]. The stomach refers to the corpulence which it is good to display when one becomes powerful.[65]

Here, eating refers to accumulation of money, commodities, and power through the impoverishment of others. It is not about satisfying a physical hunger but creating insatiable desire. Eating becomes an allegory for colonial voracity and consequent postcolonial plutocratic conditions.

Conclusion

Saro-Wiwa's work therefore joins a complex conversation where "stubborn ingredients" of historical dispossession, poverty, deprivation and despair abide. Saro-Wiwa's food interventions, as embodied eating practices, or "feast performances," connote a dislocation of the African body which is exiled from land both at home and in the diaspora. As Greg Ruiters reminds us, colonization was "environmental racism writ large."[66] Colonization, as Mbembe argues, systematically disciplined bodies of the colonized through alienating them from the environment.[67] Decolonization includes not only the regeneration of suppressed

60 Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*.

61 Judith A Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 66.

62 Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, 36.

63 zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects /newwest-african-kitchen.

64. See Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009).

65 Célestin Monga, "Let's Eat: Banquet Aesthetics and Social Epicurism," in *Beautiful/Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics*, ed. Sarah Nuttall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 224–39.

66 Greg Ruiters, "Environmental Racism and Justice in South Africa's Transition," *Politikon* 28.1 (2001), 95–103.

67 Achille Mbembe, "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62/1 (1992), 12.

68 zinasarowiwa.com/special-projects /themangrove-banquet.

languages, knowledges, and practices but also relations to land and to food. It is the systematic dislocation of a sense of belonging and altering of spatial consciousness as a right and expression of citizenship.

Since Saro-Wiwa's work is intent on modes of representation as the locus of entanglement and the social imaginary, I see Saro-Wiwa's food interventions in the light of the revived call for decolonization. Targeting the legacies of colonialism that stubbornly persist in contemporary landscapes, architecture and everyday practice, youth are forming movements challenging the "manners" of colonialism in all spheres of everyday life. How one speaks, behaves and eats reverberates mannerisms rooted in colonial experience, the inhibiting conditions and the denial of, to use Saro-Wiwa's phrase, existing in "brand new ways."

Zina Saro-Wiwa's food interventions go beyond what seems a simple social event to reveal a longue-durée of how the human palate developed a penchant for sweet, salty, bitter, or sour tastes. In her work, the people, those close to her and those implicated in her narrative, are significant. Saro-Wiwa's creative work dovetails with her father's poetic texts to pinpoint the social conditions that erode people's livelihoods. This *poetic entanglement* divulges the poignant interwoven narratives but also the sense of dislocation that is implied in those entanglements. In my reading of Saro-Wiwa's work, and building on Nuttall's notion of entanglement, the food interventions discussed draw attention to the emotive histories, or rather the psycho-emotional struggle in the predicaments of contemporary life. Using food to generate new narratives within unlikely and adversarial situations, Saro-Wiwa's work implies the symbolic inseparability of food, land, and body. Intricately linked to power, food (production and consumption) signifies emancipatory politics. Saro-Wiwa's food interventions are what she calls "an assertion of life" that engages with historical desolation in order to "triumph" over it.[68] It unearths and digs deep to find unforeseeable, and yet irreversibly entangled, roots.

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FROM WITHIN & FROM OUTSIDE: INVESTIGATING CONTEMPORARY CLOUDS

Samaneh Moafi

On Friday 26 November 2021, white clouds filled the dried-up riverbed of Iran's Zayandeh River. Soon, pictures were shared virally on social media platforms including Twitter and Instagram, and in Telegram groups. Two weeks had passed since the beginning of the protests. Frustrated by the continued severity of a regional drought and lack of a meaningful plan for addressing the crisis, Isfahani farmers had decided to take it to the city. They left the withered agricultural fields and fruit gardens on the outskirts and staged a procession along the dried-up river's course. They set up camps in the heart of the city and at the foot of one of the iconic Safavid-era bridges. Day after day, more urban dwellers joined their requiem for water.

I took a few hours to find my bearings, discussed the situation with my colleagues at Forensic Architecture, a research group at Goldsmiths, University of London, where I'm based, and then began to archive and study the images of the white clouds closely. In their backgrounds were figures dressed in police and Basiji uniforms, armed with riot control gear. Also in the images were children and the elderly, men and women, struggling to breathe. Gradually, chants for the right to water gave way to desperate cries for air. The clouds spilled from the riverbed into residential neighborhoods, snaked up to open windows, and poured into the interiors of familial living rooms. The neighborhood's residents, my aunt and her children included, described a burning sensation in their eyes, followed by shortness of breath, chest-tightness, and excessive coughing.

These white clouds descending, these flowing streams of tear gas, and these protests following the course of a dried-up river are parts of an emerging condition of warfare where conflicts and negotiations play out through the destruction, construction, reorganization, and subversion of space. In the process, the lines between civilians and combatants are

blurred. Today, the environment "must be understood not simply as the backdrop to conflict, nor as its mere consequence," Eyal Weizman has argued, "but as trapped in a complex and dynamic feedback-based relation with the forces operating within it—be they a diverse local population, soldiers, guerrilla, media or humanitarian agents."[1]

The entanglement of environmental destruction with colonial and military forms of domination is often overlooked through the use of terms such as *slow violence*.[2] The destruction of the environment may be delayed, gradual and out of sight. It may be dispersed across time and space. It may affect individuals and communities at a pace too slow to assign blame. But FA's precedents and findings show that the slow speed of environmental destruction can and does accelerate into egregious incidents of conflict. In other words, violence against the environment is entangled with police brutality, sexual violence, and shooting. Incident analysis can serve as an entry point to the field of causality of environmental destruction. This exemplifies our team's approach to what we define as *contemporary nature*.[3]

Urban & Environmental Wars

The proliferation of smartphones has opened new avenues for the pursuit of accountability. Human rights violations and the destruction of the environment have never been so thoroughly documented. This documentation can be pieced together spatially using architectural analysis and digital modeling techniques, and cross-referenced with scientific methods of remote sensing and fluid dynamic simulations. For example, our project on tear gas in Plaza de la Dignidad took shape around a YouTube video archive. We were made aware of its existence in February 2020, when the Chilean medical-activist group No+Lacrimógenas contacted our team. They had gathered documentation of the Carabineros' use of tear gas in residential neighborhoods of Santiago, and had learned about our research on the topic through our collaborators Angeles Donoso and César Barros.

The archive held the uninterrupted daily livestream of a camera installed on the building of Galéria CIMA near Plaza de la Dignidad. The camera was pointed at the roundabout, an urban space that served as a center for the protests. Its earliest recording was dated 24 October 2019, only ten short days from the rise in public transport

1 Eyal Weizman, "Walking Through Walls: Soldiers as Architects in the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict," Public Space (3 June 2009); publicspace.org/multimedia/-/post/walking-through-walls-soldiers-as-architects-in-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict.

2 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011).

3 Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2019).

4 Eyal Weizman, *The Roundabout Revolutions* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015).

5 Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 22.

6 Ibid.

fares. As such, it held rigorous documentation of the rise of a people's movement, the largest of its kind for a generation. The footage resonated with images of the "Roundabout Revolutions"—in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, Libya, and Syria in 2010—that I had previously studied together with Eyal Weizman.[4] It was to this space that the Chilean working class, Indigenous peoples, students, and feminist advocacy groups all were pulled, and it was from this space that their voices were livestreamed in every home across the globe. The movement and the urban form of this roundabout were entangled.

As chants of *El violador eres tú* [The rapist is you] shook Santiago's Plaza de la Dignidad, the words كلن يعني كلن [All of them means all of them] erupted in Beirut's Martyr Square. Across the ocean, from Chile to Lebanon and even further to Iraq and Hong Kong, public space was being reclaimed by social movements seeking to overthrow authoritarian regimes. The occupations were sustained week after week, month after month. Slowly, the residential neighborhoods that hosted these occupations began to suffer acute manifestations of police brutality. Distrusting the police, residents used their smartphones to document these acts of violence and post them on social media in the hope it was a guaranteed avenue to a measure of accountability. Images and videos from these sites of repression suggest that the weapons of riot control varied, but the common signature across them all was that of the white clouds of tear gas or CS gas, launched by projectiles or from armored vehicles.

The history of the weaponization of toxic clouds can be traced back to the turn of the twentieth century, when the essential thought was how to target the enemy's environment instead of his body.[5] The case of 1915 Ypres serves as one of the earliest of its kind, where thousands of chlorine gas cylinders were released by German soldiers along their trench line to clear the border of French and British troops. Simply by the habitual, elementary act of breathing, the breather in this context became at once—to use Peter Sloterdijk's words—"a victim and an unwilling accomplice in his own annihilation."[6] With the end of

Automated analysis of time and location of clouds of tear gas based on video footage taken by Galeria Cima on 20 December 2019. Video still from Forensic Architecture, *Tear Gas in Plaza de la Dignidad*, 2020. Image courtesy of Forensic Architecture.

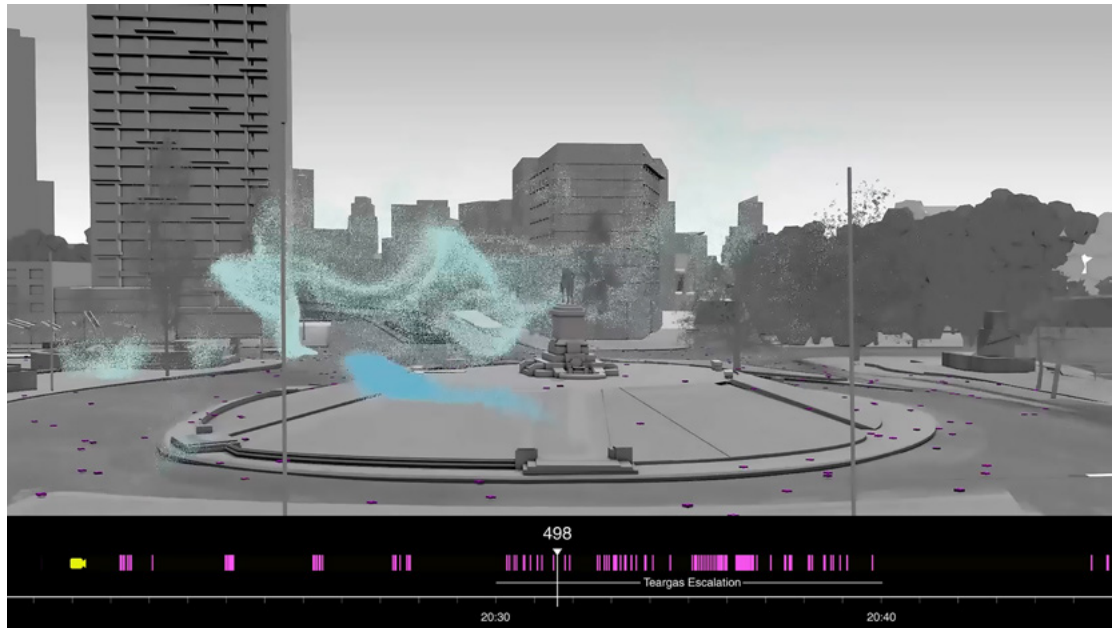
7 My team at Forensic Architecture greatly benefited from the supervision of Eyal Weizman and included Martyna Marciniak, Robert Trafford, Mark Nieto, and Tamara Z. Jamil.

the First World War, in 1925 the Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of asphyxiating clouds in warfare. Later, in 1993 when the United Nations (UN) tightened the legal framework for toxic clouds, it also introduced an exception for the domestic purpose of riot control. With this convention, the frontiers of environmental wars were indeed shifted to the roundabouts, streets, and riverbeds of our cities.

CS or tear gas manufacturers often provide detailed specifications for their products, but they fail to offer a reliable account of how they might behave in urban environments. Tear gas comes in a powdery solid form. When deployed, the pressurized powder is mixed into a liquid formulation that is then released into the air as droplets. The speed and direction of the wind, the temperature, and even humidity all influence the behavior of such droplets. While medical reports have evidenced their brutal impact, these toxic clouds are yet to be prohibited. As with other environmental forms of violence, new sets of investigative methods are necessary to explain the ways they might affect the health of their breathers in residential neighborhoods.

Mapping Toxic Clouds

In partnership with No+Lacrimógenas, and together with Dr. Salvador Navarro-Martinez of Imperial College London, I led a team at Forensic Architecture that took up the challenge of examining the scale of the use of tear gas in one day of protest as it was recorded by Galéria CIMA's camera on 20 December 2019.[7] Our aim was to evaluate the severity of health risks that residents had been exposed to. On this day, hundreds of tear gas canisters were deployed against protesters in a heartless display of disregard for public health by the Chilean authorities. First, we developed a 3D model of the roundabout. We reconstructed the camera's cone of vision and confirmed its timecode using shadows. Then, we developed an automated method of video analysis for detecting the extent of each tear gas cloud and marking the approximate location of its source, the canister. We located a total



Fluid dynamic simulation showing that the wind carried the tear-gas particles. Video still from Forensic Architecture, *Tear Gas in Plaza de la Dignidad*, 2020. Image courtesy of Forensic Architecture.

of 596 clouds in our 3D model. For the past four years, we have been working to develop a method for mapping the shapes and concentrations of toxic clouds using open source data. Our method involves the mathematical simulation of the fluid dynamics of toxic clouds in digital laboratory conditions, taking into account meteorological data such as temperature and wind. With the locations of tear gas canisters accurately mapped within our 3D model of Plaza de la Dignidad, we are able to map the architecture of tear gas clouds there. On the day in question, the wind carried the CS particles from southwest to northeast across the roundabout, ultimately depositing them on the ground and into the Mapucho River. The surrounding buildings generated irregular turbulence that carried airborne toxins into the surrounding neighborhoods. We showed that the contours of the clouds, as they accumulated in the air and were deposited on the ground, extended well beyond the perimeter of the roundabout.

Our simulation also allowed us to measure the saturation of toxicity at any point in the space of our 3D model. The Chilean police crowd control manual, a document leaked to us by informers, states that exposure to tear gas should be limited to point four milligrams per

8 D. Ortiz, J. Riffo, and F. Velásquez, "Vecinos de Plaza Dignidad acusan desprotección de tribunales por uso indiscriminado de lacrimógenas," *Interferencia* (10 January 2021); interferencia.cl/articulos/vecinos-de-plaza-dignidad-acusan-desproteccion-de-tribunales-por-uso-indiscriminado-de.

cubic meter, and that concentrations above the two milligram threshold constitute a serious danger. Our model showed that this threshold was surpassed at a sample point for a total duration of 185 seconds between 8:30 and 8:40 pm. In other words, the concentration of tear gas in Plaza de la Dignidad had reached toxicity levels of forty times the allowed limit, risking not only the lives of the protesters, but also those of the residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

Local media outlets including *Interferencia* and *El Desconcierto* reported on the findings of our investigation. Within a month, a fenceline community group with members from the Parque Forestal, Lastarria, and Bellas Artes neighborhoods opened a case against the Carabinero's use of tear gas, on the grounds of the destruction of the flora and fauna of their neighborhoods, and of the residents' mental health.[8] They testified about four pets and several plants that had died as a result of being poisoned by tear gas residue. Elderly residents and those with children had no option but to leave their homes with their relatives every Friday so as not to be there when the repression began, they said. Seen from the outside by members of our team at Goldsmiths, the clouds of tear gas were measurable objects: the concentration of their droplets in the air and their residues on the ground could be measured. From within the Plaza, and for the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, however, the clouds were an experiential and gradually suffocating condition. Cross-referencing testimonies from within and from outside opened up an opportunity to pursue accountability in legal forums.

"Within" and "outside" take on slightly different meanings when applied to clouds with territorial scales. Consider the case of the 2015 forest fires in Indonesia. The smoke from millions of fire sources in and around the palm oil plantations of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and West Papua accumulated into a cloud that contained more carbon, methane, ammonium, and cyanide than the entire annual emissions of German industry. Scientists estimate that it resulted in more than 100,000 premature deaths, and pushed the world beyond 2ºC of global warming faster than expected.

Due to its scale, we understood this cloud to be a harbinger of a new international crime against humanity—ecocide. In her proposal for the Rome Statute, Polly Higgins described ecocide as:

> Extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been or will be severely diminished.[9]

Unlike the existing four international crimes, that is, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression, ecocide would be the only one where human harm would not be a prerequisite for prosecution. Through his organization La Fundación Internacional Baltasar Garzón (FIBGAR), the human rights lawyer Baltasar Garzón, who successfully put out an international arrest warrant for the former Chilean military dictator Augusto Pinochet, commissioned us to gather evidence regarding the causes and consequences of these fires, towards the aim of holding an international trial.

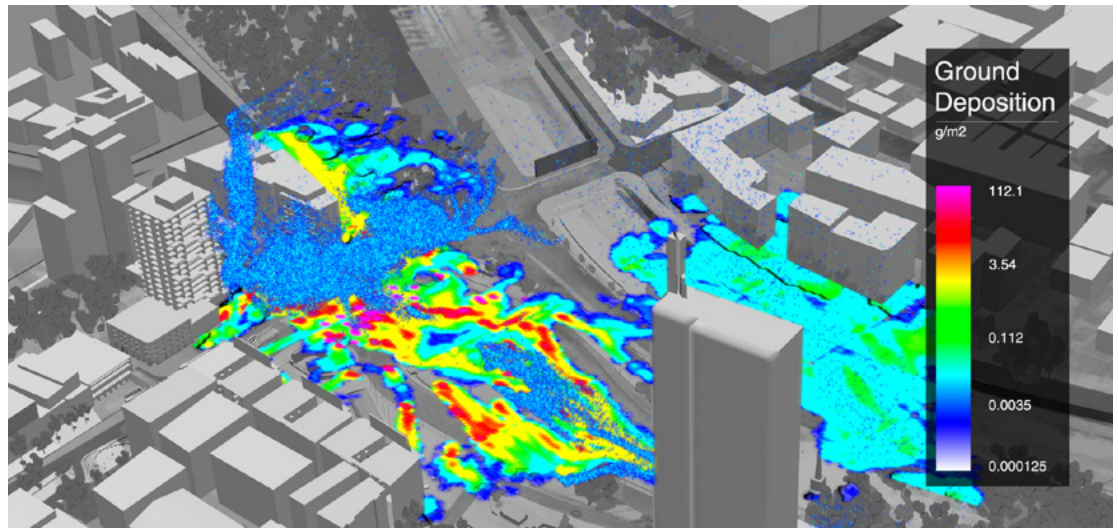
We began with remote sensing, a technique that refers to a set of processes for detecting the physical characteristics of an area from afar. Special cameras installed on satellites orbiting the earth collect reflected and emitted forms of radiation, and this helps researchers sense things at a distance. Concentrations of carbon in the air are mapped by the MOPITT sensor on NASA's Terra satellite, with a time resolution of one month, and an atmospheric resolution of twenty-two kilometer pixels.[10] We acquired the global data for the year of 2015. Processing it, we indicated the concentrations of carbon dioxide with gradients from yellow to dark red, and masked the blind spots in

9 Polly Higgins, *Eradicating Ecocide: Laws and Governance to Prevent the Destruction of our Planet* (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 2015).

10 MOPITT: Measurement of Pollution in the Troposphere.

white. When animated, our monthly analysis revealed that the air's carbon concentration increased exponentially with the arrival of the dry season. Gradually a carbon cloud was formed, engulfing a zone that extended from Indonesia across Malaysia and Singapore to Southern Thailand and Vietnam.

We synchronized this time-lapse with another time-based dataset that consisted of daily information about detected sources of fire, their geographic coordinates and timestamp, and was verified by our local collaborator, an Indonesian NGO named WALHI—Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, the Indonesian Forum for Environment. The synchronized data showed that the accumulation of the carbon cloud corresponded to a sharp increase in the detected sources of fire. The corroboration between the two datasets—the carbon monoxide (CO) concentration detected by an extra-terrestrial sensor and the sources of fire detected locally and from the ground—indicated their entanglement.



Fluid dynamic simulation showing that alarming concentrations of toxic particles of tear gas were eventually deposited on the ground. Video still from Forensic Architecture, *Tear Gas in Plaza de la Dignidad*, 2020. Image courtesy of Forensic Architecture.

Archetypes

Moving on, we opened a line of inquiry at the scale of the plantation. Archetypally, the plantation involved the extermination of local people and plants, and the introduction and employment of new crops and labor, forced or enslaved, foreign to the local context.[11] In Anna Tsing's words, the plantation was designed to eliminate local histories of companion species and disease relations, maximize alienation, and hence to multiply infinitely, taking entire territories and increasing economic profit. This formula served throughout much of the history of plantations in Indonesia. In the 1990s, repressive Indonesian government policies allowed local and international companies to collaborate with the armed forces, appropriate vast tracts of land from Indigenous populations, and then employ those same populations in exploitative conditions. The 2015 forest fires mirrored the disastrous fires of the 1997 El Niño droughts. Both opened space for non-scalable ecological relations to erupt.

The borders of many palm oil concessions in Kalimantan are shared with those of areas protected by deforestation moratoriums, inhabited by various forms of life including the orangutan, a name that translates as "man of the forest." The concessions' borders are death zones for them. On 24 June 2013, for example, our collaborators at Greenpeace Indonesia and Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF) discovered an orangutan skull buried near the borders of two palm oil plantations run by subsidiaries of PT Eagle High Plantations Tbk (formerly BW Plantation) and Bumitama Agri Ltd, near Tanjung Puting National Park. Three other orangutan bodies were found on this very border. The year after, in 2014 three other orangutan bodies were found on the borders of PT Nabatindo Karya Utama plantation, including that of a baby named Apung. Between 1999 and 2015, approximately 100,000 Bornean orangutans lost their lives in Kalimantan alone.

There are precedents for claiming rights, or "non-human rights," for apes, and the forest fires could be considered an act of ape genocide. But to make this case would have led to an act of total individuation. To become subjects of law, the endangered orangutans would have had to be separated from the forests, from the many species to whom they are related, and even from one another. To become subjects of law, in other words, they would have had to lose so much of their shared being in the world. This made evident that new legal frameworks, tools, and vocabularies were yet to be developed to address their rights.

11 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2015), 37–45.

12 See "The NhRP Praises Argentine Court's Recognition of Captive Chimpanzee's Legal Personhood and Rights," The Nonhuman Right Project (5 December 2016); nonhumanrights.org/media-center/12-5-16-media-release-nhrp-praises-argentine-court-on-legal-personhood-for-chimpanzee.

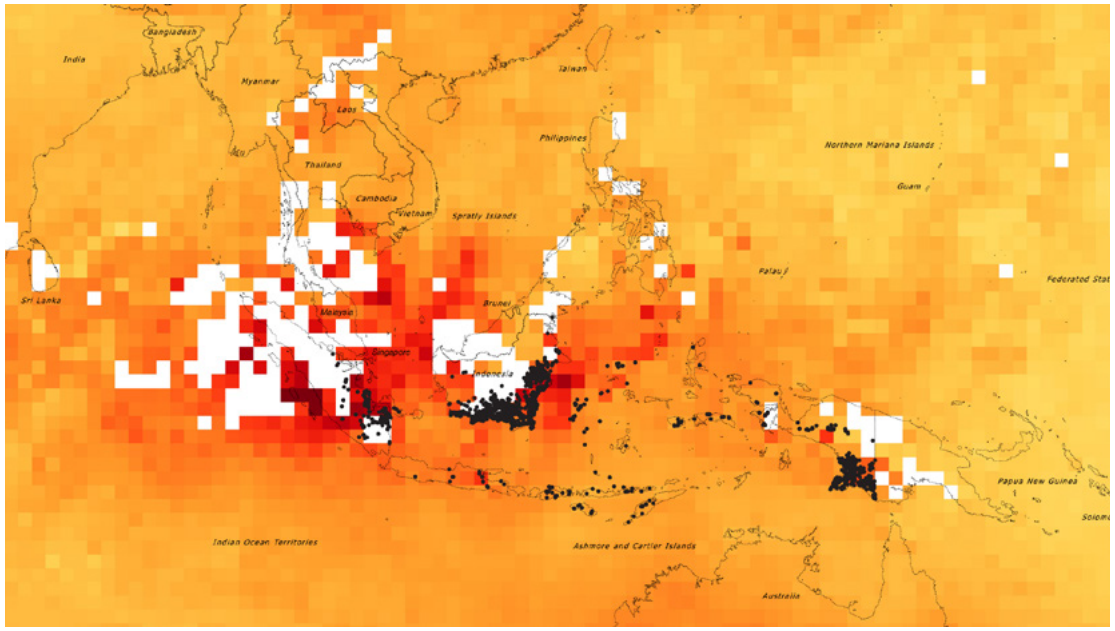
13 Eyal Weizman, "Are They Human?", *e-flux Journal* (10 October 2016).

In the meantime, cultural forums play a significant role for raising awareness. Our evidentiary materials around the case of the 2015 carbon cloud ranged from remote sensing and cloud cartographies to physical models of the architecture of orangutan nests, scientific experiments conducted at the Max-Planck institute proving the orangutan to be a sentient being, and proceedings of an Argentinean court where an ape was issued with a writ of habeas corpus.[12] We used our findings to engage the public with the possibility to extend a kind of a shared and environmental orangutan rights to humans and with it, in Eyal Weizman's words, a certain "becoming humanoid of humanity."[13]

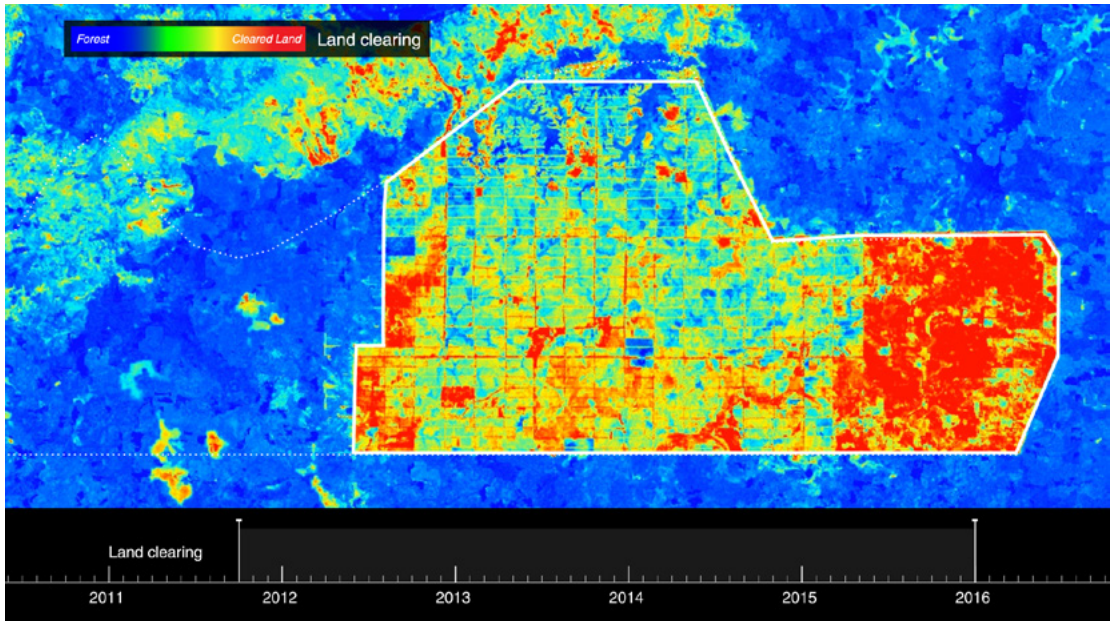
The Problem of Intentionality

Later, and with a commission from an environmental organization named Greenpeace International (Greenpeace), we organized a new inquiry into fires, this time on the question of intentionality. We were asked to focus on a specific set of plantations in West Papua affiliated to an Indonesian/Korean palm oil agglomerate named Korindo. If the intentional use of fire for land clearing was part to the operational logic of Korindo, we were told, the company was in breach of Indonesian law. Moreover, the social credit of international organizations such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), that had awarded its certificate to Korindo, could be at stake. Our work was anchored in an archive of footage taken from helicopters flying over the edge of forests and plantations in West Papua. The videos, provided to us by Greenpeace, showed assemblages of fire sources moving along what appeared to be carefully organized rows of dried wood.

Fire is neither good nor bad. It is a manifestation of elements such as oxygen, fuel loads, ignition sources, and topography, brought together in a unique event. In Indonesia, Nigel Clark argues in his



MODIS satellite image showing the carbon cloud from the 2015 forest fires engulfing a zone that extended from Indonesia across Malaysia and Singapore to Southern Thailand and Vietnam. Video still from Forensic Architecture, *Ecocide in Indonesia*, 2017. Image courtesy of Forensic Architecture.



Normalized Burn Ratio (NBR) analysis revealing the monthly pattern of land clearance inside a palm oil concession between 2011 and 2016. Video still from Forensic Architecture, *Intentional Fires in West Papua*, 2020. Image courtesy of Forensic Architecture.

14 Nigel Clark, "Fire: Pyropolitics for a Planet of Fire," in *Territory Beyond Terra*, ed. Kimberley Peters, Philip Steinberg, and Elaine Stratford (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2018), 82.

15 Nigel Clark, "Fire: Pyropolitics for a Planet of Fire," in *Territory Beyond Terra*, 75.

16 NASA/USGS: National Aeronautics and Space Administration/United States Geological Survey.

writings on pyropolitics, fire has always been "a means of carving out and shaping territory"; and territory, he clarifies, has always been "porously bounded and inclined to move in sync with environmental rhythms and flows."[14] In other words, the burning of farms and croplands has been a way of relating to the living world. But the archetype of the plantation turned these periodic events of combustion into "configurations too wide-ranging and incessant to allow for recovery and regrowth."[15]

We researched the metadata from Greenpeace's video archive to map the time and location of the events of fire recorded. We used key spatial features visible in the videos, such as the networks of roads and drainage canals, to locate the camera's cones of vision and, in turn, calculate the geographic coordinates of the sources of fire. We then cross-referenced these coordinates with those detected by NASA/USGS Landsat satellites.[16] The next step was to examine these coordinates in relation to the borders of the concessions and analyze their trajectory of movement, be it toward or away from the boundary.

Gathering open source data from the Landsat satellite archive, we deployed a remote sensing technique that uses the ratio between near-infrared (NIR) and shortwave infrared (SWIR) values to identify burned areas and provided a measure of burn severity. Commonly referred to as the Normalized Burn Ratio (NBR) analysis, this technique helped us map the patterns of monthly land clearings inside the concessions. Our research revealed that for several months between 2012 and 2016, the assemblage of fires, their direction, and the speed with which they moved in many Korindo plantations in the region matched the patterns of land clearing. This indicated that the fires were set intentionally.

We shared our findings on Korindo via local and international media outlets that, in turn, connected our work to testimonies from the ground by the plantations' laborers and neighboring communities. Shortly after the release of our findings, another environmental organization named Mighty Earth asked us to submit the findings for a court case to be held in Germany, and we agreed. The judge found our evidentiary work to be of high caliber, confronting Korindo with the prospect of either challenging our robust methodology or losing

17. Achille Mbembe, "The Universal Right to Breathe," trans. Carolyn Shread, *Critical Inquiry* 47/S2 (2021): 58–62.

the case. If the court finds Korindo guilty, the implications will be global in scale, since our robust methodology for determining the intentionality of fires could be applied to any plantation.

The Universal Right to Breathe

When mapping the contours of the 2015 plantation cloud in Indonesia, we detected two others blanketing the basins of Congo and Amazon. Similarly, during our mapping of the white clouds of tear gas at the Plaza de la Dignidad roundabout, we were sent videos from protesters in the streets of Beirut and Hong Kong, migrants crossing the Evros border between Turkey and Greece, and farmers staging a sit-in at the dried-up riverbed of Isfahan. Breathing, Achille Mbembe reminds us, is beyond a purely biological act: it is that which we hold in common, that which is "unquantifiable" and "cannot be appropriated." If the twentieth century was characterized by environmental acts of warfare where the target was the breathers' air, the twenty-first century can be the era of contemporary nature wherein the breathless share their experiences, from within and from outside; build new investigative techniques, lock arms, and claim what Mbembe has articulated as the "universal right to breathe."[17]

TOXICITY & HEALING

Maria Thereza Alves is an artist. She has participated in the 22nd Bienal Panamericana de Quito; the 8th Berlin Biennial; the São Paulo (2016 and 2010), Sharjah (2017), Sydney (2020), and Taipei (2012) Biennials; Manifesta 12 and 7; and dOCUMENTA (13), among many other exhibitions. Alves was the recipient of the Vera List Prize for Art and Politics in 2016–18. In 1978, as a member of the International Indian Treaty Council, Alves made an official presentation of human rights abuses of the Indigenous population of Brazil at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. She was one of the founding members of the Green Party of São Paulo in 1987. Her books include *Recipes for Survival* (University of Texas Press, 2018) and *Thieves and Murderers in Naples: A Brief History on Families, Colonization, Immense Wealth, Land Theft, Art and the Valle de Xico Community Museum in Mexico* (Di Paolo Edizioni, 2020).

THE UMBRAGIADE

Maria Thereza Alves

Prologue

I live in Europe and read the stories, histories, myths, and traditional poems belonging to here. I am particularly fond of the epics and read some of these back in school while living in New York. In contrast to this, there are hardly any epic poems that survived the colonial invasion of the Americas. This has negatively affected the dissemination of Indigenous voices.

In 2017, I went to the Amazonian city of Rio Branco in the state of Acre in Brazil and interviewed thirty-three forest agents and one organizer from the AMAAIAC (Association of the Movement of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents of the State of Acre).[1] "The Umbragiade" is an epic poem based on these interviews, which were originally made for the 19-channel video installation *To See the Forest Standing*, commissioned for the exhibition *Disappearing Legacies: The World as Forest,* curated by Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin.[2] In 2020, I invited my friend Xanupa Apurinã of the Apurinã people to contribute to this epic poem and she conducted an interview with Lina Apurinã, a student of agroecology at the Federal Institute of Brasília.

The forest agents come from various reservations throughout the state of Acre and belong to different Indigenous peoples, such as the Huni Kuin, the Shanenawa, the Asháninka, the Shãwãdawa, the Yawanawá, the Katukina, the Nupiquin, the Poyanawá, and the Nawa, among others. All have survived genocide campaigns, first by the Portuguese and then by Brazilians.

The AMAAIAC's mandate is to preserve forested areas on Indigenous lands. It is also a place for experimentation and for the exchange of ideas and techniques for more efficient agroforestry methods, particularly for areas that have been heavily deforested and destroyed by non-Indigenous settlers. Many of the peoples of these reservations, particularly those where major highways were built to deliberately divide up land, have continuous confrontations and problems with gold miners, ranchers, loggers, monocrop plantation owners, and hunters, as well as with the ongoing colonization program by

1 In Portuguese, Associação do Mov. dos Agentes Agroflorestais Indígenas do Acre.

2 See Anna-Sophie Springer & Etienne Turpin, eds., *Verschwindende Vermächtnisse: Die Welt als Wald* (Berlin: K. Verlag, 2020), p. 85 for a project description and pp. 77–8 for a translated transcript of one such interviews (with Yaká Shãwãdawa); see mariatherezaalves.org for access to the videos.

the INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform). Forest agents are elected by their communities and are responsible, through community consensus, for managing reforestation, overseeing animal life, sustainable farming; for the protection of water sources, promoting the biodiversity of fauna and flora, and caring for archaeological sites, as well as for organizing environmental education programs for settlers in order to protect the land from further destruction.

The AMAAIAC has about 145 forest agents on 204 reservations who are protectors and custodians of 2,439,982 hectares of forest (a land area almost the size of Belgium). Forest agents are not recognized by the Brazilian government and receive no regular income for their labor. Yet they are at the front line for maintaining the possibility that Brazil, and indeed the wider world, might have a future. Some are even killed for their efforts, as Paulo Paulino Guajajara from the state of Maranhão was in 2019.

At the time of our interview in 2017, Masha, a forest agent of the Huni Kuin, foreseeing the increased violence that would be unleashed upon Indigenous peoples and lands by the present Brazilian administration, asked that they not be left alone to face what, or who, is coming… the loggers, the ranchers… the land being overrun by whoever the federal government would allow.

Poá Katukina, previous president of the AMAAIAC, reminds us: “We have dedicated ourselves to seeing that the forest stands.”

The Umbragiade

The night is the grandmother.
Because at night she comes and enriches the carbon dioxide,
and the trees are glad as well.
The grandmother drinks the morning dew
that comes from the tree, not those close to the creek.
The grandmothers drink the water from the morning dew.
That is how they sustain themselves.
And the grandfather, he is our food,
what we reap, eat, and kill.
They are the animals that give their lives to the ones who are still living.
We kill so that their life can give life to the living.
If you harvest the cassava root,
it was once alive, but we reap it from the earth, cook it,
and eat it, so the cassava gives its life to the human beings. (17)

Before, we thought that the forest would go on forever,
that we would never run out of fish,
and the rivers would never dry up.
It never crossed our minds that the river could become dirty. (16)

When the whites came the Age of Correrias [runnings] –
of the many *correrias* began,
where the Indians were massacred.
These *correrias* I am talking about –
what were called *correria* in the past –
were when the white people came to Indigenous areas
and would start to massacre the Indians.
To kill…
They killed the men and took the women away.
This was part of the *correria*. (12)

Then came the Age of Captivity.
It was when the rubber barons arrived.
They brought too many problems for my relatives.
The rubber barons did not want my relatives to do things the way they did,
or to live the way they did.
The rubber barons simply arrived and started bossing around.
You either worked or hit the road,
or else they would try to kill you. (33)

During the Age of Captivity, my grandfather,
he was a leader during that time.
Now, I am of the fourth generation,
my role is to protect and plant on our land,
and to protect our nature and medicine…
so we can make ourselves stronger and learn more and more. (24)

There was great suffering in the Age of Captivity
because Indigenous people were expelled
many times from their localities
to somewhere else.
So much so that nowadays there are many people on other territories,
So much so that they were decimated,
they were…
Yes, they started running away, because of the pressure,
because of the massacre. (19)

And we were forced to speak Portuguese
because they would not let us speak
our language. (21)

And then after the Captivity, they…
they cleared much of the forest
for cattle,
for large plantations,
and they did not use the land more than once.
Just once, and then it was over. (21)

In that past, there were no more plants.
Now we have our plants, the Cupuaçu trees. (23)

Without the forest, we are nothing.
The forest is our life, you see?
The forest… (29)

When my grandfather's generation arrived on Indigenous land –
my grandfather is 107 years old –
he arrived here with 70 people.
Seventy people…
Today we have more than 900 people.
But it was a struggle…
There were only 70 Shanenawa people left.
Our elders fought
to take this piece of land.
In the past,
the ranchers lived here,
and there were many hurdles we had to overcome.
Our Indigenous land was poor, because of these ranchers.
But that is a long story.
My grandfather is a great warrior.
I am his grandson. And today we reforest. (12)

I was born and raised in the forest
and I live in the forest to this day.
I really like the forest,
I love it, a lot.
To me, the forest…
is my spirit.
And Indigenous people,
we consider the forest to be our home
because the forest protects us.
The forest is our shelter,
it shades us from the sun,
and allows us to live, drink, and breathe well.
The air is good and it was God who gave it to us.
So, for me, the forest comes first. (33)

We consider the forest to be our home,
the land, our father,
the water, our mother.
And…
the others as well, as I have said –
fish,
the animals we hunt –
they are our family too,
because they live here
alongside us.
We need them,
we use them as well,
but we use them carefully.
As I said,
we have to take them into consideration.
We cannot think only about ourselves,
we have to think about ourselves, our children and grandchildren.
We, Indigenous persons, that is how we think,
that is how we work.
Thinking about all of our families
is the best thing we can do for ourselves. (33)

After the demarcation of Indigenous lands
came the delimitation of the territories,
meaning we could no longer move from one place to the other
even though our land is small.
The entire land is already delimited,
everything is already owned by someone. (16)

Before that, we used to migrate from river to river.
Whenever game or fish became scarce,
we would simply go to a different river, a different place. (27)

We are currently living in a small space,
and so there was a need to plan the use of the forest resources.
We had to think about how to maintain
and how to use
the little land we have,
how to do it wisely,
and, by doing so, how to keep the forests,
the game animals, and the rivers. (16)

We plant
Palm trees, Cashew trees, Orange trees… everything.
We do it
because we want to draw the animals closer.
And if we don't do it,
our children will never know these animals. (32)

Today our biggest problem are the ranches.
People deforest
the land around them. (4)

People come to hunt our game…
come onto our land,
taking our game out, taking our animals from inside,
taking our fish from inside. (15)

In the Indigenous territories…
there is Indigenous land confronted
on the upper side by one ranch
and on the lower side by another ranch.
Our land is right in the middle.
We have been suffering from these environmental impacts. (4)

Particularly around where the riverside peasant farmers live.
Where you need to leave a riparian area for the animals to feed –
turtles, fishes, caimans –
that is where you can find many of the animals of our region.
We are very concerned about this,
because as soon as the farmers receive welfare money,
they buy some cattle.
As they get more cattle, the clearings get larger,
and they are getting bigger all the time. (18)

This also causes the silting of our river,
which for us is our road. (14)

You reap and you sow,
and you will reap,
what you have sown.
Nature is already there, planted.
We just need to know how to take care of it.
But it will make no difference if you take care of it,
if a random person – the white people, the *nawás* –
then illegally extracts timber
to build houses.
So, it makes no difference. (10)

If it were not for the forests, there is no "us," there is no life.
Without the forests, there is no water. (34)

Although the BR-364, the federal road, has invaded our land,
anyone leaving the city will see
that forests only stand within demarcated Indigenous lands.
Before arriving on Indigenous land, all you see is cattle and pasture.
And then you arrive on Indigenous land and you can see the forest,
preserved. (27)

When I am in the middle of the forest
I am fine,
I am at home, I am with the elements
that are living beings.
There is so much life here;
I am working for life now.
It's not a life like "us,"
but a life
that gives life too,
that enriches life.
So, all of these are life.
They came from life.
It is not different from any other life.
It needs to be cared for
in order to maintain this
temperature…
which feels so good… doesn't it?
I feel it. (1)

The women are making things with the seeds from various Palm trees,
such as Cocão-da-mata, Murumuru, Urucuri, Jarina, Pupunha.
All we think about
is what we see around us. (17)

So, this is a Cacao tree.
It gives us food,
you can make a juice out of it
and you can make chocolate with the seeds.
And right beside it, I will plant
a Cupuaçu tree
and a Ceiba tree, (28)
which we can use to make roofs for our houses.
But it will be useful for the animals too,
because they will feed there and come closer to
Indigenous land. (10)

I will plant a Starfruit tree
and what else…
close to the Açaí palm. (28)

We also have a land-use plan, in our Asháninka community.
We are eighty families and each family can use three plots –
one for cassava, another for bananas, and the other one for vegetables –
to plant these kinds of things.
So each family can use three plots,
planting on two at a time, leaving one fallow.
You use the plots for one year and after the harvest,
you let the forest grow back again.
After three years, you can plant in the same plot again,
without having to clear another area. (3)

Our land, Katukina land, is surrounded by land projects,
by INCRA (the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform),
by the people from RESEX (Extractive Reserve),
and by the BR-364 federal highway, which cuts
through our land, with
branch roads that encircle our land. (15)

Come, come warrior,
with your enchantment of the ayahuasca power.

Come, come warrior.
Bring your enchantment.
Come teach us.
She is a warrior
and mother of the forest.

She is a warrior and mother of the forest,
and brings the enchantment of the Nexie and the Kawa.

I am calling the
warrior of the forest.
Her enchantment will cure us.

Vou chamar a India Guerriera [I Will Call the Indian Warrior]

The land is forever and the people are forever.
It can't be changed, it can't be exchanged for another land.
This is ours… ours.
It is ours. (15)

There is, however, a large portion of society
that still sees the Amazon forest as an opportunity for making money.
They are greedy for iron ore,
for timber
for cattle
for soy
for crude oil
and for hydroelectric dams.
It is really bad for us.
That is really bad for us,
very bad for humanity. (16)

There is a vine called Pytxuni.
The plant, the Rainha [the Queen], remains far away,
and we are bringing her closer.
We are doing all this…
planting more.
Because there are many things in our village
that are becoming extinct
and we are recovering them. (2)

There are also some health issues
such as malnutrition and others.
Health agents talk to us a lot about malnutrition,
which is a problem of many Puru Indigenous peoples:
Huni Kuin, Kulina, Madija…
And this critical situation is a result of the lack of food.
And the health agents say this is the main reason
for the deaths of children in my area.
When it comes to health issues, many have died because
of this. (30)

The government, it is not even trying
to help the Indigenous population.
It wants to destroy Indigenous lands.
Because we are nature's refuge,
because we plant.
And we don't demand anything from nature.
But nature will demand what is due
if we destroy it. (10)

My grandmother, she wants to teach.
She told us she wants to teach the world
about what her ancestors used to do,
so that we, Yawanawá, don't lose our customs.
So, in order for us to be here today,
our language, our customs,
they are our records.
If I only speak the language of the whites,
I will not be considered an Indian anymore.
I might be enslaved, or hurt,
because I no longer speak my language,
because I lost my tradition. (26)

The demarcation of Huni Kuin land, the Caucho, was a difficult process;
it was really hard to get our own land.
It was by no means easy to secure the Igarapé do Caucho Indigenous territory.
We began with reforestation, replanting some areas.
We did that so that we could attract birds,
bringing some parakeets and other small animals closer to us. (9)

Beyond keeping the plants standing, we need to understand how they function in their environment. How do we work with them in this environment? Our commitment is to study them. I do not mean study them by writing several texts, or making scientific studies, or researching their molecules. No, I mean, to observe how they function. Are the fruits growing? If not, is there a bird that is disappearing due to lack of food? Is something in excess? Our principal commitment beyond maintaining the plants is to study and understand them. How do their cycles work and the interactions around them? So as not to cause any disequilibrium, which would also affect us and our future autonomy. (35)

All this care for the plants comes from popular knowledge. It comes from traditional knowledge that is a science. All this management is a science. It is a science that dates back hundreds of years. It has always been improved by our grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, cousins, aunts, granduncles. All of this knowledge is there. Based on the observations of the elders we come to conclusions and build other conclusions, but some things you cannot change. You need to observe not only your necessities, but also the surroundings of vegetation of that environment to find out the necessities of their future. You extract without destroying the relationship with the future. (35)

Today… a document comes,
the Brazilian government makes a law, a decree…
making changes
for Indigenous peoples and their lands.

They want to bring an end to our lands, to take our lands,
to get rid of Indigenous people.
Indigenous people belong here… the Brazilians only came here…
Brazilians are not the owners of the land.
We belong to this land.
In that time, the time of Pedro Álvares Cabral,
they found Indigenous people living here already. (15)

But, if we destroy our land, if we destroy the woods, the forests, we will no longer have native game animals, or native birds like the macaw.
And we need them… So we are really trying to help, and helping them to survive.
The smell coming from the forests is clear, we breathe it in.
But where forests have been cut down, the air is too hot –
we cannot handle it, we cannot live well in these conditions.
Nowadays, human beings try to destroy the Earth, to destroy the forests.
But the Indians, well, the Indians, we… well, we don't even have land. (34)

So, with the new law, they can come in,
come inside with roads… railroads.
And with this comes the hindering of children's social life,
of women's lives,
abuse,
even the rape of Indigenous women, quite often… (19)

If we follow this path, all of us will be…
the whole of humanity will be lost.
So, this is the time for us to learn from the experience
of Indigenous peoples.
We will only be able to live better side by side
if we help one another.
The forest helps us and we help the forest.
I notice that the big cities
in the big countries, they have lost this.
They only see the forest as an opportunity,
not as an exchange. (16)

But this is the fight!
We cannot stand still…
We have to
get ready to fight, to discuss
how we are going to be…
the Brazilian population…
about getting together, in unity, to prevent…
The Indigenous, we Indigenous people… we are human beings.
Indigenous people and the *nawás*
have only one blood. (15)

How can it be?
Why did these politicians make this law
to destroy Indigenous people?
Their land…
to bring an end to their land?
Taking the woods from Indigenous people.
Killing Indigenous people. (15)

I feel sad…
How are we going to be?
How are we going to live?
Are we going to live that time we have already lived?
The Age of Captivity?
Are we going to live like that?
Suffering as in the Age of Captivity.
We have been through that time.
Today… we live in peace. (15)

Many men and women
and children
are joining in,
so we can organize ourselves,
improve ourselves,
survive and stay,
look after, plant, create.
And valorize our culture, our language,
our painting, our dance, our rituals,
our shamanism,
our traditional medicine,
our forest.
Because
we know where we want to live –
inside the forest,
with fresh air, with clean water.
On the good land for planting,
with so many seeds, so much forest,
lots of energy, lots of spirituality.
And we *are* living.
We cannot survive without it,
we cannot live. (6)

That is why we agroforestry agents,
we want to be acknowledged.
We are environmental educators,
we are teachers,
we are tough,
we are a young leadership, prepared
to confront this bigger political culture:
the businessmen, the farmers, the fishermen,
the gold miners. (6)

I believe
the future we have in mind
involves respect from our government
and from those who support us.
That they would actually consider and begin to respect us,
allow us to have control over the area,
so that we could prevent people
from committing these kinds of mistakes –
of cattle ranching and taking
our timber and animals away. (29)

The land for us is…
the land is like a mother.
A mother is someone you take care of.
A mother is someone you do not trade for anything.
So the land is like this, for us. (19)

And we want to keep our forest standing and to make it larger.
We care because the world is getting more worried about the climate,
there is much concern about climate change.
The people, the white people, they began to worry not so long ago,
while we have been thinking about it for thousands of years.
Until this day, we take care of the forest,
to keep the forest standing – so that we can breathe and
live healthily. (27)

Well, the future I see is these Açaí palms,
these nuts, this Bacaba,
all loaded with fruits,
so as to bring over our bees, and our own food too,
our kids,
and so that whoever comes to our land will see
how we are doing forest recovery work. (21)

Composed by
Maria Thereza Alves

Sources

The poem's lines are composed from interviews with agroforestry agents from AMAAIAC (Association of the Movement of Indigenous Agroforestry Agents of Acre) conducted by Maria Thereza Alves in Rio Branco, Acre, in 2017 (numbered 1–34). Interview 35 was conducted by Xanupa Apurinã in Rio Branco in 2020. The song extract "Vou chamar a India Guerriera" [I Will Call the Indian Warrior] is by Yube Huni Kuin of Terra Indígena (TI) Rio Humaitá.

1. Busã
   Huni Kuin people
   Terra Indígena (TI) Katukina/Kaxinawá
2. Pupua
   Nukini people
   TI Nukini
3. Pyãko
   Asháninka people
   TI Asháninka do Rio Amônea
4. Isaka
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Igarapé do Caucho
5. Ibatsai
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Kaxinawá do Rio Jordão
6. Maná
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Kaxinawá do Rio Jordão
7. Muru Inu Bake
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Alto Purus
8. Siã
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Colônia 27
9. Ninawá Huru Bacã
   Huni Kuin people
   TI Igarapé do Caucho
10. Siã
    Shanenawa people
    TI Katukina/Kaxinawá
11. Dasu Hurá Bacã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Alto Rio Purus
12. Busã
    Shanenawa people
    TI Katukina/Kaxinawá
13. Mashã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Katukina/Kaxinawá

14. Yuvãna Shãwã
    Shãwãdawa people
    TI Arara
15. Kaku
    Katukina people
    TI Campinas/Katukina
16. Yube
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá Praia do Carapanã
17. Kakã Kashu Bané
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá de Nova Olinda
18. Yaki Hurá Bacã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá Praia do Carapanã
19. Yaká
    Shãwãdawa people
    TI Arara
20. Yura
    Shawanawá people
    TI Arara
21. Yawa Kushu
    Yawanawá people
    TI Yawanawá do Rio Gregório
22. Shawã Katê
    Shawanawá people
    TI Arara
23. Tene
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Alto Jordão
24. Shamya
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá do Seringal
    Independência
25. Paka
    Katukina people
    TI Rio Gregório
26. Tmaii
    Yawanawá people
    TI Rio Gregório

27. Poá Katukina and Nawá Sharu
    Nupikuin people
    TI Campina/Katukina
28. Xidu
    Poyanawá people
    TI Poyanawá
29. Siã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Curralinho
30. Naximar
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Alto Rio Purus
31. Shawã Dxuyda
    Shawanawá people
    TI Arara
32. Keã Hura Bacã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá Praia do Carapanã
33. Bané Hurá Bacã
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Kaxinawá do Rio Jordão
34. Yube
    Huni Kuin people
    TI Rio Humaitá
35. Lina Apurinã
    Apurinã people
    TI Camicuã

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is a critical theorist and artist. She is Franz Boas professor of anthropology and gender studies at Columbia University and a founding member of the Karrabing Film Collective. Her research and artistic practice focus on modes of the *otherwise* within the wakes of settler colonialism. She is the author of eight books, including: *Routes & Worlds* (Sternberg Press, 2022); *Between Gaia and Ground* (Duke University Press, 2021); and *The Inheritance* (Duke University Press, 2021). With her Karrabing colleagues, Povinelli has made over ten films which have received numerous awards, including the 2021 Eye Prize from the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam. Povinelli lives between New York City and Darwin, Australia.

SURVIVAL & SURVIVANCE IN CLIMATES OF TOXICITY IN THE ORBIT OF THE KARRABING FILM COLLECTIVE

Elizabeth A. Povinelli

I.

Two works of fiction: The film, *The Family & the Zombie* (2021) and *Alice Henry and the Chronicle of the Collapse of the Western Plateau* (2023), a book. In the first, future ancestral children do what children often do—defy their parents. We watch somewhat anxiously as some of the children comically creep up on the lair of a white zombie (played by me), rifling through its nest, finding old batteries, plastic bottles, and rusting petrol drums. In the latter work, a future ancestral child chants the tale of a more-than-human world in which an unsocialized, insatiable, devouring hunger and rage drives the evolution of organic and nonorganic forms, turning snakes to snails to turtles to moles to crawfish, as her interrogators slowly dissect her psyche, body, and art for its potential value.

Both works were begun during the Covid-19 pandemic, though neither make reference to it. The Karrabing Film Collective began shooting *The Family & the Zombie* (*F&Z*) during the first two long years, 2020–21. I began writing and sketching *Alice Henry* (*AH*) during my 2021 quarantine in Perth on my way back to Karrabing in the Northern Territory of Australia. What surprise then that *F&Z* and *AH* sit solidly within the proliferating arts of toxicity—that large set of aesthetic and ascetic practices that focus on the building and inhabiting of worlds within the wastelands of capitalism's ravenous consumption of the

Earth and its excrements. When placed in relation to each other, as well as to the arts of toxicity writ large, these two tales of the worlds of future ancestors might alter how we think about practices of survival and survivance, as viewed from the monstrous legacies of colonialism. Rather than producing a common scene of shared consequences, these two works, written within the orbit of a Karrabing methodology, suggest that survivance has never been some *thing* but rather a relation built in the wakes of colonialism and white supremacy.

II.

The Family & the Zombie is set in an ancestral future in which a group of human and more-than-human beings are doing "future ancestral things" like digging yams, collecting seafood, painting body designs that represent the group's various *therrawin* (grandfather totems), and dodging an oozing white zombie (*nunu* in Creole; *wingmalang* in Emmiyengal) who is stalking the children—just as the children stalk it.

In the midst of these ordinary activities, the future ancestral children ask their older relatives two broad questions that structure the film: *Where do the zombies, plastic, batteries, and old cars that litter the landscape come from? Where do we (the children) come from?* While the two questions organize the film's chapters, the ways in which the elder future ancestors answer them knit the two sections together by replacing the question of origins with the efforts of endurance. That is, where the zombies and where the children come from ultimately leads to the same place: the refusal of the ancestors of these future ancestors to let go of their relations to their own ancestors, thus limiting the spread of toxic colonialism.

Karrabing Film Collective, still from *The Family & the Zombie*, 2021. Image courtesy of the artists.

Karrabing Film Collective, still from *The Family & the Zombie*, 2021. Image courtesy of the artists.

1 *Manufacturers' Monthly* (27 October 2021); manmonthly.com.au/news/finniss-lithium-project-strategic-move-nt-manufacturing.

The elders tell their children of a world of ongoing imminent extinction:

"White people came to our country and sucked all the waterside themselves."

"We had nothing left."

"White people came and claimed our lands."

"No one was listening to us."

"We were dying."

As the story progresses, viewers see and hear fragmented clips of the ecological alarm and promises of free-market capitalism: newscasts warning of rising temperatures and climate damage; the huge water extraction necessary to produce Coca-Cola; the material unconscious of green energy, such as the dependency of Tesla electric cars on vast, ecologically destructive lithium mines, and so on. We could have included announcements of nearby lithium mining. As we were filming *F&Z*, Core Lithium and the Northern Territory government announced construction was underway, just fifty kilometers to the south, "on the $89 million Finniss Lithium project," which would mine "over one million tonnes of lithium-bearing ore per year to produce and manufacture new and emerging technologies for the global market."[1] As the future ancestors in the film move across a landscape rich in food but littered with toxic leftovers, we filmmakers moved through the same surroundings.

The futures elders braid the problematics of survival into the practices of survivance. To the question of where they come from, the elder future ancestors tell their children the outline of their totemic nature, a nature that continues to exist because:

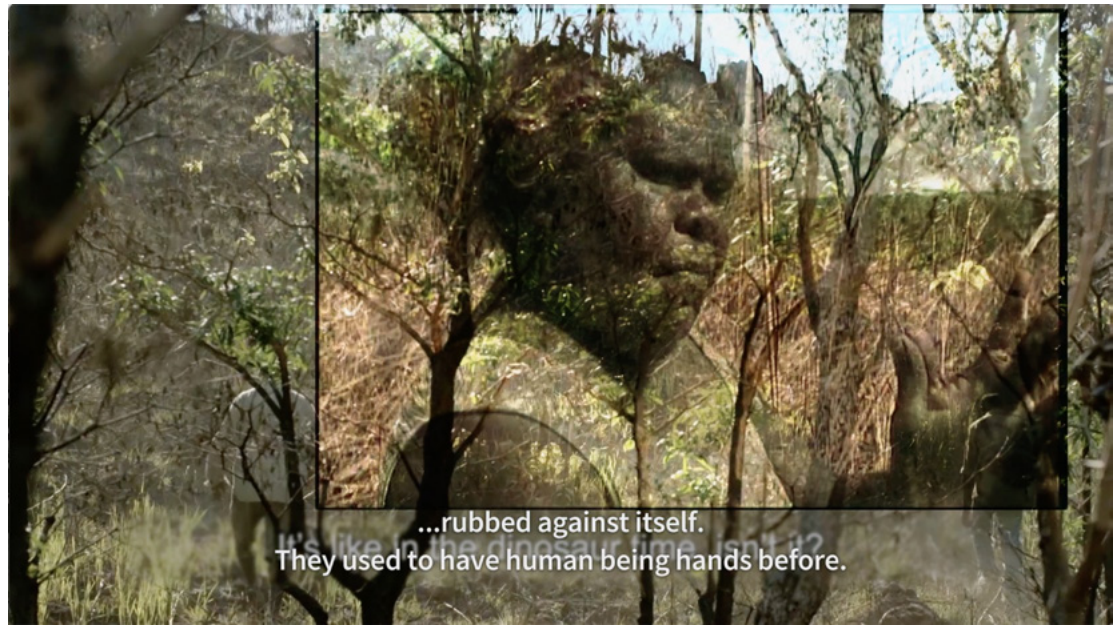
Karrabing saved us.

They always came to us

Cared for us.

Sang out to us.

In other words, crucial to the practice of survival is an orientation toward a specific way of thinking about *material tense*—an orientation to the present continuous understood as a sedimentary practice, rather than an orientation to the future perfect as a phantasmatic horizon where all evil has been purified and redeemed. *The Family & the Zombie* thematizes this difference in multiple ways. As visual elements, the future ancestors slowly move from being distinct from the landscape to being composed of it. The future ancestors describe how the ancestral totems—that these future ancestors still *are*—came from the sedimentations of even older ancestral actions; say, how two Barramundi sisters acted and so shaped the coastal geology. Likewise, we hear how the practices of the Karrabing have sedimented everyday practice into filmic practice and then this filmic work back into everyday life, which the film shows by layering old camcorder clips with clips from Karrabing films, and then both into the present film. In all these ways, *F&Z* suggests that the future is the mattering-forth of the practices of the present. Rather than a perfectly purified future, with all the plastic and polluted landscapes wiped clean, *F&Z* argues that all these traces survive. The question is what form the corporeal multitude of such survivals will take as each ancestral present decides what it will struggle to hold onto and thus will leave behind in the act of going forward.



Karrabing Film Collective, still from *The Family & the Zombie*, 2021. Image courtesy of the artists.

Alice Henry and the Chronicle of the Collapse of the Western Plateau is also set in the ancestral future. And it also centers on the ancestors of the future ancestors trying to survive as they refuse to let go of their commitments to their world. The book follows a small child found in the debris of a great fire in a sector of the Western Plateau as she is dragged across and interrogated in various subterranean and superterranean landscapes, themselves the compressed and distorted practices and disciplines of the Western modern world. At stake in these interrogations is the answer she gives to the question of where she came from. The answer unfolds mythopoetically. She seems neither to be *in charge* of nor able to *discharge* herself from its doggerel rhythms, which recount a more-than-human world unfolding with ghostly echoes of the actual worlds she is moved across.

Memo

In a tiny region to the south, a ferocious fire raced across a small outpost.
Everything is reported burnt to the ground except for one small child.
Her name is Alice Henry. Some say she was the cause of the fire. Some
say she was the result.

She has been sent to Division 17, Department 46.

The Interrogators—Division 17, Department 46, Room G

For a long time, she never spoke a word. Through all the interrogations, many of them quite harsh even by our standards, she seemed distant to our cruelty and her own suffering. It was as if she were saying to us, yes, my body is in intense pain, but before I can answer you, I need to make sense of it for myself, to get the order right, the many perspectives, their odd syntax and syncopations. If her body jerked according to the kind of instruments we used, her eyes seemed always to be keeping time to other inner rhythms.

We are all agreed that when she did finally speak it wasn't because of anything we did. You'd say too if you saw the way she slowly looked up, right at us, the strap mid-swing. To say she looked like oracular is wrong. She didn't have that mad hollowed-out look of people we'd done this to so many times I've lost number. With the shattered ones what emerges is less language than tongueless sounds——like a broken wind instrument

whose finger hooks have snapped off. Her voice was calm, certain, as if nothing we had done, the red-stained evidence everywhere, had happened. It was as if we had returned to the very first day when we asked her, "Did you cause the fire or are you the result?" She shook her head and said: "You're approaching the matter in the entirely wrong way. If you want to know what happened, you need to listen in a new way."

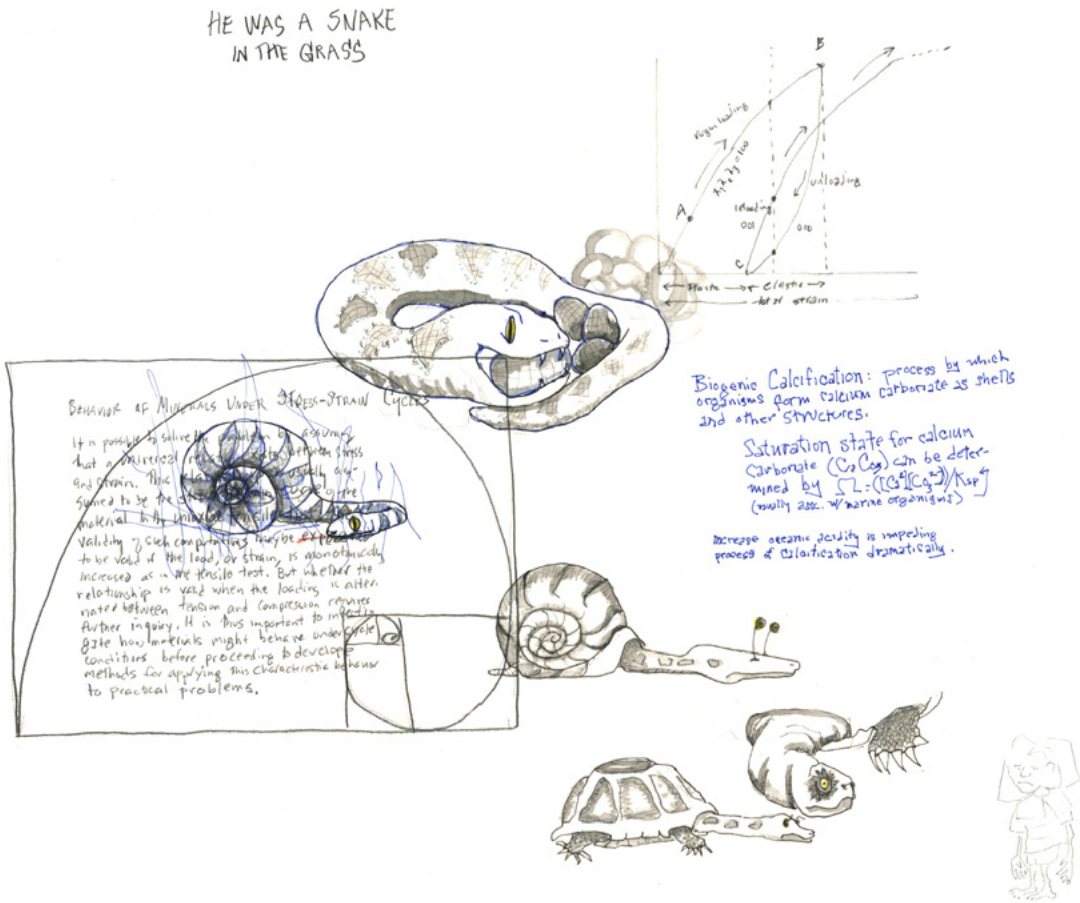
It was the confidence that held her voice steady even when so much of her body was scattered on the ground that made us stop, sit down, and listen.

The First Cycle of Alice Henry

The Mother

He was a snake in the grass.
He ate his own children.
She didn't know,
at first.
At first, she was just confused.
...
...

When viewed from the perspective of *F&Z*, the practices of survivance in *AH* do not belong to a shared human condition in which presence is always haunted by past and future absences, but rather to a sedimentary relationality between those who refuse to stop profiting from the ancestral catastrophe of colonialism and its spawn, free-market capitalism, and those who refuse to give way to more of its destructive creation. Alice Henry's mythical narrative holds up a ghostly mirror to the logics of the social world in which she finds herself trapped. The more the future ancestors of Alice Henry's world try to keep the logic of their world in place, the more this future world creaks, strains, and collapses; the more stubborn their insistence becomes not to change course.



Elizabeth A. Povinelli, draft sketch for *Alice Henry and the Collapse of the Western Plateau*, 2022. Image courtesy of the author.

I had spent the couple days before A.H.'s arrival carefully studying everything Translation had sent. I always like crossing over to them. The shape and style of Department 107 isn't all that different than ours. After passing through their broad thick plexiglass door with its aristocratically lettered "Translation, Decoding & Archeological Investigation" sign, you found the same incessant hum of jerry-rigged lighting strung across their offices; the same need for a good sandblasting of the green prefab walls; the same hard orange insulation leaking through the retaining walls.

[From the section:
The Interrogators—Division 17, Department 71, Room B]

To think, we can savor this treasure only because of the hubris of the mindless men with their brutal little picks and the preening delegates, their medals polished and ribbons pressed, always bustling beside them. None of them stop to *appreciate* anything. Imagine, there they were, standing in front of one of the most uniquely hued and contoured striation fields we've found, an astonishing display of the Earth's aesthetic sense, and all they can think to do is hammer in their silly designation. Who couldn't take delicious pleasure in reflecting on how, in trying to mark their territory, the territory marked them? The footage is deliciously comic. With the first whacking on their golden spike, the entire ledge along the western slope slipped out, burying them all alive. Then the whole spectacle capped when a treasure trove of records tumbled out on top of them.

[From the section:
Arts, Archives & Restoration, Division 2, Chapel 71, Room 4N]

Just as the visual economy of the future ancestors of *F&Z* is slowly absorbed into the bushlands, so Alice Henry survives by becoming sedimented in the corporeal multitude of her world's refuse—their refusal and their rubbish.

The sunsets on the debris field never fail to amaze. Here, above the atmosphere, no smog mutes the kaleidoscope of the layered metal and plastic waste of old body parts. I come to this point at regular intervals as if beset by the law of recurrence. I try to match my pace to the regular rhythm of this landscape of forces, to the timing of its mixing and recombination. Bit of a fool's errand. The terrain is so vast and complex you can't really know how one part is affecting another. Plus, we have no idea what has happened below the dense debris cover. I've heard the oldest of us tell stories of atomic blasts still birthing Neptunium somewhere in the east where Poseidon Ltd is operating illegally looking for promethium. Soon our elements will become some new amalgamate rendering the existing periodic table not merely incomplete but otherworldly. About forty clicks to the west, the periodic table has nearly broken in two.

[From the section: Refuse & Reclamation—*Off-Record*.]

III.

These echoes between *F&Z* and *AH* are not surprising given that both are composed within the surround of the Karrabing Film Collective: my authorship of *AH* in relation to Karrabing words, worlds, and relations, as sure as the future zombies of *F&Z* are the relatives of the inhabitants of Alice Henry's collapsed Western Plateau, and as I played the zombie while thinking through *AH*'s compositional form. What survival consists of, and therefore how survivance is oriented in relation to the ancestral catastrophe of colonial invasions and the extractive logic of capitalism, take on a different shape, sound, and content. In the Western Plateau, survival refuses to leave the horizon of redemption and instead is practiced in the here and now while leaving behind what we are walking into.

In November 2021, we screened *F&Z* at Belyuen School, in the area where most Karrabing live. Angelina Lewis stood up and introduced the film to the school children, a handful of whom starred in it. She said they would see that *F&Z* was funny. But, she added, it was important to remember that *F&Z* is a Karrabing film, meaning that there are true

stories embedded within it, which, if they paid attention, they would recognize and so find. By this she did not only mean that the kids should be on the lookout for the totemic patterns and stories the film repeatedly refers to (if you have enough background to follow the referents). By this she was also giving them guidance: to orient yourselves toward knowledges and practices of world-maintenance when the world you are trying to maintain is being eaten up by white zombies still clinging onto what has already collapsed around them.

The yam fields are littered with, but not subsumed by, the remains of plastics and other toxins—the undead persistence of settler colonialism/the debris field subsuming all forms of existence into its own logic of chemical recomposition. Two modes of survival, two orientations of survivance; multiple positions within the legacies of the white capitalist invasion of everything.

Cecilia Vicuña's practice is characterized by ritual and collective action, and encompasses sculpture, poetry, site-specific installation, film, sound art, and performance. Closely intertwined with activism, Vicuña's artistic output since the 1960s has addressed climate change, ecological destruction, women's rights, colonialism, and cultural memory.

UNUY QUITA

Cecilia Vicuña

Curving soundulating
magmatic stream

Pacha Pacarina
flashflood sphere

You are one
Waterrrrr

Zig zag meander

Who filled you with filth?

Chica gone
around the bend

Playing splashing

Your sack
my span

One thirst!

*

The round spring
its own silence
the sylvan key
will end

It will all end!

Where will the fog go?
The life-giving mist?
Where it will go?

Cool, fresh

The earth's sustenance
the tear filled brancxhes

Our hearts extinguished
the fog is gone!

Translated by
Suzanne Jill Levine

Léuli Eshrāghi (they/them) is a Sāmoan/Persian/Cantonese artist, writer, curator, and researcher born in Yuwi Country, Australia. They intervene in display territories to center global Indigenous and Asian diasporic visuality, sensual and spoken languages, and ceremonial-political practices. Eshrāghi is curator of the TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili* (forthcoming), curatorial researcher-in-residence (Blue Assembly) at the University of Queensland Art Museum, and scientific advisor (Reclaim the Earth) at the Palais de Tokyo. Eshrāghi was editor with Camille Larivée of the landmark Indigenous art history publication *D'horizons et d'estuaires: Entre mémoires et créations autochtones* (Éditions Somme toute, 2020). Together with Peta Rake, they collaborate on Blue Assembly and *The Clam's Kiss/Sogi a le faisua*, a multilingual online journal at the University of Queensland Art Museum.

Peta Rake (she/her) is a curator, cook, and community interlocutor presently based in Meanjin/Brisbane, Australia, where she was also born. Her practice as a curator is attentive to transdisciplinary conversations focused on Blue research, working closely with artists and scientists to understand the psychosocial, political, and gendered dimensions of coastal wetlands, sea country, intertidal zones, aquaculture, and the regeneration and articulation of these sites. Her work has always involved a large network of long-term collaborators, thinkers, and friends, with a keen interest in distributed curatorial work toward activism. Presently, she is the senior curator at University of Queensland Art Museum (Meanjin/Brisbane). Together with Léuli Eshrāghi, she collaborates on Blue Assembly and *The Clam's Kiss/Sogi a le faisua* multilingual online journal at the University of Queensland Art Museum.

BLUE ASSEMBLY: SITUATING KNOWING IN THE MAJORITY WORLD

Peta Rake & Léuli Eshrāghi

Moana Is the Warmest Color

Léuli Eshrāghi It is most apt for us to begin with our relationships to aqueous spaces and to a multitude of aesthetic and intellectual practices that manifest fluidity and interdependence. I was born on the sugarcane plantation-ridden coastlines of Yuwi Country in so-called Queensland, and grew up spending time in rivers, creeks, and the mighty Great Ocean, across First Nations territories along the coast, and also in the Sāmoan archipelago where my forebears have lived and thrived for thousands of years. My clans (and villages, customary districts, and islands) are Sā Seumanutafa (Āpia, Tuamāsaga, 'Upolu), Sā Pilia'e Fa'ase'e Lelili'o (Leulumoega, A'ana, 'Upolu), Sā Tautua (Salelologa, Fa'asaleleaga, Savai'i), and Sā Manō (Si'umu, Tuamāsaga, 'Upolu).

Cognizant of the sheer complexity and diversity of ways of relating, let us cheekily reference a recent classic of queer femme cinema.[1] Let us also productively question the Eurocentrism of many current oceanic discursive and curatorial projects. Many of which reference Indigenous and other racialized peoples whose oceanic and fluvial territories already bear the brunt of climate catastrophe, but do not center these peoples and our responsibilities to more-than-human kin. *Moana* is much more than a Disneyfication of Indigenous deities and territories in the Great Ocean.

Moana is the deep hues and undulating continuity of our primary Ancestor.

Perhaps this is how, in emulation of the settler-colonial emphasis on freshwater spaces that intersect with saltwater spaces, I have mainly lived on estuaries and along bayside shores as an adult: Meanjin/Kurilpa/Brisbane, Lyon, Naarm/Birrarungga/Melbourne, Tiohtià:ke/Mooniyang/Montreal, Garramilla/Darwin, nipaluna/Hobart, and Paris. I know that using Indigenous place names next to the names of colonial settlements is a game of false equivalences, particularly as most Indigenous toponyms are genealogically related to specific lineages and locales, but here I hope they signal the diversity that is flattened with Eurocentric naming conventions and taxonomies.

Peta Rake I write alongside you from the unceded and sovereign lands of the Turrbal and Jagera peoples, the Traditional Owners of these lands; by the body of water called Maiwar, the brown snake; in Meanjin, known today as Brisbane, where as a settler I was born.

I would also like to acknowledge the lands to which I am currently adjacent: Quandamooka Country to the east and its islands of Mulgumpin and Minjerribah, Yugambeh Country to the south, and Wakka Wakka, Kubi Kubi, Jinabara lands to the north and west. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Bundjalung Country, the Arakwal, where my family lives and where I learnt to swim in the oceans and tea tree lakes of Cavanbah/Byron Bay. I still swim there often, but the headlands and marine topology is constantly reshuffling with the sandbanks and tides, as humans encroach, clear, and creep closer into the intertidal zone—a hallmark of settler-colonial impact. Here, neck deep, I look out from the most easterly point of what we now call Australia, to the Great Ocean here and beyond.

I, like you, have always lived adjacent to water: in Huichin and Yelamu, also known as Oakland and San Francisco, on the unceded territories of the Chochenyo and Ramaytush Ohlone peoples who have lived on their ancestral lands since time immemorial. Then, I lived in Banff along the glacial melt river of the Makhabn/Bow. All our waters and oceans are connected.

1. Abdellatif Kechiche, *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*, 2013.

PR & LE Standing along the Maiwar river near its prized bend named Meanjin/Brisbane, we recognize the indelible Turrbal and Jagera political, cultural, intellectual, performed, and aesthetic practices, and their sovereign governance of this special river territory that flows into Quandamooka waters before combining with the wider oceans. The continuing impacts of past and current settler-colonial violences cannot be silenced or erased, but we sincerely wish that they be healed.

PR We write this during the continuing flooding through the regions of South East Queensland and Northern Rivers in New South Wales, where many of our friends and families have been uprooted from this utterly immediate climate emergency. These events have irrevocably altered our coastlines and riverbanks, with debris washing as far north as K'gari/Fraser Island.

Before colonization, floods were natural riparian forces that germinated, repaired, and cultivated environments. However, these floods and weather patterns—referred to as a "river in the sky" were metastasized by the large-scale clearing of forest spaces, the labyrinthine damming of catchment systems and the fossil-fueled death drive of our successive governments and multinational corporations. While the flooding occurred inland, coastal river mouths are now the flashpoint of two bodies of water meeting; brackish saltwater collides with muddy effluent. I am reminded that all our waters are connected, and while the restorative movement of the ocean dilutes this event, the sediment remains, affecting the health of shoreline communities in the wider Great Ocean.

Ancient Seafloors, Celestial Consciousness

LE I am particularly moved by your revelation about the sublime temporality of creativity and connection at the foot of Iniskim, Sleeping Buffalo Mountain, in the town of so-called Banff. Two of the most transformative times of my life have been during residencies dedicated to global Indigenous visual and media arts, and global Indigenous art criticism, at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, which is located on sacred territory shared for millennia by the Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Blackfoot, Secwépemc, Ktunaxa First Nations, and the Métis Nation, prior to the Banff National Park being imposed on these landscapes by the settler nation of Canada.

This deep-time consciousness permeates your curatorial writing, exhibition making, and focus on matriarchal/matrilineal artists' practices. I reflect equally on the expansive discussions we had together as we traveled across another ancient seafloor, now raised elevation region, that of so-called Central Australia. I was nearing the end of a year living and working from the storied settler-militarized town of Alice Springs, itself an imposition on the continuing Indigenous storied places still named Tyuretye, Mparntwe, Antulye, and Irlpme. Our travels enabled me to recognize the sacred beauty and power of the territories we were traveling through, always centering our role as people of solidarity with First Nations struggles for land back, lifeways, and the ending of genocide. In this spirit, I'd like to share the poetic text of a textile artwork, *Expanses* (2021), which I made just before our sojourn. I seek to speak humbly to two sites in particular, Rungutjirpa and Kwartatuma, both to the east of so-called Alice Springs.

Léuli Eshrāghi, *Expanses*, 2021. Photos by Thomas McCammon. Images courtesy of the artist.

Expanses

TĀ TĀ TĀ

TĀ TĀ

TĀ

Slowly folding, leaning in and out
Sweat trickles on this balmy night
I am joined in fragmented phrases
Gestures powering event-horizons

Feet, hxstories and lips trace lines
Ancestral memory dated in Tyuritye ranges
Their inner lives a decolonial continuity
Situated knowing in the Majority World

With Rungutjirpa before the sun turns
I breathe in this high-lit expanse
Crystalline skies hold terra firma
Compress ages in stone and bark

Roadworks make sealed trails named for lost
Whites into Blak Youth Skater Society
At dusk seasonal rivers witness White
Contours of control and militia violence

Pale tongues and states claim all
Serrated deltas, courses and continent
Narcissus asphalted onto Arrernte Homelands
Sedimented clay, dances, bones, medicines

TŪ

TŪ TŪ

TŪ TŪ TŪ
TŪ TŪ TŪ

TŪ TŪ

TŪ

Hundreds of metres above shorelines
Tyuritye ranges still ocean floors
Tenebrous ages, extinctions and grief
Held in the faces of descendants

Eons of waves crescendo and crash
Tubers, trees, saltbush and tomato
Could all be under swollen seas again
Beached sands for futures unbound

Winds tumult land into form
Palms rise refracting veneration
So many Rains this season
Budgerigars hum with Kwartatuma

Who remembers when spoken correctly
Not those words that noun and contain
Sounds that racialise and wound
Overwhelm what I know to say

White wars everywhen against mnemonic
Places, Afghan mosques and saffron as well
Who lives outside White citadel walls?
Who reads beyond Europe?

TĀ

TĀ TĀ

TĀ TĀ TĀ

PR As a migrant settler on Treaty Seven Territory—ancestral lands of the Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Blackfoot—for almost a decade, I spent most of my time between so-called Banff and Moh'kins'tsis/Calgary. The temporary and enduring communities made possible at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity rendered me lucky enough to work and learn from established thinkers and peers whom I admire and am indebted to in my practice: Marjorie Beaucage, Lisa Myers, Nicole Kelly Westman, Caroline Monnet, Katarina Veljovic, Candice Hopkins, Tiziana La Melia, Safia Siad, and Jacqueline Bell among others, many of whom I retain connections with across oceans. I count your practice, Léuli—grounded in constant generosity and global kinship—as one I am also beholden to and feel affinity with.

The mention of our journeys across ancient seafloors, at both ends of the earth, trigger two simultaneous memories of place and deep time for me, and two indelible poems. At an elevation of 2,286 meters, the 508-million-year-old Burgess Shale contains visible remnants of the ancient sea in the form of seashells and other fossilized life. And in the 144-million-year-old inland sea stratum, under what is presently called the Central Desert, we laid eyes on wave patterns in rock, compacted layers of former ocean floors at Watarrka, and melaleuca trees being grafted and healed with hessian and herbal poultices by Luritja rangers.

In these moments, bodies stand as witness on Country—this uniquely First Nations "Australian" conception of territory as place of belonging and responsibility—as gnomons of time, memory, and futurity. I, we, like others, have been altered by this phenomenon, and I am reminded of an excerpt from "Full Moon Hawk Application" by C.A. Conrad, the gender non-conforming poet and activist, which was written on a Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity residency around the same time I first met you there:

> On one of my first nights, a young man drove me to the top of the mountains above the art colony to show me the hot springs and lake. There were fish in the lake. There were fish swimming above Banff Art Centre, swimming above my head each night, and this became part of my writing ritual. I would go to sleep with a piece of celestite crystal, meditating on the swimming above me, the swimming above me. The notes for the poems were often informed by nightmares. Every night sleeping was difficult, the magnetic iron dumping toxins into my blood. A few nights it seemed I didn't sleep at all, but was instead dreaming about not sleeping. Once I dreamed I had a vagina for a nose and this dream was fantastic![2]

I also am reminded of a section of the poem "Learning Bundjalung on Tharawal" by Bundjalung poet Evelyn Araluen, from her 2022 Stella Prize-winning collection *Dropbear* (2021), which you shared with me while we drove through the desert:

> We are relearning this place through poetry:
> I open my book and say, wayan,
> here is a word which means road, but also root
> and in it I am rooted, earthed,
> singing between two lands
> I learn that balun is both river and milky way,
> and that he is baray-gir, the youngest child
> and the top of the tree,
> where the gahr will come and rest –
> to call its own name
> across the canopy,
> long after his word for it
> is gone.[3]

LE These poets render complexities in this unending form of orature through soundwaves, as on paper or screen. This complex intersectional understanding of humanity's varied places and histories that we have both embraced for so long, and in which we are yet leaning deeper into learning, is in stark opposition to the anthropocentric literature about, but not responsible to, the Great Ocean. By this I mean the falsified texts of Margaret Mead (and all before and after her)

2 C.A. Conrad, "Full Moon Hawk Application," *Soma(tic) Poetry Rituals*; somaticpoetryexercises.blogspot.com/2013/10/91-full-moon-hawk-application.html.

3 Evelyn Araluen, *Dropbear* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2021).

Mangrove Forest at low tide, Minjerribah, 2022. Photo by Peta Rake. Image courtesy of the author.

Rising tide over mangroves. Photo by Isabella Baker. Image courtesy of the authors.

written during her visit to Tāʻū, in the Manuʻa group in the east of the Sāmoan archipelago, while she was a very naive graduate student. I don't believe that the extraction of fanciful conclusions on Indigenous pubescence and sexuality that Mead took from the tamaʻitaʻi ma teine Sāmoa [Sāmoan girls and women] has ever been reciprocated in material and intellectual opportunities for our people in the ivory towers currently occupied by anthropology and museology. I hold this understanding only from precisely reading beyond Euro-America, from delving into Lana Lopesi's significant 2021 essay collection *Bloody Woman*: a welcome salve and affirmation of Indigenous femininity that deserves to be much more known than the fabulations of Mead, Malinowski, and Guiart.[4]

*

I am surprised when I enter the National Gallery of Australia to see Great Ocean artists' works framed by European fantasies projected onto our Ancestors, such as through the infamously simplistic *Les Sauvages de la mer Pacifique* (1805) by Joseph Dufour and Jean-Gabriel Charvet, itself based on impressions from newspaper accounts rather than anyone who actually traveled to our region. Of course, the saturation of sexual abuser-colonist Paul Gauguin's œuvre in place of genuine Māʻohi art practices continues to inform, almost exclusively, the romanticized notions of oceanic placehood, visuality, and knowledges that Euro-American museums and universities lazily perpetuate. Lauded literary works are equally based in racist interpretation, such as the work by Robert Louis Stevenson, a pedophile-colonist on my own clan lands in central Sāmoa, and James A. Michener, a military colonist in northern Vanuatu, among too many others.

There is scant mention in their works, or in their umpteenth reprise in theatres or art museums, of the trans-oceanic slave trade, nuclear testing regimes, and persisting militourist occupations. Myriad atrocities remain unaddressed in the lazy white-supremacist gloss of complex oceanic

4 Lana Lopesi, *Bloody Woman* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2021).

5 Vehia Wheeler and Mareikura Whakataka-Brightwell, "Ha'avarevare: Fiu with Gauguin's Legacy and Those who Profit From It," *The Pantograph Punch* (June 2021); pantograph-punch.com/posts/gaugins-legacy.

continental worlds, which still defy essentialist categorization or *cloisonnement*. These outwardly cis-heteropatriarchal Western authors, as the sole "translated" voices in European languages, speak over and about Great Oceans people and places, reiterating the oft-deployed misnomer that they were universally loved in their time, despite being harbingers of mass death, evangelization, capitalism, plantations, gender binarism, and sociopolitical westernization. But why am I still shocked to find James Cook, Paul Gauguin, and Louis Antoine de Bougainville's travel accounts in the Oceanian literature section of an international bookstore in Paris?

Productively for us, it is equally important to consider the responsibility to histories and the right to speak of specific Indigenous and racialized peoples, as opposed to the continuing postmodern impulse to appropriate and incorporate any and all narratives—as if to say that any impression of our storied places and histories will suffice. I want to cite Vehia Wheeler and Mareikura Whakataka-Brightwell's searing writing on the epistemic and economic violences of pan-Pacific artistry, written from the French oceanic colony of French Polynesia:

> As Tahitian people who trace our genealogy to the islands and people directly related to Gauguin's work, we have a lot to say that is pertinent as a response to Gauguin's works, and also adds so much richness to the larger conversation of Gauguin and his impact. What are the ways that we in Tahiti (a French colony) are still celebrating Gauguin? What does tourism look like in Tahiti? What are the ways that Europeans celebrate and expect stereotypes of our population as initiated by Gauguin? Tahitian people know the answers to these questions as first-hand experiences that other people in the Pacific cannot know. While we are all affected by the dusky-maiden images, the South Sea islander images, the Gauguin stereotypes, Tahitians are specifically and directly affected by Gauguin, and his impact continues today, almost 130 years later.[5]

In a sense, you and I never leave the shore, and on this planet that means not really ever leaving the embrace or possibility of aqueous expanse, as it is not as much earth as it is saltwater and freshwater.

PR I take heed of your comment to upend the lazy reliance on anthropocentric texts and poets in the Western literary canon, where accounts of riverine and oceanic spaces are highly saturated as sites of romantic and militaristic conquest, yet blaringly omit perspectives and authorship of Indigenous and racialized peoples. This has led to a surface-based approach to watery writing that does not, and cannot, fathom or plunge the depths of the intricacy and interconnectedness of these spaces for both human and non-human kin. Western literature has often done a great disservice to the description of ocean spaces, often espousing and defining them as empty, dark, impenetrable, terrifying, and there to be crossed and pillaged in the name of empire.

I particularly implore settler readers and writers to seek out texts and passages from Indigenous and racialized perspectives, and from gender-nonconforming writers, that shed misconceptions of sites that the Western humanities may understand as already fixed, across the smaller and larger spaces we may term climates. Among those I would like to share are Anita Heiss's indelible novel *Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray* [River of Dreams] about the Murrumbidgee, Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, Ali Cobby Eckermann's *Inside My Mother*, Ellen van Neerven's *Heat and Light*, and writings by Kimberley Moulton, Clothilde Bullen, Freja Carmichael, Neika Lehman, and Hannah Donnelly, among many others.

6 See rematriate.com.

Mangrove Daughters & Supratidal Futurity

LE & PR Our work currently and prior to now is anchored in the possibilities of rematriation, to use the eponymous collective's term,[6] itself denied by dominant Western software. We understand rematriation as a restoration of matriarchal knowledges that leads us to futures not defined by the terms of pessimistic Western death drive practices and failed theories. Through the multi-year initiative *Blue Assembly*, we are joined by many incredible actors in a new theater of creativity, hope-mongering, and restoration of what we might call inter-disciplinarity, but would just be called ways of knowing, being, and relating in many Indigenous worlds.

PR We were recently knee-deep in the relational space of the inter- and supratidal zone on Minjerribah [North Stradbroke Island] in Quandamooka Country. We spent several hours between saltwater and freshwater, between the mangroves and the melaleucas, with blue-carbon scientist Catherine Lovelock, Ph.D. student Vicki Bennion, Ngugi weaver and artist Sonja Carmichael, and local Glynn Carmichael.

Here, many systems and worlds intersect. We waded through the tea-tree-inflected tannin waters that flow past the salt marshes, and sank into the mud of the mangrove forest, dotted with old growth trees that were seeded well before colonization in the nineteenth century. Here, the mangroves grow daughter limbs that drop propagules, in turn distributed by the bay tides and ocean currents. We traversed vast mudflats with small saltwater pools, made by the indentation of stingrays feeding, which serve as support for toadfish survival between the tides, revealing bright blue soldier crabs in their thousands. The visual multiplicity is at once achingly beautiful, deliberate, and precarious.

The mass clearing of these spaces to make way for voracious development, an all-consuming tropical malady in these parts, has left these sites vulnerable. This is deftly

Stingray indents in the mudflats, Minjerribah, 2022. Photo by Peta Rake. Image courtesy of the author.

highlighted by the ancient sand island aquifer of Minjerribah providing megaliters of water daily to the mainland water grids of Redland Bay Council, which operates unbeknownst to most through the gateway that is the contested site of Toondah Harbor. The embrace and nurturing of blue-carbon spaces, which extend to include seagrass forests, serves multiple purposes: the sequestering of carbon in coastal areas, storm mitigation, and the slowing of sea level rise. These constitute a networked infrastructure for submerged futures.

We moved through these spaces slowly, ankle-deep in huey mangrove mud, as the tide began to rise to make way for this zone to re-embrace its function as a nursery; small lemon sharks brushed past, and juvenile stingrays zoomed on the sand floor below the bobbing mangrove seedlings headed oceanward, off to propagate futures "elsewhere."

LE The first time I learnt the Latin jurisprudence term *mare nullius*—the oceanic cousin to the *terra nullius* doctrine used to wage genocide against Indigenous peoples across the continents beyond Europe with writing systems not recognized by then-pious Europeans in service of egos, thrones, and bulging empires—was another shock. The manifest destiny of ever-hungry empires extended, of course (and was activated especially), through these very same aqueous territories. Like our thousands upon thousands of Ancestral Belongings robbed from home archipelagos, ceremonies, and burial sites, our many oceanic land and water bases as peoples of this Great Ocean are usually "spoken for" and "in the custody" of would-be protector empires. With *Blue Assembly*, Peta and I wish to shift the rules of engagement entirely to return attention, lastingly, to our very real responsibilities to kin beings and places. This planet's oceans are not an intellectual curiosity alone: they are the Majority World, so feared and sliced by Enlightenment ideals and practices, and the Majority can speak and move in plural ways and times, right now, right then, right here.

Eduardo Carrera R is a curator, cultural manager, and former coordinator of the Centro de Arte Contemporáneo in Quito (2020–22). Currently, he is researching his Ph.D. in art history at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2022 he was awarded the James D. McDonough Fellowship in queer art history by the University of Pennsylvania and the Alphawood Foundation in Chicago. Carrera is an alumna of the independent studies program at MACBA, Barcelona (2019–20), and of Independent Curators International (ICI), New York (2013). From 2017 to 2019, he served as chief curator of the Centro de Arte Contemporàneo in Quito and was co-director of No Lugar – Arte Contemporáneo. Between 2011 and 2017, Carrera was advisor to the Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio de Ecuador, Head of Research and Heritage at the Fundación Museos de la Ciudad, and collaborated on projects with the Metropolitan Institute of Heritage of Quito. He has done curatorial research residencies at Matadero and FelipaManuela in Madrid and Queer City São Paulo. His texts have been published by *Artpress*, *Artishock*, *ArtsEverywhere*, L'Internationale Online, and *Terremoto*, among others.

AGAINST NATURE: *CUY(R)* ECOLOGIES & BIODIVERSE AFFECTIVITIES

Eduardo Carrera R

This text reflects on certain artistic practices, using Andean ritual to evoke a vision of the world in which the human figures as part of the natural and social environment, a balanced coexistence of the human and nonhuman. Each Andean ritual is an act of gratitude, a gift, an offering to Mother Earth. Andean spirituality mediates between the spiritual world and the human world. It occupies the epicenter of a civilization based on respect for Pachamama and all the elements that she is made up of—rivers, plants, animals, mountains, etcetera—because everything that exists is sacred, and deserves special care. The spiritual, then, returns to the idea of unity, mobilizes life in favor of conscious evolution, understands the world and our actions as a synergy. The spirit in harmony drives to create, not to destroy, as has always been revealed through art.

Not all of the artists mentioned in this text come from the Andes region. However, in all their creative processes we find a close relationship between spirituality and nature. Coming from Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Abya Yala,[1] through their transcendent creative processes, these artists introduce a spiritual desire for the radical transformation of relationships between humans and nonhumans. Their artworks highlight the capacity of artists to permeate deep into the individual and the collective, enabling us to navigate through the complexities of the world with a sense of awareness and direction.

This text establishes a link between racialized and Indigenous sexual dissidence and ancestral values such as those concerning spirituality, Pachamama, and nonhuman living beings. The artists and images featured decenter the position that the human being has occupied in queer-identified theoretical, artistic, and activist practices; *cuir* implies that the human is linked with and dependent on other,

nonhuman life forms.[2] In my writing, I advocate a perspective based on the mobilization of queer, *cuir,* or *cuy(r)* perspectives and policies, toward a radical ecological reimagination.

Over the course of our Western cultural history, we have come to believe that heterosexual monogamy is the norm, the natural thing to do. People who call queer people unnatural assume that nature is pure, perfect, and predictable. Nature intended for a man and a woman to love each other, they say. In such a view, gays act against nature: they are possessed, body and soul, by a kind of diabolical spirit, something that does not correspond to this earthly plane.

Queer ecology recognizes that people often view nature, and things related to it, in dualist terms, such as natural or unnatural; alive or nonliving, human or nonhuman, when in reality nature exists in a continuous state. The idea of "the natural" arises from the perspective of the human being, not from nature itself. Queer ecology also identifies the heteronormative ideas that saturate human understandings of nature and society, and calls for the inclusion of the *cuy(r)*/queer in environmental movements. It rejects the associations that exist between the natural and the heterosexual and draws attention to how nature, marginalized social groups, and sexual dissidents historically have been exploited.

Considering LGBTIQ+ people to be "unnatural" and labeling their actions as "crimes against nature" are arguments that have a long history. Politicians, the church, and police continue daily to evoke actions that affect and endanger the lives of queer people and their relationship with the nonhuman environment. One quite literal example took place at a religious ceremony in 2008, during Pope Benedict XVI's Christmas "salute" to senior Vatican staff. His speech turned into a pronouncement against nature and the sexually dissident community when he spoke about "the natural" as man and woman and referred to an "ecology of the human being."[3] He explained that ignoring this human ecology (by engaging in destructive and unnatural behaviors) would be the equivalent of destroying the world's most vulnerable rainforests. That speech supports the long-held idea that LGBTIQ+ people are unnatural. This in turn affects the way sexual dissidents think and relate to the natural environment, language and environmental issues, straining LGBTIQ+ experiences of, and connections to, nature.

"Nature" and "the natural" have long been outspoken against the LGBTIQ+ community, as they have also against women, racialized people, and Indigenous people. Social Darwinism, colonialism, primitivism, and other forms of scientifically infused racism combining

1 Eds. note: Abya Yala is a term in the Guna/Kuna language referring to the geographical region between southeast Panama and northwest Colombia; meaning "land of vital blood," it is a common name used by Indigenous peoples and Indigenous rights activists in replacement of terms such as "the Americas" or the "New World," and in that way can be compared to the name of Turtle Island used in the northern hemisphere.

2 See for example: *Cuir/Queer Américas: Translation, Decoloniality, and the Incommensurable; GLQ* 27.3 (June 2021); dukeupress.edu/cuirsolqueer-americas.

3 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–48.

4 Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, *Queer Ecologies*, 332.

5 Diamond (2003), cited in Diego Falconí Trávez, "La heteromaricageneidad contradictoria como herramienta crítica cuy-r en las literaturas andinas," *Revista interdisciplinaria de estudios de género* 8 (2021). Translated for *L'Internationale* by Jorge Sánchez.

6 Falconí Trávez, "La heteromaricageneidad contradictoria."

"race" and "nature" have prompted indispensable criticisms.[4] Queer theory has likewise bracketed, expelled, or distanced the volatile category of nature from that of desire, situated as these are within an entirely social and very human habitat. This type of segregation of the queer from the natural is not for those who seek an environmentalism allied with sexual dissidents and a dissident sexual politics that is also environmentalist. The issue of whether nonhuman nature can be queer raises broader questions within interdisciplinary theory regarding the relationships between discourse and materiality, human and more-than-human worlds, as well as between cultural theory and science.

In his most recent article, legal and literature studies scholar Diego Falconí Travéz uses the term *cuy(r)* as an intentionally bad translation of the term "queer," a rebellious gesture that pretends to join together sexual dissidence and anti-coloniality in an Andean context, in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Here the Andean guinea pig, *el cuy*, *la cuy*, *lx cuy*—the Spanish word can be paired with different pronouns—functions, in this deliberately poor translation, as a base metaphor for the queer: "one of the animals that prehispanic ancestral populations domesticated."[5] Falconí Travéz presents some arguments for using the word *cuir*, based on the power of the *cuy* metaphor. In one of them, he mentions a "humanist-environmentalist paradigm shift," where a *cuy* makes it possible to revalue ancestral forms that recognize nature as a living subject while at the same time questioning the colonial hierarchy that places the human being at the center of the world. The *cuy* also posits a return to what is rural, "questioning urbanity as a symbol of vital improvement."[6]

The watercolor image *Men passing aguardiente from mouth to mouth*, made in the nineteenth century by an unknown painter, records an Indigenous practice in which two men pass a drink between them

Men passing aguardiente from mouth to mouth (1800s). Watercolor on paper, unknown artist. Image courtesy of the Museo Nacional del Ecuador (MuNa), Ministerio de Cultura y Patrimonio del Ecuador.

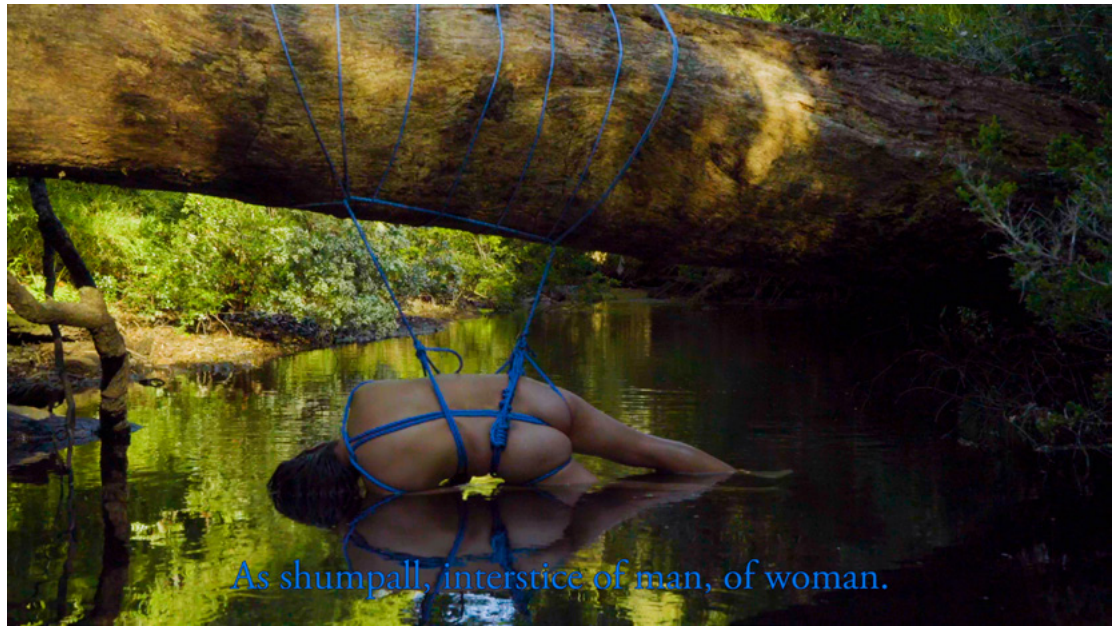
7 Mapuche, also known as Mapudungún (from the autoglotonym *Mapudungún* [language of the earth]) or Araucanian, is the language of the Mapuche, an Amerindian people who inhabit the current countries of Chile and Argentina.

8 *Wallmapu* or *Wall Mapu* (in Mapudungún *wall mapu*, *walh mapu*, or *waj mapu* [surrounding territory]) is the name given by some Indigenous groups and movements to the territory that the Mapuche inhabit or historically inhabited to various degrees at various times in the Southern Cone of South America: from the Limarí River in the north to the Chiloé archipelago in the south; on the southeastern shore of the Pacific Ocean; and from the southern latitude of Buenos Aires to Patagonia.

by bringing their lips together in an action that suggests a kiss. This is precisely the first thing that people who visit the Museo Nacional del Ecuador (MuNa) see: a painting (apparently) of a kiss between two people of the same sex. This way of looking at the image itself exposes the imposition of European epistemological categories on ancestral cultures during the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the Americas. Those practices inscribed (according to the religiously devout) with abominable connotations were eradicated with moral violence. The colony subordinated the bodies concerned and made them assume a guilt that previously did not belong to them. In this sense, this image questions and *denatures* the Western socio-sexual order via the representation of a diverse reality.

In the Mapudungún language, *kowkülen* means to be in a liquid state: a state in which matter appears as a fluid substance, with volume but without a definite shape.[7] *Ko*, or water, constitutes one of the fundamental components of *mapu*, or the earth and space as a whole. The phrase *genule ta ko, gerkelayafuy ta mogen* is an expression of the Mapuche people that means "there would be no life if we did not have water," since the Mapuche are traditional carriers of water and givers of life. As caretakers of rivers, lakes, streams, and oceans that have an impact on health, on the bodies of communities, and on the relationship that we all have with the natural world, Mapuche people and territories continue to be deeply linked to water for physical and spiritual well-being.

In *Kowkülen*, Sebastián Calfuqueo suspends his body from a tree using shibari techniques. The body swings as the skin touches the water of a river located in the Wallmapu territory.[8] While water flows and caresses Calfuqueo's skin, a text in Mapudungún and Spanish gives an account of different toponymies linked to the water and the anachronistic and complex relationships between different Mapuche terms and words. This allows for the interweaving of different imaginaries,



Sebastián Calfuqueo, stills from *Kowkülen*, 2020. HD video, 3'. Images courtesy of the artist.

9 My body is water, our bodies in the water, *itrofill mongen*. *Itrofill mongen* is a Mapuche saying for "all life without exception."

10 Fragment of the poem "Mexicana de este lado" by Gloria Anzaldúa. Translated by the author.

11 Fragment of the poem "No Basta" by Gloria Anzaldúa. Translated by the author.

Mapuche and non-Mapuche, with a defense of water from the perspective of the jurisdictional rights of nature. "Mi cuerpo es agua, nuestros cuerpos en el agua, *itrofill mongen*."[9] For the Mapuche people, water is never alone, not in any of its forms—there is always a spiritual body accompanying it.

In Gloria Anzaldúa's poems "Mexicana de este lado" [Mexicana from this side of the border] and "No Basta" [It's Not Enough], a relationship between bodies and an intimacy with the natural environment is made explicit: overflowing from skin and flesh, one becomes one with the nonhuman.

> I hear the cry of the sea, the breath of the air,
> my heart soars with the beat of the sea.
> In the gray haze of the sun,
> the sharp hungry howl of seagulls,
> the sour smell of water soaking me.
> But the land has no seams.
> The sea cannot be fenced,
> it does not end at the border.
> To show the white man what he thought of his arrogance,
> Yemayá blew up that wall of hawthorn.[10]
>
> It is not enough to open yourself
> only once.
> Again you must sink your fingers
> into your navel, with both hands,
> tear yourself apart,
> dropping dead rats and cockroaches,
> spring rain, corncobs in cocoon.
> Turn the maze upside down.
> Shake it out.[11]

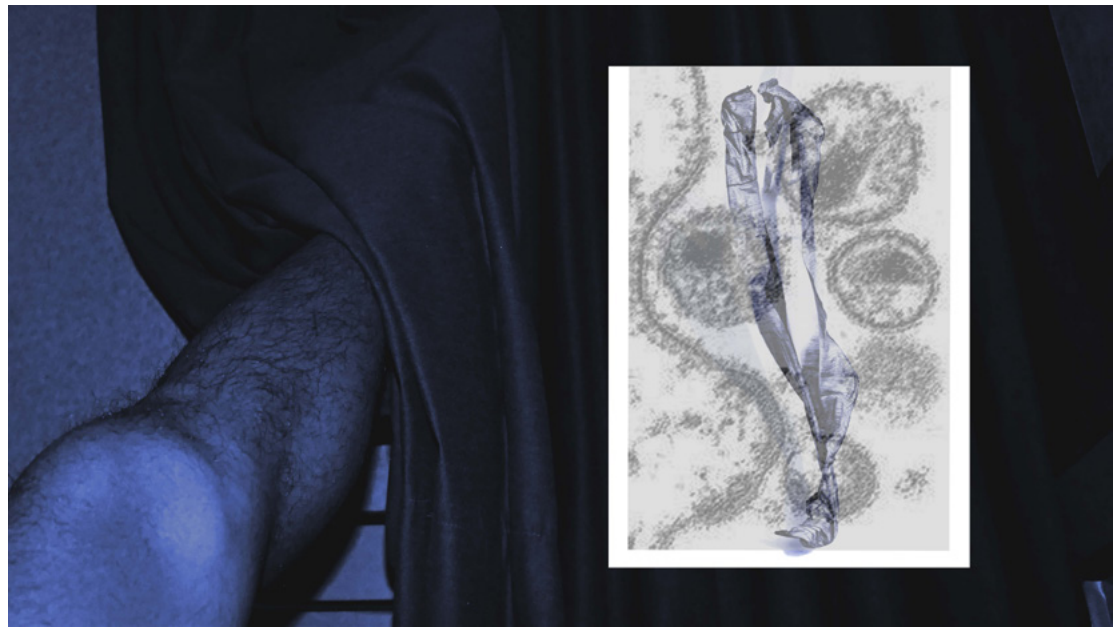
The artist Gian Cruz, in his series of photographs *(séro)TROPICAL(e)*, negotiates the tropics as a powerful place of resistance, working against the colonial exploitation of land and bodies and the naturalization of cis-sexism and heterosexuality. These images serve as imaginary,

atypical and performative self-portraits of the artist in relation to his overcoming health complications related to HIV/AIDS in early 2015. Here, the visual landscape embodies the intersections of the bodily, the viral, and the ecological. In the process, HIV/AIDS narratives are made visible in the context of Southeast Asian art (specifically that of the Philippines), as they grapple with the emergence of pandemics as colonial phenomena, driven by the extraction of natural resources and the dispossession of Indigenous traditions.

The plants, taking care of them and feeling their company, became—and came to mean—a healing ritual for Cruz. Being close and surrounded by tropical vegetation was a way for him to protect his body and his health, and also to become part of that environment, to embody a plant himself: a site for situated knowledge of fluid and non-binary perceptions of gender in relationship with the nonhuman, the vegetal. In this series of photographs, the artist asks, "How then could the tropics emerge not only as resistant to colonial sexual ideologies, but also as offering alternatives to queer/Western terminologies and lexicons?"[12] *(séro)TROPICAL(e)* offers a reflection on decolonial queer ecologies as a way to forge regionally specific queer imaginaries and to confront the nonlinear trauma of the HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 pandemics.

Cruz's way of being with his plants is spiritual. Here, spirituality and nature are evidence of a condition of the queer world. Queer people are not taught to think about our spirituality. We spend so much of our lives banished from religions and focused on our bodies' existence. In times of plague, climate and economic crisis, when making plans feels futile and overwhelming, Cruz's work makes us remember this: imagining our queer future is a form of prayer.

Futurity, nature, and spirituality are concepts that hetero-normativity distances from queer experience. For the Catrileo+Carrión Community, however, their desire is to stimulate political imagination and radical love as gestures of reciprocity, through actions that long to communicate through the sea. Each action carried out in the *Kiñe Lafken Ngelay Afpun (An Ocean Without Borders)* project is intended as a relationship with the *füta lafken* [great body of water] that has been named "the Pacific Ocean." This video is made up of two performances in different places, and two textile items: a cord from the communities and a piece of textile woven using the Mapuche technique called *ñimikan*. These are accompanied by a poetic text that travels along with the displacement of waters and textiles, inviting one to become aware of another notion of the sea as a fluid memory of tides that breaks with linear time as the only way of understanding life. The metaphor



Gian Cruz, *(séro)TROPICAL(e) n°4*, 2018–19. Digital prints on fine matte rag paper. Images courtesy of the artist.

Kiñe Lafken Ngelay Afpun (An Ocean Without Borders), 2021. Video and posters by the Catrileo+Carrión Community. Images courtesy of the artists.

12 Gian Cruz, *(séro)TROPICAL(e)*, in *TILTING 2.7*, The Blackwood Gallery (May 2020).

13 Catrileo+Carrión Community, *Kiñe Lafken Ngelay Afpun (An Ocean Without Borders)* (2021). Translation by the artists.

of fabric and its aesthetic relationship with the sea make us aware that time is a fiction, a convention that we all accept as real, and the real does not exist in itself. The real is a consensual fiction. However, the sea is real, the sea exists.

The video is accompanied by the following poem, a text that brings us closer to the sensitive relationship between the ocean and Mapuche subjectivity:

One ocean, no borders.

The frontier was built
to try to lock us in
and consume ourselves.

Sister, sister,
a long time ago
we used to have much knowledge
but the colonizer
cut our memory.

But we are still alive,
we are strengthened
and now thriving.

We are
more than human.
More than two hearts,
two volcanoes,
a shoal.

Two ceremonies
two textiles
two lands
one ocean
no borders.[13]

Lizette Nin has made several images in relation to the *Orí Odé* that represents both temporary attachment to the earthly plane and also the transcendence of bodies to another plane, back to the source of energy that created them. Traditionally, these conical forms are made with cowrie shells and natural elements, but they now appear deconstructed and transformed. The conical forms are now minimalist shapes made of paper. Printed and drawn onto the material, the forms of cowrie shells are in dialogue with those of plant, animal, and human elements, emphasizing the modern dualism that insists on separating nature and culture, body and soul, the human and the divine. They are representations of that energy to return to one day, of the *Orí Inú* of Black souls—the transcendence out of the head, the return to the spiritual roots erased by centuries and centuries of colonial violence.

*

The world needs to renew its energies. Ideas must be transformed, otherwise we will end up contributing to our own destruction. The artists mentioned in this text carry out these works with the intention that they transcend the artistic and occupy a place in the political, the ecological, and the humanitarian. Designed as tools to help liberate the Western world from its materialism and to achieve a social coexistence based on direct democracy and mutual solidarity between humans and non-humans, their works must be analyzed not only according to aesthetic criteria but also transcendental ones as well. This utopian horizon constitutes, in short, the ultimate goal of the entirety of diverse productions mentioned in these lines.

In this sense, *cuyr*/queer ecological art practices are more aligned with futurity and future-thinking, particularly when it comes to combating extractivism and social/environmental injustice; even as this highlights the fact that a lack of concern for the future more accurately characterizes regimes such as heteronormativity and capitalism. While they may operate out of concern for the reproduction of the white middle-class heterosexual family or the accumulation of wealth, these regimes also ignore their immediate and future costs to the poor, the sexually dissident communities, Black and Brown

Lizette Nin, *Orí Odé*, 2020. Blueprints and stencils. Installation view courtesy of the artist.

people, the environment, and even themselves. The kind of queer ecological future postulated here is ethically in tune with the care, health, and safety of the biosphere, as it encompasses the human, the nonhuman, and everything in between.

A *cuyr*/queer ecology is a liberating ecology. It is the relationship *within* the human, the natural, the spiritual, the past-present-future body-self-other. It is the recognition of the innumerable relationships between all living things. *Cuyr*/Queer ecology is, then, an experience across all phenomena, all behaviors, all possibilities. It is the relationship between the body, the flesh, the soul and the universe.

The artists and artworks I have included here emphasize the need to decentralize the position of the human being in contemporary theoretical, epistemological, artistic, and activist practices. Some of the artists identify themselves as queer, pointing out that queer also implies assuming the bonds of dependence of the human being with other forms of nonhuman life. These images of bodies that take care of plants and pray with them; of bodies that work the land, that rest in the landscape; of bodies that submerge in the sea, that share with the river; of bodies that are made of shells. Theirs are dissident corporealities that invite us to look closely at how experiences are built from our affections, desires, pains, and stories of our colonial past.

We need more robust and complex ways of engaging productively with nonhuman materiality, forms that account for the diversity and promiscuity of a multitude of cultures of nature; ways that can engage with sexual dissent, scientific studies, and Indigenous, *cuy(r)* and queer artists who can encourage such formulations. Embodying profound epistemological revisions as well as philosophical, political, and aesthetic challenges to the binary model of sex and nature, artists, writers, and poets such as Sebastián Calfuqueo, Gian Cruz, Gloria Anzaldúa, Lizette Nin, Diego Falconí Travéz and others affirm an ecology that embraces deviance and strangeness as a necessary part of biophilia; sexual pleasure and transgression as the substance of environmental ethics; politics and resistance to heteronormativity as an integral part of ecology and natural science.

SHELTERS

Mônica Hoff is an artist, curator, and researcher based in Florianópolis, Brazil. She investigates relations between curatorial, artistic, and educational practices and how these conflict with and determine institutional polices and pedagogies. Her projects include *Lab of curating, art and education*, with Fernanda Albuquerque (2014–present); *Embarcação*, with Kamilla Nunes (Florianópolis, 2016–present); *Public Office of Questions* (2016–present); *La Grupa* (2018–present); *Extraordinary School* (2018); *Heart Lungs Liver* (2019–20); and *Ni apocalipsis ni paraiso* (2021). Hoff co-edited *Pedagogy in the Expanded Field* with Pablo Helguera (8th Mercosul Biennial, 2011); *The Cloud* and *The Manual for Curious* with Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy (9th Mersocul Biennial, 2013); and the Portuguese translation of Martha Rosler's 1970s novel *Tijuana Maid* with Regina Melim (Parentesis, 2018). Hoff received her Ph.D. in contemporary artistic processes from CEART/UDESC, Florianópolis, with an investigation of artist-run art schools and how artistic methodologies become pedagogy, which in turn becomes institutions.

HOW TO KEEP ON WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW, OR, WHAT COMES AFTER MAGIC WORDS & POLITICS OF SALVATION

Mônica Hoff

The forest is alive. It can only die if the white people persist in destroying it. [...] We will die one after the other, the white people as well as us. All the shamans will finally perish. Then, if none of them survive to hold it up, the sky will fall.

— Davi Kopenawa, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*[1]

They were the fact, not the pretense of being an idea.

They were communal societies, never societies of the many for the few. They were societies that were not only ante-capitalist, as has been said, but also anti-capitalist. They were democratic societies, always. They were cooperative societies, fraternal societies. [...] They were the fact, they did not pretend to be the idea.

— Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*[2]

Believing in happy endings is our greatest pathology.

— Suely Rolnik, *Antropofagia zumbi*[3]

I.

That climate collapse is a colonial achievement, we have known for a long time. That we have universalized the problem so as not to have to assume certain inherent responsibilities and that over the centuries we have created comfortable truths, convenient lies, and dishonest equations to justify our apparatus of violence and privilege, there is no shadow of a doubt. That the fear of the end is, in fact, the fear of a certain end of a certain project (and) of a certain reason—besides its being established: it seems that the applicability of this sentence is ever more evident. That the world has already ended many times, and that insisting on the contrary only proves the hegemony of the discourse, too. That the mountain is not inevitably a condition for the train, another obvious fact; even though the centuries of devastation and "progress" tell just the opposite. That the problem is always the one we don't want to see, but that we perfectly know how to illustrate—nothing could be more symptomatic. That to call "a crisis" what is, in reality, a result of a certain civilization project is nothing new.

That climate emergency, capitalism, and racism are three sides of the same coin, even though it only shows two of them—no one will contradict the obvious. That the earth is black, also red, sometimes ochre or yellow, and that the predominant voice in the ecological debate is historically _____—is not only problematic but suggestive. That civilizing shouldn't be a destiny, and being human is perhaps the greatest hoax of all, we finally seem to be realizing; and it is already too late. That posts and likes accelerate the melting of glaciers; that WhatsApp groups burn down entire forests, and that TikTok videos kill whales—whoever is not lost does not yet understand. That both *capital* and *modernity*, and its *isms*, were our ideas, we who have been too human for so long, indiscriminately conceived in the name of an idea of future that only benefited ourselves, but not all of us—no doubt this is the most basic arithmetic. That humanity is a dangerous invention, we have known for a long time, too.

That what we call "climate change" is called "white sickness" by native people—also abuse, extractivism, violence, looting, rape. That what seems to be construction is already ruin. That empathy is a convenient discursive invention, just like resilience and salvation. That nothing is more Western-centric than the apocalypse, and nothing more self-confident than guilt. That, in order to read the circumstances,

1 Davi Kopenawa, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, trans. Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), xvii.

2 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 40.

3 Suely Rolnik, *Antropofagia zumbi* [Zombie Anthropophagy] (São Paulo: n-1, 2022), 87.

4 Verse from the song "Sampa," composed by Caetano Veloso in 1978 in honor of the city of São Paulo and its enormous contradictions.

5 Audre Lorde, *A unicórnia preta* [The Black Unicorn] (Belo Horizonte: Relicário Edições, 2020), 157.

6 Fábia Prates, Interview with Rosane Borges, Humboldt: Cultural Platform of Goethe-Institut in South America; goethe.de/prj/hum/pt/dos/mar/21249390.html.

one must stop being narcissistic. "Narcissus finds ugly everything that is not a mirror," the song goes.[4]

That reproducing one's own species in order to save it from the end of the world is just one more capital-logic of art's survival. That art is, by condition of its existence, colonial, and that appropriation is not an invention of the twentieth century. That its world continues to be colonial and its system too, resulting from universalizing colonizing epistemologies that we invented based on certain interests; we who haven't stopped being who we are for a minute, not since five centuries ago. That art can be a tractor—and let cast the first stone, the one who has never run over someone for its sake! That it creates proto-phenomena, feeds statistics, increases fortunes, invents illusory redistributions, and pulls the trigger—all quiet on the Western front. That it saves nothing, and no one; that its world has very little eco-vision; and that it insists on calling "ecological" what, historically, is political—we seem to have arrived at (or returned to) our starting point.

II.

Because every conquest leaves its debts. Because when it seems like construction, it is, in fact, already ruin. Because "world fiction" is an enormous paper tiger that wakes us up every morning with seductive agreements and impossible promises. Because poetry is not rhetoric. Because, as Audre Lorde says, the difference between poetry and rhetoric is being ready to kill yourself instead of your children.[5] Because when a chimpanzee is worth more than a rat, we all lose, humans and nonhumans. Because competition is a capitalist invention. Because capitalism does not exist without oppression. Because racism is a dynamo of capitalism.[6] Because the world has ended many times,

and has been ending for a long time. Because the end of the road is so far ahead that it is already behind us. Because worse days will always come. Because another world will only be possible when we no longer know what we know; but it will still be made of everything we have made, and of everything that must end. Because a world where everything is a beginning has much future, little present, and no past. Because progress is scarcity's invention; "enough" is a truth that has never materialized, and underdevelopment is a strategy of domination. Because land is a language, and colonialism is a monocultural system.

Because justice and prosperity should be preconditions, but can cost billions. Because expecting the art world to decolonize is stupid, not naive. Because every concept carries with it a history that is almost never fair. Because fairness also has its chiefs. Because light does not tell us about seeing, but precisely about what we do not want to see. Because what we don't know also exists. Because the dismantling of the art world, as Denilson Baniwa says, is a didactic and cosmological action of *likoada*.[7] Because when Ailton Krenak says: "The Earth is our Mother […], this is not poetry, this is our life," he is trying to tell us that life is not useful.[8] Because even the name *Araweté* is an invention of *kamarã*.[9] Because in the capitalist world-system, to die mostly means to be killed. Because criticism is also a place of power. Because museums have never been anything else. Because more than places of historical memory, they are historically protagonists in the implementation of the colonial monocultural system. Because in the world of metaphors, everything that is real is also fake. Because it is not enough to change the object if the episteme does not change. Because calling a package of historical violence "climate collapse" is just another erasure strategy. Because what "a few select people call the Anthropocene, the great majority is calling social chaos, general misgovernment, loss of quality in daily life, in relationships, and we are being thrown into this abyss."[10] Because it has been in effect for at least 530 years. But you can always go shopping at Humana.[11] Because who can really afford organic food? Because to impose an "existential turn" is to enact a massacre. Because the meat is poor, but it means power.[12] Because the price to pay is too high, too normative, too cool. Because we still produce what we produce, and for whom we produce it. Because even in the post-binary, post-pandemic, and "posthuman" world there are still those who serve and those who are served. Because art as a way of thinking is no longer enough.

Because "the Yanomami will not be saved just because Brazil's biggest museum is holding an exhibit on Yanomami mining."[13]

7 For the Baniwa people, the law of *likoada* is what in Western culture would be called "the law of reciprocity": the law, that is, of the reciprocal obligations that regulate the exchanges that human beings make with each other and with the spirits. Denilson Baniwa, Instagram post made by the artist, 16 May 2022.

8 Ailton Krenak, *A vida não é útil* [Life is not useful] (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2020), 114.

9 *Kamarã* is how the Araweté people call white people. Eliane Brum, "*O que o velho Araweté pensa dos brancos enquanto seu mundo é destruído*?" [What does the old Araweté think of the whites while his world is being destroyed?], *El País* (6 February 2017); brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2017/02/06/opinion/1486385972_496318.

10 Ailton Krenak, *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo* [Ideas for postponing the end of the world] (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019), 72.

11 Humana is a secondhand clothing store with a transnational character, with branches in some European countries, that, under the shield of ecological debate and solidarity toward countries of the Global South, acts illicitly, profiting millions of euros each year. More than simply corrupt, this relationship is a perverse and violent game of capitalizing on the conditions of colonized lives, instrumentalizing the supposed social vulnerability of groups and communities.

12 In Portuguese, *podre*/*poder* = putrid/power.

13 Denilson Baniwa, artist's comment on an art exhibition that will take place at the São Paulo Museum of Art, recently involved in a series of important public debates regarding the museum's stance towards the inclusion of certain pieces in one of the show's projects. Instagram post made by the artist, 16 May 2022.

14 Achille Mbembe, *Crítica da Razão Negra* [Critique of Black Reason] (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2018).

15 For Krenak this is a proof of the separation humanity has created from nature.

16 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (São Paulo: Ubu, 2020), 21.

Because "naivety" is a word that we use for everything that we don't know or understand. Because wanting someone to take a stand is just another strategy to capitalize on their discourse or canceling it. Because we are all tired, but some will always be more tired than others. Because the sun does not shine for everyone. Because the intellectual left is no longer sustainable. Because the trigger continues to be pulled by the same fingers. Because if it was once a colony, it is now an evangelical corporate parastate. Because if it was once 1492, it still is. Because, as Achille Mbembe said, contemporary racism resides in the interconnection between the radioactive and the viral, that is, it is the sum of a direct, visible and immediate violence with a slow and gradual one, which little by little makes unfeasible and prevents basic rights.[14] Because we have never been so medieval, nor so terribly modern. Because we steal land. Because we kill each other. Because we are incapable of considering a river that is sick as our grandfather.[15] Because there are more things between heaven and earth than are dreamt of in Western philosophy. Because our guilt continues to be Christian and science does not relieve us of it. Neither does art. Because it is wallowing, and we are wallowing in it. Because, as Fanon announced, "the explosion will not happen today. It is too soon […] or too late."[16] Because it may be the end of everything, but it may also be the end of nothing.

III.

What can the art world actually do with a snake-letter? What place does it have for a *jararaca*-dream?[17] What ethical structure is art capable of building, in order to deal with what it does not invent? How does it behave when it cannot retain codes that do not belong to it? How does it fail to illustrate what it does not know? How does it exhibit, and *exist*, without aestheticizing everything? Is it from within that we break with the pedagogies of power? What social, political, and environmental responsibility are we effectively assuming in our practices? How to go beyond the "magic words"? What are we really capable of building when everything is burning around us? To what extent does our critical discourse and our activist posture prevent lives from being made precarious? How can we, in our practices, avoid making aesthetics of disgrace, praising guilt, falling into politics of salvation? How to go beyond simulations of experiences, falsifications of situations, the logic of models, programmatic captures, and the paralyzing institutional gasses? How do we do all this when the political situation summons us to defend what we believed to be our object of criticism? How to escape the pedagogies of power and be, at the same time, didactic enough? How to be tactically in and strategically out? How not to negotiate the non-negotiable? What, after all, do we consider to *be* that? Do we really want to question our own statements? Do we really want to unlearn what we know? What effective, non-narcissistic ideas and actions are we building to *postpone the end of the world*? What effective, non-narcissistic ideas and actions are we building to accelerate the end of the world we have created so that others are possible? Is it possible for us to start over without aestheticizing its end? How can we continue being human, but without knowing what we already know? Are we really capable of imagining a world in which we no longer are (as we are)? What part of what we (re)produce represents structural change, and what remains part of a strategy of consumption? Is art really interested in abandoning the historical project of *things*?[18]

17 The Jararaca is a snake of the viper family endemic to southeastern Brazil, Paraguay, and parts of northern Argentina that is extremely venomous.

18 See Rita Segato, *Contra-pedagogías de la crueldad* [Counter-Pedagogies of Cruelty] (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2018), 11–16.

IV.

In the institutional art market, one of the most traded terms (and themes) in recent years has been "the future," and especially its possible end—sometimes sold too cheaply, sometimes costly enough, depending on the level of speculation and capitalization on the day. As many who work in this field claim, climate collapse means the end of the future and this is what we need to fight against so the world doesn't end. This seems symptomatic of a way of thinking that, in reality, has changed little or not at all: we keep looking ahead in order not to have to look back; at the same time, we continue to insist on the idea that History is what is in the past and not the present that we build daily. In both cases the idea of the future is an escape.

V.

In the last decades, there have been many prescriptions for, and attempts at, facing and postponing the end of the world. The same can be said of theories about the loss of the future—on the lack not only of its occurrence, but also and mainly of its representation. Meanwhile, never have so many different futures been projected at the same time—nostalgic, dilated-developmentalist, techno-utopian, disruptive. It is as if the future that no longer exists has become its own simulacrum, while we, under the effect of this future with no future, are lost among transitory worlds that we think we know, but in which we have never been.

Some will call it "apocalypse." Others, "posthumanity," "Anthropocene," or even "dystopia." In all cases the hypotheses, whose link to a specific linear temporality is defined by epistemologies built according to a hegemonic notion of knowledge deriving from the Christian tradition, bond over identifying the future as a project of either damnation or salvation. This means that the terms and concepts

created in an attempt to name it are at once infinite and insufficient, because the end of the future represents above all the exhaustion of a certain project of reason and its regulatory and civilizing frameworks.

For many native peoples, what we call the future has been under dispute for more than 500 years. For others, the future was never even a possibility; and there are those for whom the future never existed, cosmologically and/or temporally. The planetary collapse we are experiencing does not, therefore, establish or constitute the fact of a common or universal relationship to the future. At least, not to the pimped-out future maintained so far, based as it is in a capitalistic, racializing colonial regime, as Suely Rolnik argues.[19]

How, then, to go beyond apocalyptic dogma and its politics of salvation, and, at the same time, beyond the very logic that defines it as such? What of the past are we annihilating in its favor? What of the present are we denying while we continue in real time to project ourselves into an apparently lost future built of idealizing utopias (progressive or reactionary)? What exactly do we need the future for, when its relationship with progress is precisely what brought us here? Wouldn't thinking about the future as something behind us, and the past as something ahead, as the Aymara people suggest, be a way to learn everything we need to unlearn, in order to stop knowing what we already know?

The Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui argues that what the crisis does is to question the words, the assumptions of common being. That is, "it questions the fact that we think we understand each other because we take for granted what words like market, citizenship, development, decolonization, among others, mean."[20] These are "magic words," she tells us, "because they have the magic to silence our concerns and ignore our questions. What the crisis does, in breaking those securities, is to take us off the ground and force us to think about what we mean by them."[21] And to these, we could certainly add "future," "progress," "civilization."

Understanding what we mean by them involves much more than using them correctly. In the capitalist economy of narratives, the boundaries between words of change, watchwords, and trendy words are very thin. The same word can very quickly assume all three undertones, contradicting itself and emptying itself of its possible meanings, potency, or coherence.

19 Suely Rolnik, *Esferas da Insurreição: Notas para uma vida não cafetinada* [Spheres of Insurrection: Notes for a Life that is Not Pimped Out] (São Paulo: n-1, 2018).

20 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible: Ensayos desde un presente en crisis* [A *ch'ixi* World is Possible: Essays from a Present in Crisis] (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2018), 40–41.

21 Ibid.

22 Caetano Veloso, "Sampa."

VI.

Modernist anthropophagy is just a step away from zombie anthropophagy. In the blink of an eye, we move from anthropophagic micropolitics to the uncritical incorporation of the capitalist politics of the production of subjectivities. When we come to our senses, if it happens at all, we find ourselves devouring self and others in the name of a supposed common good; both inside and outside art, and with less or more decolonial impetus. "Narcissus finds ugly everything that is not a mirror," as the old song goes.[22]

VII.

In this factual "vanity," the institution of "art" does not stop: it goes on reinforcing its "visionary" role by producing images, generating narratives and "trends," revising discourses, formulating new agendas, exhausting concepts, doing business, moving the chain of production in its own way, and serving delicious dinners for whoever is hype at the moment. The "antennae of the race" (a hideous expression coined by Ezra Pound to refer to artists) don't stop, either. They keep producing and producing and producing, until, stuck between saving the world in order to fit into the current art discourse and getting sick, they end up exhausted.

The art world dances a strange and convenient dance of contradictions: for the sake of the oceans, the forests, humans and nonhumans, the regeneration of the planet; and also, if not mainly, for that of its own status quo. In the name of the planet's health and its own "decolonization," it races unbridled toward revisions and new agendas. The changes so-realized are mostly discursive; still

barely epistemological, and therefore rarely structural. Thus, it ends up reproducing the capitalist, racializing, colonial regime it claims to oppose, since, as Rolnik argues, the unconscious is not necessarily altered by discourse. (In the name of the planet's "health," the art world turns its back to worlds, lives, and forms of knowledge it finds uninteresting, even while participating in the devastation of what is left.)

This too is, no doubt, a complex mathematics: as long as structural changes are treated only as if they are images (of something), whose purpose is to occupy white cube galleries or specialized publications of restricted circulation; as long as visibility is confused with appearance, and historical debt with agenda, we will hardly move on. If human relationships and ways of being do not change, the contracts remain the same and so do the emergencies.

VIII.

Great fortunes rule governments. Governments are killing people. What do museums do?

Northern countries have the "best models of education." Northern countries mine Southern lands. What do museums say?

The forest burns. Hunger is back to being a reality. The extermination of native peoples only increases. São Paulo has more than 60,000 people living on the streets. What are museums for?

Artists make art. Computers make money. And the museums?

How uncomfortable a role are museums really willing to occupy in the so-called decolonization process, beyond just talking about it?

What do museums do in the face of massacres and land invasions? What should their role be in these hostile times in which we are living? Illustrating the looting and violence is not enough.

What is the measure of comparison between the poetics of doom and the politics of salvation, and what does this have to do with taking ethical responsibility? What does thinking about museum education today consist of? What notion of education is the museum building? What institutional pedagogies structure its practices? Which of them is the museum willing to unlearn?

IX.

Historically, both in the context of art institutions and museums, as well as in the political and social structure in which we live, education has occupied a somewhat paradoxical position: on the one hand, it is recognized as a fundamental place for the exercise of critical and political imagination; on the other, we effectively treat it as a subordinate sector in the hierarchy of institutional discourses and practices.

The enormous interest in education, in the first half of the 2000s, within the cloud of the "educational turn," certainly brought some changes regarding its relevance in the context of art and giving the role of education and pedagogy more attention and a certain respect. This new "status," important for the review of statements and modes of operation, did not, however, guarantee effective structural changes in terms of institutional pedagogies.

By "institutional pedagogies" I mean the set of practices and methodologies that make up and shape an art institution, museum or organization. That is, not only their educational activities and programs, but also and especially their decisions, modes of organization, and structures of mediation—from contracts, income, and organizational hierarchies to direct or implicit curatorial, advertising, and educational discourses and choices and the times and spaces in which they take place as well as the question who occupies the chairs and positions.

In view of this, we could say that the sense of education constructed by a museum is indisputably present in the educational activities that are developed for this purpose, but not only in them. It is also actualized in attitudes and practices not necessarily called educational, but which structure the institution.

Although it is the task of the educator or the educational curator to create spaces for learning, reflection, and debate and work in the name of education, the responsibility for the sense of education created by a museum or art institution will never be theirs alone.

Education is not an activity or a sector within an institution, but a place of political co-responsibility in which we all act, willingly or not. So, the decisions, methodologies, actions, and practices carried out by a museum make up the set of pedagogies from which this museum operates and structures itself. Less or more visible, directly or subliminally, they are never impartial.

In this sense, for the museum to understand what it must unlearn, it must be able to look with critical care at the idealized self-image that it has historically constructed and, from there, review its institutional pedagogies from what bell hooks calls "love ethics," that is, a different set of values to live by, in which power and domination are no longer possible methods.

X.

Questions like:

How to rethink museums when the number of femicides grows exponentially instead of decreasing?
How to rethink museums in the face of the social epidemic of parental abandonment in the world?
How to rethink museums when the rate of children living below the poverty line is 40 percent?
How to rethink museums when hunger is a reality in the homes of thousands of people?
How to rethink museums in the face of the fact that prisons continue to exist?
How to rethink museums in the face of the unbridled medicalization of life?
How to rethink museums without falling into reactive micropolitics?
How to rethink museums when their pro-environment speeches and public programs are sponsored by companies that expropriate and exploit land and lives somewhere on the other side of the world?
How to rethink museums without falling into moral precepts and convenient ethical parameters?
How can we rethink museums when the labor reforms that favor them seek to make the lives of those who work in them even more precarious?
How to rethink museums without rethinking the structural racism that shaped them and guides their existence?
How to rethink museums beyond saving progressive rhetoric and missionary policies?
How to rethink museums when their collections are largely formed from invasion and expropriation?

How to rethink museums when the theories and logics that structure them continue to be thought from the same places, bodies and voices for more than 500 years?
How can we rethink museums and not consider the role they play in the system of social, political, economic, and cultural domination?
How to rethink museums and not fall in models of cultural appropriation and epistemic extractivism?
How to rethink museums beyond the strange mixture between school and business?
How to rethink museums without persisting in the idea of progress?
How to rethink museums beyond the idea of utopia?
How to rethink museums beyond the aesthetics of empathy?
How to rethink museums beyond the logic of "satisfaction guaranteed"?
How to rethink museums without resorting to analogies?
How to rethink museums so that they stop teaching and make an effort to learn?
How to rethink museums as places where different subjectivities circulate, not just audiences and numbers?
How to rethink museums based on anti-colonial voices rather than post-colonial theories?
How to rethink museums beyond civilization theories?
How to rethink museums as non-saving devices?
How to rethink museums without making "historical reparation" a public program of four meetings?
How to rethink museums without rethinking the sense of education that structures and organizes them?
How to rethink museums beyond the "themes" and the "agenda"?
How to rethink museums without rethinking the declarations, contracts, work hours, and the tickets?
How can we rethink museums without doing the exercise of transforming language?
How can we rethink museums and not asking ourselves why we continue to work and believe in them?
How to rethink museums as anti-racist organizations?
How to rethink the museum considering that its historical debt is unpayable?
How to rethink museums without falling into the desire to end them?
How (not) to rethink museums in the face of all this?[23]

need to be understood and answered structurally, that is, from the guts.

XI.

If the museum really wants to invest in a review process, it needs to be willing to review itself epistemologically, that is, understanding itself not only as a space of historical memory, but as a historical figure—as a direct agent in the construction of a certain project of reason and, therefore, in the validation of the world as we know it. By assuming itself as an agent of this machinery, the museum will be able to better understand its political, economic, social, and cultural responsibility today.

In this process, it is important that the museum refuses the missionary logic of saving the world. Aside from being misleading, it serves no other purpose than to reinforce its own voice and benevolent self-image. The museum is not and has never been a neutral or passive figure. There is no other way to face this than by diving into its own entrails, analyzing the institutional pedagogies that structured it as a place of power. Otherwise, it may fall into the trap of thinking it is making historical reparation when in fact it is making epistemic extractivism.

In this sense, it is essential that the museum inhabit its vulnerabilities and accept itself as an unstable place—that is also ugly, bad, wrong, complex. It is necessary that it assumes its political responsibility in the face of the historical construction of the facts and learn to expose itself, that is, to leave from its position. Learning, more than teaching, can be a good methodology for this.

Finally, it seems urgent that the museum reflect deeply on what it means to think and act in terms of an "agenda" in a world whose politics is the aesthetics of the now, therefore, a world in which narratives and debates are constantly capitalized and/or aestheticized, and whose obsolescence is already programed.So that personal narratives and historical debates do not become magic words within museums, it is necessary to understand and address them as the living processes they are, that is, as processes that were not produced to fit on their walls or galleries, nor in their agendas.[24]

23 This is a fragment of a long, and constantly updated list of questions I initiated in 2018. Part of the list was published under the title "How (not) to rethink museums in such impressive times," in *Repensar los museums* [Rethinking Museums], organized by the Thyssen Bornemizsa Museum, Madrid, 2019.

24 More on these ideas are present in my text "El museo, las palabras mágicas y las políticas de salvación," which will soon be published in the book *Museo Digital: Ciudadanía y Cultura*, organized by MUAC/UNAM, Mexico, 2022.

25 Rolnik, *Antropofagia zumbi*, 88.

26 bell hooks, *Tudo sobre o amor: novas perspectivas* [All About Love: New Visions] (São Paulo: Editora Elefante, 2021), 123.

XII.

Yes, the paradoxes are as innumerable as the imbrications. Here at the crossroads there is always a knife at one's neck. What remains is to ask ourselves: Why do we produce what we produce, and for whom? How do we abandon our narcissistic power and, instead, let ourselves be affected by the Other—by the one, or by the us, that is not *us*—in order to generate, sustain, and embody, constitutionally transformative effects of dissonance, as Rolnik suggests?[25] Against which "apocalypse" are we really positioning ourselves? What kind of world do we want to be part of, after all?

XIII.

Because, as bell hooks says, "awakening to love can only happen if we let go of our obsession with power and domination."[26]

Ayesha Hameed explores the legacies of indentureship and slavery through the figures of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Her Afrofuturist approach combines performance, sound essays, videos, and lectures. Hameed examines the mnemonic power of these media—their capacity to transform the body into a body that remembers. The motifs of water, borders, and displacement, recurrent in her work, offer a reflection on migration stories and materialities, and, more broadly, on the relations between human beings and what they imagine as nature. Her exhibitions include Liverpool Biennal (2021), Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art (2019, 2021), Lubumbashi Biennale (2019), and Dakar Biennale (2018). She is coeditor of *Futures and Fictions* (Repeater, 2017) and co-author of *Visual Cultures as Time Travel* (Sternberg Press/MIT Press, 2021). She is a senior lecturer in visual cultures at Goldsmiths University of London and a Kone Foundation research fellow.

songs for petals

Ayesha Hameed

For the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in India

I.

October 31 1984

I pull myself up
eyes at the horizon of the back seat window
Watch cars slick on rubber band roads
through graphite clouds of night
Grey white buildings swing round an older one
fuzzy and broken and old.
Kristallnacht broken glass sure
sparkling stars on the asphalt
Rings on the Ring Road there are broken
Olympic Os scattered on the street
Rings of fire
burning tires
And our Ambassador two Sikhs inside
boomerangs fast and slow
Passing men quietly smashing car windows
Standing contemplative around thickening fires
oozing black rubber
graphite into the night

26 000 1833

the half-life for salt to disintegrate into the sea is 260 million years. this is a measure of how sea meets salt in bodies crushed into the water from slavers on ships. a half-life as margin of witness. what else. the sea is in our blood and the sea is our blood and we are exiled from the sea and so we staccato attack with anchovy machine-gun fire what is not us in the sea. but we are the sea and this is our obsolescence. what else. there is blood in the breeze. what else

On a bus going from Jamia Nagar to Old Delhi
December 7 1992 (part 1)

We are drowsy afternoon
sliding without shadows.
Bars cut the window in horizontal lines
& the doors are mouths gasped open
A man's voice floats reedy through currents on the bus
he is singing.
Around his voice
a grey cottondry silence
He sings softly not gently
a knife inside a plastic serenade
I press my palms damp on rough denim thighs
Our fear twanging the air
filling it with water
Air sharpening outside as our bus carried on slick and slow waves
a concentric set of circles
a bull's-eye on its back

II.

songs

#1
december 2019. when they crash into the library at jamia millia islamia first they smash the cyclops security cameras. then they take out the eye of mohammed minhajauddin reading in the library. an eye for an eye.
they round up protesting students, beat them to the ground and make them sing

#2
i am too young to understand when someone comes home with a cassette recording of iqbal bano singing a banned poem by faiz. i listen more to the sound of the 50,000 people in the audience. they are so loud that the tabla player changes their tempo to the crowd shouting ~~*revolution*~~ i don't understand but its timbre onomatopoeia enough
we shall see & shake the earth/ crackle lightning/ turn mountains of oppression into dry cotton

#3
february 2020. mobs shouting/ shoot the traitors/ throw petrol bombs into homes in ashok nagar/ knocking men to the ground making them sing/ again

#4
"The hours pass. The sun beats down. The great white herons spread their wings like the swan enrapturing Leda as we float downstream through the floating verdure. He sings of the paramilitaries and the terror they create, chopping up bodies and heaving them into the river we are floating on with its vivid flowers."

*

There is litter in the foreground. The crane is red. Its long arm draws an arc around a black shore around it. Water ripples in a white sheen reflecting the grey sky and the halo of a suggested sun behind the clouds. Cars pass by behind. Ordinary. Brick buildings line the road behind the cars. The camera follows the crane moving in circles, pulling its matter to shore.

*

a half life of singing

singing lying on the ground
blood trickle
soldiers above ready boots
smash a cctv camera *(eye number 1)*
and then the eye of a man *(eye number 2)*
singing on a river full of bodies
& flowers
cranes humming through sewers for bodies disappeared
singing faiz under tents with old women sitting vigil
singing on a cassette tape worn old and through

vā

songs slick leaving time
span the space between
        grains of air
scale lush trade winds
        angry
gust retribution waiting
        return

seablood as a spinning of
        air-plus-water
        flood-plus-famine
twine past into future
        a half-life of vibrations
        water-into-air
        bodies-into-song
tremble the undertow of the in-between

III.

26 000 2020

we share the sea but this brings to us our annihilation. fascism: to multiply the self and destroy the other. to destroy the self so that the sea can return. but we can't return. when we bleed it is (a) minute in the archaic immensity of the sea.

*

imago

#1
taken from above. a parking lot full of burned cars covered in white dust. there are no windows or tires. twelve men and a women are walking in between. a shed at the back painted a pale pink. in the front what looks like a cart is also burned. the cars arranged in a tidy grid.

#2
smashed cars piled on one another over a layer of rubble. the bottom car a bright emerald. another folded like an accordion. a boy stands to the right of the pile, leaning on the pile with one hand, a stripe on his tracksuit leg, his other hand on his hip. two women look to the right, off camera, wearing red, yellow, orange. someone's turquoise knapsack and a bit of sun. most of the photo is of the cars that everyone has their backs to.

#3
a teenager and an older man. the boy has his hand on the handlebar of a twisted bicycle frame. there is no second handlebar. white rubble at his feet. boy looks to the right, man looks to the left, arms crossed in front of him. he is wearing a sky blue shirt. the boy is wearing an army shirt. both in rubber slippers. leaning. behind them shredded cables radiate up the wall.

#4
grey cement. the textured paint print of a hand. white, with
long fingers, their outlines wavy. the thumb is thin, its tip
round like a comma. four lines radiate away from the palm
from left to right. is this print on the wall or ground? why was
paint on someone's hand. what happened. sedimentation of
haste of a body no longer there. what happened

*

On a bus going from Jamia Nagar to Old Delhi
December 7 1992 (part 2)

the bus stops at the terminal
ok so 20 minutes more to walk
the light is purple and black
there's blood in the breeze and we both know it.
just say: we're almost safe
steady now, i'm far from home and it's dark.
my shadow hidden by the black

ok so we are at the house
porch light on cyclops beacon
safe haven hurrah no mob this time suck it.
inside steel eyes on us
without looking at me r introduces me by
                another name.

a desert full of silence and not safe
                & shit we better get out of here soon

~~*utopia*~~

what shakes the earth shakes the sky
sure but then
the air between is thick with
what

potential is a stupid word
but so are words in general
and you can't point to the tip of language
without falling back in.
let me try again
utopia could be the trembling of a grain. maybe just one
between the continents
or you and me
or the idea of movement
or something falling
or as ocean never anywhere
or particles of seablood
or bits of nightmare left tarnished
and soldered into refusing form
and itself

or let me split this atom between you and me
and count the difference
or count my blessings
or count how many times I forgot to see
or stupidly cried instead of looking
forgot the snakes tumbling out of lightning bolts
or ships tipped like lightning in lava seas
and time on a loop looking straight at me
and tried instead to find a shiver
in the decay of a song
we sang once
and remembered.

IV.

one. we walk in lodhi gardens after meeting for a cup of tea. december's late afternoon stretched out. the grass dug up brown and turned over. we pass two men arguing while pushing carts full of roasting nuts. the light gets more oblique. the ruins more inscrutable. swans and ducks fluttering in the ponds. the air a chalky zigzag in our throats. the brown arms of the smog settle around our shoulders. under a tree a man sits contemplative on a bench wearing a mask over his nose and mouth.

two. under a rose gold tent that stretches back without end. a bright winter sun hovers at its margins. it draws a neat line across the thousands of women sitting underneath, their faces painted fuchsia by the light. hundreds of men and women standing crowded around them. outside there is the law. inside the old women sit on the ground and hold it. this is day fifty. flying across the tent in every direction are millions of rose coloured petals. thousands of voices shouting

they will fight with bullets, we will reply with flowers

Notes and Acknowledgements

"songs for petals" refers to:

Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem "Va Yabqá Vajhu Rabbika" (1981) (more popularly known as "Hum Dekhenge") performed by Iqbal Bano in 1986, the transliteration is my own; youtube.com /watch?v=dxtgsq5oVy4

"song #4" is a quotation from pages 512–13 of Michael Taussig's "Excelente Zona Sociale." *Cultural Anthropology* 27.3 (2012): 498–517.

Chandan Gomes's Facebook videos posted 2 March 2020 and 2 February 2020. The final line of "songs for petals" is a quotation from the caption for Gomes's video posted 2 February 2020 of the fiftieth day of the sit in by women in Shaheen Bagh, New Delhi, protesting the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens in India.

Ram Rahman's Facebook pictures posted 29 February 2020. The reference to *Kristallnacht* is inspired by his description of photographs posted on 1 March 2020 of the destruction of two schools during riots in Delhi in the preceding days.

For Christina Sharpe's description of the disintegration of sodium from the bodies of the enslaved in the middle passage see her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Italo Calvino's "Blood, Sea" in *Cosmicomics*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2010. 190–202.

Arundhati Roy's speech at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, published as "This is our version of the coronavirus. We are sick" in *scroll.in,* 1 March, 2020; scroll.in/article/954805/arundhati-roy-on-delhi -violence-this-is-our-version-of-the-coronavirus-we-are-sick

Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiava-Doktor's description of Vā in "Beyond 'Migration': Samoan Population Movement (Malaga) and the Geography of Social Space (Vā)." *The Contemporary Pacific* 21.1 (2009): 1–32.

Images of utopia in Amar Kanwar's *The Sovereign Forest*, ed. Daniela Zyman. Berlin; Sternberg Press, 2015.

Thank you to Lizzie Homersham, Henri Gunkel, and Katie Earle for support and advice on early drafts of this piece. For my Khalas.

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THE PENUMBRAL AGE: ART IN THE TIME OF PLANETARY CHANGE

Sebastian Cichocki & Jagna Lewandowska

Time has never spun so fast. What used to take millions of years now plays out in just a few decades. In 1947, Isamu Noguchi proposed to erect *Memorial to Man* in the desert: a huge relief sculpture resembling a human face, which could be viewed from space. It was supposed to leave a trace of a civilization that would leave Earth to seek a new home on Mars following nuclear war. But fantasies of "Planet B" have not been fulfilled. We have just one Earth. Awareness of the catastrophic agency of the human species, as well as of the inevitable end of the order we know, requires another view of the activity of mankind—a vision stripped of anthropocentric arrogance, closer to geology than the humanities. Only when we change our perspective and recognize that we live simultaneously on more than one scale will we perceive the consequences of the processes occurring since the Neolithic Revolution (and later the Industrial Revolution and the postwar economic boom). The bounty we receive from "civilization" is also our poison. *Eat Death*, the American artist Bruce Nauman concluded in his prophetic work from 1971.

We live in a time of planetary change affecting each and every one of us. Climate change influences every sphere of life, including thinking about art: the systems of its production and distribution, its social function, and its relation to other disciplines, especially science. *The Penumbral Age* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw was composed of artworks from the last five decades, based on observations and visualizations of the changes underway on planet Earth. It intended to provide a space for discussion on "managing the irreversible" and new forms of solidarity, empathy, and togetherness in an age of climate crisis. The installation was suspended a few days before the opening, scheduled for 20 March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.[1]

Maria Pinińska-Bereś, *Prayer for Rain*, performance in 1977; digital print on paper, 2020. Image courtesy of Maria Pinińska-Bereś, Jerzy Bereś Foundation, and Galeria Monopol.

We were not unaware of the irony of the situation: the consequences of violence against nature, the leading theme of the exhibition, led in this case to institutional paralysis.

The title of the exhibition was drawn from the book *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, where the protagonists from the future date the "period of the penumbra" from the "shadow of anti-intellectualism that fell over the once-Enlightened techno-scientific nations of the Western world during the second half of the twentieth century, preventing them from acting on the scientific knowledge available at the time," and leading to tragedy.[2] We are witness to this process: scientific findings have ceased to be regarded as dispositive and do not persuade people to act. As the writer and historian Ibram X. Kendi wrote in *The Atlantic*, analyzing climate skepticism and climate denialism, "Science becomes belief. Belief becomes science. Everything becomes nothing. Nothing becomes everything. All can believe and disbelieve all. We all can know everything and know nothing. Everyone lives as

1 The exhibition later took place from 5 June to 13 September 2020.

2 Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2014), 59–60.

3 Ibram X. Kendi, "What the Believers Are Denying," *The Atlantic* (1 January 2019); theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/what-deniers-climate-change-and-racism-share/579190.

4 Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015); the Bible, Acts 2:19 (New King James Version).

5 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *How to See the World: An Introduction to Images, from Self-Portraits to Selfies, Maps to Movies, and More* (London: Pelican Books, 2015), 195.

an expert on every subject."[3] The crisis in the culture of expertise and science is reinforced by fundamentalist movements that deny scientific findings, from evolution to air pollution, and dispute the human impact on the climate. Clearly, statistics, charts, graphs, and shocking photographic and film reports from places affected by ecological disaster no longer make much of an impact on the imagination.

Observations by artists are akin to those of scientists, but they typically do not confront viewers with an excess of numbers, soaring bar graphs, or "pornographic" images of poverty and devastation. Art has "strange tools" at its disposal, which we can use to discern, as the biblical saying goes, "wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below."[4] When ordinary tools of dialogue and persuasion fail, artists enable an "imaginative leap" by working on the emotions, and confronting the incomprehensible and the unknown. As the theoretician of visual culture Nicholas Mirzoeff puts it, we must "unsee" how the past "has taught us to see the world, and begin to imagine a different way to be with what used to be called nature."[5] Art can help by organizing the work of imagination, sometimes more effectively than the tools developed by science and environmental policy.

One of the key historical references for *The Penumbral Age* were the activities of the Slovenian OHO group, active from around 1966 to 1971, described as "transcendental conceptualism." The development of the group can be divided into three rather distinct phases. In the first phase, members of the group devoted themselves to "reism," a philosophical and artistic project based on a non-anthropocentric view of the world and committed to discovering things as they are: a world of things. According to reism, there would be no hierarchical difference between people and things, and things could be seen and understood beyond their function for humans. The OHO group devoted themselves, among other things, to creating "popular art" that could be found on matchboxes sold in bazaars. In the second phase, the group established a dialogue with the contemporary artistic avant-garde: the artists used the principles of Arte Povera, Land art, Conceptual

Exhibition views, *The Penumbral Age: Art in the Time of Planetary Change*, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2020. Photos by Daniel Chrobak. Images courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

art, and Anti-form. Many of their activities took place in nature and consisted of poetic and transient interventions using readily available materials, such as strings or sticks. In the last phase, OHO members undertook to leave the world of art through a combination of conceptualism and a kind of esoteric and ecological approach.

The OHO group's composition changed, especially in the first phase, when OHO functioned more as an artistic "movement" involving representatives of various disciplines including poets, filmmakers, and sculptors. The documentation presented at *The Penumbral Age* focused on the last phase of the group's existence. In 1970, OHO was invited to participate in the *Information* exhibition at MoMA in New York. In response, the artists focused on activities they referred to as *šolanje* [education], organizing two summer sessions in the villages of Zarica and Čezsoča. Instead of working on a specific project, the group took a conscious and conceptual approach to living, cooking, walking, and breathing together, looking for patterns of behavior and relationships with one another and nature. These were primarily mindfulness exercizes, through which they trained in order to perceive OHO as a "collective body." As the group was just beginning its international career, the members decided they should abandon art as a separate sphere and enter life; so, in April 1971 the main members of the group settled on an abandoned farm in western Slovenia and established a community—the Šempas Family. Meditation, the cultivation of land, daily drawing sessions, weaving, ceramics, and animal husbandry all represented a continuation of OHO's prior searches into post-humanism, spirituality, and Land art. After a year, the Family went their separate ways, with only Marko Pogačnik remaining in the village. Pogačnik continues to work there today for the benefit of the local community and the environment while attempting to "heal the land" through his original "lithopuncture" method.

The Penumbral Age exhibition spanned five decades, and highlighted the strengthening of environmental reflection in art of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as in the 2010s. The first period was linked with the intensification of pacifist, feminist, and anti-racist movements and the formation of the contemporary ecological movement. The first Earth Day was held in 1970, Greenpeace was founded in 1971, and the next year a think tank, the Club of Rome, published the report *The Limits to Growth*, describing the challenges posed for humanity by the exhaustion of natural resources. At the same time, new artistic phenomena arose, such as Conceptualism, Anti-form, Land art, and Earth art. While introducing "geological" thinking about art, artists

The Ice Stupa Project, ice stupa in Ladakh, 2015. Photo by Sonam Wangchuk.

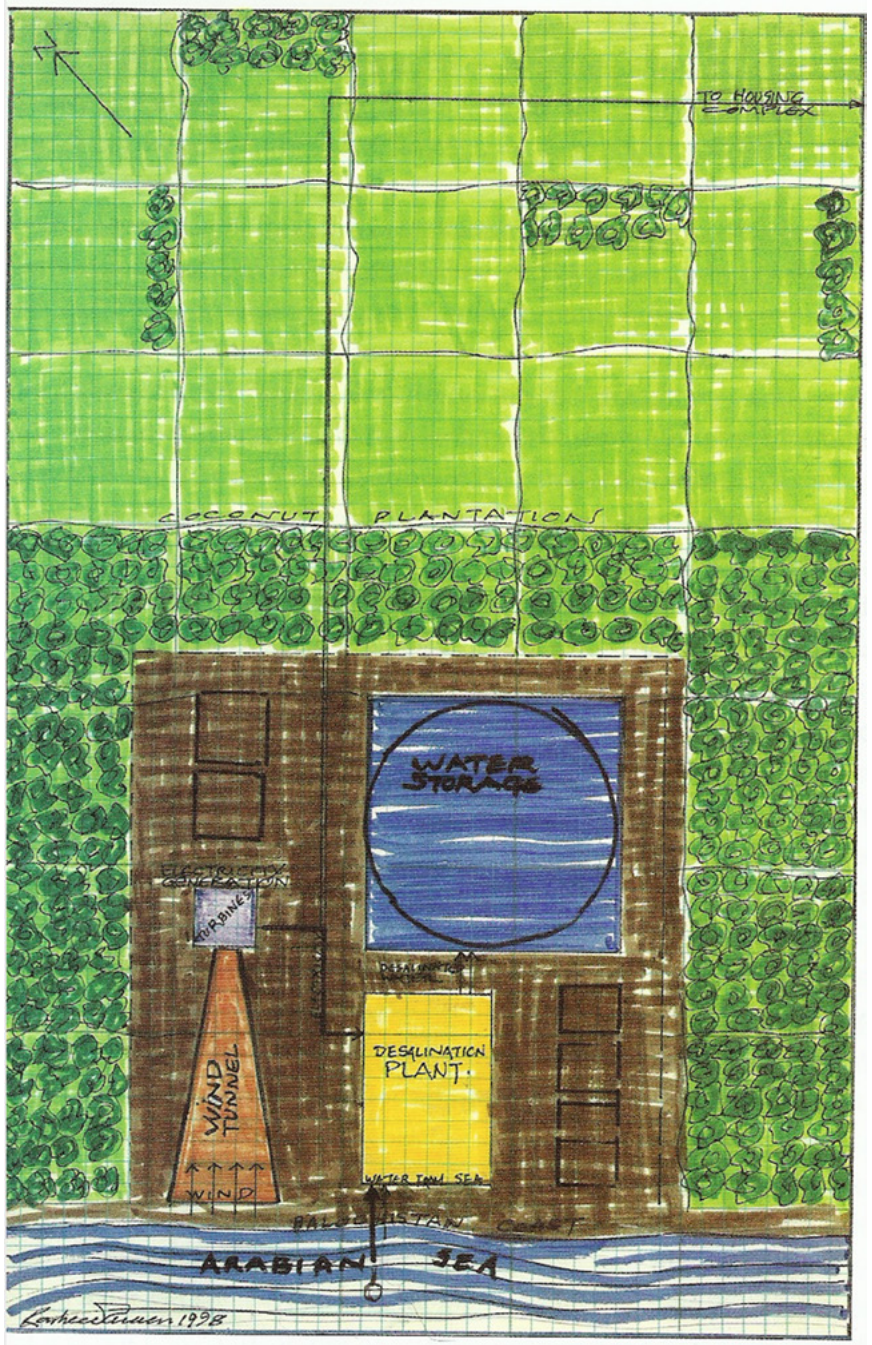
used impermanent organic materials or sought to entirely dematerialize the work of art. Many of those proposals decisively changed ideas about the role of art institutions and the relationship between artistic practice, professional work, and activism. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who treated household chores and motherhood as part of her artistic work, Bonnie Ora Sherk, who transformed urban wastelands into green oases, and Agnes Denes, who combined art with cybernetics and agriculture, were all part of the countercultural revolution—a revolution which ultimately failed, however, to live up to the hopes placed in it.

Following the thought of the Pakistani artist and activist Rasheed Araeen, and drawing from his "ecoaesthetics" agenda, we seek "global art for a changing planet." Araeen's ecoaesthetics program is expressed in the series of essays in *Art Beyond Art: Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century*.[6] In these texts Araeen postulates going beyond the supremacy of the *Homo sapiens* species and unleashing the "creative energy of the free collective imagination." Araeen's program is anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-capitalist. He criticizes the very system within which art functions, a system that maintains hierarchies and glorifies growth and progress, powered by the intellectual fuel of modernity, separating creative energies from everyday life processes and petrifying them into "narego"—the narcissistic ego of the artist. In these discussions, Araeen puts forward two key principles: "nominalism" and "cosmoruralism." Nominalism consists in launching useful artistic processes—processes which are fluid, lasting, and based on sustainable development—which are then implemented by local communities. For example, in 2001 Araeen proposed (utilizing his engineering experience) building a dam in the Balochistan desert, which would help retain water from periodic rivers and thus provide better living conditions for the nomadic population. The dam would be both a sculpture and a fully-functional engineering solution. The second proposal, cosmoruralism, is a complete vision of a network of cooperatives and ecological villages based on fair co-operation between the Global North and the Global South, which would result in, among other things, the reforestation of the Sahara.

Works connected with the "canonization" of Land art—such as Richard Long's *Throwing a Stone around MacGillycuddy's Reeks* (1977), in which the artist followed a stone he tossed before him; the "terraforming" plans of Robert Morris; or Gerry Schum's television program (an example of the use of new media to expose audiences to "organic" art practiced in deserts or forests)—were accompanied in *The Penumbral Age* by contemporary works involving ecological

Suzanne Husky, *La Noble Pastorale* (*The Noble Pastoral*), 2016/17. Tapestry. Image courtesy of the artist.

education (Futurefarmers), protest (Akira Tsuboi), and spirituality and esoterics (Teresa Murak). Such works help visualize what seems omnipresent and overwhelming. The field recording is a particularly efficient tool of transferring these ineluctable changes. One of the exhibition participants, the interdisciplinary scholar AM Kanngieser (based in Wollongong, Australia) works with such issues as violence against Indigenous communities and the natural environment of the Pacific region, related to the extraction of fossil fuels from the ocean floor and the consequences of nuclear testing in the twentieth century. Kanngieser was born and spent her early childhood on a boat sailing the Pacific. She remembers the sounds of the ocean, always mixed with



Rasheed Araeen, *A Proposal for a Collective Farm in Balochistan*, 1998. Image courtesy of the artist.

the noise of the walkie-talkie that her father, the sailor and electrician, operated. Her work consists of field recordings, interviews, and sound works constructed from scientific data. *The Penumbral Age* includes a field recording captured early in the morning in Tarawa, the capital of the Republic of Kiribati in the Pacific. Kiribati is on the front line of climate change: ocean levels have recently risen by approximately three meters and the island is regularly submerged in salt water. The water enters flats, hospitals, drinking-water wells, fields, and gardens, destroying crops. Kanngieser writes:

> The people of Kiribati with whom I spoke do not want to leave the land of their ancestors, where they have lived for thousands of years. Some elders told me that they wanted to stay on their islands and did not want to talk about migration, that people were happy in their homes and that they didn't know what would come but they put their trust in God. Kiribati's share of global greenhouse gas emissions is disproportionately low in relation to the effects that the islanders face today.[7] According to climate forecasts, by 2050, Kiribati will disappear completely underwater.

Artists sensitive to environmental change also address such issues as climate debt, post-anthropocentrism, the unavoidable exhaustion of fossil-fuel deposits, the effects of limitless economic growth, the unending accumulation of goods, planetary ecocide, and colonial exploitation. All of this is the context for Land art. For us, Land art is therefore much more than a stream of Western art emblematic of the late 1960s and early 1970s. We propose to extend the term to cover a broad panorama of artistic practices concerning humans' relations with other species, inanimate matter, and the entire planet, as well as "non-artistic" ventures by artists and activists (from community gardens to struggles for the rights of Indigenous populations and the establishment of political parties). Land art in this sense is not confined to any one medium, specific material, or geographical region. It can also cover activities that do not take place under the banner of art. One example is the ice stupas in Ladakh, India, artificial glaciers created by engineer Sonam Wangchuk, with a fascinating form and the clearly defined function of delivering water to inhabitants of the desert at the foot of the Himalayas. In desert areas, at an altitude of over three thousand meters above sea level, it almost never rains; agriculture is dependent on water from seasonally melting glaciers flowing down

from the Himalayas. As a consequence of global warming, water no longer reaches the villages at the foot of the mountains—or when it does, it does so violently, destroying buildings and bridges. Wangchuk and his team use gravity and temperature differences between day and night to create the ice stupas. Using a simple pipe system, they direct water from the peaks to the villages in the valleys below. The ice stupas, several meters high, melt slowly, supplying farmers with water until early summer. A beneficial side effect of erecting ice stupas is also the draining of lakes, which form as a result of the violent ripping off of large fragments of glaciers, blocking the outflow of water and causing floods. According to local legends, in Ladakh, people have specialized in "breeding" glaciers for centuries. It is said that in the thirteenth century, an ice barrier was used to stop the invasion of Genghis Khan's army.

Life in a state of deepening crisis forces us to change our thinking about our entire system of social organization, and to confront ethical and existential dilemmas such as climate migrations and new class conflicts. The world of art, with its museums and rituals for organizing objects and ideas, is no exception (to paraphrase the slogan of the Youth Strike for Climate, "No museums on a dead planet!"). Art requires deep systemic transformation. We treat engagement in this discussion as a duty of the museum, and not as just another fashion in art. Countering the calls for "ecological restoration" or the popularity of "art of the Anthropocene," we stress the permanence of environmental reflection, based on continuity and responsibility. As an example, in 1970, a group of Buddhist monks from the Shingon and Nichiren schools went on a pilgrimage to Japan, from Toyama to Kumamoto. They adopted the name Jusatsu Kito Sodan [Group of Monks Bringing the Curse of Death]. Their pilgrimage was one of the most radical, but also one of the most poetic, ecological and anti-capitalist manifestations in the history of Japan. Equipped with conch instruments and books with the curses of Abhichar (based on, among other things, ninth-century Vedic rituals), the monks wandered from factory to factory, where they camped and performed their ceremonies. Their intention was to bring death to factory directors through prayers. The activities of Jusatsu Kito Sodan were a response to the environmental pollution and mass poisonings in Japan after a series of epidemics in the mid-1960s. New diseases appeared, such as *itai-itai*, caused by cadmium-contaminated rice, a side effect of hard coal mining. Japanese industrialists connected to American businesses or those protected by the government remained unpunished. For thirty-four years, the Chisso Corporation, aware of the damages it was

6 Rasheed Araeen, *Art Beyond Art: Ecoaesthetics: A Manifesto for the 21st Century* (London: Third Text Publications, 2010).

7 AM Kanngieser, email to author, 24 December 2019.

8 Koichiro Osaka, *Curse Mantra: How to Kill Factory Owners* (Hong Kong: Para Site, 2019), 4–47.

9 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART, 1969! Proposal for an exhibition: "CARE,"* 1969. Four typewritten pages, each 21.59 × 28 cm.

causing, discharged wastewater with high mercury content into the Shiranui Sea. This poisoned thousands of people and caused severe Minamata disease in many. The actions of Jusatsu Kito Sodan can be analyzed in terms of a radical artistic experiment or performance that combines spirituality with general concern for the well-being of people and the natural environment.[8]

Art will certainly not protect us against catastrophe, but it can help us to arm ourselves with "strange tools" for the work of imagination and empathy. In her memorable 1969 manifesto, Mierle Laderman Ukeles posed the question: "After the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"[9] In works of art from recent decades, we not only seek to visualize processes taking place on our planet, but also to discern possible proposals for the future. If ecological catastrophe is already happening (as the residents of the inundated islands of Nauru and Banaba in the Pacific would confirm), we wonder: Will we ever manage to clean up our planetary mess and rebuild our relations with other sentient beings? Will we manage to start over again?

Marina Naprushkina is a visual artist and activist. Her artistic practice involves video, installation, and text. Naprushkina mostly works outside of institutional spaces and in cooperation with communities, where she focuses on creating new formats, structures, and organizations based on theoretical and practical principles of self-organization.
In 2007, Naprushkina founded the Office for Anti-Propaganda, a project that interrogates power structures in nation states, often making use of non-fiction material such as propaganda issued by governmental institutions. In 2013, she founded the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit project in Berlin, which has grown to be one of the largest of such initiatives in the city, building up a strong community of people, many with migrant and refugee backgrounds. Naprushkina teaches art at Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weißensee and Universität der Künste Berlin.

FUTURE FOR EVERYONE

Marina Naprushkina

> Caring solidarity, as I call it, gives me hope. Even in this brutal war.
> — Olga Shparaga[1]

I am writing this text in the form of a collage—an array of jottings, notes, and images—as I ponder what is required to support and generate critical discourse and express protest in times of crisis. With increasingly harsh rightwing agendas, heightened terror, and the recent war in Europe that Russia is waging on Ukrainian soil, I want to stress the need for resources to be redistributed in solidarity. The basis from which I write is the situation in Belarus and my experience at the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit initiative in Berlin, as seen through the lens of neighborhood migrant self-organization. Through that initiative, art became a key means of communication for horizontal networking. Collective activities such as these make it easier to become visible by creating one's own forms of representation. This counteracts the marginalization of cultural experience of migrant communities. As a metaphor for this form of natural coexistence, which assures life and invents new forms, I would propose the theory of symbiogenesis advanced by the evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis (1938–2011). Symbiogenesis refers to a process of "becoming by living together": to the fusion of two or more different organisms into a single new organism through cooperation and coexistence. As such, symbiogenesis, which Margulis argued was a key event in the evolution of organisms, helps us to think processes of development and emergence outside of the Darwinian model of natural selection and competition.

> … the future will be: unlimited, bright, joyful, full of success, progressive, creative, for everyone. It will come soon, will be impartial, attentive, and caring, for all ages. The future belongs to us, you, me. It is for women, it brings no work, no coercion, no more illness, no debts, love. The future exists for the hungry, the poor …

Marina Naprushkina, video still from *Future for Everyone*, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist.

Marina Naprushkina, video still from *Arbeit keine arbeit*, 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.

1 Olga Shparaga, "Krieg ist soziale Regression," *taz* (April 2022); taz.de/Belarussische-Philosophin/!5849556.

2 Galina Kazimirovskaya, social media post, 18 March 2022.

My personal experience of migration and motherhood, and my prolonged exposure to freelance labor, allow me to take a critical view of the fields of education and labor in art and cultural policy in general. On the one hand, being an artist, a mother, and a migrant leaves me in a vulnerable position with professional institutions, which marginalizes my own experience and work. On the other hand, it brings empathy and diverse experiences of dealing with other social groups, via contact and exchange between communities and diasporas that are often overlooked in the professional discourse of major institutions.

Can we imagine art institutions founded upon inclusivity, which would provide an easy entry point for those otherwise outside of them and act as places where we might recuperate and generate resources? How can institutions be made to feel for, care about, and defend their employees by offering support beyond the boundaries of the nation-state? This is essential in crisis situations. The rightwing government that has come to power in Poland is instrumentalizing the cultural field and dismissing cultural workers who disagree with its conservative agenda. The authoritarian government of Belarus is persecuting and purging the critical cultural space by eradicating cultural and non-governmental organizations, and by arresting artists and cultural activists and sentencing them to lengthy jail terms. In war-torn Ukraine, institutions are losing their autonomy or disappearing altogether: schools and museums have been destroyed or forced to hide their staff and neighbors in basements and bunkers. In such situations, can cultural institutions jointly consolidate and organize themselves internationally, to provide shelter, pool resources, and support their colleagues?

> For the first time in my life, I've been away from home for a year. I haven't breathed my native air for a whole year.
> No, I'm not here to complain. I realize I'm not the only one like this...
> I even joke that I've been relaxing for so long that I just can't anymore...
> And it's already your second spring without me... My poor roses, who'll water you? I see my mint and lemon balm are all overgrown.
> So many things left undone, projects abandoned, songs left unsung...
> So many people left behind...
> — Galina Kazimirovskaya, Belarusian choir conductor[2]

Democratic freedoms are a fundamental condition for any country to create contemporary art institutions capable of generating critical discourse. Such freedoms give cultural institutions the autonomy to express themselves and influence the agenda for cultural policy. Then they can gather an audience and ensure visibility, while contesting marginalization, inequality, and discrimination. In Western Europe, such institutions receive support from state funds and various international foundations.

In authoritarian countries plagued by censorship, creating cultural institutions that are independent (or at least which correspond to established Western models) is simply impossible. In Belarus, which gained its independence in 1991 but never transitioned to a democracy, the contemporary art field materialized with no state support whatsoever and only grew due to personal initiatives and horizontal networking. Obtaining funds from international foundations was always fraught with risk, censorship, and even arrest in cases where the state accused you of financial crimes.

Meanwhile, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Belarusian cultural space was one of the few places that generated and developed critical cultural discourse. That space hinged on personal initiative and precarious work, mostly by women. A feminist agenda thus also emerged, related to the work of activists and the study of gender theories. My own experience of working in post-Soviet societies took place within this framework. Yet most of the knowledge and criticism that reaches post-Soviet countries still comes from abroad and is generated by their Western counterparts. Thus, the post-Soviet space has a dual history of subordination: first, of being absorbed by Russian culture in Soviet and post-Soviet space; and second, of observing and reading about itself through the lens of Western European history and concepts. Postcolonial criticism needs to take such dynamics into account.

In Belarus, as the regime of Aleksandr Lukashenko (the country's first and only president since 1994) tightened the screws and cracked down on the 2020 revolution, cultural workers were driven to participate directly in political and civil resistance. Following the arrests, incarceration, torture, and murders of peaceful protesters in August 2020, the majority of Belarusians took part in demonstrations and protest marches. On 13 August of that year, cultural workers organized a protest outside the Palace of Arts in Minsk, decrying the violence and repression. Instead of the traditional paintings normally on display for its visitors and passers-by, artists exhibited posters depicting the beaten and crippled bodies of people arrested at peaceful protests.

Cultural workers on strike, Minsk, 13 August 2020. Photo by Lesya Pchelka. Image courtesy of the author.

Volny Khor courtyard concert, 2020. Video still courtesy of the author.

One artist shaved his body, which was covered in bruises after a savage beating by the militia.

Employees of state theatrical and musical institutions joined in the protests and strikes directly after the 9 August 2020 presidential election results were announced. Actors and musicians went on strike or quit their jobs in droves, in a show of protest against the fraudulent election results and the violence perpetrated on peaceful demonstrators. Then they took their work into the streets of the cities. The most vivid events included performances by Janka Kupala National Academic Theatre actors outside their building, and appearances by the Volny Khor [Free Choir] near the Belarusian State Philharmonic and many other places in Minsk. The choir popped up unexpectedly in public places around the city—in underpasses, metro carriages, the station, near the circus, in shopping centers, and next to The Pit (a memorial to victims of the Holocaust)—and also, it took part in self-organized courtyard concerts. By walking out of state institutions, cultural workers saw themselves not as abandoning their audiences but joining them, forming a space above and beyond the institutions. This was a space for cultural protest, for people to unite and consolidate their struggles, and to fight their fear as the government increasingly resorted to violence. After all, when one sings, one's fear disappears.

> National societies are closed and hierarchical. National identity does not help us support one another and overcome our differences.
>
> — Olga Shparaga[3]

The experience of displacement and migration is becoming commonplace in the contemporary world. Faced with a looming environmental catastrophe that will entail a mounting influx of refugees from the regions hardest hit by climate change, issues of migration and its control will continue to be a major instrument for mobilizing the right in society. Critical thinking and environmental education are now crucial, along with criticism of nationalism and the nation-state. We must throw ourselves into creating infrastructures of support for refugees and migrants, into enabling critical knowledge to be generated by the very people concerned by these issues. Their experience needs to be seen and heard.

I co-founded the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit initiative in Berlin in 2013. The initiative grew out of my idea to create an arts studio inside a hostel for refugees. In a children's playground in Moabit,

3 Olga Shparaga and Marina Naprushkina, "Lebt und arbeitet in Berlin," *Kultur Mitte Magazin* (6 July 2021); kultur-mitte.de/die-frauen-haben-die-proteste-gepraegt-durch-horizontale-beziehungen-und-empathie-ein-gespraech-mit-olga-shparaga.

the district of Berlin where I live, I met Chechen mothers who were living in a temporary refugee hostel, set up hurriedly in an empty building that was once a school. However, the building was not fully equipped to serve as a hostel for residents: they had no cooking facilities, only intermittent access to hot water and showers, and the former classrooms were overcrowded. Moreover, the building was mostly home to families with numerous children. In the first few months I organized art classes for mothers and children, but as more and more people came, I began to involve friends in running my classes at the studio. Consequently, my private initiative burgeoned into a rapidly growing community centered on self-organization and mutual support. Soon we had to find new premises, and we continued our work outside the hostel's walls, developing a space of our own. The initiative's open, adaptive, and inclusive structure has allowed hundreds of people to participate in events and helped create a diverse, interdisciplinary program: from language-learning and cooking to art classes, political organizing, and a program of public cultural events.

After the war began in Syria, when the so-called "refugee crisis" was dominating the public discourse, we began to outline a concept for Moabit Mountain College, transferring the Black Mountain College model to our contemporary situation. On the one hand, we were creating a model for a space where migrants and refugees (from Syria, Dagestan, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Sudan, among other countries) made up the audience and participants. On the other hand, we were interested in questions similar to those that preoccupied Black Mountain College: How and where can knowledge be acquired? How can access to it be guaranteed if state institutions are unable to take migrants into the education system, or if so only to offer basic education? When considering how to create an accessible teaching space, we also needed to think about the actual premises and their architecture, to make people feel comfortable and encourage them to walk in from the street. We had to think about what the light should be like, what should be displayed in the windows, how new visitors could enter, where event information should be posted, and whether new visitors would be able to simply observe what was happening until they had adjusted to the new environment.

Inner Meditative Sit-In, performance by Aliaxey Talstou at Strandbad Tegeler See/Zentrum für Kultur und Erholung, 2021.
Photo by the author.

Studio of the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit initiative, April 2022. Photo by the author.

Members of the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit initiative with handmade posters at the #unteilbar demonstration, Berlin, 13 October 2018.
Photo by the author.

Pesto Band, concert and performance at Strandbad Tegeler See/Zentrum für Kultur und Erholung, October 2021. Photo by the author.

Fantastic feminist futures with Rupali Patil at Strandbad Tegelsee/Zentrum für Kultur und Erholung, 2022. Photo by the author.

Recently, the Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit initiative, now a registered association, has been organizing a new space on the Strandbad Tegeler See beach in northern Berlin. We decided to look for another space within the city, but we wanted to find somewhere that wasn't just another building. Many of our guests and program participants have endured traumatic experiences and still feel alienated and stressed, making it very difficult for them to process new information and learn. Thus, first and foremost, the institution needed to be a place for regeneration and recovery. An open-air venue offered the perfect conditions, as its spatial architecture was defined not by a building's walls, but by trees and a body of water—Lake Tegel.

Initially, the municipal authorities were skeptical of our idea to combine relaxation and swimming by a city beach (a conventional recreation site within the city limits) with cultural and educational programs. As an émigré organization working in the field of culture, we were accused of lacking the professional knowledge and experience to run the beach project. In particular, members of the radical rightwing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party actively campaigned against our proposal. Free entry for children and young people, job creation for people with difficulties in accessing the primary job market, our environmental approach to all forms of activity, and no meat (which is to say, no traditional Currywurst sausages) on the menu left the right-wingers indignant—they felt there was no future in this unprofitable beach-management model.

Lake Tegel beach is located in the protected waters of a nature reserve, so there are also significant laws and regulations regarding its use. State bodies have imposed necessary restrictions to keep the lake water clean (since Berlin's drinking water originates there) and to protect the flora and fauna surrounding the beach. However, the city authorities have been unable to devise and implement a plan to manage such a site, in part due to their own restrictions. Meanwhile, politicians have repeatedly emphasized the need for accessible recreation sites in the city, since many low-income residents cannot afford tourist holidays abroad. Also, in line with the ecological agenda, holidays need to be restructured to encourage local travel and thus reduce the number of flights. The competition to find a new operator for the Tegeler See beach took two years. In the end, our concept was accepted and the team of Neue Nachbarschaft/Moabit was able to start with the first renovation work. During our first season in Summer 2021, we managed to hold a range of events: lectures, workshops, literary readings, experimental dance and music, and choir performances. Owing to the

pandemic restrictions, our open-air space was even more in demand as a venue for public and cultural events.

> From the paramecium to the human race, all life forms are meticulously organized, sophisticated aggregates of evolving microbial life. Far from leaving microorganisms behind on an evolutionary "ladder," we are both surrounded by them and composed of them. Having survived in an unbroken line from the beginnings of life, all organisms today are equally evolved.
>
> — Lynn Margulis[4]

In 2022, the first classes at our initiative's studio began with a study of works by the self-taught rural artist Alena Kish (1889–1949), as well as the theory of symbiogenesis advanced by Lynn Margulis. Looking at Kish's works, we discussed what it meant to be a woman artist growing up in a village with no access to professional art education. Kish was born near Minsk and worked in the *maliavanka* painting style common in mid-twentieth-century Belarusian villages. Painted fabrics and carpets made of hand-woven textiles, with homemade paints and brushes, were mostly produced by women. In the patriarchal rural environment, women's arts and crafts were not considered a proper or "useful" activity, as they were "unproductive." As a result, Kish, who had always painted yet had no professional artistic education, was regarded as unemployed or lazy. Unable to provide for herself, she committed suicide by drowning herself in a river. The first exhibitions of her works were held only in the 1970s.

Working through the research of Margulis offered interesting parallels, since it was also essential to view her work in the context of opposing male hegemony—in this case, in scientific research. It took Margulis, too, a long time to gain professional acclaim. Her interdisciplinary approach aroused suspicion and, for many years, most scientific publications refused her controversial articles. Margulis was also actively engaged in teaching, writing, and publishing, and even produced illustrations for her own publications. Returning to the idea of creating teaching spaces, we could follow Margulis in envisaging these as open-air laboratories. We might see sustainable art and teaching practices as emerging out of these very spaces—as from nature itself—like living organisms constantly able to form new, symbiotic bonds.

4 Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Evolution from Our Microbial Ancestors* (New York: Summit Books, 1986).

bell hooks (1952–2021) was an author, feminist, and social activist. She was a professor at the University of Southern California, Oberlin College, Yale University, and the City College of New York. Her writing focuses on the interconnectivity of race, class, and gender. She has published over thirty books, including *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope* (Routledge, 2003) and *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (Routledge, 2006).

TOUCHING THE EARTH

bell hooks

> I wish to live because life has within it that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is love. Therefore, since I have known all these things, I have found them to be reason enough and—I wish to live. Moreover, because this is so, I wish others to live for generations and generations and generations and generations.
>
> —Lorraine Hansberry, *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*

When we love the Earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully. I believe this. The ancestors taught me it was so. As a child I loved playing in dirt, in that rich Kentucky soil, that was a source of life. Before I understood anything about the pain and exploitation of the southern system of sharecropping, I understood that grown-up black folks loved the land. I could stand with my grandfather Daddy Jerry and look out at a field of growing vegetables, tomatoes, corn, collards, and know that this was his handiwork. I could see the look of pride on his face as I expressed wonder and awe at the magic of growing things. I knew that my grandmother Baba's backyard garden would yield beans, sweet potatoes, cabbage, and yellow squash, that she too would walk with pride among the rows and rows of growing vegetables showing us what the Earth will give when tended lovingly.

From the moment of their first meeting, Native American and African people shared with one another a respect for the life-giving forces of nature, of the Earth. African settlers in Florida taught the Creek Nation runaways, the Seminoles, methods for rice cultivation. Native peoples taught recently arrived black folks all about the many uses of corn. (The hotwater cornbread we grew up eating came to our black southern diet from the world of the Indian.) Sharing the reverence for the Earth, black and red people helped one another remember that, despite the white man's ways, the land belonged to everyone. Listen to these words attributed to Chief Seattle in 1854:

> How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this Earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore; every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people ...
>
> We are part of the Earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man—all belong to the same family.

The sense of union and harmony with nature expressed here is echoed in testimony by black people who found that even though life in the new world was "harsh, harsh," in relationship to the Earth one could be at peace. In her oral autobiography, granny midwife Onnie Lee Logan, who lived all her life in Alabama, talks about the richness of farm life—growing vegetables, raising chickens, and smoking meat. She reports:

> We lived a happy, comfortable life to be right outa slavery times. I didn't know nothing else but the farm so it was happy and we was happy .... We couldn't do anything else but be happy. We accept the days as they come and as they were. Day by day until you couldn't say there was any great hard time. We overlooked it. We didn't think nothing about it. We just went along. We had what it takes to make a good livin and go about it.

Living in modern society, without a sense of history, it has been easy for folks to forget that black people were first and foremost a people of the land, farmers. It is easy for folks to forget that at the first part of the twentieth century, the vast majority of black folks in the United States lived in the agrarian South.

Living close to nature, black folks were able to cultivate a spirit of wonder and reverence for life. Growing food to sustain life and flowers to please the soul, they were able to make a connection with the Earth that was ongoing and life-affirming. They were witnesses to beauty. In Wendell Berry's important discussion of the relationship between agriculture and human spiritual well-being, *The Unsettling of America*, he reminds us that working the land provides a location where

folks can experience a sense of personal power and well-being: "We are working well when we use ourselves as the fellow creature of the plants, animals, material, and other people we are working with. Such work is unifying, healing. It brings us home from pride and despair, and places us responsibly within the human estate. It defines us as we are: not too good to work without our bodies, but too good to work poorly or joylessly or selfishly or alone."

There has been little or no work done on the psychological impact of the "great migration" of black people from the agrarian South to the industrialized North. Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* attempts to fictively document the way moving from the agrarian South to the industrialized North wounded the psyches of black folk. Estranged from a natural world, where there was time for silence and contemplation, one of the "displaced" black folks in Morrison's novel, *Miss Pauline*, loses her capacity to experience the sensual world around her when she leaves southern soil to live in a northern city. The South is associated in her mind with a world of sensual beauty most deeply expressed in the world of nature. Indeed, when she falls in love for the first time she can name that experience only by evoking images from nature, from an agrarian world and near wilderness of natural splendor:

> When I first seed Cholly, I want you to know it was like all the bits of color from that time down home when all us chil'ren went berry picking after a funeral and I put some in the pocket of my Sunday dress, and they mashed up and stained my hips. My whole dress was messed with purple, and it never did wash out. Not the dress nor me. I could feel that purple deep inside me. And that lemonade Mama used to make when Pap came in out of the fields. It be cool and yellowish, with seeds floating near the bottom. And that streak of green them june bugs made on the tress that night we left from down home. All of them colors was in me. Just sitting there.

Certainly, it must have been a profound blow to the collective psyche of black people to find themselves struggling to make a living in the industrial North away from the land. Industrial capitalism was not simply changing the nature of black work life, it altered the communal practices that were so central to survival in the agrarian south. And it fundamentally altered black people's relationship to the body. It is the loss of any capacity to appreciate her body, despite its flaws, Miss Pauline suffers when she moves north.

The motivation for black folks to leave the South and move north was both material and psychological. Black folks wanted to be free of the overt racial harassment that was a constant in southern life, and they wanted access to material goods-to a level of material well-being that was not available in the agrarian South, where white folks limited access to the spheres of economic power. Of course, they found that life in the North had its own perverse hardships, that racism was just as virulent there, that it was much harder for black people to become landowners. Without the space to grow food, to commune with nature, or to mediate the starkness of poverty with the splendor of nature, black people experienced profound depression. Working in conditions where the body was regarded solely as a tool (as in slavery), a profound estrangement occurred between mind and body. The way the body was represented became more important than the body itself. It did not matter if the body was well, only that it appeared well.

Estrangement from nature and engagement in mind/body splits made it all the more possible for black people to internalize white supremacist assumptions about black identity. Learning contempt for blackness, southerners transplanted to the North suffered both culture shock and soul loss. Contrasting the harshness of city life with an agrarian world, the poet Waring Cuney wrote this popular poem in the 1920s, testifying to lost connection:

She does not know her beauty
She thinks her brown body
has no glory.
If she could dance naked,
Under palm trees
And see her image in the river
She would know.
But there are no palm trees on the street,
And dishwater gives back no images.

For many years, and even now, generations of black folks who migrated north to escape life in the South returned down home in search of a spiritual nourishment, a healing, that was fundamentally connected to reaffirming one's connection to nature, to a contemplative life where one could take time, sit on the porch, walk, fish, and catch lightning bugs. If we think of urban life as a location where black folks learned to accept a mind/body split that made it possible to abuse the body, we can better understand the growth of nihilism and despair in the black psyche.

And we can know that when we talk about healing that psyche we must also speak about restoring our connection to the natural world.

Wherever black folks live we can restore our relationship to the natural world by taking the time to commune with nature; to appreciate the other creatures who share this planet with humans. Even in my small New York City apartment I can pause to listen to birds sing, find a tree and watch it. We can grow plants—herbs, flowers, vegetables. Those novels by African American writers (women and men) that talk about black migration from the agrarian South to the industrialized North describe in detail the way folks created space to grow flowers and vegetables. Although I come from country people with serious green thumbs, I have always felt that I could not garden. In the past few years, I have found that I can do it—that many gardens will grow, that I feel connected to my ancestors when I can put a meal on the table from food I grew. I especially love to plant collard greens. They are hardy, and easy to grow.

In modern society, there is also a tendency to see no correlation between the struggle for collective black self-recovery and ecological movements that seek to restore balance to the planet by changing our relationship to nature and to natural resources. Unmindful of our history of living harmoniously on the land, many contemporary black folks see no value in supporting ecological movements, or see ecology and the struggle to end racism as competing concerns. Recalling the legacy of our ancestors who knew that the way we regard land and nature will determine the level of our self-regard, black people must reclaim a spiritual legacy where we connect our well-being to the well-being of the earth. This is a necessary dimension of healing. As Berry reminds us:

> Only by restoring the broken connections can we be healed. Connection is health. And what our society does its best to disguise from us is how ordinary, how commonly attainable, health is. We lose our health—and create profitable diseases and dependencies—by failing to see the direct connections between living and eating, eating and working, working and loving. In gardening, for instance, one works with the body to feed the body. The work, if it is knowledgeable, makes for excellent food. And it makes one hungry. The work thus makes eating both nourishing and joyful, not consumptive, and keeps the eater from getting fat and weak. This health, wholeness, is a source of delight.

Collective black self-recovery takes place when we begin to renew our relationship to the Earth, when we remember the way of our ancestors. When the Earth is sacred to us, our bodies can also be sacred to us.

Editors

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CLIMATE:
Our Right to Breathe

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OUR MANY EUROPES
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The confederation initiated **L'Internationale Online** as a platform for research and debate on urgent matters in the expanded field of contemporary art; it is a space where commissioned texts, research, and artistic projects, as well as curated exhibitions drawing on the collections and archives of the member institutions, are commissioned—both in digital form and in print. *CLIMATE: Our Right to Breathe* is published in the framework of the four-year program cycle "Our Many Europes" (2018–22).

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In 2022, we are facing vast, mutually exacerbating planetary conditions: the accelerated collapse of the biosphere under climate change and the increasingly crushing dynamics of toxic politics. The reactionary, divisionary politics driven by ruthless forms of authoritarianism, denialism, nationalism, and other globalized forms of oppression and dispossession are also a call to action.

In *CLIMATE: Our Right to Breathe*, more than twenty-five voices from the arts and culture form an internationalist chorus that emphatically responds to a collective need to imagine common strategies for solidarity when many limits of the Earth system have already been surpassed. Because racialized capitalism cannot be separated from ecological disaster, vulnerable and often marginalized communities are forced to endure the worst effects of the climate crises. It is imperative to work in solidarity against the uneven violence of these times. Mobilized by diverse practices and backgrounds, the contributions in this book offer both speculative perspectives on and pragmatic relays from the intersectional fight for climate justice and multispecies survivance.

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