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The Poetics of Environmental Destruction, Care, and Insurgency: Socio-Environmental Crisis in Women's Contemporary Novels and Films in The Americas

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Abstract

The effects of the climate crisis have reached a point of undeniability. Action is required urgently at a global level. Women's activism against environmental dispossession in the Americas is expressed not only through the streets, classrooms, and social media, but also through their artistic filmmaking and writing. My focus on women's literature and film was not only motivated by the need to study their overlooked contributions, but by the need to unravel how they illuminate the entanglements of environmental dispossession with injustices on matters of gender, ethnicity, age, class, and labour.

The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that an increasing number of contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas offer a sustained engagement with environmental matters, analyze the similarities and differences of how these ecological issues are represented, and identify a set of principles to establish a common ground between the texts.

Through an interdisciplinary focus on Environmental Humanities, Gender Studies, Literature and Film Studies, I compare novels and films from Canada and Latin America. Through textual analysis, three poetics were identified: environmental destruction, care, and insurgency. The term poetics signifies a set of thematic and stylistic principles that are derived from repeated patterns and functions across novels and films (Bordwell, 2008; Walker, 2014). In the poetics of environmental destruction, the artists challenge socio-environmental devastation by questioning the model of *maldesarrollo* [bad development]. The texts that focus on care seek to push our understanding of caring beyond the human realm into the non-human by underscoring the need for reciprocity and interdependency among beings. With regards to the poetics of environmental insurgency, novelists and filmmakers represent the struggles to overthrow the hegemonic extractivist models and imagine equitable socio-environmental alternatives.

The analyzed films and novels are a starting point for readers and audiences to become aware of how deeply environmental justice issues are interwoven into society.

Keywords

Environmental Humanities, Gender Studies, Women's Literature in the Americas, Women's Film in the Americas, *Maldesarrollo*, Care Ethics, *Buen Vivir*, environmental justice, Indigenous Ecologies, environmental migrants, girlhood.

Summary for Lay Audience

The effects of the climate crisis have reached a point of undeniability. Action is required urgently at a global level. Women's activism against environmental dispossession in the Americas is expressed not only through the streets, classrooms, and social media, but also through their artistic filmmaking and writing. My focus on women's literature and film was not only motivated by the need to study their overlooked contributions, but by the need to unravel how they illuminate the entanglements of environmental dispossession with injustices on matters of gender, ethnicity, age, class, and labour.

The aim of this dissertation is to demonstrate that an increasing number of contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas offer a sustained engagement with environmental matters, analyze the similarities and differences of how these ecological issues are represented, and identify a set of principles to establish a common ground between the texts.

By using ideas from academic fields that study the environment, gender, literature, and film I compare novels and films from Canada and Latin America. Through the analysis of these films and novels, I have identified a set of three characteristics which are: the poetics of environmental destruction, care, and insurgency. The idea of poetics refers to patterns in themes and styles among the analyzed texts. In the poetics of environmental destruction, the artists challenge the devastation of nature by challenging the structures of predominant economic models. The texts that focus on care seek to expand what caring means by extending it to the realm of the environment. The artists in this second group highlight the need for mutual dependency among living beings. With regards to the poetics of environmental insurgency, novelists and filmmakers represent the struggles to overthrow socioeconomic models that hinder the environment, and they also represent sustainable alternatives.

The analyzed films and novels are a starting point for readers and audiences to become aware of how deeply environmental justice issues are interwoven into society.

Land Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that our host institution, Western University, is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

With this, I respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have with this land, as they are the original caretakers.

Acknowledging historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (eg First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, I accept responsibility as a community member to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through teaching, research and community service.

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Introduction

After graduating from university, when reading and viewing purely for pleasure was an option, I found myself drawn to the work produced by women artists. During my undergraduate education, most of the syllabi lacked the presence of women filmmakers and authors. These storytellers were engaged in personal and local issues which had national or global repercussions. A moment of realization came to me when I recognized that for many of them personal, cultural, social, and political issues were tied to concerns for nature. Environmental matters were like a thread that combined several strands and once pulled revealed complex social challenges. I decided to start pulling from the thread and begun to do research. Now I find myself writing advocacy scholarship on this matter.

Contemporary advancements in both feminist and environmental activism are closely related to Latin American and Canadian women authors and filmmakers who engage with environmental degradation. Within the Latin American literary context, the precipitous increase in the number of published and translated women authors since 2010 is, in part, caused by the advent of the grassroots feminist movement "NiUnaMenos" [NotOne(Woman)less]. Readers from outside Latin America became attracted to these Latin American voices, fueling the need for translation of their literary works. In an article titled "Something Is Happening" Argentinian writer and journalist Leila Guerreiro indicates that "these women's voices are urgent voices." (Guerriero, 2021) Scholars (González-Stephan and Fornoff, 2012; Pastor and Hughes Davies, 2012) remark how these authors denounce gender violence, but they exclude other forms of violence associated with the extractive impetus of neo-liberalism affecting the environment.

The recent history of film production by Latin American women presents some parallels with their literary counterparts. Deborah Martin and Deborah Shaw (2017) remark that the global tendency towards transnational co-productions and international funding programs related to film festivals, such as Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund and Cannes's *Cinéfondation*, have favoured the resurgence of women filmmakers in Latin America. "In the 2000s and 2010s," they claim,

> prominent female directors who have benefited from international co-production include the Argentines Lucrecia Martel and Lucía Puenzo, the Peruvians Claudia Llosa and Rosario García Montero, the Costa Rican Paz Fábrega, the Paraguayan Paz Encina, the Chilean Dominga Sotomayor, the Colombian Priscilla Padilla and the Mexican Yulene Olaizola, among many others (Martin and Shaw, 2017, 14)

These two authors advocate for the need to "reinsert women into the story of Latin American political filmmaking, with canon reconfiguration understood as a political act" (2017, 19). Martin and Shaw highlight that among women filmmakers in the region, tend towards interiorization and explore intimate places which also participate in the social, political, and public spheres. Even though the environment is overlooked in their study, it is also closely linked with those intimate spaces.

Within the Canadian context, women authors have had more visibility than their Latin American counterparts. Though still in a peripheral position, their writing is a "questioning, disruptive feminist practice." (Demers, 2019, 261) Academic research has been conducted on women authors from Quebec (Joubert, 2015), Indigenous nations (Emberley, 2015), and in the diaspora. Scholars have studied Canadian environmental texts written by women. A seminal publication is Shelly Boyd's *Garden Plots: Canadian Women Writers and Their Literary Gardens* (2013), in which she studies the figure of the garden to analyze the relationship between the realms of the domestic and the public. When it comes to Canadian women's filmmaking, the scholarly attention does not match the variety and profusion of the cinematographic production. A comprehensive study is the collection of five essays "Revisioning Gender and diversity in Canada," published in *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing* (Raoul, Levitin, Plessis, 2002), a volume dedicated to global women filmmakers. Parallel to the study of Canadian women's literature, the essays are devoted to Québécoise women directors (Giguére and Denault, 2002), and First Nations women filmmakers (Eisner, 2002; La Flamme, 2002). Up until now, there has been scarce

analysis on the environmental aspects of these films. This insufficient scholarship on women's environmental writing and filmmaking in the Americas sparked my interest to research and analyze the extent of their commitment to challenge the intersectional webs of oppression nucleated around the environmental crisis.

The effects of the climate crisis have reached a point of undeniability. What only a few years ago seemed to be a mere hypothesis today can be perceived directly through concrete consequences. Action is required urgently at a global level. Women's activism against environmental dispossession in the Americas is expressed not only in the streets, classrooms, and social media but also in their artistic filmmaking and writing. My focus on women's literature and film was not only motivated by the need to study their overlooked contributions, but to unravel how they illuminate the entanglements of environmental dispossession with injustices on matters of gender, age, class, and labour. My corpus is a selection of contemporary novels and films in which ongoing environmental concerns are represented by women across the Americas. Because of the recent increase in scientific studies and social awareness on climate crisis, my research is circumscribed to texts that have been published or premiered since the turn of the millennium. Given the considerable research on women authors and filmmakers in the United States, their work is excluded from my study. While my research does not include novels or films from the US, scholarship on them has been useful for developing my arguments. The areas of comparison are the ways in which storytellers from different regions of the Americas represent climatic themes, set their stories in specific places, and portray characters. My analysis is focused on the feminist environmentalist standpoint and while my area of study is not the science of ecology, my research is informed by this discipline. I pay special attention to textual analysis and the narrative structure of the texts. Furthermore, I am not Indigenous, but I seek to contribute to reveal and correct miseducation and strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities through my research.

My research answers two questions. Why are discourses on environmental justice critically important to the artistic work of contemporary women novelists and filmmakers in the Americas? Why do contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas embed the discourse of environmental justice in their representations of gender, race, place,

class, age, and labour? The aim of this research is to demonstrate that an increasing number of contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas offer a sustained engagement with environmental matters, to analyze the similarities and differences of how these ecological issues are represented, and to identify a set of principles to establish a common ground between the texts.

One of the most challenging aspects of this dissertation was the selection of the corpus. The intention behind my choices was to encompass the production of women in diverse regions, nations, and languages within the Americas, select novels and films that were overlooked by environmental scholarship, and include a balanced number of literary and cinematographic texts. To that end I have selected stories from locations with consolidated cultural industries such as Toronto, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, but also places and nations with emerging creative industries such as Guayaquil, the Araucanía, Santo Domingo, the Amazon River, and Anishinaabe and Mohawk nations.

The chapters are devoted to distinct environmental poetics which are drawn from the cinematographic and literary texts. The term environmental poetics is a denomination I propose to analyze the common themes, forms, and styles derived from the selected films and novels. The notion of poetics has a long tradition ranging from Aristotle's theory on literature and theatre to Russian formalist's *The Poetics of Cinema* (1927) edited by Boris M. Eikhenbaum.[1] Although the term originally referred to literature, the idea proved to be productive in other arts. David Bordwell argues that "such extensions of the concept [poetics] are plausible, because it need not be restricted to any particular medium." (2008, 12) My research project in poetics presents a theoretical approach and is descriptive of the outlined principles derived from the texts in the corpus and is not prescriptive. These principles are derived from repeated patterns and functions across the novels and films. The claims proposed on environmental poetics are exploratory, corrigible, and expandable. This notion will be addressed in detail in the literature review.

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[1] For further explanation on the uses of the term poetics, see. Jeffrey Walker (2014).

After offering a detailed account of the research and ongoing debates in the fields involved in my investigation, this dissertation opens with a chapter on the poetic of environmental destruction. The storytellers studied in this section represent the catastrophic results of large-scale extraction of materials such as mega mining and logging. The compared corpus in the second chapter includes two novels, *Poso Wells* (2007) by Ecuadorian Gabriela Alemán, *Enterre seus mortos* [Bury Your Dead] (2018) by Brazilian Ana Paula Maia, and two films, *El verano de los peces voladores* [The Summer of the Flying Fish] (2013) by Chilean Marcela Said and *Falls Around Her* (2018) by Anishinaabe-Canadian Darlene Naponse. In the third chapter, "The Poetic of Environmental Care," the selected stories represent characters who are invested in protecting the places that surround them. Some of them express this care as part of their work, as an affective choice, or as a political commitment. The selected texts for the third chapter are the Dominican novel *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] (2015) by Rita Indiana, and the films *El niño pez* [The Fish Child] (2009) by Argentinian Lucía Puenzo, *Vozes da floresta* [Voices of the Rainforest] (2019) by Brazilian Betse de Paula, and *Beans* (2020) by Mohawk-Canadian Tracey Deer. In the fourth chapter a comparative analysis is offered on stories that challenge the socio-environmental *status quo* through insurgent narratives. These storytellers represent social structures that challenge extractivist neoliberal models and seek to imagine other possible forms of cultural configurations in line with *alterdesarrollo* [alternatives to the existing models of development] (Svampa and Viale, 2014). The corpus for this final chapter includes the novel *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood, the Argentinian novel *Las aventuras de la China Iron* [The Adventures of China Iron] (2017) by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, and the Mexican documentary *El bosque de niebla* [The Cloud Forest] (2017) by Mónica Álvarez Franco.

In the following chapter, the review of the literature provides the theoretical framework for my dissertation as well as a revision of the scholarly work carried out within the areas of study on which my arguments are structured.

Chapter 1

1 An Overview of the Environmental Humanities in The Americas: Gender and Ethnic Perspectives

"New imaginaries" and "alternative narratives" are the terms used by sociology and economy scholars when they urge for the systemic changes needed to overcome the current environmental crisis. Many of these specialists do not emphasize or even mention the potential role of the arts in the advocating for a shift from the existing socio-economic system. However, since the turn of the century, researchers in the new field of Environmental Humanities have been defending the need for bridging disciplinary boundaries in order to push their academic work into the world. According to Hannes Berthaller, Robert Emmett, Adeline Johns-Putra et. alt. (2014), the two pre-existing fields that first embraced the emergence of Environmental Humanities as an interdisciplinary field were Ecocriticism and Environmental History. Ecocriticism studies the intersections of global ecological crisis with literature and other cultural productions. For over three decades, ecocritics have brought forward the different ways in which artists across the globe have made visible and legible the ways humans contribute to environmental breakdown.

Inscribed in the Environmental Humanities, my exploration focuses on the ways in which women artists in the Americas engage with the environmental reality of their continent. The main question that structures my research is as follows: why are discourses on environmental justice critically important to the artistic work of contemporary women novelists and filmmakers in the Americas? This central question is closely followed by another one that refers to the factors that affect the development of environmentally equitable societies. Why do contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas embed the discourse of environmental justice in their representations of gender, race, place, class, age, and labour? In order to present a thorough answer to these two questions, I define the subject of environmental justice and how it ties with issues concerning indigenous ecologies, environmental migrants, and girlhood.

The following sections present an overview of the ties between environmental injustices and economic systems which have been structured to ensure extraction and

depletion of the planet. This leads to the analysis of the emergence of ecocriticism and how environmental injustices have been questioned in contemporary literature and film. The following section provides an overview of the theoretical overlapping between Environmental Studies and Gender Studies. The subsequent section presents an analysis of the groups of women vulnerable to environmental injustices, such as indigenous women, girls, and migrants. Finally, the last section outlines a summary of the paths of Ecocriticism in Latin America, focusing on its tight relation with Decolonizing Studies.

1.1 « The Environmental Humanities Challenging the Notion of Development: Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism »

Environmental justice is a subject shared by all Environmental Humanities. The term refers both to a social movement and a research subject. "Environmental justice means that all people —irrespective of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and physical ability— have the right place to live in clean, healthy, and safe environments; to have equal access to safe and healthy workspaces, schools, and recreation areas; to have access to safe and nutritious food and clean water." (Byrne, 2013) Although environmental justice as a social movement gained momentum during the events that took place in an African American community in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982,[2] analogous situations took place across the world in which poor communities acknowledged that they lived in areas that were strained with environmental hazards such as pollution or toxicity. It was not the first time that members of underprivileged communities in the US or across the world had faced environmental injustices, but it was the first time in which community neighbours, environmental activists, and politicians developed a movement to counteract it. Although Environmental Justice as a field of study and a movement was developed in the United States, scholars

[2] The term "environmental justice" became widespread in the United States of America in the 1980s due to popular demonstrations and acts of resistance in the Black Belt region against toxic and waste dumps in their communities. Particularly, in Warren Country, North Carolina, in 1982 poor African American communities rose against the construction of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls) landfill. See Esme G. Murdock "A History of Environmental Justice: Foundations, Narratives, and Perspectives" in *Environmental Justice: Key Issues*, edited by Brendan Coolsaet, pp. 6-17.

and activists across the globe had faced analogous situations previously. Therefore, my research is based not only on notions from North American and European academia but also by Latin American intellectuals.

A pioneering publication that stresses the socio-environmental injustices that took place in the American continent is *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* [The Open Veins of Latin America] (1971) by Eduardo Galeano. This book was conceived in a revolutionary context in Latin America. Galeano wrote this text in a period when intellectuals started questioning the interference of the United States in Latin America through developmentalist or *desarrollista* policies. The core assumption of this political and economic model is that "economic development (via capitalism) should propel a society away from its "traditional" (i.e., tribal or clan based) structure towards a more "modern" configuration" (Johnson, 2010). In this essay Galeano traces how the region was affected by global capitalism since the Spanish Conquest. "It is Latin America, the region of open veins. From the discovery to the present day," he denounces,

> everything has always been transmuted into European or, later, North American capital, and as such it has accumulated and accumulates in distant centers of power. Everything: the earth, its fruits and its depths rich in minerals, men and their capacities for work and consumption, natural resources and human resources.[3] (Galeano, 1971, 16)

As he argues throughout his text, foreign and internal exploitation in the Latin American continent applies directly to both natural resources and human labour. The international division of labour was accompanied by the international division of nature. Indigenous

[3] es América Latina, la región de las venas abiertas. Desde el descubrimiento hasta nuestros días, todo se ha transmutado siempre en capital europeo o, más tarde, norteamericano, y como tal se ha acumulado y se acumula en los lejanos centros de poder. Todo: la tierra, sus frutos y sus profundidades ricas en minerales, los hombres y sus capacidades de trabajo y de consumo, los recursos naturales y los recursos humanos.

peoples and African slaves were coerced to work the land in order to provide the raw materials which were then exported to Europe.

With regards to the colonization of Latin America, geologist Kathryn Yusoff proposes, “the language of materiality and its division between life and nonlife, and its alignment with concepts of the human and the inhuman, facilitated the divisions between subjects as humans and subjects priced as flesh (or inhuman matter)” (Yussof, 2018, 8). The category of nonlife and inhuman not only affected non-human nature but also people considered to be merely things. Since its conquest, Latin American land as exploited and sold with its inhabitants. This venture was possible not just because of the extraction of gold, silver, and copper but also the forced work of indigenous peoples. In the plantations of banana, cotton, sugar, coffee, cacao, and soy “the lands were as exhausted as the workers: the lands were robbed of humus and the workers of their lungs, but there was always new land to exploit and more workers to exterminate”.[4] (Galeano, 1971, 145) The words used by Galeano “exhaustion,” “workers,” “exploitation” signal the root of many environmental injustices, the model of economic development. In the global economic system that was formed since the Conquest, the European model of development was stimulated, or, made possible, by the materials and labour extracted from the colonies. The asymmetry between development in Latin America and Europe became more acute over time.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the European ideas of “progress” and “civilization” shaped the understanding of modernity, and these beliefs became dominant in Latin American ruling classes. For these classes, the only way to achieve modernization was to eliminate the “barbarity” of the First Nations communities in order to emulate European societies. During the twentieth century the notions of progress and civilization were replaced with the idea of development which in turn became an obsession in Latin American politics and social thinking (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 24). Eduardo

[4] las tierras quedaban tan exhaustas como los trabajadores: a las tierras les robaban el humus y a los trabajadores los pulmones, pero siempre había nuevas tierras para explotar y más trabajadores para exterminar.

Gudynas (2011) also pointed out the connection between the nineteenth-century notion of progress in relation to developmentalism. Both ideas of development and underdevelopment are Eurocentric because the effects of colonial and neocolonial practices are understood as the lack of ability to achieve the same standard of living as Europe (French and Heffes, 2021, 212). This developmentalist economic and political model is based on an extractive matrix that is fueled by dispossession of natural goods and territories which under this light are seen as socially emptiable to produce profit. Gudynas defines extractivism as "a particular type of appropriation of natural resources, in large volumes or high intensity, half or more of which are exported, such as raw materials".[5] (Gudynas, 2019, 50) Regarding the understanding of development in Latin America, Marisella Svampa and Enrique Viale affirm that

> [i]ndeed, traditionally in Latin America, a large part of the left and populist progressivism have upheld a productivist vision of development that privileges a reading in terms of conflict between capital and labor, and tends to minimize or pay scant attention to the new struggles concentrated in the defense of the territory and the common goods. […] As a consequence, socio-environmental problems are considered a secondary concern (or are simply sacrificed), in view of the serious problems of poverty and exclusion in Latin American societies.[6] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 19)

Until not so long ago, environmental problems in this region have not been perceived as urgent in the socio-political arena. More pressing matters such as access to food, education, work and houses are rights yet to be gained. However, as Gudynas, Svampa and Viale have

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[5] un tipo particular de apropiación de recursos naturales, en grande volúmenes o alta intensidad, que la mitad o más son exportados, como materias primas.

[6] En efecto, tradicionalmente en América Latina gran parte de las izquierdas y del progresismo populista han sostenido una visión productivista del desarrollo que privilegia una lectura en términos de conflicto entre el capital y el trabajo, y tiende a minimizar u otorga escasa atención a las nuevas luchas sociales concentradas en la defensa del territorio y los bienes comunes. […] Como consecuencia de ello, las problemáticas socioambientales son consideradas como una preocupación secundaria (o son llanamente sacrificadas), en vistas de los graves problemas de pobreza y exclusión de las sociedades latinoamericanas.

argued, most of the poverty in the region is caused by an economic model that is based on the extraction of so-called natural resources and the exploitation of labour.

According to Svampa and Viale, the discourses that challenge the ideology of progress in Latin America are catalogued as impeding modern development or denying the region of economic growth. Discussions about environmentalism in Latin America are considered to be imposed from developed countries in the Global North. These two scholars point out a critical tendency that openly challenges the models of development propelled by different Latin-American governments. These dissident subjects, according to Svampa and Viale, are First Nations organizations, socio environmental movements, environmentalist non-governmental organizations, intellectuals, experts and cultural collectives (2014, 21). Yet, these scholars do not mention artists as dissident voices that propose different perspectives to the current system. This group is of vital importance in perusing a change in minds and hearts regarding environmental injustices.

The main argument that Svampa and Viale put forward in their book *Maldesarrollo: la Argentina del extractivismo y el despojo* [Bad Development: The Argentina of Extractivism and Dispossession] (2014) is that there has been a systematic, worldwide failure of development both in the developed and developing countries. In the specific case of Latin America, the authors point out that *maldesarrollo* [bad development] has a direct relation to inequity, squandering, and plundering. This economic model and ideology are not sustainable, and in Galeano's words "development develops inequality".[7] (Galeano, 1971, 17) Hegemonic ideologies need to change globally and new imaginaries are necessary in order to envision different modes of inhabiting the world while valuing the environment and building an equitable sustainable economic system. One of the first scholars to talk about *nuevos lenguajes de valoración* [new languages of valuing] is Catalan economist Joan Martínez Alier who advocates for a change in our understanding of territory opposing extractivist public policies (Martínez Alier and Guha, 1997). In a similar vein, Ulrich Brand and Markus Wissen published the essay "Crisis sociológica y modo de

[7] el desarrollo desarolla la desigualdad.

vida imperial. Crisis y continuidad de las relaciones sociedad-Naturaleza en el capitalismo" [Sociological Crisis and Imperial Mode of Living. Crisis and Continuity in the Society-Nature Relationships under Capitalism] in the collection *Alternativas al capitalismo del siglo XXI* [Alternatives to Twenty-First Century Capitalism] (2013) by Carmen Ortíz and Sandra Ojeda, a book dedicated to studying alternative paths to development in Latin America and Germany, in which they advocate for a change in behaviours and imaginaries. These imaginaries have not only symbolic implications but also material ones. To question what it means to lead a good life, to have a good quality of life, and even to be able to generate social development is possible by envisioning alternatives which in turn these imaginaries can lead to find ways of implementing them.

The arts are fertile ground for imagining alternatives to modes of living. Literary studies, specifically Ecocriticism, have approached the notions of environmental justice in relation to modernity and development. Scholars analyzing literature through an ecocritical perspective have been examining the representation of such ecological imaginaries. In Lawrence Buell's periodization of Ecocriticism, he cautions that although we can establish a division between a first and a second wave, there are still resonances of the first moment in the second wave. The first moment begins in the early 1990s and comprises a decade. Within North American scholarship, the most prominent figure of this period is Lawrence Buell. He revises canonical North American literary texts, in particular the work of Henry Thoreau, and how the environment was perceived in them, the place they granted to nature, and the representation of a more "ecocentric" way of being (Buell, 1995, 1).

The second wave of Ecocriticism begins at the turn of the century when scholars approached their analysis from a more political and theory-oriented perspective. In this period ecocritical analysis began to consider other artistic manifestations such as film and visual arts. Most of the publications of this period are focused on the Anglo-American and European cultural production. The third wave of Ecocriticism combines notions of both earlier moments; however, researchers begin to shift their focus away from the Anglo-American context onto other regions of the globe, in line with Postcolonial studies in literature.

A key scholar of the third period is Rob Nixon who in the preface to his seminal book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, states that he was influenced by the work of Edward Said, Rachel Carson, and Ramachandra Guha. Although Nixon recognizes the influence and conceptual ambition of figures such as Lawrence Buell and Ursula Heise, he states that both of them are Americanists and that "from a postcolonial perspective, the most startling feature of environmental studies has been its reluctance to engage the environmental repercussions of American foreign policy, particularly in relation to contemporary imperial practices" (Nixon, 2011, 33). In order to ground his analysis in a different perspective, he studies these global repercussions not only of American policy but also of neoliberalism. Nixon builds on the work of postcolonial scholars, environmentalists, and economists. His work on inequity at a structural level and violence accumulated throughout time is helpful for my analysis of how women represent other women living in precarious conditions.

In 1962, Rachel Carson was one of the first environmentalists to denounce the delayed effects of the toxic buildup of the chemical industry. Influenced by her work, specifically *Silent Spring*, Nixon coins the term slow violence to refer to "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." (Nixon, 2011, 2) Even though this sort of violence affects the environment as a whole, some social groups are more affected by it. For this reason, he builds on the differentiation proposed by Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez-Alier between First World environmentalism and the environmentalism of the poor (1997). This last idea allows Nixon to think about the places inhabited by the poor in relation to physical displacement and place displacement. On the one hand, Nixon ponders physical displacement through the action of transnational, national, or even local powers that affect impoverished communities by altering their environments with projects such as extraction sites, mega dams, or pollution. He also names another type of displacement, place displacement, which designates "the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable." (Nixon, 2011, 19) Furthermore, reclaiming Said's reflections on the role of the engaged critic, Nixon proposes the figure of the writer-activist. He considers artists as witnesses that

assume the role of *porte-parole* in that they represent these invisible realities in the global arena. Artists are go-betweens and are able to bridge "the challenges of translating across chasms of class, race, gender, and nation," Nixon affirms, and they are "viscerally connected to memories of self-translation across dauntingly wide divides." (Nixon, 2011, 27). The role of memory is tightly connected to the figure of the writer-activist who gives words and images to the long-lasting consequences of slow violence.

Closely tied to Nixon's theory on violence is that of the Anthropocene which gained momentum at the turn of the century and since then it was widely adopted in the Humanities (Morton, 2013; Clark, 2015; Grusin, 2017; Yusoff, 2018). Originally coined by ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer in the early 1980s, the concept became widespread by atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen in the early 2000s. This idea came to name the geological age that the Earth is going through since the industrial revolution when humans began to have an environmental and geographical impact on it. Among the scientific community this term is not homogeneously accepted and there are several questions regarding the precise period of origin; some suggest the industrial revolution, others go as far as the first agricultural revolution, and others even pinpoint the year 1945 when the intensity of noxious human impact accelerated. Naomi Oreskes contends that humans have become geological agents with the power of changing physical processes of our planet (2004). Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty proposes a possible counter argument by indicating that not all humans have had the same responsibility and contribution to the current climate emergency. "One could object, for instance," he says,

> that all the anthropogenic factors contributing to global warming -the burning of fossil fuel, industrialization of animal stock, the clearing of tropical and other forests, and so on- are after all part of a larger story: the unfolding of capitalism in the West and the imperial or quasi-imperial domination by the West of the rest of the world." (Chakrabarty, 2009, 216)

Still, he continues, no matter who contributed more or less to this situation, humans are collectively challenged by the consequences.

Thinking in terms of the Anthropocene entails a shift in our understanding not only of time but of space as well. How can humans begin to grasp their actions in geological

dimensions? Until recently we thought that geological time was much slower than human time and that we could not affect planetary processes. This disjunction in the perception of time calls for a re-examination of the way in which humans think about space-time scales. Moreover, as Chakrabarty suggests, we may comprehend in abstraction what "human species" means but we do not have an experience of the "we" (Chakrabarty, 2009, 220).

A more recent publication, *Disposition of Nature: Environmental Crisis and World Literature* (2020) by Jennifer Wenzel, approaches ecocriticism using a comparatist methodology. She stresses that climate change not only confronts us with political, technological or economic problems but with "narrative problems and problems of the imagination." (Wenzel, 2020, 1) For this reason, she proposes the analysis of world-imagining from below, which she defines as how "marginalized characters or documentary subjects situate their precarious local condition within a transnational context." (Wenzel, 2020, 9) She returns to the conundrum analyzed by Ursula Heise regarding the representation of the local and the global when she posits that "world-imagining from below can challenge the reflex suspicion that thinking the world entire necessarily erases difference and elides local agency." (Wenzel, 2020, 23) Wenzel focuses on Anglophone literature from Africa, India and the Caribbean where she finds representations of the intersection of global imperial-capitalist interests, national governing classes, and local communities. She examines the theoretical proposals of three comparatists, Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, and Franco Moretti, to engage this concept from an ecocritical perspective. Wenzel states that

> although one could ask why environmentalism's earth should accord with World Literature's world, they do share one important commonality. Maps of both —at least as drawn in the United States and Europe— tend to replicate the Eurocentric distortions of a Mercator projection. (2020, 28)

This criticism not only applies to the discipline of Comparative Literature but also to previous theoretical stances within Ecocriticism.

In her consideration of world-imagining, she thinks about the other side of the coin, the construction of the category of the unimaginable. Wenzel argues that, by naming

something as unimaginable, one contains it, along with all the socio-historical processes that lead to this state which in turn are also rendered invisible. Two genres present alternative worlds that try to imagine the unimaginable: utopia and eco-apocalypse. She points out the risks these forms of imagination entail. Currently utopias are suffering from an imaginative inertia because they present a very familiar future with no actual change. The risk with eco-apocalypse is that by presenting a future in terms of destruction this might cause fear and paralyze the reader or viewer instead of generating impetus for change.

Wenzel brings to the debate the crises of futurity which was coined by Mary Louis Pratt. Wenzel refers to two entwined crises present in the Global South: "the future lost to climate change as the belated cost of modernity's chain, as opposed to never having enjoyed the benefits of modernity to begin with." (2020, 33) An aspect that separates the Global North from the Global South is the level of modernization that was reached in the North causing not only the accumulation of capital but also of carbon. However, in the South this level of modernization was not achieved due to lack of advanced infrastructure. Wenzel states that "what is distinctive about the unevenness of world-imagining in the era of satellite TV, social media, and the Internet is that the excluded tend to have vivid images of what they are excluded from" (Wenzel, 2020, 33). People living in vulnerable conditions are not only confronted with the end of the world but also, excluded from the narratives of futurity.

Some of the places where people are excluded from development and modernity are depicted in literature as wastelands. Wenzel elaborates on Zygmunt Bauman's *Wasted Lives. Modernity and its Outcasts* (2004). Very large extensions of land in the Global South that were not used or did not produce revenue were considered under a global capitalist regime as waste land. For this reason, they were either used as extracting sites or disposing of waste. In turn, they became sites of marginalization where people are considered disposable since they are dwelling in an uninhabitable place. Another term to refer to these areas is "sacrifice zones." These conditions also generated the displacement of people to other areas. Sometimes the responsibility for depleting the land is not only tied to national business but also to multinational corporations. Wenzel's proposal of using business

conglomerates rather than nations as an axis for comparison is referred to in chapter one. The following section presents an overview of the scholarly work that examines the relations between literature and the environment in Latin America.

1.2 Ecocriticism in Latin America

The ecocritical analysis of Latin American texts is still scarce. Most of these studies are influenced by the scholarship and theories developed within Anglophone academia. A summary of the key volumes published to date is presented to explain their relation to my research.

One of the scholars with the longest trajectory in the field is Jennifer French, a Comparative Literature and Spanish professor who published *Nature, Neo-colonialism, and the Spanish American Regional Writers* (2005) establishing a landmark reference in Latin American Ecocriticism. Through a Marxist materialist approach, she analyses the British influence in Latin American literature from the 1920s through what she names as invisible imperialism, "a hegemonic formation that was effective enough to dominate economic (and, consequently, social and cultural) life in Latin America, and yet almost imperceptible there." (French 2005, 7) She studies in depth the representation of rural life under global neo-colonialist economy in the *novelas de tierra* [novels of the earth] by Horacio Quiroga, Benito Lynch, and José Eustaquio Rivera. Influenced by *The Country and the City* by Raymond Williams, French explains that contrary to what was being represented in post-industrialist British literature where there was an exodus from the city to the idyllic countryside, in the *novelas de tierra* in Latin America the rural spaces are represented in terms of colonial struggle for land tenure. French's study is key for my analysis of *Las aventuras de la China Iron* [The Adventures of China Iron] (2017) by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, in particular the representation of rural life in Argentina and the contrast with British industry expanded in the form of an invisible empire.

The volume *Caribbean Literature and the Environment. Between Nature and Culture* (2005) edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Reneé Gosson, and George Handley, converges theories of both Anglo-American scholarship (Buell, 1995, 1999, 2001) and

Caribbean theories (Glissant, 1969). Analogously to French, they stress that the representation of Caribbean natural landscape is not deprived of colonization, labour, or trauma. One of the common threads throughout the essays is the reference to the history of migration both human and non-human nature in the region, displacement, diaspora, and deterritorialization, which informs the literary analysis of the authors. For this reason, DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley assert that "Caribbean writers refuse to depict the natural world in terms that erase the relationship between landscape and power." (DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley, 2005, 4) This way of looking into history entails a challenge to the colonial gaze. They denounce the effects of the local economic system of the plantation imposed by the metropolis as well as the foreign economic interests in the islands based on the tourism industry abusing both the workers and the environment. These notions will be crucial for my analysis of the Dominican novel *La mucama de Omicunlé*.

In *Reading and Writing the Latin American Landscape* (2009) Beatriz Rivera-Barnes and Jerry Hoeg focus on the early testimonial writings about the New World written by European explorers and on canonical literature, by authors such as Andrés Bello, Horacio Quiroga, and Rómulo Gallegos. When reading the travel testimonies by Christopher Columbus, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Euclides de Cunha from an ecocritical perspective, Rivera-Barnes and Hoeg find that, in these accounts, the Latin American landscape is hostile and threatening. In this collection there are two essays of particular significance to my research because they focus on the relationship between women and nature. The first one questions the myth of eternal fertility elaborated in the work of Cuban Gertrudis Gómez Avellaneda which discursively hides the degradation inflicted to the Caribbean environment. The second essay about Nicaraguan Gioconda Belli's work is also informed by the essentialist ecofeminism of Françoise D'Eaubonne. I disagree with this perspective because by arguing that the relationship between women and nature is intrinsic, Rivera-Barnes conveys a Manichean idea in which men are unfailingly the perpetrators of violence against both.

Another scholar with a long trajectory in the field is Mark Anderson, who in 2011 published *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*. Unlike the previous volumes, Anderson does not study nature writing broadly but narrows it to

natural catastrophes. Humans have always granted meaning to natural disasters. The narratives constructed around disasters are ideologically charged and politically manipulated. Anderson is interested in how "literary mediation of natural disasters informs political policy in Latin America." (Anderson, 2001, 2) He argues that literary representations have a material impact on how political discourse on disasters is structured. A central notion for his argument is risk, which he contends is constructed not only quantitatively but also politically and discursively. He systematizes disasters into single event disasters and recurring disasters. Regarding the second category, he specifies that certain populations are confronted with higher levels of vulnerability, an argument similar to Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence: Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011). Both critics point out the difficulties in separating marginality, poverty, and disempowerment when studying matters of environmental degradation.

In 2010, Adrian Taylor Kane edited an influential collection of essays *The Natural World in Latin American Literature: Ecocritical Essays on Twentieth Century Writings.* This volume follows a similar scheme presented by some Ecocritical Anglophone books (LeMenager, Shewry, and Hiltner, 2011; Clark 2012) with regards to the texts they select to analyze. The contributors revisit canonical Latin American texts, mainly novels, through an ecocritical lens. Three of these essays focus on the work of women novelists, namely, Gioconda Belli (Pereyra in Taylor Kane, 2010), Alicia Gaspar de Alba and Helena María Viramontes (Ramírez-Dhoore in Taylor Kane, 2010), and Rosario Castellanos (Robert-Camps in Taylor Kane, 2010). For my research, the article about the novel *Waslala* by Gioconda Belli is relevant since it is read as a utopia where both women and nature are liberated from oppressions.

In *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction* (2011), Laura Barbas-Rhoden elaborates on Lawrence Buell's notion of environmental imagination (1995) within the Latin American context. Barbas-Rhoden's main focus of study is the representation of marginal landscapes that question the process of modernization in Latin America. She organizes her analysis by geographical regions, specifically, texts that represent Patagonia, the Amazon, and Central America. One of the most remarkable aspects is that five texts in the examined corpus are written by women: Argentinians

Libertad Demitrópulos and Syliva Iparraguirre; Costa Ricans Anacristina Rossi and Tatiana Lobo; and Nicaraguan Gioconda Belli. These authors are pioneers, and their work precedes the novels I will be analyzing throughout this thesis.

One of the few publications in Spanish is *Política de la destrucción – poéticas de la preservación. Apuntes para una lectura eco-crítica del medio ambiente en América Latina* [Politics of Destruction - Poetics of Preservation. Notes for an Ecocritical Reading of the Environment in Latin America] (2013) by Gisela Heffes. This renowned scholar in the field of Latin American Ecocriticism structures her argument in three chapters in which she examines the topoi of the landfills, the representation of sustainability, and social utopias. The first chapter is particularly relevant for my research since Heffes analyzes Gabriela Cabezón Cámara's opera prima, *La virgen cabeza* [Slum Virgin] (2009), in the context of waste disposal in *villa miserias* [slums].

One of the few volumes that is not restricted to literary analysis but extends to other mediums is *Ecological Crisis and Cultural Representation in Latin America. Ecocritical Perspectives on Art, Film, and Literature* (2016) edited by Mark Anderson and Zélia Bora. The main argument through the volume is that Latin American intellectuals have represented environmental issues as local issues such as specific problems of certain regions or individuals rather than a crisis that exceeds regional problems. They argue that the current crisis is different mainly because of the scope it entails. For this reason, they express that "in the midst of globalization, the environmental crisis can no longer be viewed as a local or even regional phenomenon nor as something that affects only nonhuman nature." (Anderson and Bora, 2016, xii) To present an analysis that contemplates the planetary aspect of this crisis, the contributors of this volume are informed by major ideas debated in Anglophone academic circles such as Anthropocene, scale, crisis, and the interlinking between the local and the global environmental crisis.

Since for the human mind it is impossible to comprehend these incommensurable dimensions, Anderson and Bora state that "representation thus becomes one of the key problems of ecological crisis. Pragmatic solutions seem impossible when the dimensions of the crisis exceed our abilities to conceive them." (Anderson and Bora, 2016, xix) In the

environmental crisis the axis of the local, the national, and the global converge. For this reason, the authors indicate the need to rescale this crisis by re-evaluating the meaning of the local. They suggest that the category of place could be read as a network or, in Timothy Morton's terms, a mesh, a system of material interactions. For instance, one of the realities that exposes the complex levels acting concurrently is environmental migration. Anderson and Bora point out that

> as environments become increasingly precarious or even uninhabitable, moreover, people are displaced on a massive scale, leading to intensified conflict over territory, resources, and political power. These displaced people are often treated as exiles from legality; their extra-territorialization transforms them into Agamben´s dehumanized "bare" bodies, bereft not only of citizenship, but of the most basic human rights. (Anderson and Bora, 2016, xv)

Conflicts over places are traversed by global and local economic interests which in some cases cause and exacerbate human displacement and marginality. Their research will support my analysis of the globalized nature of environmental disasters which are represented in *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015) by Rita Indiana and *Enterre seus mortos* (2018) by Ana Paula Maia.

Another edited volume is *Latinx Environmentalism: Place, Justice, and the Decolonial* (2019) by Sarah D. Ward, David J. Vázques, Priscilla Solís Ybarra and Sarah Jaquette Ray, which presents a combination of interviews with authors and academic articles on Latin American writers that publish in the United States (Justin Torres, Héctor Tobar, Ana Castillo, Elena María Viramontes, María Melendez) and other Latin American authors (Mayra Montero).

Ecofictions, Ecorealities, and Slow Violence in Latin America and the Latinx World (2020) by Ilka Kressner, Ana María Mutis and Elizabeth M. Pettinaroli originated in a panel titled "The Dimensions of Disaster: Scale, Circulation, and the Specular Economy in Latin American Disaster Writing" at LASA (Latin American Studies Association) in 2018. Once again, at the core of the ideas discussed in this book is a concept developed in US academia, namely Rob Nixon´s notion of slow violence (2011). The essays in this collection are not circumscribed to literature but also refer to cinema, dance, music,

performances, and video games. From the essays referring to literature, three of them analyze the work of women: Argentinian Samantha Schweblin (Mutis in Kressner, Mutis, Pettinaroli, 2020), Mexican American Jennifer Clement (Taylor Kane in Kressner, Mutis, Pettinaroli, 2020), and Puerto Rican Mayra Santos-Febres (Rogers in Kressner, Mutis, Pettinaroli, 2020). The essays that examine cinema are all dedicated to the work of male filmmakers.

In the same year, Jennifer French and Gisela Heffes edited *The Latin American Ecocultural Reader* (2020) which is unique in its formulation. In this book, they re-evaluate the Latin American literary canon through the lens of environmental knowledge from a genealogical approach. In doing so, a key idea that the authors emphasize is the urgency to value Indigenous knowledge. They present extracts of texts or short stories that can be re-read under an ecocritical perspective, such as *Popul Vuh*, "Our America" (1891) by José Martí, "Cannibalist Manifesto" (1928) by Oswald de Andrade, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1983) by Rigoberta Menchú, "Goldman Environmental Prize Acceptance Speech" (2015) by Berta Cáceres, and *Laudato Si* (2015) by Pope Francis.

No published volume circumscribes its research specifically to Latin American women, contrasts the production in novels and films, while also looking at the comparison between the production of Latin American and Canadian women artists. Given this absence, an examination of the entanglements between environmental justice and matters of gender is presented to discuss how these issues inform the oeuvre of women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas.

1.3 Environmental Justice and Gender

The relationship between environmentalism and feminism has been contested since its inception. My standpoint is feminist environmentalist. In the interest of having a better understanding of the main points of the theory and activism, a distinction is presented of the relationship between feminist environmentalism and ecofeminism which is a term that unites different lines of thought regarding "women's gender-based interest in

environmental conservation or sustainability." (Radel, 2009, 331) Furthermore, I agree with Andrea Nightingale's argument that "gender is not a constant and predetermined materiality or symbolically but rather becomes salient in environmental issues through work, discourses of gender and the performance of subjectivities" (Nightingale, 2006, 2).

The publication in 1962 of *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson is a precedent to ecofeminism in the USA. This text was meant as an explicit denunciation of the noxious effect of pesticides in humans and non-human nature, but it achieved public influence by shaping national policy. The United States applied the precautionary principle to regulate pesticides and even more so, it was a key factor for the creation of the US Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. This book is a key precedent both to the environmental justice movement and also to feminist environmentalism. Although she was educated as a marine biologist with an MA in zoology, Carson aspired to be a fiction writer and was able to combine both scientific and artistic knowledge in her many writings. The initial chapter of her most renowned book is "A Fable of Tomorrow," where she describes an imaginary American town razed by all the environmental calamities that she describes throughout the book. She specifies that this place is a product of her imagination, but that humanity is not far from reaching that point. Carson decides to begin her scientifically proved accusation with a brief apocalyptic story. One can ask, why would a scholar trained in science draw upon a literary form to convey her message? One of her motivations was to condense all the harmful effects that DDT and other pesticides had concisely so it could generate a shock to the reader and prepare the emotional tone with which to approach the rest of the text.

Rachel Carson's contribution to exposing the effects of chemicals to both humans and non-humans not only raised awareness but linked public health issues in relation to environmental ones. In reporting the effects of human-made chemicals on communities in the USA and across the world, she emphasized the particularly vulnerable conditions of certain communities and subjects such as women and children. For instance, she addresses how women come in close contact with pesticides while working on their gardening or how the ingestion of certain carcinogenic chemicals harmed the female endocrinological system and has genetic repercussions during the period of gestation. Her most challenging contribution was pointing out the systemic conditions which caused these health and

environmental harms. According to Joni Saeger, Carson "drew attention to the patriarchal, economic, and social structures that pose particular dangers to women's health and that keep women's health issues from being taken seriously." (Saeger, 2003, 957) By questioning the detrimental actions of chemical companies, Carson confronted a large segment of the capitalist machinery.

Ecofeminism presented different lines of thought regarding the relationship between women and the environment since it was developed during the 1970s. The two most prevailing ones were cultural ecofeminism and social ecofeminism. The first branch, also known as spiritual ecofeminism, has an essentialist standpoint of the relationship between women and the environment, which is that women are biologically determined to be closer to nature. From this perspective, dualisms such as woman/man and nature/culture are reinforced. A recurring image is that of Mother Earth. The essentialist standpoint was challenged by scholars from the Global South who argued that the experience of being a woman is also affected by ethnicity, class, and age (Femenías, 2007; Svampa, 2015; Arriagada Oyarzún and Zamabra Álvarez, 2019).

Spiritual ecofeminism was contested by social ecofeminism which has a constructivist perspective. According to Radel, "this ecofeminist position firmly centred women's interests in conservation and the environment in their socially constructed gender roles of childcare and the gendered division of labour. Women were not considered inherently closer to nature; rather, the sociocultural assignment of specific reproductive and productive tasks to women placed them closer to nature through their labour." (Radel, 2009, 332) The term ecofeminism unites such broadly different viewpoints that I prefer to use the term feminist environmentalism. This field examines the gendered nature of power in politics, economy, and ecology by challenging the interconnected systems of oppression and domination. My study focuses on women's labour in the novels and the films form a feminist environmentalist standpoint. Through their work, paid or unpaid, women come in contact with environmental degradation which consequently affects their lives.

Since labour is a key axis for my analysis, my research draws from some of the most relevant ideas debated in feminist ecological economics. Confronting environmental

breakdown requires not only actions on an individual level, but most urgently on an economic one. European economists Corinna Dengler and Brite Strunk argue that the current growth model propagates both gender and environmental injustices. They propose to shift into a degrowth paradigm in which labour is distributed in a more gender-equitable way between men and women with specific emphasis on care work. They state that the concept of degrowth was developed in the Global North.

> Degrowth must not be understood as an essentially economic concept, nor is it merely a call to shrink the GDP [Gross Domestic Product] (Demaria et al. 2013; Muraca 2013). Instead, the focus lies on abolishing economic growth as an inevitable, unquestioned social and political objective. The important aspect is not to achieve negative GDP growth, but precisely that what happens to GDP is of secondary importance. Of primary importance, instead, are aspects of well-being, social justice, and ecological sustainability (Schneider, Kallis, and Martínez-Alier 2010). (Dengler and Strunk, 2018, 171)

The authors' point is an economic one, but its consequences have individual, social and ecological repercussions. The radical change they describe cannot be achieved by simply altering the economic paradigm, it entails a socio-cultural transformation. In an article on economy, Dengler and Strunk call for a radical change in narratives to achieve socio-economic goals. They refer to Federico Demaria's (2013) argument that degrowth challenges

> the 'growth-based roots of the social imaginary' of Western societies to open up conceptual space for new narratives (Demaria, Schneider, Sekulova, Martinez-Alier 2013: 209). These new imaginaries imply a value change away from economic rationality as the most dominant political goal. Instead, economic growth is only justified when it serves the goals, which a given society deems relevant for a good life for all." (Dengler and Strunk, 2018, 172)

They argue that it is crucial to be able to envision an alternative to the current mode of living and to question what does a good way of life mean. Both literature and film are privileged media for the task of imagining alternatives to our unsustainable mode of living because they create stories.

An alternative Dengler and Strunk present that would pave the way for degrowth is re-evaluating the care economy. They affirm that "not only can a feminist perspective on

care pave the way for degrowth, but also degrowth can pave the way for a caring economy." (Dengler and Strunk, 2018, 173) Degrowth lays the foundations for a more environmentally aware society but to achieve a more gender equitable society further changes need to happen. They assert that historically most of the care work, which is unpaid and undervalued, was relegated to women. Working women carry a double burden because when they finish their shift, they have to continue with a second one at home. These two economists contend that a shared scheme of the care work would have not only an environmental impact but also a gender one. This radical change entails questioning what it means to have a good life and a desirable way of living.

In a recent publication, Esme Murdock articulates "while environmental justice has paid attention to the distributive mechanisms through which environmental inequalities persist, especially by closely following along the axis of race and class, gender is also a very important vector or factor for considering environmental harm." (Murdock, 2020, 10) This statement brings to the foreground the problem that gender had not been considered a fundamental aspect of environmental injustices from the beginning of the movement. Even though Carson's book and public activism were a key precedent, the environmental justice movement in the USA did not gain momentum until 1982. Although environmental risks might seem to be democratic because they affect everyone and all the environment, this is not the case. Environmental hazards have had a palpable impact on individuals that already suffer from other oppressions, and in the case of some Latin American women these vulnerabilities are multiple. Murdock, an environmental philosophy scholar from South Africa, critiques the scholarship on environmental justice when she warns that

> given that, globally, gender is a critical axis of oppression and that the intersections of race, gender, and class oppression converge to create predictable recipients of environmental degradation and harm in the pronounced negative consequences for women and children of colour, the exclusion of explicit gender analysis from the traditional purview of environmental justice scholarship is particularly troubling. (Murdock, 2020, 11)

Murdock is aware that analyzing gender as a category in relation to environmental injustices must be considered with other categories such as class and ethnicity. My research

focuses on the intersection of gender, age, class, ethnicity in women from Latin America and Canada.

One of the voices that has had a robust influence on the ecofeminist thoughts in Latin America is Spanish scholar Alicia H. Puleo (Quesada Guerrero, 2010; Svampa, 2015; Arriagada Oyarzún and Zambra Álvarez, 2019; Salgado Álvarez, 2020). In her publication "El ecofeminismo y sus compañeros de ruta. Cinco claves para una relación positiva con el Ecologismo, el Ecosocialismo y el Decrecimiento" [Ecofeminism and Its Fellow Travelers. Five Keys to a Positive Relationship with Environmentalism, Ecosocialism and Degrowth] (2015), she traces the relation that feminism had throughout history with other revolutionary movements in order to warn that women are usually a key for the development of these movements but once the movement achieves its goals the women are quickly forgotten. Puleo adopts a critical position to evaluate the relation between feminism and ecology. She studies the confluences between feminism and ecology to establish five obstacles that should be overcome: invisible women, deferred emancipation, forgotten illustration, beatified multiculturalism, and the old new man. Puleo's first criticism is that scholars working on subjects such as ecology, eco-socialism, or ecological economy don't recognize and even mock women scholars' input. She refers to the unfulfilled promises of several emancipatory movements such as the French Revolution, abolitionism in the USA, and even socialist Marxism which assured women their emancipation but failed to achieve it. Puleo stresses a point of vital importance since several scholars overlook this aspect: forgotten illustration. She recognizes the undeniably harmful effects Modernity had on humanity, but she acknowledges the need to preserve the emancipatory legacy that enables the fight against religious and political oppression. This point is specifically addressed to the neoconservative branch of ecologism that seeks to suppress women's rights by attacking their freedom. The fourth point is beatified multiculturalism. Puleo affirms that in some cases rejecting ethnocentrism (a form of imperialism), has led to the veneration of traditions of foreign cultures. She urges the reader to

> learn from sustainable cultures as a timely corrective to our suicidal civilization but do so without falling into pious admiration. We also have to be able to recognize in ourselves something to offer to others. Through self-criticism and criticism, we will advance. The objective must be to

> jointly build an ecological culture of equality, not venerate every custom just because it is part of our cultural tradition or that of others.[8] (Puleo, 2015, 401)

This particular point is of capital importance to my analysis of the texts, since some of the writers and filmmakers present Indigenous cultures in a romanticized manner without critically engaging with them. The last obstacle that Puleo addresses is the old new man. This refers to the need to put forward a new understanding of *anthropos* by setting aside essentialist or dualist viewpoints.

Mapping the relation between ecology and gender in Latin America presents a diversity which is analogous to the diversity of feminism in the same region. Not only are there distinctions within national boundaries but also differences given by location, class, ethnicity, and age. The most prominent thinkers are Gloria Anzaldúa, Ochy Curiel, Marisol de la Cárdena, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Rita Segato. Despite their specific differences, there are some recurrent elements in Latin American feminisms. From a theory perspective, the common denominator among scholars (Lima Costa, 2002; Femenías, 2007) is to reappropriate the theory produced in the hegemonic centres in order to produce positioned and localized knowledge. María Luisa Femenías states that women in Latin America are doubly subaltern and, sometimes considered as one uniform group and thus erase historical, regional, individual, and collective differences (2007, 15). Furthermore, because of the ethnic conformation of the continent (indigenous nations, African descendants and European settlers) feminisms in Latin America usually work to "detect and delve into the intersections where color, class, religion, ethnicity, sex-gender enhance exclusion and generate distortions alien to populations with higher degrees of homogeneity".[9] (Femenías, 2007, 17)

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[8] Hemos de aprender de culturas sostenibles como oportuno correctivo a nuestra civilización suicida, pero hacerlo sin caer en una admiración beata. También tenemos que ser capaces de reconocer en lo propio algo que ofrecer a los demás. A través de la autocrítica y de la crítica, avanzaremos. El objetivo ha de ser construir en conjunto una cultura ecológica de la igualdad, no venerar toda costumbre solo por ser parte de la tradición cultural nuestra o de la ajena.

[9] Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this thesis are mine.

Two aspects shared by feminism and ecofeminism in Latin America are the quest against epistemic colonialism and an active participation in the public sphere to defend their human rights. Marisella Svampa refers to this public participation as a "process of feminization of struggles".[10] (2015, 128) Another aspect that Svampa and Arriagada Oyarzún and Zambra Álvarez refer to is the communitarian characteristic of ecofeminism in Latin America. One last aspect that Rita Segato reminds us of is that patriarchal societies pre-existed colonization in Latin America; that is, patriarchal structures are not restricted to Western cultures. These differences within the same ethnic group are still prevalent today, as Raquel Quesada Guerrero indicates. Although Mapuche women are part of social movements in Chile, these organizations are patriarchally structured since most of the hierarchical positions are filled by men and therefore women are prevented from making decision within the community. However, this position of disadvantage sometimes proves to be empowering for Latin American women. Quesada Guerrero argues that "not only women become emerging subjects in environmental management, but the very process of organizing, debating in public and making their voices heard becomes an indisputable vehicle for their own empowerment and questioning of unequal gender relations at a local level." (Quesada Guerrero, 2011, 98) Becoming powerful and visible in the public sphere is also altering their personal lives when they decide that they can also be vocal about all types of violence against them, not only environmental.

Regarding the term "ecofeminism," some scholars such as Marisella Svampa choose to use it with the caveat of rejecting its essentialist nuance. She stresses that many activists do not recognize themselves as environmentalists although they fight for such causes and sustains "Nor does one become an environmentalist by choice, but by obligation, starting from the assumption of the fight for the defense of life and territory." (Svampa, 2015, 128) From a similar perspective as Dengler and Strunk, Svampa advocates for a co-participation of both men and women in the defense of socio-environmental rights: "Survival ecofeminism would seek the orientation of the bond between men and women

[10] proceso de feminización de las luchas.

with nature from the co-participation of both genders." (Svampa, 2015, 131) Other scholars such as Arriagada Oyarzún and Zambra Álvarez opt for the term "feminist political ecology". They contend that this theoretical approach has been the most effective in the analysis of the relations between ecology and distribution in Latin America. Political ecology is an approach that examines the relation between humans and the environment from economic and political perspectives. Arraigada Oyarzún and Zambra Álvarez hold that political ecology in Latin America does not show significant contributions from feminist theories which hinders further understanding of the power relations across the continent regarding the environment.

The notions discussed above are key to understand the women artists' ideological stance and thought about the relation between gender and women. Even more so, it allows me to position myself as a scholar in this debate. Considerations on care ethics, division of labour, and resistances inform most of this dissertation.

In the following section I narrow down my focus within gender and women studies to the issue of vulnerable women such as girls, Indigenous peoples, and migrants. The purpose of this overview is to shed some light to how these individuals are represented in most of the selected corpus of literary and filmic texts.

1.4 Girls, Indigenous peoples, and Migrants: Groups Vulnerable to Environmental Injustices

Some Latin American and Canadian women artists, specifically writers and filmmakers, refer in their stories to environmental injustices suffered by women across the continent. Women with different backgrounds, classes, ethnicities, ages, and nationalities walk through the pages and screens of these artists. For my specific research the focus is on three particular groups that frequently emerge in the narrative of these women artists: Indigenous peoples, migrants, and girls. My aim is to analyze the voices and viewpoints these underseen women present through the pens and cameras of Latin American artists, and examine how their stories bring to the foreground the violence exerted on these women

and how they resist oppressions and sometimes even show alternative modes to the current Westernized mode of life in certain regions of the continent.

Indigenous communities across the Americas have experienced systematic forms of dispossession, assimilation, marginalization, and extermination since the colonial period until today. Most of these communities struggle to achieve their sovereignty, legal land-tenure, and maintain their traditional knowledge. These threats affect not only humans but also the environment which they inhabit. Scholars from across disciplines (Kronik and Verner, 2010; Velásquez Nimatuj, 2018; Gudynas, 2019) agree that Indigenous women suffer the consequences of environmental degradation more than men. The cause for this vulnerability is not the essential relation between indigenous women and nature, but because

> women within indigenous communities across the region carry a heavy burden of impact, as they are often traditionally in charge of the routine labour in horticulture, while men are often the ones to clear the forest itself, involving heavily labour but much less of a time demand. […] Children's ill health and malnutrition directly affect women's work and responsibilities. (Kronik and Verner, 2010, 105)

Even though Indigenous women in Latin America and the Caribbean have a stronger dependence on their environment, a United Nations report shows that the decisions concerning internal governance, administrating the properties, and land-tenure are in male hands (Velásquez Nimatuj, 2018). In this same report, the author asserts that Indigenous women are faced with several barriers to access land-tenure and resources. Some of these obstacles are unequal land distribution, concentration of land tenure, lack of consideration for women in land redistribution programs, language barriers, and in some cases even the use of sexual violence by private enterprises or the state to evict them from their land.

These women's stories inspire contemporary Latin American women filmmakers and writers. In my research, texts are analyzed by both Indigenous and non-indigenous artists that engage in their work with Indigenous women in relation to environmental justice. Although the adversities that confront Indigenous women across the continent are systemic, many of the artistic representations are not limited to these traumatic experiences. Some artists choose to represent the precarious conditions and how these women are

vulnerable to socio-environmental injustices, but other artists emphasize Indigenous women's resistance and resilience. According to Joni Adamson and Salma Monani in the introduction to *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies. Conversations from Earth to Cosmos*, "Environmental Humanities broadly, and Ecocriticism and Indigenous studies specifically, emerge out of the same long, entangled, historical roots." (Adamson and Monani, 2017, 4) A very tight connection arises between these two disciplines given the exploration of ideas such as ecological knowledge of indigenous nations, place, borders in the colonizing enterprise, and contemporary multinational corporations in the globalized world. On this matter, Kronik and Verner affirm that "it will be difficult to achieve either climate-change adaptation or mitigation without strengthening the necessary conditions for continued use and development of indigenous peoples' knowledge. This calls for a dialogue between knowledge systems." (Kronik and Verner, 2010, 116)

Within Indigenous communities, the role of storytelling is key to express their knowledge but also it can be used to make visible or legible their stories as an act of engaged resistance. "Using twentieth and twenty-first century technologies like cinema and new media, older written expressions of literature and poetry, age-old ceremonial dance and song, and markings on the land itself," Adamson an Monani argue,

> Indigenous artists and their communities revitalize storytelling modes that engage the human with the more-than-human, and draw into view earthly and cosmic "persons" as allies in struggles against localized and planetary destruction. Such struggle is not only focused on critique and resistance but on continuance." (Adamson and Monani, 2017, 13)

My research found a greater number of films directed by Indigenous women in Latin America than novels written by them. It does not mean that they do not use literature as a form of expression, but rather, that they choose poetry instead novels. However, non-Indigenous Latin American writers have published novels about Indigenous characters in which their causes and vulnerabilities are made visible. These texts establish Indigenous people's right to their way of living and in doing so, represent an alternative to hegemonic social systems.

Another group that has captured the interest of Latin American women artists when engaging with issues of environmental injustices are migrants, in particular women migrants. The artistic narratives delve into a range of issues associated with migration such as inhabitable spaces or wastelands, displacement itself, and care labour. Geographers studying the phenomenon of migration find that although women compose a larger number of migrants, they do not capture proportionate attention in the studies conducted on this field (Gioli and Milan, 2018; Lutz and Amelina, 2019). Commenting on this scarce academic research, Anna Amelina and Helma Lutz point out the friction between academic disciplines by pointing out that "the difficult relationship between migration studies and gender studies also involves the dominance of a bipolar differential theoretical paradigm in both these fields that considers the migrant, and in particular the female migrant, as the respective Other, as a deviation, and as someone lower in the hierarchy." (Lutz and Amelina, 2019, 13) The texts in my corpus focus on characters from lower levels of hierarchical structures.

A number of factors cause environmental migration, this includes, geophysical disasters, floods, droughts and wildfires, ecosystem degradation, industrial accidents, and land grabbing (Ionesco, Mokhnacheva, and Gemenne, 2017). Some authors such as Brazilian Ana Paula Maia situates her novel, *Enterre seus mortos* [Burry Your Dead (2018), in an inhospitable place due to land grabbing and extreme heat while Dominican Rita Indiana Hernández situates her dystopic narration, *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] (2015), in the aftermath of a human-induced tsunami. Although these fictional spaces are described as not bearing life, characters are forced to migrate from them, but others decide to stay living in them, and thus they experience displacement without moving.

In the novel, not only are represented the places from which characters migrate, but also their lives after the displacement. According to Giovanna Gioli and Andrea Milan, "environmental change is indubitably a key factor in shaping (gendered) labour migration fluxes in the global South" (Gioli and Milan, 2018, 142). The analyzed novels and films narrate the stories of women who migrate not from South to North but within the South, most of the time to neighbouring countries or within the same country. The two stories that represent migration and environmental injustice are united by two characters that work as

house maids. This commonality echoes the global phenomenon of "care work which is currently the most important labour market for female migrants across the world" (Lutz and Amelina, 2019, 59). In both stories, *Enterre seus mortos* and *La mucama de Omicunlé*, two working women are affected by socio-environmental inequalities and suffer gender violence both in the place they migrated from and in the place they migrated to.

The last group of characters are girls. The research is not focused on the literary works carried out by girls or young adult fiction, but on how women artists represent girls. Why do artists engaging in matters of environmental injustices choose a girl as the protagonist? Although one might be inclined to think about girls as a vulnerable demographic, in most of the examined narratives girls appear as agents of socio-environmental change. At a time when scholars in the field of Environmental Humanities are debating about the crisis of futurity, some artists propose alternative modes of dwelling, placing girls at the core of their narratives. Some of the fictional characters are part of a community that does not lead a hegemonic way of life under a consumerist neoliberal regime. Moreover, other characters re-imagine a different society with more equitable distribution of labour and care work based on indigenous communities.

In the past two decades the interest in girls within Gender Studies has increased. Until the 1990s the field of Girlhood Studies was subsumed by Women Studies. Scholars such as Mary Celeste Kearney (2009) indicate that during the 1960s and 1970s there were some tensions within these two fields originated in the use of infantilization of women as a diminishing strategy in which they were seen as girls in order to minimize their agency and power. Often the term "girl" was used to refer to women implying that they were incapable or subordinate. Kearney even traces this conception of girls back to the nineteenth century where she shows that

> children were singled out in such feminist rhetoric because it was widely believed during the late nineteenth century (as it is today) that youth were not mature, rational, and experienced enough to handle the responsibilities of adulthood and citizenship. As a result, young people were understood as necessarily dependant on adults to determine what was best for them, a mindset common among women reformers and feminist activists during this period. (Kearney, 2009, 9)

Even though Kearney is discussing ideas that originated two centuries ago, she indicates that some of them are still prevalent. However, in the 1990s that the field was legitimized, and during this decade the word "girl" was reclaimed and seen as positive. In 2008 the publication of the *Girlhood Studies Journal* brought together academics from a range of disciplines: Literary Studies, Media Studies, Sociology, Psychology, Education, and History. Girlhood scholars emphasize the importance of having an intersectional approach to the analysis within the field. There are different ways of being a girl given their material bodies and their socio-historical context. Within literary theory, girls are studied in relation to *Bildungsroman* for adults with girl protagonists, girl-oriented young adult book series, girl-centred children's literature and fairy-tales, girl character types, adult authors who focus on girls' characters, girl's writing, and girl readers (Kearney, 2009, 18).

Some of the debates within this discipline are relevant to my research, political agency of girls (Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh, 2010), activist girls (Taft 2011), empowered girls (Bent, 2016), and girls at risk (Harris, 2003). Through the process of growing up, some girls question not only themselves on a personal level but also as citizens because they examine the structures and rules of the societies that they live in. However, in the public arena, girls remain invisible, lacking political agency. "The girl child remains voiceless," Jackie Kirk, Claudia Mitchell, and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh argue,

> She is seen as a passive object suffering a series of interlocking oppressions and discriminations taking place at the family, school, community, and state levels. She has to be protected by others. Children are often considered as future adults, rather than individuals and citizens with a full set of rights and expectations right now. This emphasis is especially true for girls, who are seen mainly in terms of their future roles as mothers and the nurturers and mainstays of families and communities. (2010, 21)

In their analysis of the political agency of girls in developing countries, Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh challenge the idea of girls' passivity by arguing that it is in this way they are denied their rights. Although they do not survey their political agency in relation to climate

breakdown, their argument can be extended to this issue. In the analyzed narratives, girls are vocal about the collective future of their society and become part of communities that foster alternative modes of living.

Furthermore, some of the girl characters represented deliberately oppose consumerist habits in hegemonic societies. Although they are not part of public demonstrations, they articulate their political resistance to the system in place. With regards to activist girls in the Americas, sociologist Jessica Taft asserted that

> girlhood is not an irrelevant social category, but one that is important to global capital and global citizenship, and, therefore, to our understanding of political resistance and social movements in the Americas. According to the transnational theorist Chandra Mohanty, "it is especially on the bodies and the lives of women and girls from the Third World/South -the Two-Thirds World- that global capitalism writes its script, and it is by paying attention to and theorizing the experiences of these communities of women and girls that we demystify capitalism as a system of debilitating sexism and racism and envision anti-capitalist resistance"" (Taft, 2011, 6)

Taft draws our attention to the material effects of the capitalist system in girls' lives and advocates for envisioning a system that resists this model. Academics from across disciplines incentivize the envisioning of alternatives to the current system and artists that work on cinema and literature are articulating alternatives. Once again, Taft's research does not mention the environmental injustices that happen in capitalist societies and how these also affect girls. However, both in real life and in fiction, girls are articulating a political resistance to confront this situation. In some cases, challenging the status quo entails intergenerational cooperation between girls and women. In other cases, such as *Bosque de niebla* [The Cloud Forest] (2017) by Mónica Álvarez Franco and *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood it is through girl's education.

1.5 My work

My focus is related to the oeuvre produced by contemporary women novelists and filmmakers in the Americas, specifically their engagement with environmental justice. Most of the novels and films studied here call for an examination of the socio-economic system in place which affects both the environment and all the species living in it. For this reason, my argument is structured around the idea of labour in relation to the environment. In the first chapter, by using the notion of the poetic of environmental destruction stories

are analyzed in which characters work within an unequitable system and some of them emerge as revolutionary subjectivities that resist the neo-liberal extractive economic model. In the second chapter, through the idea of the poetic of environmental care the connection between the ethics of care for the environment in relation to care work in four texts is studied. The last chapter is devoted to three texts that are analyzed under the poetic of environmental insurgency which offer alternative understandings of common goods by proposing counter-hegemonic social structures.

After having reviewed the main routes of enquiry posed by the Environmental Humanities, Ecocriticism both in North and Latin America, the contributions of Gender Studies to Environmental Justice in the sections, the ground has been laid to proceed to the different chapters. The next chapter offers an analysis of four texts in which the writers and directors expose the dire consequences of *maldesarrollo* [bad development] for both humans and the environment through poetic of environmental destruction.

Chapter 2

2 The Poetics of Environmental Destruction: Resisting *Maldesarrollo* in the Americas

2.1 Poetics of Environmental Destruction, Extractivism, and Bad Development

In this chapter, I analyze five texts from different regions in the Americas that, through poetics of destruction, criticize the socio-environmental consequences of development in the region. Building on Gisela Heffes' study on environmental tropes found in texts both literary and non-literary, I propose that the trope of destruction (Heffes, 2013, 31) in some literary and cinematographic texts becomes a poetics of destruction. If a trope is understood as a rhetorical figure, such as an image that gives a different meaning to an expression or words, in some environmentally engaged texts, destruction is not merely a figure but permeates the narratological structures of the discourse. This poetic of environmental destruction denounces, challenges and disrupts *maldesarrollo* [bad development]. I have identified three principles of the poetics of environmental destruction. The first one is the representation of a doubling structure in which either one space, time, or even idea is mirrored by another one. From the recurrences in the selected corpus, the most frequent bifurcations are spatial. Storytellers refer to an underground (or under-water) setting usually in relation to extractivist practices. The second principle is the central presence of a destructive force that undermines the life and well-being of humans and non-human nature. This destructive impetus can be triggered by institutions, corporations, individuals, and human-induced environmental hazards. The last principle of the poetics of destruction is the representation of a protagonist or group of characters that through their labour, paid or unpaid, work to resist the devastating force.

In some environmentally committed texts, the cineastes and authors represent how the resistance movements act against extractivism. This term is defined as "a particular way of thinking and the properties and practices organized towards the goal of maximizing benefit through extraction, which brings in its wake violence and destruction" (Duarte, Kröger, LaFleur, 2021, 20). According to Eduardo Gudynas (2019), the notion of extractivism is derived from the Spanish *extractivismo* which was developed by Latin

American Left intellectuals in the 1970s to name the developments in the mining and oil export sectors. Initially, the term referred to the appropriation of so-called natural resources in large volumes at high intensity to be exported as raw materials with limited industrial processing (Gudynas, 2018, 62). Over time, academics began to expand this definition to encompass the extraction of labour, data, cultures, and individuals.

Extractivism did not emerge spontaneously nor recently. Intensive extractivist practices have been taking place since European colonialism across economic systems for the past 500 years[11] (Wallerstein, 1974; Mintz, 1986; Escobar, 1995; Acosta, 2013). The extraction of raw materials in the colonies has fueled the expansion of empires, enabled the emergence of modernity, propelled scientific research, and sustained economic prosperity. The material practice of extractivism is insolubly linked to a mindset which is intrinsically violent. This way of thinking caused and sustained centuries of destruction and depletion of indigenous peoples and environments. This extractivist global system that was set in place with the onset of colonialism still functions today. In reference to this, Gudynas (2019) asserts that: "The countries of Latin America accept to continue being suppliers of raw materials, as they have been doing since colonial times. Only the appropriate resources, technologies, and ways of organizing these ventures, and the discourses that legitimize them, have changed".[12] (68) The scale of extraction has vastly increased with technological advancement.

Confronted by the imminent threat to their livelihoods, some communities resist the extractive projects. Anthropologist Anna Willow has named these counter movements as extrACTIVISM (2018). Within this movement she includes indigenous communities,

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[11] Frank and Gills (1993) argues that the logics of extraction which undermine the environment have been in place for 5000 years.

[12] Los países de América Latina aceptan seguir siendo proveedores de materias primas, tal como lo vienen haciendo desde las épocas coloniales. Sólo han cambiado los recursos apropiados, las tecnologías y los modos de organizar esos emprendimientos, y los discursos que los legitiman.

environmentalists, non-governmental organizations, social movements, and trade unions. I also consider it necessary to include artists as part of extrACTIVISM. As I have mentioned in my analysis of characteristics of the poetics of environmental destruction, the representation of destructive forces is countered by the action of characters who will work to stop the depleting process. Moreover, in my analysis I also propose some examples of textual extraction in the form of intertexts. Some filmmakers and authors take excerpts from works and use them to propose a counter argument or viewpoint, but also to underscore the activist work of other storytellers.

Maldesarrollo [bad development] is another concept that informs this first chapter. Under this term, Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale (2014) analyze the socio-economic and environmental consequences of this history of depletion. They explain its logic in the following way:

> Thus, based on a productive and efficient view of the territory, the disqualification of other valuation logics is encouraged; territories are considered socially voidable and in extreme cases they end up becoming "sacrificial areas" to satisfy selective progress. Developmental neo-extractivism installs, in this way, a vertical dynamic that bursts into territories and, in its wake, competes and tends to displace existing regional economies, destroying biodiversity, dangerously deepening the process of land grabbing, expelling or displacing rural communities, peasant or indigenous, and violating citizen decision processes.[13] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 16)

Some of the filmmakers and novelists in this chapter allude to these valuation logics that the authors refer to in order to expose the interlocking systems of oppression. As expressed

[13] [A]sí, en función de una mirada productivista y eficientista del territorio, se alienta la descalificación de otras lógicas de valoración; los territorios son considerados como socialmente vaciables y en los casos extremos terminan por convertirse en "áreas de sacrificio" para satisfacer el progreso selectivo. El neoextractivismo desarrollista instala, así, una dinámica vertical que irrumpe en los territorios y, a su paso, compite y tiene a desplazar las economías regionales existentes, destruyendo la biodiversidad, profundizando de modo peligroso el proceso de acaparamiento de tierras, expulsando o desplazando comunidades rurales, campesinas o indígenas, y violentando procesos de decisión ciudadana.

in the quotation above, the problems triggered by *maldesarrollo* exceed the realm of the environment, thereby revealing ethnic, gender, and social inequalities.

Adding the adjective "bad" to the noun "development" serves a twofold purpose for Svampa and Viale. On the one hand it establishes that what is commonly understood as development is an unsustainable system, and on the other it indicates that there is a possibility for a "good" development. The traditional understanding of development models entails the growth of the economy and the consequent positive impact on the population. One specific theory of development emerged during the late 1980s, neoliberalism, which paved the way for the intensification of extractivist practices. Human geographer David Hervey defines neoliberalism as a political and economic framework that places the utmost value on private property, free markets, and free trades, while at the same time advocating for the financialization of everything.[14] (2005, 33) The lack of government regulations enabled corporations to increase their profits with little control. Svampa and Viale advocate for a change of this paradigm that affects all areas of human and non-human lives. They name this model *alterdesarrollo* [alter development]. In chapter three I explain how this model has informed contemporary insurgent narratives in which filmmakers and novelists propose alternative modes of living that are not geared towards neoliberal extractivism.

2.2 Introduction to the selected corpus

In this initial chapter, is analyzed how *maldesarrollo* (Dumond and Mottin, 1981; Satrustegui, 2009; Svampa and Viale, 2014) is represented in the works of artists across the continent when they point out how deplorable are the living and working conditions of women as vulnerable subjects. Some of these characters are able to express resistance to their current way of living while others are silenced or absent from the narration. The corpus of this section consists of the novels *Poso Wells* by Gabriela Alemán (2007) and *Enterre seus mortos* [Bury Your Dead] by Ana Paula Maia (2018), and the films *El verano*

[14] For further definitions of neoliberalism see Comaroff and Commaroff. *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*, 2001.

de los peces voladores [The Summer of the Flying Fish] by Marcela Said (2013) and *Falls Around Her* by Darlene Naponse (2018).

The novel *Poso Wells* by Ecuadorian Gabriela Alemán was published in 2007, but it achieved most of its critical attention after its translation into English in 2018. In a review published in *World Literature Today*, Ríos de la Luz observes that Alemán "weaves noir, feminism, satire, and environmentalism into the strange history." (Ríos de la Luz, 2018) For the purposes of my research, the most telling review is a very brief publication, "Out of the Mainstream: Books and Films You May Have Missed" by Matt Witt in the *New Labour Forum Magazine* published by The Murphy Institute, CUNY School of Labour and Urban Studies. Witt summarizes the plot as "a distinctly Latin-American novel [that] mixes magical realism and mystery in a story that includes disappearances of women and threatened exploitation of local forests by a multinational company." (2019, 101) Witt's analysis both exemplifies that *Poso Wells* is of interest to scholars in areas other than literary studies, in this case a researcher on labour, and supports my reading form a socio-economic perspective. Two significant academic articles have been published about this novel: "When the First World Becomes the Third: The Paradox of Collapsed Borders in Two Novels by Gabriela Alemán" (2010) by John D. Riofrio and "*Escritura de mujeres: daño ambiental, orden materno, cartografías de la violencia*" [Women's Writing: Environmental Damage, Maternal Order, Cartographies of Violence] (2019) by Alicia Ortega Caicedo. The first article proposes an analysis of the novel *Body Time* (2003) and *Poso Wells* (2007) by focusing on the permeability of the border between the Global North and Global South. This Inter-American approach enables the critic to point out the functioning of multinational corporations in the fictional town of Poso Wells. The second article proposes a comparative analysis of *La loca de Gandoca* [Madwoman of Gandoca] (1991) by Anacrista Rossi, *Poso Wells* (2007), and *Distancia de rescate* [Fever Dream] (2014) by Samantha Schweblin, establishing a correlation between the violence exerted towards women and the environment.

The other novel analyzed in this first chapter is *Enterre seus mortos* [Bury Your Dead] (2018) by Ana Paula Maia. This Brazilian novelist and scriptwriter is best known for her *Trilogia dos Brutos* [Saga of Brutes] which entails: *Entre rinhas de cachorros e*

porcos abatidos [Between Dog Fights and Hog Slaughter] (2009), *O trabalho sujo dos outros* [The Dirty Work of Others] (2009), and *Carvão animal* [Carbo Animalis] (2011). One of the first articles about her latest novel is "*Literatura em tempo de barbárie: un estudo sobre romances brasileiros contemporâneos*" [Literature in a Time of Barbarism. A Study on Contemporary Brazilian Novels] (2019) by Gisele Novaes Frighetto, where she proposes a reading of the aesthetics of barbarism informed by the work of Raymond Williams. Much of the scholarly readings are devoted to analyzing the violent atmosphere created throughout the trilogy as well as the blurring divisions between animals and men. One of the few academic articles including Maia's latest novel is "Ecocriticism in Brazil: The Wastelands of Ana Paula Maia's fictions" (2020) by Leila Lehnen. Although this scholar does not consider gender or labour perspectives, she focuses on the theme of environmental crisis and wastelands. I analyze how wastelands are represented, more specifically, the geography as a sacrifice zone, not only of humans but also of non-human nature.

El verano de los peces voladores [The Summer of the Flying Fish] by Marcela Said is a Chilean-French co-production that premiered at Cannes (2013) and won awards at the *Cinéma en Construction* in Toulouse, La Habana Film Festival, and the RiverRun International Film Festival. This film received the attention of critics because it represents the ongoing conflict between the Chilean state and the Mapuche Indigenous nation. However, much of the criticism arises from the presumption that non-Indigenous filmmakers cannot fully represent Indigenous stories (Estévez, 2014; González-Rodríguez, 2020). In "Latin American Indigenous Media Productions: Digital Artifacts of Contestation" (2020), Milton Fernando González-Rodríguez mentions this film as an example of "Indigenous characters that are portrayed […] as members of societies dependent on help from external agents" (González-Rodríguez, 2020, 98). Another academic article analyses the film as a *Bildungsroman* of the non-indigenous protagonist, Manena, in the process of forming her consciousness about racial, ethnic and socio-economic differences (Díaz-Zambrana, 2018, 25).

The last film in my first chapter is *Falls Around Her* by Darlene Naponse. This Canadian film premiered at the 2018 Toronto International Film Festival and later on was

screened at the opening gala of the imagineNATIVE media+arts festival, where it won the Air Canada Audience Choice Award. The drama was reviewed not only in Canada (*Screen Daily*, 2018; *Now Toronto*, 2019), but also in an Australian specialized journal (*Artlink*, 2019). In his piece for *Screen Daily*, Hazelton remarks that in 2018 TIFF featured nine films directed by women, focusing his attention on *Anthropocene: The Human Epoch* (2018) by Jennifer Baichwal, Nicholas de Pencier and Edward Burtynsky and *Falls Around Her*. However, there is no mention that these films also share an environmental concern. On his part, when writing for *Now Toronto*, Edwards points out that the film touches on "contemporary Indigenous issues – the community protests against a mining company polluting the waterways, and there's a joke about the government not honouring treaties" (Edwards, 2019), but observes that the filmmakers leave several issues unexplained or not fully developed. Australian Film scholar Pauline Clague published the article "Indigenous Storytelling: Deconstructing the Archetype" (2019) in which she revisits five hundred films featuring indigenous characters and states that there are four prevailing archetypes: the noble savage, the struggling contemporary Indigenous person, the Aboriginal woman, and the Shaman. She points out that the protagonist of *Falls Around Her* initiates her path as a disengaged indigenous woman who rejects indigenous teachings by assimilating into the colonized world. Clague argues that later the protagonist moves past this state and is able to express a deeper connection to Mother Earth. Although I agree with her point about the deep connection to her environment, I do not concur with her argument about the initial disconnection with indigenous traditions and ways of living. The protagonist is a mature musician whose work requires her to be on the road but upon her return she expresses allegiance to her indigenous friends and family and defends her environment against the toxic dumping of the local mine.

2.3 Sediments of Patriarchal Extractivism in Ecuador: A Palimpsestic Reading of *Poso Wells*

In this section I propose an analysis of the novel *Poso Wells* (2007) by Graciela Alemán through the examination of the use of intertexts to represent a bifurcated geographical place governed by the connivance of local and transnational patriarchal-extractivist powers. Alemán leads the reader into an apparently realistic small town, in the proximity of Guayaquil, only to disrupt this deceptive normality with the introduction of an allegorical specular underworld ruled by monk-like patriarchs who imperceptibly abduct women.

Gabriela Alemán was one of the first contemporary Ecuadorian women authors to be published and acquire moderate recognition. Her work is included in several anthologies on Latin American literature and women's literature such as *Les bonnes nouvelles de l'Amérique Latine* (2010). Throughout her career she was nominated for numerous awards, was selected as a finalist for the Hispano-American Short-Story Award Gabriel García Márquez (2015) and was awarded the national Joaquín Gallegos Lara Award twice (2014 and 2017). In 2006 she won a Guggenheim scholarship and in 2007 she was included in the Bogotá39 list of most relevant Latin American authors under 39 years of age. *Poso Wells* was not widely read until its 2017 English translation. Alemán paved the way for a new generation of younger women authors in Ecuador. In the span of ten years, between its first publication and the translation, the readers have clearly shifted their interest towards other emerging Ecuadorian women authors, such as Mónica Ojeda, María Fernanda Ampuero, Solange Rodríguez, Gabriela Ponce, and Natalia García Freire. Some of these storytellers have developed a unique voice, for instance, Ojeda (who in 2017 also was selected in Bogotá39) is known for her Andean gothic style through which she explores fear and pain within family relationships in novels such as *Nefando* (2016) y *Mandíbula* (2018). Ampuero in her two short-story books *Pelea de gallos* [Cockfight] (2018) and *Sacrificios humanos* [Human Sacrifices] (2021) also describes violent attacks against women within their families.

Most of Gabriela Alemán's narratives challenge simple generic categorization, and *Poso Wells* is no exception. The novel begins as a political satire but later becomes a detective novel with brushstrokes of magic realism and science fiction. The opening paragraph reads as follows:

> Poso Wells does not appear on the map. It would be impossible for it to be there. That enormous amount of mud gained from the estuary was, the last time anyone surveyed, part of the river. And the water runs, it is not parcelled. But there it is, against the will of many, and any of its inhabitants would be able to give an accurate description of its location: it is in the most stinky and forgotten hole in the limits of the world that exists on this side of the central Pacific. Kilometers and kilometers of stick, cane and chipboard houses built on sewage and rotten mud. Mangrove stake sunk into soft, muddy earth; an unstable ground where cracks appear with each high swell or current dragged by high-tonnage ships on their way to the port of Guayaquil.[15] (Alemán, 2007, 11)

The plot is situated in the fictional Cooperative Poso Wells, described as a forgotten putrid hole, allegedly in the proximity of Guayaquil, in Ecuador. Although this place cannot be found on the map, Alemán is referring to a specific historical event that pushed marginal settlements into an even more perilous position than before. In 2006, the Ecuadorian government decided to dredge Guayaquil's port covertly to deepen the harbour in order to increase international exports. The removal of sediments and debris, and the subsequent crossing of vessels weakened the housing foundations in these precarious settlements.

In the novel, journalist Gonzalo Varas is conducting research to write his story about missing women in the area. During interviews, he made the following point about the citizens:

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[15] Poso Wells no aparece en el mapa. Sería imposible que así fuera. Esa enorme cantidad de lodo ganada al estero era, la última vez que alguien realizó un levantamiento topográfico, parte del río. Y el agua corre, no se parcela. Pero ahí está, contra la voluntad de muchos, y cualquiera de sus habitantes acertaría a dar una descripción precisa de su ubicación: está en el hueco más apestoso y olvidado de los límites del mundo que existe de este lado del Pacífico central. Kilómetros y kilómetros de viviendas de palo, caña y aglomerado construidas sobre aguas servidas y barro podrido. Estaca de mangle hundidas en una tierra fangosa y blanda; un suelo inestable donde aparecen grietas con cada marejada alta o corriente que arrastran los buques de alto tonelaje en su camino al puerto de Guayaquil.

> If they were forced to describe what this accursed and barren land has, they could not. […] Throughout the neighborhood, things disappear. […] That feeling of danger is not removed just by trying, you live with it all day and at dusk it becomes more palpable because it is not only food that disappears but people.[16] (Alemán, 2007, 13)

Despite the normalization of daily disappearances, Varas' editor interrupts his work to cover the story of the unusual death of a presidential candidate. While campaigning, the politician visited Poso Wells to offer food in exchange for votes and during his speech on stage he urinated and was fatally electrocuted with a high-voltage discharge through his microphone. On resuming his investigation, Varas rakes the town for fifty missing women. Along his way, he attempts to save a dog that fell into a hole, and while doing so, he realises that the cavity is much deeper. He fetches a rope. In his anabasis he is attacked by rats and at the end of the tunnel he stumbles over a lump, only to discover that it is a woman. He carries both her and the dog up to the surface, but given the traumatic experience, she is unable to speak about what she went through in the underworld.

While doing archival research, Varas comes across a "historical document" where a "chronicler," H. G. Wells, reports the existence of an ancient civilization of blind people who inhabited Ecuador since the sixteenth century. Far from being a historical source, Gabriela Alemán is paying homage to the father of science fiction, H.G. Wells, by using his short story *The Country of the Blind* (1904) as an intertext. The succinct summary of its plot elucidates the narrative parallels. Wells tells the story of mountain climber Núñez, who slips and falls into the valley of the Country of the Blind. In this forgotten land, everyone has been blind for more than fifteen generations, both women and men. The dwellers do not believe in the sense of sight that Núñez possesses and consider him of an inferior intelligence. Being a social pariah, Núñez tries to demonstrate the benefits of sight,

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[16] Si se vieran forzados a describir qué tiene esa tierra estéril y maldita, no podrían. […] Por todo el barrio las cosas desaparecen. […] Esa sensación de peligro no se quita con solo intentarlo, se vive con ella todo el día y al atardecer se vuelve más palpable pues no es solo comida lo que desaparece sino gente.

but he only fuels the collective will to blind him. In a desperate act, Núñez escapes from the valley, never to return.

As Jean Marie Trujillo has pointed out, the motifs of eyesight and blindness traverse *Poso Wells* (2016, 177). In her doctoral dissertation on the representation of Andean diasporas in literature, Trujillo indicates that this motif is used in this novel to demonstrate the collective blindness towards the disappearances and trafficking of women in Ecuador. As Varas explains in the novel, "I always found someone who had lost a niece or daughter. Women vanished like smoke and no one who could do something seemed to care too much"[17] (Alemán, 2007, 24). Even though gender violence and environmental precarity were not directly present in Wells's story, Alemán uses both the motifs of blindness and the physical descent of the male character to ponder these contemporary issues in Ecuadorian society.

As the novel unfolds, parallels between the Ecuadorian novel and the English short story become more developed. Gerard Genette's narratological notion of palimpsest is useful both in the structural and thematic levels. *The Country of the Blind* is a key intertext but at the same time, the archeological meaning of palimpsest, overlapping geographical layers, informs my analysis of the allegorical topography of the novel. The underworld that Varas observed is similarly inhabited by five religious blind old men. However, these old men kidnap women to keep them captive in the underworld. Read allegorically, these hidden patriarchal structures sustain, and at the same time weaken, the Ecuadorian social fabric. The interconnected web of exploitation and corruption intensifies when the only presidential candidate disappears from the public arena, abducted by the five blind men. Now the underworld hosts not only the representatives of gender and environmental violence but also the political corruption that undermines the bedrock of this society. The five men become a symbol of the gender, environmental, and political oppressive system.

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[17] siempre encontraba a alguien que había perdido a una sobrina o hija. Las mujeres se esfumaban como humo y a nadie que pudiera hacer algo parecía importarle demasiado.

The splitting presented by the double city, above and below the ground, also has discursive repercussions. The five blind men are hypocritical when they express their values. With an ironic tone, Gabriela Alemán describes that "the encounters with the men were grotesque because while they violated the women, they spoke with their convoluted voices about the perpetuation of their civilization and customs"[18] (Alemán, 2007, 149).

The environmental threats represented in the novel are not just caused by local corruption, which results in precarious living conditions specifically the physically weakened foundations of the town, but the political turmoil escalates acquiring international scale when the blind men decide to liberate the future president, Vinueza, from the underworld and he begins to act under their influence, proclaiming "they are wise men who have made me understand that God wants me to be the president of all Ecuadorians"[19] (Alemán, 2007, 121). Vinueza begins negotiations with a Canadian mining corporation for the legal rights for copper extraction. When writing the contracts, the notary declares

> He had reviewed the letter very carefully and from what he understood, open pit exploitation meant turning the forest into a desert. To remove the necessary earth in search of copper, it would be necessary to move seventy tons of soil a day. Goodbye forests, orchids and little birds: goodbye cloud forest. Bon voyage, because looking at it on the positive side, he would make millions just like the Canadians. [...] The atmosphere was too hot, and they had amply beaten up the people of Intag, the lands granted to the Eagle Copper Corporation were within the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, something that the notary overlooked when drafting the documents but not the population and its authorities. It would be seen, it would be seen, but when the time comes.[20] (Alemán, 2007, 147)

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[18] Los encuentros con los hombres eran grotescos pues mientras las violentaban, hablaban con sus voces enrevesadas sobre la perpetuación de sus civilización y costumbres.

[19] Son sabios que me han hecho entender que Dios quiere que yo sea el presidente de todos los ecuatorianos.

[20] Había revisado muy por encima la carta y de lo que entendió la explotación a cielo abierto suponía volver al bosque un desierto. Para remover la tierra necesaria en busca del cobre habría que mover setenta toneladas de suelo al día. Adiós bosques, orquídeas y pajaritos: adiós bosque nublado. *Bon voyage*, pues mirándolo por

The notary adopts an ironic viewpoint when he oversees the law in pursuit of economic revenue, and he minimizes the areas destructed by the contracts he authenticated. The land that the notary agrees to exploit, the Cotacachi-Cayapas Ecological Reserve, is a national park protected by international law and is inhabited by the Chachis indigenous population and African descendants. The last sentence implies that the local communities will resist the threats. Environmental injustices reveal a type of violence described by Rob Nixon as slow. Unnoted by the public eye, this violence builds up with time and has long-term consequences. The allegory of the hidden world speaks both to the immediate violence against women and to the extraction sites of copper. In this sense, the title of the novel is revealing since it is referring in three different ways to the word "hole". The term "well" not only is an evident allusion to H. G. Wells but it is also the English word for "hole." At the same time, the author chose to name her text "poso" [lees] rather than the expected "pozo" [hole], thus creating an allophonic pun between these words. The term "poso" refers to the sediments, to the remainder, the residual matter. The disappeared women and "natural resources" are considered by these five men, as symbols of power in Ecuador, disposable, to be used, exploited, and then discarded.

The title of the novel exposes an extreme form of predatory extractivism, open pit mining. In the description of the functioning of modern mining in Latin America, Svampa and Viale indicate that "this type of [open pit] mining profoundly affects the morphology of the area where the exploitation takes place, since it forces a well (gash, slit or open pit [English in the original]) to be made up to hundreds of hectares of surface and hundreds of meters deep."[21] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 175) Once again, this definition supports my

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el lado positivo, él haría millones al igual que los canadienses. […] El ambiente estaba demasiado caldeado y habían peloteado sobradamente a la gente de Intag, las tierras concesionadas a la Eagle Copper Corporation estaban dentro de la Reserva Ecológica Cotacachi-Cayapas, cosa que pasó por alto el notario al redactar los documentos pero no la población y sus autoridades. Ya se vería, ya se vería, pero cuando llegara el momento.

[21] [E]sta modalidad de minería [a cielo abierto] afecta profundamente la morfología de la zona donde se efectúa la explotación, ya que obliga a realizar un pozo (tajo, rajo u *open pit*) de hasta cientos de hectáreas de superficie y cientos de metros de profundidad.

argument that it is impossible to separate patriarchy and extractivism in *Poso Wells*'s allegorical underworld. Building on Jean Marie Trujillo's argument that Alemán creates a metaphor of a predatory organism to symbolize the web of women trafficking in the novel, I add that this organism not only feeds on women but also on other vulnerable sectors (such as indigenous communities), and the territory itself.

Open pit mining is one of the models of *maldesarrollo* that causes environmental injustices in present-day Latin America. In addition to the physical fracturing of the land that takes place in the novel, we can read a social splitting by which characters are divided into the ones that abide by the law and the ones that corrupt it. The latter group has the power to impose the logic of extraction and set in place mega-mining projects. Svampa and Viale explain that

> the mining model supported by transnational companies, in alliance with different governments (national and provincial), displays a binary conception of the territory based on the viable / unfeasible division, which leads to two major ideas: on the one hand, the idea of "efficient territory", a concept that is articulated with the classic topics of the productivist paradigm about progress and modernization; on the other, the idea of empty or "socially voidable" territories or - to put it in more concrete terms - of areas or zones of sacrifice[22] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 174-175)

Gabriela Alemán juxtaposes in depth not in extension the binary division exposed by Svampa and Viale, creating a halved world characterized by its social asymmetry. The lower world, known by a few, is destined to be a sacrificial zone both for human and non-human nature. Later on in this chapter, a comparison is established on this matter with the Brazilian novel *Enterre seus mortos* (2018) [Bury Your Dead] by Ana Paula Maia.

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[22] [E]l modelo minero que sostienen las empresas trasnacionales, en alianza con diferentes gobiernos (nacionales y provinciales), despliega una concepción binaria del territorio sobre la base de la división viable/inviable, que desemboca en dos ideas mayores: por un lado, en la idea de "territorio eficiente", concepto que se articula con los tópicos clásicos del paradigma productivista acerca del progreso y la modernización; por otro, en la idea de territorios vacíos o "socialmente vaciables" o -para decirlo en términos más concretos- de áreas o zonas de sacrificio.

By introducing Holmes's viewpoint, one of the representatives of the Canadian mining company, Gabriela Alemán deconstructs the logic behind these transnational corporations by using irony:

> Holmes was fed up with the problems that peasants and environmentalists caused him around the world, although he found Latin Americans especially unnerving. It seemed that each polluted river, each interrupted animal route, felled tree house, was taken to heart; as if something inside them snapped when it happened. Plants, bugs: some died, others were born, what did it matter. Latin Americans had no vision of the future, they only knew how to live in the present. They knew nothing about progress. That's why they were as they were. Nothing would change his opinion that their underdevelopment lay there, in the lack of concentration and projection. They were diverted, they got lost easily but he could not deny that what he considered a defect, in the right circumstances and with the right people, made his job easier. If some protected a mangrove with their lives, others - who were in a position to do so, that was the key - were willing to sell without hesitation the entire land of the country for a certain amount and with a minimum benefit for its inhabitants. No longer for colored trinkets or paper. No, now it wasn't even that, it was just zeros and slashes moving in a digital network, moving amounts unimaginable for any human being from one account to another, from one country to another. Air, he was dealing with air. He laughed although nothing was particularly funny. Rather, everything was going wrong. His shares in Barrick Gold have fallen precipitously since the destruction of the Andean glaciers at Pascua Lama in Chile, to extract 10 billion dollars in gold, had reached the ears of the world press, disturbed by the Chilean peasants. And now some radical ecologists sons of dogs dared to award gold nuggets emblazoned with the words DIRTY GOLD. What did it matter to end up with a little water?[23] (Alemán, 2007, 161-163)

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[23] Holmes estaba harto de los problemas que le ocasionaban en el mundo entero los campesinos y los medio ambientalistas aunque a los latinoamericanos los encontraba especialmente enervantes. Parecía que se tomaban a pecho cada río contaminado, cada ruta de animal interrumpido, casa árbol talado; como si algo dentro de ellos se partiera cuando ocurría. Plantas, bichos: morían unos, nacían otros, qué importaba. Los latinoamericanos no tenían visión de futuro, solo sabían vivir el presente. No sabían nada sobre el progreso. Por eso estaban como estaban. Nada haría cambiar su opinión de que en eso radicaba su subdesarrollo, en la falta de concentración y proyección. Se dejaban desviar, se perdían en el camino fácilmente pero no podía negar que eso que él consideraba un defecto, en algunas circunstancias adecuadas y con las personas correctas, facilitaba su trabajo. Si unos protegían un manglar con su vida, otros -que estaban en condición de hacerlo, esa era la clave- estaban dispuestos a vender sin titubear todo el suelo del país por una cifra determinada y con un mínimo beneficio para sus habitantes. Ya no por baratijas de colores ni papel. No, ahora ni siquiera era eso, eran solo ceros y barras moviéndose en una red digital, trasladando cantidades inimaginables para cualquier ser humano de una cuenta a otra, de un país a otro. Aire, él traficaba con aire.

Holmes in a condensed way exposes his developmentalist ideology by carrying the flag of progress and through this procedure Gabriela Alemán ironizes about the alleged lack of foresight some Latin American people had regarding environmental matters. By mentioning the colored mirrors, which became the symbol of fraudulent exchange during the Conquest, the author establishes a historical timeline that contains the history of Latin American colonial and neo-colonial ecologies. In Holmes's words, the exchange did not change altogether, only the currency did, which became intangible. Svampa and Viale specify that one of the main characteristics of modern mining is that because of its transnational nature, the activity is concentrated in few global businesses, 60% of them are Canadian (2014, 172). This web extends across Latin America with the extraction of gold, silver, copper, and other strategic minerals, such as uranium, disproportionately exported abroad with thin margins for internal consumption within the region of extraction. However, the last section of the quoted paragraph sheds some light on the resistance work accomplished by the press. Holmes mentions the conjoined action of farmers, journalists, and environmental activists to make visible the mining of gold which causes the destruction of glaciers in Chile.

In a similar vein, the resistance to the corrupt locals in collusion with global systems in the novel is formed by a group of characters: journalist Gonzalo Varas, his Mexican friend Benito, a woman from Poso Wells named Bella, Varas's host Montenegro, and the woman Varas rescued from the underworld, Valentina. Gabriela Alemán seems to indicate that resistance is necessarily collective and both men and women are involved. From this group, the dedicated work of journalist Varas in both uncovering the ignored group of missing women and the network of political corruption.

Regarding the landscape of journalism in Ecuador, Mercedes Vigón, Juliet Pinto and Lilian Martínez-Bustos note that "reporting faces serious challenges in a nation whose

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Se rió aunque nada era especialmente divertido. Más bien todo le estaba saliendo mal. Sus acciones de Barrick Gold caían precipitadamente desde que la destrucción de los glaciares andinos en Pascua Lama en Chile, para extraer 10.000 millones de dólares en oro, había llegado a los oídos de la prensa mundial, alterados por los campesinos chilenos. Y ahora unos radicales ecologistas hijos de perro se atrevían a reglar pepitas de oro blasonadas con las palabras ORO SUCIO. ¿Qué importaba acabar con un poco de agua?

economy is centered on neo-extractivist activities, particularly oil, and where sharp political divides and harsh legal environment have resulted in less space for critical and investigative reporting." (2018, 92) In addition to the threats to freedom of speech, the financial crisis in 1999 created a credibility gap given that bank-owned media monopolies failed to inform about the true severity of the crisis that resulted in most of the Ecuadorian population losing their savings. Moreover, Mercedes Vigón, Juliet Pinto, and Liliam Martínez-Bustos highlight: "one sector whose voice is rarely heard in the media coverage is that of the indigenous population. Indigenous groups, while increasingly politically powerful, still remain sharply divided from nonindigenous sectors of Ecuadorian society, as old sociocultural cleavages remain" (2018, 109) This lack of representation in the media is also reflected in the novel *Poso Wells*. Even though Alemán clearly says that the exploited lands belong to indigenous communities, they are not involved in the resistance. This specific point is a contrasting element with other texts in the corpus, such as *El verano de los peces* voladores [The Summer of the Flying Fish], *Voces da floresta* [Voices of the Forest], *Falls Around Her*, and *Beans*.

Gabriela Alemán did not published *Poso Wells* in 2007 by coincidence. The world had its eyes on the Andean region between 2006 and 2008, when Bolivia and Ecuador drew up new plurinational constitutions. Indigenous peoples make up to thirty five percent of the population in Ecuador, fifty-five in Bolivia. These constitutions not only recognized indigenous nations within the territory of the state, but also their beliefs. When explaining Latin America's new conception of the good life and the rights of nature, Thomas Fatheuer argues that "the conscious orientation toward the indigenous Andean tradition is *the* special feature of the processes in Bolivia and Ecuador. It also represents the historical and social contest of the *Buen Vivir* concept" (2011, 14). A characteristic of this concept is the search for a collective good life and the defense of Nature's legal rights. In his explanation, Fatheuer clarifies that although this new constitution was in place in Ecuador, it did not always impact the political and economic policies. Once president Rafael Correa came to power, he distanced himself from defenders of the *Buen Vivir* and his policies were criticized for their lack of citizen participation. Fatheuer refers to two historical incidents that demonstrate the clash between the new constitution and Correa's policies: "in terms of *Buen Vivir*, two conflicts were emblematic: the 2009 mining law, which met with the

fierce resistance by the social movement during its deliberations. [And] A draft water law provoked a similar confrontation in 2010" (Fatheuer, 2011, 27). These historical events show that the political and economic context denounced by Alemán in *Poso Wells* was still in place harming the environment, women, and vulnerable populations even after the constitutional amendments.

In Gabriela Alemán's novel, female characters represent a key role in resisting the flattening of environmental, gender, and human rights. The traumatized woman who Varas rescues from the tunnels, Valentina, screams her first words when she recognizes the five monks in clear blue tunics on television: "it is them"[24] (Alemán, 2007, 124). She gradually narrates her traumatic experience to Varas who decides to file a complaint against the five kidnappers and notify the local broadcasting station. Once the public prosecutor arrives to rescue the imprisoned women, the precarious living conditions worsen even more because Banegas, the prosecutor, intends to carry out the excavation with bulldozers in unstable terrain[25]. Varas calls Bella, a member of the community, to direct the rescue given her knowledge of the area and common sense. She arranges the safety measures for when the women emerge, such as tents, personal hygiene items, medical supplies, and doctors from the Red Cross.

Despite the rescue of more than a hundred women from captivity, no substantial changes occur in the political and socio-environmental scenario in the Ecuador that the novel portrays. By the end, the author introduces a momentary impasse in the violence towards women, indigenous nations, and their environment, but the structures in place that enable those infringements have not been altered. Gabriela Alemán does not represent a hopeful scenario for the future of socio-environmental justice in Ecuador, or even Latin America. By narrating from Holmes's viewpoint, the representative of the Canadian

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[24] Son ellos.

[25] A similar image is used by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara in *La virgen cabeza* [Slum Virgin] when bulldozers try to evacuate a precarious settlement in a *villa miseria* [slum] removing layers of waste.

mining company, the predatory logic of global extractive corporations is exposed. Holmes plans his next venture when he says that

> Already in that same continent, he would take the opportunity to pay a visit to the commissions that had allowed an agreement to be reached between Chileans and Argentines to convert the Andean peak - he had liked the description made by a newspaper - into a virtual country open to international mining companies, a sort of no man's land where there were no taxes and no fees were paid. He liked it when the press did their job well. No one could disrupt that agreement signed and sealed by both states; Ecuador was still a needle in a haystack. Too many black holes, too many loopholes that would not allow mines to be exploited in peace. But there was no hurry, digital technology existed for that and he had in his possession a map of Ecuador with all the mining deposits highlighted in a wide range of bright colors, and there were many. It would only be a matter of time, of waiting for the right government to arrive, of convincing a few investors, of publishing the profits and for the gullible inhabitants of the country to believe them. He did all of this in a day's work, but that would not be now, not in the present, but in the future. Oh the future! The future opened up like a great jumble of possibilities[26]. (Alemán, 2007, 177)

Holmes's predatory strategy is to wait for the appropriate time to attack again in Ecuador by using his powerful weapon: maps. By mentioning this tool, the author establishes a direct connection to neo-colonialist extractivist practices and colonialism. Cartography is still a vehicle for land appropriation, and in this case, through the use of technology, underground "resources" can be located. However, the direst aspect of the above fragment is how promising Holmes envisions his future. Gabriela Alemán's representation of the attitude of this Canadian representative echoes Rob Nixon's remarks on the local and global

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[26] Ya en ese mismo continente aprovecharía para hacer una visita a las comisiones que habían permitido que se llegara a un acuerdo entre chilenos y argentinos para convertir a la cima andina -le había gustado la descripción que hizo un periódico- en un país virtual abierto a las compañías mineras internacionales, una suerte de tierra de nadie donde no existían impuestos ni se pagaban derechos. Le gustaba cuando la prensa hacía bien su trabajo. Nadie podía desbaratar ese acuerdo firmado y sellado por ambos estados; lo de Ecuador era todavía una aguja en un pajar. Demasiados huecos negros, demasiados vacíos legales que no dejarían explotar las minas en paz. Pero no había apuro, para eso existían la tecnología digital y él tenía en su poder un mapa de Ecuador con todos los depósitos mineros resaltados en una gran gama de colores brillantes y, eran muchos. Solo sería cuestión de tiempo, de esperar que llegara el gobierno adecuado, de convencer a unos cuantos inversores, de publicar los beneficios y que los crédulos habitantes del país se los creyeran. Todo eso lo hacía él en un día de trabajo, pero eso no sería ahora, no en el presente, sino en el futuro. ¡Ah el futuro! El futuro se abría como un gran amasijo de posibilidades.

connections of extractivism when he states that "the writer-activist shares […] a desire to lay bare the dissociational dynamics whereby, for example, a rich-country conservation ethic is uncoupled from environmental devastation, externalized abroad, in which it is implicated." (Nixon, 2011, 23) The strength of Canadian environmental policy is applied internally but contrasts with Canadian mining companies in the Global South. I will touch on this matter again when I compare *Poso Wells* with the Canadian film *Falls Around Her*.

Poso Wells is an invitation for readers to move beyond the surface and reveal hidden aspects, both symbolically and materially. On the symbolic level, readers need to dig further in order to reach layers of meaning by referring to literary, journalistic, and even legal intertexts. The central metaphor of blindness found in Wells's short story, the lack of journalistic attention to missing women, and the political disregard for the new Ecuadorian constitution are texts that *Poso Wells* refers to. On the material level, this novel invites the reader to question the physical foundations they are standing on, what realities the media is hiding or exposing, and even how the hidden maneuvers of corporations jeopardize our collective future.

2.4 Global Screens and Tourist Gaze in *El verano de los peces voladores*

In the previous section I analyzed an Ecuadorian novel that uses an allegorical underworld to denounce the mechanisms by which multinational corporations and corrupt local governments usurp land from vulnerable populations and neglect women's rights. In this segment, in which is studied the representation of the effects of *maldesarrollo* on indigenous populations, particularly affected by internal tourism, I offer an analysis of the Chilean film *El verano de los peces voladores* [The Summer of the Flying Fish] (2014) by Marcela Said.

To contextualize her work, I will succinctly refer to the recent Chilean cinematographic overview as well as to the place of indigenous nations within it. In their introductory chapter to *Chilean Cinema in the Twenty-First Century World* (2020) Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer trace the development of the industry after the end of the military dictatorship. They indicate that even though the national film industry reflowered during the 1990s, only a few films actually referred to that dark historic period and "a spate of mediocre, local comedies and crime thrillers that received limited international attention were the dominant industry trend in the 1990s" (Barraza and Fischer, 2020, 7). They specify the quality of national productions improved by the end of the decade, and they identify four currents of filmmakers emerged in Chile at the turn of the century. The first group are filmmakers who focused on genre without much political references. The second one is the *Novísimos* (Cavallo and Maza, 2011), also referred to as Generation 2000 (Parada Poblete, 2012) and Generation 2005 (Kemp, 2010), a generation of young directors educated in film schools such as *Escuela de Cine de Chile* [Chile's School of Film], who represent their intimate preoccupations such as family fragmentation in a self-reflexive style. The third group are filmmakers that take to the silver screen issues related to society, politics, and recent history. The fourth group includes documentary directors who engage with political matters, revisiting the past and working on collective memory. Barraza and Fischer's introduction, as well as the essays in their collection, tend to focus on the representation of post-dictatorship and neo-liberalism in Chilean film but given the historical connection of film productions with the subject, I find it telling the lack of sections or essays on indigenous filmmakers or representation of first nations.

A detailed account of this issue can be found in documentary filmmaker Pamela Pequeño de la Torre's master's thesis titled: *Representaciones de género de sujetos indígenas en el cine chileno de ficción de la última década 2005-2015* (2015) [Gender Representations of Indigenous Subjects in Chilean Fiction Film of the Last Decade 2005-2015]. During the Seventies non-indigenous filmmakers became interested in making documentaries on the discrimination and violation of the Mapuche people's human rights. Throughout the Eighties and Nineties, this interest extended to other populations such as Aymara and Atacameños. During the Nineties the first films by indigenous filmmakers

were made, and some of the most outstanding ones were Jaenette Paillán's *Punalka, El alto Bío Bío* (1995), *Wirarün, El grito* (1998), and *Wallmapu* (2002).

Most film productions up until the late 1990s and early 2000s were documentaries, however, at the turn of the century filmmakers began to include indigenous nations in fiction films. Even though they acquired visibility in the silver screen, anthropologists Valentina Raurich and Juan Pablo Silva-Escobar (2011) indicate that indigenous populations were mainly represented as exotic or archaic. They posit that "the film native appears to be subjected to a process of aging and exoticization that places him outside the current situation. Hence, the image of indigenous peoples in national production strengthens an imaginary that places the indigenous in a historical, original, sacred, and mythical time."[27] (Raurich and Silva-Escobar, 2011, 80) However, this is not always the case. A group of films include main characters and protagonists from indigenous nations in contemporary Chile. Pequeño de la Torre enumerates some examples such as: *Play* (2005) by Alicia Scherson, *Alicia en el país* (2008) by Esteban Larraín, and *El verano de los peces voladores* by Marcela Said.

Franco-Chilean filmmaker Marcela Said began her career directing documentaries such as *Valparaiso* (1999), *I Love Pinochet* (2001), and co-directing with her partner Jean de Certeau, *Opus Dei: Una cruzada silenciosa* [Opus Dei: A Silent Crusade] (2006), and *El mocito* [The Young Butler] (2011). Most of Said's films have premiered in film festivals in Chile, France, and the Netherlands. Regarding the circulation of films in the international film festival circuit, Tamara Falicov asserts that "these [festival] films follow "particular aesthetic and narrative conventions for an educated audience and from a higher socioeconomic class stratum" and "are generally not fast-paced action genre films" (2016, 213)" (Falicov in Barraza and Fischer, 2020, 14). To this affirmation, Barraza and Fischer add that festival films narrate local political issues while at the same times package them for international audiences (Barraza and Fischer, 2020, 10). Bearing these characteristics

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[27] [E]l nativo fílmico aparece sometido a un proceso de envejecimiento y exotización que lo sitúa al margen de lo actual. De ahí que la imagen de los pueblos originarios en la producción nacional viene a fortalecer un imaginario que ubica al indígena en un tiempo histórico, originario, sagrado y mítico.

in mind, *El verano de los peces voladores* (2013) is a slow-paced film that through the viewpoint of a girl introduces both local indigenous and environmental conflicts to international audiences.

If we refer to the classification by Vania Barraza and Carl Fischer mentioned above, Marcela Said's initial work can be categorized in the third group, given the socio-political themes of her work. However, in her first fiction film, *El verano de los peces voladores* (2013), she incorporates some of the aesthetic characteristics of the *novísimos*. Social conflicts are now filtered through the viewpoint of a privileged girl who becomes aware of, and at the same time introduces the film's audiences to, political and environmental conflicts between settlers and indigenous groups in the Araucanía region in Chile. The film follows Manena over her summer vacations in the South of Chile where her family has an estate. Her father, Pancho Ovalle, is particularly invested in eradicating carps from the local artificial lagoon he constructed, going as far as to blow up with dynamite the specimens from their new habitat. As a result of his actions, the environment of indigenous individuals is also altered. Throughout the film, Manena gradually unravels the different ways in which her father has altered the local indigenous community. To help her in this political discovery process, her indigenous friend Pedro plays a key role.

By choosing to represent the domestic vacation that a wealthy settler family has within Chile, Marcela Said engages with the contemporary inequalities that the Mapuche community is confronted with and which are rooted in colonialism. Early in the film, Marcela Said shows the carp, an ecological imperialism metaphor that traverses the film, to refer to the tensions between indigenous and foreign species in general. One night during a dinner with friends, a guest asks Pancho about the provenance of the carp in the water to which he replies, "they come from another place" and quickly explains "look, the carps are originally from the Amur River that divides China from Russia. They brought them here to exterminate the algae, but they didn't tell them that they reproduced very fast." The insertion of a foreign species that alters the indigenous ecosystem and is uncontrollable by the settlers who introduced it is part of the process of ecological imperialism. Environmental scholars Robert S. Emmett and David E. Nye explain this type of imperialism by stating: "one reason some species have disappeared is that human beings

have assisted invasive species to spread in a process of ecological imperialism. Microbes, animals, and plants function as co-invaders that may impose change even more irreversible than that imposed by militarized human colonization" (Emmett and Nye, 2017, 15). The metaphor of the carp not only mirrors the invasive non-human animal species brought in the conquest of America, but also the initial introduction of colonizers who proceeded to exterminate indigenous groups and settle on their land.

Following Pancho's explanation about the origin of the carps, one of his friends suggests he puts the carps to use by installing a spa where the fish do "the pedicure by eating the callus of the client's feet" to which everyone laughs. Then Pancho's wife suggests another way of solving the problem, by asking "why don't you dry the lagoon, so the carps die and then you fill it up again" to which Pancho ironically replies: "good idea, eh! And who is going to pull the plug? Are you going to do it, or am I?". This brief exchange between husband and wife sets the tone for their relationship along the film. The character of Pancho's wife remains at the margins of the family decisions and is not involved in her daughter's life.

If the conflict of the carps preannounces that of the Mapuche community, another conversation between Pancho and his male settler friends fully delves into the dispute. One of the guests posits the following question: "What I don't understand is this idea of 'recovering the lands.' They talk about the historical debt. What historical debt? They have never owned anything!" To which another responds: "But their ancestors have." The first man disagrees: "Noooo. They were collectors and hunters. The agricultural activity was minimal. They walk through these woods. They usufruct the woods. They were not owners." Across Chile's territory there are nine indigenous groups: Aymara, Atacameños, Quechuas, Collas, Diaguitas, Rapa Nui, Mapuches, Kaweshkar, and Yámana or Yagan (Molina Otarola, 2012). The area in which the Ovalle family has their estate is the Araucanía, in Southern Chile, Mapuche territory. Contrary to what Pancho asserts, Mapuches had an agricultural system in place before the Spanish Conquest given the influence of the Inca culture in the North of the territory of modern-day Chile. Early ethnographic studies show that they were a semi-nomadic nation. Mapuches not only grew corn and quinoa but also implemented irrigation systems, used fertilizers, and worked with

metal agricultural instruments (Guevara, 1904, 31-35). However, in the conversation quoted above, arises one of the most contested aspects of territoriality in Chile, namely indigenous land ownership.

During the colonial period, Mapuches were granted sovereignty and power over their territory though the *Tratado de Quilín* [Treaty of Quilín] in 1641, and later, reinforced in 1825 by the *Parlamento de Tapihue* [Parliament of Tapihue] in which the newly established State of Chile recognized the autonomy and power of the *caciques* over their territory. Yet land was a key factor during the process of nation-building throughout the nineteenth century in Chile. Given this importance, the republican authorities, influenced by the hegemonic positivist ideology, began to outline plans for charting all of Chile's territory. The legal discourse used to sustain this policy was that of *terra nullius*, which determined that indigenous peoples did not have the right to own property given that they were nomads. Between 1862 and 1883 the state military forces occupied the Araucanía which allowed them to establish a real estate system. The Chilean state granted Mapuche people land titles but usually for much smaller pieces of land than what the Mapuche were accustomed to for agriculture and cattle raising. The remaining land was considered wasteland and taken by the state. According to Law professor Rodrigo Míguez Núñez, this was the inception of territorial conflicts between the Mapuche indigenous nation and the state of Chile (Míguez Núñez, 2013, 33). He enumerates the causes for the conflict:

> the usurpation of the ancestral land, the fragmentation of the territorial control of the traditional authorities, the ignorance of the effective occupation of land other than the house-room and neighboring territory, the overlapping of titles resulting from the auction of the indigenous property already awarded, the appropriation *de facto*, and the fraudulent acts on Mapuche lands, are some of the causes of the territorial conflicts derived from the occupation and imposition of property in Araucanía[28]. (Míguez Núñez, 2013, 33)

[28] La usurpación del terreno ancestral, la fragmentación del control territorial de las autoridades tradicionales, el desconocimiento de la ocupación efectiva sobre terrenos diversos a la casa-habitación y territorio aledaño, la superposición de títulos producto del remate de la propiedad indígena ya adjudicada, la apropiación de hecho y los actos fraudulentos sobre tierras mapuche, son algunas de las causas de los conflictos territoriales derivados de la ocupación e imposición de la propiedad en la Araucanía.

In the film, by minimizing their agrarian labour and land ownership, Pancho defends the neo-colonialist ideology that disowns the historical claims of Mapuches to the Araucanía territory.

As the tension between Francisco (Pancho) Ovalle and the local indigenous community escalates, his daughter Manena becomes increasingly interested in Mapuche culture and their ways of living, demonstrating an equitable treatment towards indigenous subjects. The narration is filtered by Manena's eyes. John Urry's notion of tourist gaze is useful for my analysis of Manena's relation to the local community. The Ovalle's estate in the Araucanía is the domestic tourist destination for the family that moves from the city to the lakes and the mountains to rest from work. Urry explains:

> At least a part of the [tourist] experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary. When we "go away" we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. […] There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group, and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference. […] Rather the gaze in any historical period is constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness. What makes a particular tourist gaze depends upon what it is contrasted with; what the forms of non-tourist experience happen to be. (Urry, 2002, 1)

Said insists throughout the film on showing Manena silently looking, sometimes directly into the lakes or mountains, and other times, mediated by a window. She is equally attracted by the environment and the indigenous people. Insofar as she strengthens her friendship with Pedro, Manena visits places not inhabited by settlers, discovers the everyday lives of Mapuche people, and consequently, begins to question some of her father's decisions regarding his estate. Returning to Urry's statement about difference, Manena is separated from the Mapuche community both by ethnicity and class differences which are also replicated at the directorial level in the film, I will refer to this point later.

One of the central aspects of the tourist gaze theory is the visitor's search for authenticity. According to his research, tourists seek to explore the real lives and experiences of the people living at the destination site. Both Pancho and his wife interact

with indigenous people merely as workers who provide services for them, making their stay comfortable: women are care takers in the house, and Pedro is employed to exterminate the carp from the artificial lake. In Manena's case, she is the only member of the family who shows any interest in the everyday lives and problems the Mapuche community faces as a consequence of Pancho's seasonal decisions. Some of these problems involve damaging Pedro's eardrum caused by the blast of one of the explosions in the lake to terminate the fish, killing the local sheep, massive logging, incarcerating a member of the Mapuche community because he defended himself from the attack of dogs, installing barbwire on Pancho's estate to prevent the community from passing and hunting in his property, and finally, murdering Pedro.

The tourist gaze is not only an internal device within the film, but it is replicated both at a directorial level and spectatorial level. Urry describes the differences between the familiar and the faraway produce liminal zones (Urry, 2002, 12). Within the film, the main place of liminality is the forest that Manena traverses on several occasions, even though at the beginning of the film an indigenous maid (instigated by Pancho) warns Manena about the perils she could find there. On the level of the filmmaker, Marcela Said does not have an indigenous background, but the core of her film is an environmental neo-colonial conflict. She chooses to tell the story from a settler girl's point of view and not from an indigenous one to respect native voices. Finally, at the spectatorship level, this film is produced by international companies and catered to global audiences. Spectators across the world in film festivals get a glimpse of Mapuche's conflicts in Chile through Said's narrative. However, in all three levels Said does not represent the direct experience of indigenous struggles. It is in this light that I interpret the ambiguous ending of the film: in the last scene, right after Manena discovers Pedro's murder, she is seen floating on the water, with her eyes closed and her ears below water level (see Figure 1). Even though she silently observed through the entire film and complained to her father, she cannot account for the sorrow of the Mapuche community. This ending suggests a sense of powerlessness in Manena who symptomatically suspends her visual and auditory perceptions. In the next sub-chapter, along the lines of *El verano de los peces voladores,* I propose to think about the value of life within capitalist systems in a Brazilian novel.

Figure 1: Final shot of *El verano de los peces voladores* (2013) by Marcela Said. Still Shot. Manena floating in the water. © ARTE, Centre National du Cinéma et de l`Image Animée, Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes.

2.5 Of Sacrificial Zones and Wasted Lives: Environmental Migration in *Enterre seus mortos*

In the following section analysis is offered of the representation of environmental migration caused by ecological depletion and health hazards in the Brazilian novel *Enterre seus mortos* (2018) by Ana Paula Maia. My analysis is informed by the correlating ideas of sacrificial zones (Lerner, 2010) and wasted lives (Bauman, 2004). Developed within the discipline of geography and widely used in environmental justice, the notion of sacrificial zones names the geographic areas located in the vicinity of polluting industries or military bases. These zones have noxious bodily impacts on the members of the community and generate exclusion. The population living in these areas is deemed disposable lives, because they are deprived of their livelihoods. In Maia's novel, this diminished value for life causes two simultaneous forms of migration: environmental migration of most of the population in town, and at the same time, displacement without moving (Nixon, 2011, 19) for the few people who remain in it.

I succinctly summarize the contemporary production of women writers in Brazil to support my argument of Ana Paula Maia's marginal position. Brazilian literature specialist Cláudia Castanheira traces the presence of women authors in her country to the colonial period. According to her, Clarise Lispector's publication of *Perto do coração selvagem* (1944) [Near to the Wild Heart] challenged the white, upper- and middle-class male dominated field of Brazilian literature. Thus, Castanheira affirms that:

> By diving into the unfathomable and unattainable mysteries of being and the word that represents it, Clarice [Lispector] distinguished herself as an "event", a watershed that determined two stages in female literature in Brazil, for which she founded a line of tradition, representing a great reference for the following generations.[29] (Castanheira, 2011, 32)

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[29] Ao mergulhar nos mistérios insondáveis e inatingíveis do ser e da palavra que o representa, Clarice [Lispector] se distinguiu como um "evento", um divisor de águas que determinou dois tempos na literatura de autoria feminina no Brasil, para a qual ela fundou uma linha de tradição, representando uma grande referência para as gerações seguintes.

Along these lines, Lispector's work sets a precedent for the revindications and cultural achievements by female authors in Brazil during 1960s. Influenced by feminist writers in the United States such as Betty Friedan, Brazilian women authors explore the conflicts between women's public and private spheres. In consonance with other writers across the globe, they challenged patriarchal structures deepened during the Seventies and Eighties. In an article published in 2011, Castanheira enumerates contemporary prominent authors by posing "new and promising talents that tend to represent and critically discuss the new sociocultural configurations of postmodernity – some examples are Patrícia Melo, Lívia Garcia-Roza, Adriana Lisboa, Heloísa Seixas, Fernanda Young, Carola Saavedra and Ana Paula Maia, among many others".[30] (Castanheira, 2011, 34) Within this group, Maia is one of the very few authors of African descent. The research carried out by Vania Maria Ferreira Vasconcelos in her doctoral dissertation sheds light on the historical lack of funding and scholarly attention to African-Brazilian women authors. She explains that: "according to research by Regina Dalcastagnè (2005), less than 10% of novels published by the three largest Brazilian publishers between 1990 and 2004 were authored by Afro-Brazilian writers, either men or women."[31] (Ferreira Vasconcelos, 2014, 13). She indicates that authors of African descent carry the burden of dismantling centuries of Brazilian literature that represented racialized characters either through animalization or hyperbolic sexual stereotypes.

Within the reduced group of published African-Brazilian authors, Ana Paula Maia is one of its greatest exponents. She began writing about the systematic degradation of the environment in her country long before Jair Bolsonaro came to power. Although as a reader one might expect to find the Amazon as the central geographical place for her stories, Maia does not specify the region in which her stories are situated. She refers to the historical

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[30] novos e promissores talentos que tendem a representar e discutir criticamente as novas configurações socioculturais da pósmodernidade – alguns exemplos são Patrícia Melo, Lívia Garcia-Roza, Adriana Lisboa, Heloísa Seixas, Fernanda Young, Carola Saavedra e Ana Paula Maia, entre muitas outras.

[31] Segundo a pesquisa de Regina Dalcastagnè (2005), menos de 10% dos romances publicados nas três maiores editoras brasileiras entre 1990 e 2004 tinham autoria de escritores afro-brasileiros, entre homens e mulheres.

layers of systematic environmental exploitation that took place since the conquest up until the present. Her most renowned work is the *A saga dos brutos* [The Brutes Saga] trilogy composed of *Entre rinhas de cachorros e porcos abatidos* [Between Dog Fights and Hog Slaughter], *O trabalho sujo dos outros* [The Dirty Work of Others], and *Carvão animal* [Carbo Animalis]. Throughout her work, different forms of marginality emerge through characters who work as coal miners, firemen, garbage collectors, crematorium workers, and through places such as prisons, slaughterhouses, and morgues in isolated towns. Most of the scholarly articles that analyse this author's literary corpus focus primarily on her most recurring theme, the blurred distinction between the dichotomy of animal and human (de Mauro Rucovsky, 2018), and on her violent aesthetic (Araújo Barberena, 2016; Kiill, 2019; Rezende Benatti, 2020; Araújo Morais, 2020). In addition to her novels, Maia wrote the scripts for the film *Deserto* [Desert] (2017) by Guilherme Weber and the supernatural mini-series *Desalma* [Unsoul] (2020) for GloboPlay platform.

In *Enterre seus mortos*, Ana Paula Maia returns to the life of her fictional character Edgar Wilson who now works as a collector of bodies of dead animals along the road, depositing them into a facility, and incinerating them. More than in her previous literary works, the atmosphere that Maia creates in this novel is direly dense and it intensifies throughout the narration. Edgar travels the roads, observing the geography of the region and interacting with some of the inhabitants. One day he finds the corpse of a female sex worker along the road, and he decides that she should have a proper burial, but the inefficiency of the local police and medical services prevent him from doing so. In his journey to find some official institution that can receive the corpse, he finds a fraudulent doctor at a morgue who fractions the bodies to sell the organs and tissues.

2.5.1 Cartographies of Desolation and Depletion

The representation of place in Maia’s novels is not merely a description of the setting but a key narratological device that sets the tone and, one could affirm, has even more textual weight than characters. Throughout his journey, Edgar describes a land tormented by unbearably high temperatures, with very few people living in it and even

fewer houses. While looking at the extension of land that lies before his eyes he thinks: “Everywhere you look there is dull vegetation, without any trace of vigor, as if connected to something that constantly takes away the sap. The plants resist, bad or good, in a way that is also continuous; animals die day after day.” (Maia, 2018, 19) The act of living in this land is an act of resistance. Maia represents soil depletion in a similar manner to water pollution. Fluvial bodies are far from sources of life, but portrayed as sewages. In a previous novel, *De gados e homens* [Of Cattle and Men] the description of the stream is as follows:

> The river is desert. It is a dead river and it is not usually common to meet someone who is fishing. [...] It is called the River of the Flies, and since the slaughterhouses grew in the region known as the Ruminant valley, its clean waters were stained with blood. All kinds of things and materials were deposited at the bottom of the river: organic and inorganic materials. Humans and animals. (Maia, 2013, 37)

All sources of life are compromised in Maia's fictional world. On numerous occasions, the narrator affirms that the cause of this devastated landscape is purely human.

Not only remnants are dumped in the streams but also materials are extracted from the land, specifically from a quarry. In *Enterre seus mortos* she explains:

> More than half of the local population works in the quarry, in the barite mine, or in the cement factory, all endeavours that require the mountain of limestone. Other quarries, opened in some other hill of the valley, transformed the geography of the mountains after decades of exploitation. In one of these quarries, the explosions with dynamite systematically perforated the ground until invading the groundwater table.[32] [...] (Maia, 2018, 26)

Maia makes evident in this fragment humans’ power of altering the geography and non-human environment in which they live in. Although not explicitly, she insinuates a

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[32] Mais da metade da população local trabalha a pedreira, na mina de brita e na fábrica de cimento; tudo é originario da imensa rocha de calcário. Outras pedreiras que ladeiam o vale, após décadas de exploração, ganharam novos contornos. Uma delas, devido às explosões de dinamite para a retirada das pedras, teve o solo perfurado sistemáticamente até alcançar o lençol freático, que inundou uma cratera…

distinctive process of the Anthropocene: terraforming. Emerged in science fiction literature, this idea refers to the potential transformation of celestial bodies for human habitation.[33] Since the 1950s this notion was adopted to encompass three possible meanings: "to modify a world's environment so that it can support Earth life-forms, especially humans; to modify a world's environment so that in can support life that evolved on a plant other than the Earth; to modify the Earth's environment." (Prucher, 2006) The third meaning was the last one to be incorporated to the definition in the late 1990s. If the first two senses refer to the alteration of planets to emulate Earth's characteristics, the latter refers strictly to the Earth. Literary scholar Chris Pak affirms that:

> the ability to alter the landscape and the ethical dilemmas this poses direct attention towards the future. The fundamental question asked is how we want to live, and it emerges from the concern over whether we can continue living in ways that threaten the integrity of our environments. (Pak, 2016, 17)

The place in which Ana Paula Maia situates her narration, is a terraformed environment. The landscape has been altered and with it the lives that inhabit it.

The very few characters who appear in this novel are related in some way or another to the extraction sites. Moreover, when Edgar refers to the way in which the quarry operates, he directly indicates how time is now measured:

> Three times a day the quarry is blown up: nine in the morning, twelve in the afternoon, three in the afternoon. Since the church bell stopped ringing due to the lack of someone operating it, the canonical hours have been measured by the explosions of the quarry, whose limestone dust is polluting and affects the respiratory tract.[34] (Maia, 2018, 25)

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[33] For a thorough analysis of how this literary trope influenced the field of Landscape Architecture, see Klosterwill, Kevan J. 2018.

[34] Três vezes ao dia a pedreira de calcário é dinamitada: às nove da manhã, ao meio-dia e às três da tarde. Desde que o sino da igreja parou por falta de quem o toque, as horas canônicas são contadas pelas explosões na pedreira, cujo póde calcário causa contaminação, afetando as vias respiratórias.

By replacing time being measured from the bells with the explosions, the author succinctly symbolizes a shift in power from the church to capitalist enterprises. By doing so, the belief in God becomes redundant in this place and with it, the feeling of hope. Even more so, the quarry not only has intangible consequences for the inhabitants, but also material ones because the land is depleted, and in the process, the few inhabitants of the region begin to show health complications. This is a clear example of slow violence and environmental injustice, because marginal members of the society absorb the environmental impact of production of goods and waste materials. The two characters who suffer the most from this type of violence are a woman and her child. In the first pages of the novel, Edgar meets a woman called Nete when she bluntly reproaches: "It is the quarry that is killing me. I have to move urgently. Next week I am going to have another lung drain".[35] (Maia, 2018, 17) Later the reader finds her in the following health condition: "Nete coughs for long before completing what she wanted to say. —I am sorry. I am getting worse. That mother fucking quarry will destroy my lungs. My youngest son is not doing well either".[36] (Maia, 2018, 27) The precipitous deterioration of Nete's health indicates a possible cause for the lack of inhabitants in this peripheral settlement. As a result of the environmental depletion caused by the quarry, two forms of migration take place in the novel: physical displacement and displacement without moving. Some dwellers can leave, but others are displaced without being able to leave. Rob Nixon defines this form of demographic movement when he proposes "a more radical notion of displacement, one that, instead of referring solely to the movement of people from their places of belonging, refers rather to the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable." (Nixon, 2011, 17) The town represented by Maia has only vestiges of its characteristics prior to the implementation of the extractive industry. This place is inhospitable for both humans and non-humans, because it entails an

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[35] - Preciso me mudar. A poluição da pereira tá acabando comigo. Vou drenar os pulmões de novo.

[36] Nete tosse copiosamente antes de completar o que ia dizer:

-Desculpa, mas piorei. Essa pedreira filha da puta tá acabando com meus pulmões. O meu caçula também não

está nada bem.

amalgamation of “eviction, homelessness, estrangement, dispossession, and alienation” (Fay, 2017, 14). These terraformed places, such as the one represented in the novel, push inhabitants away by creating health hazards, deepening the economic dispossession with no plan for recovery.

2.5.2 Waste, Waste Lands and Wasted Lives

A striking aspect of this novel is the absence of almost all humans. In a scholarly article, Leila Lehnen establishes the relation between Ana Paula Maia’s novel and the broader Latin American context by pointing out the recurrence of the motifs of crisis and depletion (Lehnen, 2020, 22). Specifically focusing her analysis on the relationship between human and non-human animals. Lehnen does not examine the causes for the omission of characters that inhabit these places. This silence in the text is a crucial aspect because it speaks to the migration caused by environmental degradation, therefore, this literary absence is not fortuitous. In a 2016 policy report regarding migration, environment, and climate change in Brazil, the researchers state that “the lack of a concept of environmental migrants in Brazil heightens the difficulty of their identification and categorization.” (Pires Ramos, Lyra Jubilut, et. alt., 2016, 5) The lives of the characters who decided to move are absent in the novel and the lives of the remaining ones are reduced to what Giorgio Agamben refers to as bare lives, lives that are reduced to their biological functions, which he deems as “lives not worth living.”

The description of place, the dire general tone, and the absence of a lively community are some of the narrative aspects that sustain my claim that Ana Paula Maia represented a wasteland in *Enterre seus mortos*. To examine thoroughly the representation of Maia’s waste land, I refer to the theorization proposed by Postcolonial literary scholar Jennifer Wenzel in *The Disposition of Nature: Environmental Crisis and World Literature* (2019). Western conceptualizations of waste have significantly varied with time. She refers to John Lock’s understanding of wasted land as unlaboured territory, an unproductive, and

unused (so called) resource. “Waste lands were the original raw material of capitalism and colonialism awaiting transformation into arable, cultivated, revenue-producing land,” Wenzel further historicizes: “Yet the products of the transformation are also known as waste, of the sort with which we in the twenty-first century are familiar. Thus, waste isn’t what it used to be —in either the material or conceptual sense.” (Wenzel, 2020, 142) The landscape presented in the Brazilian novel is a consequence of the logics and policies of neo-colonialism and neo-extractivism. The aftermath of the quarry is spoiled land, ruins of what it used to be. In *Enterre seus mortos* the wasted land becomes the disguise of abandonment. While travelling, Edgar observes: “Materials that were never used in the days of the building site were piled up in several places around. Iron beams, wood, a concrete mixer, various tools and even a helmet lying on top of a poncho-type raincoat. Everything was abandoned”.[37] (Maia, 2018, 72) These metonymic objects are vestiges of the people who used to work there. The discarded tools indicate that the land was once “productive,” but it is now completely depleted.

The systematic effects of the working quarry are described by Edgar as a war zone:

> In the small neighboring municipality, the randomly flying stones often hit houses, schools, vehicles, animals, people and commercial establishments. After each explosion, the maximum period to shelter from possible stones is ten seconds. There are marks on the walls and landslides that are not always fixed, and dents in the cars, broken glass on the sidewalks, birds and land animals fallen on the ground[38]. (Maia, 2018, 26)

The material effects of the extraction site do not only produce a wasteland, but they also convert the inhabitants into wasted lives. In her analysis, Jennifer Wenzel establishes a

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[37] Há muitas sobras de materiais da antiga obra espalhadas pelo local. Muitas vigas de ferro, um misturador de argamasa, algunas ferramentas e até mesomo um capacete caído ao lado de uma capa de chuva.

[38] No pequeno município próximo da pedreira, as pedras lançadas aleatoriamente atingem casas, escolas, carros, animais, transeuntes e estabelecimentos comerciais. Depois da explosão, o prazo máximo para encontrar abrigo e se

salvar de uma possível pedrada é de dez segundos. As marcas das explosões estão nas paredes e nos muros furados,

em veículos amassados, vitrines partidas, aves e outros animais caídos no chão.

relation between waste and the people who dwell in those areas by affirming that "by disregarding any value besides economic productivity, waste lands are transformed into wasted lands and wasted lives -lands and lives *laid waste*" (Wenzel, 2020, 142). Maia pushes the notion of wasted lives to the limit in *Enterre seus mortos* through the death of the female sex worker who, without Edgar's intervention, would have been disposed of as mere waste. It is her death that prompts Edgar's journey to find burial grounds for her.

Even though in several interviews Maia asserts that she is not interested in representing female characters, the murdered sex worker is the catalyzer of the action in her novel. While alive the sex worker was commodified and used as a resource in an extraction site, but more cruelly, even when she passed away the objectification persisted. (This abject treatment of sex workers around extraction sites, specifically petroleum extraction, is not an exception and it is also represented by other Latin American women authors in petrofictions such as *La novia oscura* [The Dark Bride] (1999) by Laura Restrepo in Colombia, *Temporada de huracanes* [Hurricane Season] (2017) by Mexican Fernanda Melchor.) Because of the sex worker's death, the readers can delve into Edgar's understanding of life's sanctity, contrasting it with the commodified logic behind every institution he visits to bury her, such as the police station, the morgue, and so on. Because the police, coroners, or doctors would not help Edgar with the legal pronunciation of death and subsequent burial, he visits what he thinks is a morgue. He soon discovers that the unethical doctor buys corpses to dismember them and sell the organs and tissues. In the crudest passage of the novel, Maia describes the process with the stark, brutal, even repulsive style that characterizes her prose:

> With the [dead] that no one claims, the doctor himself is in charge or controls the process: dismemberment, extirpation. Tissues, bones, tendons, torsos, limbs, organs, feet, hands and head are sold separately to different entities. Depending on the type of order, the pieces are prepared using formalin or varnish. The brain is usually sliced to make it easier to sell. Some pieces are used to prepare human tissues for transplants. With the

> bones there is great demand. When it is a fresh corpse, practically everything can be used[39]. (Maia, 2018, 114)

The commodified perspective exhibited by the doctor causes estrangement in Edgar who insists that he wants to bury her. The last sentence in the quotation has an eerie tone caused once again by the blurred distinction between humans and non-human animals. The words used by this so-called doctor are more fitting for a butcher.

2.5.3 Against Unimagining: Representing Necropolitics and Ecocide

Throughout the novel, the protagonist insists on the importance of burial, for instance when the narrator comments: "But when [Edgar] is in front of a deceased, be it an animal or a person, he does not remain insensitive. There is no greater expression of contempt than abandoning a dead person and leaving it out in the open, to the action of birds of prey, in the sight of anyone".[40] (Maia, 2018, 61) Surrounded by disdain for all forms of life, Edgar is guided by the biblical command found in Matthew 8:22 "let the dead bury their dead". Much like a contemporary Charon, Edgar is at the margins of life assisting the passage to death. Although he is alive, he is not living a full life; he himself is living a bare life. He states "No person is able to remember the moment of their birth, but everyone knows what the time of their death is. Accustomed to dealing with the end of things, Edgar Wilson would not tolerate a person left unburied."[41] (Maia, 2018, 82) Left with no other alternative, Edgar leaves the dead body in the river.

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[39]Dos corpos não reclamados, ele faz o desmembramento e a extirpação. Tecidos, ossos, juntas, tendões, torsos, membros, órgãos, pés, mãos e cabeça são retirados e vendidos separadamente a diversas entidades. Dependendo do tipo de encomenda, é necessário confeccionar as peças através do uso de formol e verniz. O cérebro costuma ser cortado em formato de bolachas para facilitar a venda. De outro modo, as peças são preservadas para o preparo e a utilização de tecidos humanos para transplantes. Os ossos possuem grande demanda de venda. Quando o cadáver está fresco, é possível aproveitar praticamente tudo.

[40] Mas diante dos mortos, seja humano, seja animal, ele não se mantém insensível. Não existe sentimento de desprezo maior do que abandonar um morto, deixá-lo ao relento, às aves carniceiras, à vista alheia.

[41] Nenhuma pessoa é capaz de se lembrar da hora do seu nascimento, mas o momento da morte, a todos é conhecido. Acostumado a lidar com o fim das coisas, Edgar Wilson não gosta de deixar os homens insepultos.

Building on my argument on the representation of waste, waste land and wasted lives in *Enterre seus mortos*, I propose to take a step further by asserting that the land described in the novel is what geographers define as a sacrificial zone. This designation was originally reserved for highly polluted areas, mainly associated with uranium mining and processing. In his study on this topic, Steven Lerner advocates for expanding the definition because "areas contaminated with radioactivity are not the only places "sacrificed" to the ravages of intense pollution" (Lerner, 2010, 3). In Maia's narration the environment is decimated and the possibilities of renewing it are grim. The only character in *Enterre seus mortos* who ponders the landscape, how it changed over time, is Edgar. One night he observes that "the destructive action on the massive limestone boulder altered its contour. Seen in the dark, he suggests a man lying down with his hands on his chest. In this way, mourning and death were installed in the landscape modified by the action of dynamite".[42] (Maia, 2018, 59) By personifying the environment as a corpse, both elements are united through death. They are both ruled by what Achille Mbembe calls necropolitics, the use of socio-political power which deprives subjects of their sovereignty by dictating who can live and who must die. Mbembe's explains necropower as the generator of "*death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of the living dead" (Mbembe, 2003, 40). The characters who resisted environmental hazards are by no means living a full life but are walking dead.

Ana Paula Maia in *Enterre seus mortos* creates a fictional wasteland where the characters are affected by environmental injustices, suffer from environmentally caused health conditions which result in an exodus of both inhabitants and the temporary workers in the pit. As the novel advances, the dire circumstances intensify and it becomes clear that no redemption is possible either for the inhabitants or for the land; hence, the logics of

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[42] A silhueta da imensa rocha de calcário dilapidada transforma o aspecto do horizonte. Na escuridão, faz lem-

brar um homem deitado com as mãos sobre o peito. Assim, o luto e a morte se instalam na paisagem modificada pelas explosões de dinamite.

necropolitics are materialized in this sacrificial zone. When Edgar observes "An urgent absence flies over every inch of the old town. There is nothing alive anywhere,"[43] (Maia, 2018, 102) the representation of the emptiness is complete. The author strategically uses ellipsis and elision as literary mechanisms to magnify the absence of life. By fictionally charting a cartography of desolation, Ana Paula Maia is writing against unimagining. Jennifer Wenzel defines the latter as "the process through which something becomes unimaginable" (Wenzel, 2020, 18) and later on in her monograph builds up by stating that "unpeopling involves both literal removals of people from land and the cognitive erasure and disregard […] as *unimagining*" (Wenzel, 2020, 143). Edgar is a testimony of the complete erasure of life in rural areas of Brazil. If in Brazil ecocide is unimaginable and environmental migrations are invisible, Maia's novel challenges and counteracts that lack of imagination.

2.6 Disrupting "Frozen Images" Through Indigenous Ecologies in *Falls Around Her*

Up until this point, I have examined *Poso Wells*, *The Summer of the Flying Fish*, and *Bury Your Dead* which raise the topic of dispossession endured by indigenous and marginalized communities in Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil. In this section some of these ideas are revisited by analyzing a Canadian film directed by Anishinaabe filmmaker, writer, and activist, Darlene Naponse. By drawing from notions in Indigenous Film Studies and Indigenous Ecologies, I propose a reading of *Falls Around Her* (2018) that contends that Naponse disrupts frozen images (Pearson and Knabe, 2014, 3) of Anishinaabe women by representing neo-colonial identity conflicts of in-betweenness, as experienced by indigenous peoples who carry historical trauma. The main character in the film, Mary

[43] Existe uma ausência urgente pairando em cada centímetro do vilarejo. Não há nada vivo em parte alguma.

Birchbark (played by Tantoo Cardinal), participates in an engaged resistance (Rader, 2011) of environmental exploitation in Ontario, Canada.

Indigenous film production in North America has flourished since the turn of the century and academic analysis around it has accompanied this rise. Within the Canadian context one of the first publications that examines this panorama is *Indigenous Feature Film Production in Canada: A National and International Perspective* (2014) a report commissioned by the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival, published by Danis Goulet and Kerry Swanson. These two researchers present four key findings from their interviews with Indigenous film practitioners: Indigenous cinema is an evolving area of the worldwide film industry and Canada is considered a pillar of Indigenous cinema; in Canada, the recognition gained by Aboriginal filmmakers has not been translated into sustained production of feature films; target federal funding programs contributed to the growth of the Aboriginal film sector, with the majority of the successful Indigenous-specific film funding programs being Indigenous-run. (Goulet and Swanson, 2014, 1-3) As it becomes apparent from these findings, and the full report, the researchers show no interest in charting the participation of Indigenous women filmmakers in Canada. One of the first academic studies that includes Indigenous films within the panorama of Canadian film is Christopher E. Gittings's chapter in *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (2018) "Canadian Cinema(s)." He incorporates indigenous cinemas to the Anglo-Canadian, Quebec, and translational diasporic areas within Canadian cinemas. Gittings recognizes the gravitating influence Alanis Obomsawin had in Indigenous filmmaking in Canada when he claims that she "dispels the myth of Canada as a nation free from the vestiges of colonialism; Obomsawin embraces difference and human rights by locating the ugly and violent colonial reality of on-going racism and land claims confronting First Nations firmly in the Canadian nation's present". (2018, 245) Obomsawin's leading efforts to decolonize the Canadian screen is continued by filmmakers such as Darlene Naponse.

Research on films made by Indigenous women in North America is still limited (Gauthier, 2010, 2015; Beadling, 2016). While comparing two films, *Kissed by Lightning* (2009) by Shelley Niro and *Older than America* (2008) by Georgina Lightning, Laura L. Beadling identifies some common elements, which are instrumental for my research. She

maintains that the indigenous women characters have an identity in which private, domestic, public, political, and communal aspects are enmeshed. This portrayal dismantles a Hollywood-entrenched tradition in which indigenous women were stereotypically represented as the Indian princess, resulting in their exoticization and sexualization. Beadling argues that by providing complex and multi-faceted portrayals of their protagonist, Niro and Lightning show an engaged resistance towards tropes in Hollywood western films. Furthermore, Jennifer Gauthier's cross-cultural comparative article addresses the representation of indigenous female empowered bodies by Aboriginal Australian and Mohawk Canadian women filmmakers. In a similar line as Beadling, Gauthier sustains these two women directors are part of an indigenous counter-cinema that "disrupt[s] patriarchal, colonialist cinematic traditions and Indigenize the medium." (Gauthier, 2015, 296).

My reading of *Falls Around Her* by Darlene Naponse is positioned within this comprehensive context of Indigenous feminist counter-cinema. This Canadian filmmaker asserts her close ties with her Indigenous nation, Anishinaabe, in her personal webpage when she states that she has "worked with community leaders and elders to write and ratify the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Gchi-Naaknigewin (Constitution). She continues governance and First Nations land/human rights work in her community." Her work is not only reflected on the political level, but also on the economic one, since she owns a film company, Pine Needle Productions, in the First Nation territory. She began her career writing, producing, and directing short films and her first renowned feature film *Every Emotion Costs* (2011) features Tantoo Cardinal in a role where she deals with her return to the reserve.

The dramatic thriller *Falls Around Her* follows the story of mature musician Mary Birchmark (played by Tantoo Cardinal, Cree and Métis Canadian actor) who returns from her tour to the reserve in Northern Ontario. Once in her homeland, she spends quite some time in her isolated home, near a lake and a forest, slowly reconnecting with her community by occasionally visiting her sister Betty and her friend Inez, and dating Albert. Throughout her initial hikes in the forest, Mary observes the foliage, obtains her firewood from the bark of the white birch. However, her introspective attitude gradually fluctuates to alert and

suspicion, when she begins to detect anomalous patterns in the reserve, for instance when she finds chewing gum wrappers in the proximity of her house and identifies a black Dodge car speeding in the reservation. After learning from Albert that the mine has been releasing arsenic into the local rivers, she participates in demonstrations against the mining company. This results in an unwelcome visit from the manager of the company to threaten Mary when he states: "It was better when you were gone." Mary's fearful vigilance escalates to the point that she places a set of traps to catch the stalker. The spectator learns that the intruder is Keith, Mary's ex-manager, who wanted desperately to make her continue her music career. In a violent scene, Keith strikes Mary's head, but she manages to escape when he steps into the trap. The ending scene portrays Mary enjoying time with her friends in her backyard.

In her film Darlene Naponse defies the frozen images (Pearson and Knabe, 2014, 3) of Anishinaabe women by representing the tensions and contradictions in the various facets of their identities as sisters, friends, partners, artists, and activists in a post-colonialist context. In her seminal publication *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle*, Fatimah Tobing Rony introduces the idea of the taxidermic gaze when analyzing *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert Flaherty. She states that her purpose is to "examine *Nanook of the North* as the product of a hunt for images, as a kind of taxidermic display," (Tobing Rony, 2013, 100). She later explains that "I call the mode of representation of the "ethnographic" which emerged from this impulse of *taxidermy*. Taxidermy seeks to make that which is dead look as if it were still living." (Tobing Rony, 2013, 101) Examining the anthropological impulse that drove some filmmakers such as Flaherty, Tobin Rony asserts that they were trying to conserve a so-called vanishing race. Building on this notion of the taxidermic gaze, Wendy Gay Pearson and Susan Knabe affirm that these filmmakers created "frozen images," (Pearson and Knabe, 2014, 3) static representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures as timeless beings. In opposition to this colonial gaze, Darlene Naponse creates a singularly complex character in conflict between two cultures, Anishinaabe and Anglo-Canadian, which throughout the film is expressed as a tense state of in-betweenness. Mary Birchmark is a strong female character who exercises her agency in every aspect of her life, including her expression of sisterhood with other Anishinaabe

women, the exploration of her love life, her work as a musician, and her activism against water poisoning.

One of the most striking aspects of Mary's character is the bond that she creates with her sister Betty, Betty's granddaughter Ginger, and a friend called Inez. Even though in the beginning of the film Mary was reluctant to visit them (to Betty's question, "are you not going to come to the community?" she replies, "I need to be alone for a while"), Mary gradually begins to spend more time with them. A key scene in which this relationship is forged takes place in Betty's kitchen where the four women are dancing and singing "Starwalker" by Cree singer Buffy Sainte-Marie. Playfully using combs as microphones and laughing, they sing: "Lightning Woman, Thunderchild /Star soldiers one and all oh / Sisters, Brothers all together /Aim straight, Stand tall". In this domestic moment of collective and inter-generational joy, these indigenous women are affirming themselves as connected to one another as well as asserting their individual strength (See figure 2). This positive affirmation of life is in line with the remarks Jennifer Gauthier (2015) poses when offering her comparative analysis on Tracy Moffatt's *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) and Tracy Deer's *Club Native* (2008):

> strong female characters propel their narratives forward, enacting a powerful sense of agency and challenging traditional looking relations of narrative cinema. In their films Indigenous women's bodies are not to be conquered or violated; they are a site of power to be respected and honoured. Their bodily presence attests to their continued survival and belies the myth of Indigenous extinction. (Gauthier, 2015, 285)

Despite the references to colonial and post-colonial trauma endured by these four women, they are not victimized at any point. Darlene Naponse portrays the everyday aspects of their lives, such as discussions on how to raise their children, the gossip in the community, and their love quarrels.

Figure 2: Still shot of *Falls Around Her* (2018) by Darlene Naponse. Inez, Mary, and Ginger singing "Starwalker" by Buffy Sainte-Marie in the kitchen. © Baswewe Films.

The one aspect that unequivocally brings to the surface Mary's in-between identity is her romantic life. Upon arriving at the reservation, she meets Albert, an Anishinaabe man (played by Johnny Issaluk), who she begins dating. He invites her to his theatrical production in the reservation where he staged a play inspired by Indigenous stories. Right after the play, they have dinner together at a restaurant where a drunken Indigenous man walks towards the counter to order food. Albert approaches him, talks about their daily lives, and goes back to his table with Mary. This Indigenous character's brief intervention challenges the stereotypes of the "drunken Indian" by incorporating it as just one aspect of people's life rather than a defining characteristic. Moreover, for their second date, Albert meets Mary at an indigenous building where he tells her that he has been studying the water in the region for the past fifteen years and he has been systematically finding arsenic in it. Her relationship with Albert connects Mary to the reserve and to that part of her life that she is trying to reconcile with. However, one night a settler musician arrives at Mary's house, he wants to continue their story which began when she was on tour. He spends the night with her and the next morning they play music in bed together. These scenes are shot

in warm light and the audience discovers an unseen aspect in Mary's life. However, before departing, the man invites her to go on tour again by saying "you know I am ready to tour with you any time. And even to write," and she replies "I know, but I like it here." If throughout the film Mary was oscillating between her life touring in the cities and her quiet life in the reservation, this conversation confirms her desire to remain in her community.

The third aspect of Mary's life in which she shows her agency is her work as a musician. The first scene of the film opens with Mary playing the guitar and singing "Oh, rise, rebel!" with her fist up in the air. Setting the tone for the rest of the film, the lyrics of the song and the gesture resonate with most of the spheres of the protagonist's life. She then leaves the theatre mid-performance and when her manager Keith does not find her in the dressing room, he smashes the flowers and the vase against the wall. This initial expression of violence goes *crescendo* along the film. In a telephone conversation, he wants to persuade Mary to go on a tour of Germany by arguing "You know, Germans dig Indians," to which Mary asserts "I'm Anishinaabe, Keith, not Indian. Everybody loves Indians. They just don't want them to have a home, or a voice." This accusation encapsulates Mary's resistance to her manager's utilitarian intentions of coercing her to be productive even when she stated that she wanted to rest. The peak of the violence takes place when Mary realizes that the stalker in the black Dodge is no other than Keith and to protect herself in an action sequence, she buys in the local store nails, wood, ropes, and tools to build traps for him. The violent scene when Keith strikes Mary's head is followed by her escape and Keith's defeat by falling in the trap looms larger than this specific moment. This scene echoes a history of colonial trauma that is still prevalent nowadays for the Anishinaabe nation.

The final aspect of Mary's character that represents her as a complex individual rather than as a static stereotype is her environmental activism. Once Albert tells her about the high levels of arsenic in the water caused by the discharge of the mine, Mary visits the Whitefish Lake First Nation centre in which she learns that the mine has been abandoned for 102 years, but its effects are still causing water pollution. Even though Mary retired from her paid career as a musician, she decides to use her time to join protests against the mine. The scene of the demonstrations is key because it features Chief Water

Commissioner for the Anishinaabe Nation Autumn Peltier, water activist, screaming her signature “It's time to warrior up!”. Having Autumn play himself not only highlights indigenous youth environmental activism, but also reinforces the images of intergenerational indigenous sisterhood portrayed in the film. Moreover, Tantoo Cardinal (actress playing Mary) was also part of the demonstrations in Fort McMurray, Alberta against the construction of the petroleum pipelines (TIFF Talks, 28:50-32:45).

In this film the recurring allusions to bodies of water such as lakes and rivers constitute a motif. The arch formed by the initial and last scenes of *Falls Around Her* is sustained by the common presence of a lake. In the first bird eye shot the blue tones and the clouded skies reflected on the lake evoke a sense of coldness and alienation while at the end, the sunlight filtering through the branches and reflecting on the lake, the old furniture placed by the trees where Mary and her friends are gathered suggest a sense of comfort and coziness. Throughout the film the connotations of water vary ranging from the danger of poison contamination to the lake as a place of gathering between Mary and her female friends while fishing. The underwater shots are used ideologically (see Figure 3). By situating the camera close to the thick layer of ice, Naponse refers both to the invisible risk of the arsenic but at the same time invites the audiences to move past the “frozen images” of Indigenous characters.

Figure 3: Still shot of *Falls Around Her* (2018) by Darlene Naponse. Under-water shot below ice layer. © Baswewe Films.

The challenges Darlene Naponse offers in *Falls Around Her* to stereotypically static images of Indigenous women are thematically, visually, and ideologically expressed. By touching upon numerous underrepresented aspects of these women lives such as the bonds between women, their relations with their partners and sexuality, their remunerated work, their activism, Naponse achieves a full-bodied representation of the complexities of indigenous women's lives. This thematic depth is supported visually by the recurrent underwater shots which point towards both denouncing imperceptible poison and going beyond superficial stereotypes. Given this cohesive filmmaking project, this challenge is profoundly ideological supported by indigenous production companies, directors, actors, and subjectivities. The theme of water is ingrained in the film from the first shot in which a bird eye view shows a frozen lake, and it is built upon as the narrative progresses with several shots of the cold water right below the thick layer of ice. This movement from an aerial shot to an underwater one, is an indication of the environmental injustice produced

by the arsenic leaks, but it can also be symbolically read as an invitation for audiences to move past the surface of misrepresentation of indigenous nations, to pass the barriers of frozen images.

2.7 Comparing Poetics of Destruction: Different Perspectives of World Imagining from Below

In the previous sections I have offered a detailed analysis of the four texts that expose the logics of erasure, silencing, and invisibility through what I have identified as poetics of environmental destruction. I have referred to the material destruction of forests, rivers, villages, humans, non-human animals and also to the symbolic destruction of identities, languages, viewpoints, and cosmogonies. In this last part, I propose a transversal comparative analysis of the four narratives informed by the notion of world imagining from below (Wenzel, 2020). Building on her idea of world-imagining which she defines as "imagining a world and one's place in it, at scales raging from the cells of our bodies to the earth as a whole" (Wenzel, 2020, 1-2), Jennifer Wenzel proposes a specific perspective, below, to refer to viewpoint of marginalized fictional and documentary characters who are aware of their local predicament but framed within a global context. This concept allows me to articulate both the standpoints of underprivileged characters while at the same time to relate them to a biocentric perspective that speaks of environmental depletion. Regarding her understanding of below, Wenzel states that "*belowness* involves not only *class position*, in the familiar idiom of subalternity, but *spatial position*: perspective and altitude in the literal sense." (Wenzel, 2020, 22). From this perspective the authors and filmmakers of the four narratives studied in this chapter choose to denounce the causes and consequences of *maldesarrollo*. I have identified four main axes of comparison which are the representation of the socio-environmental depletion caused by predatory mining, the textual engagement with indigenous ecologies and resistance, the centrality of labour, and the portrayal of women's agency.

2.7.1 An Underworld and a World from Below: Representations of Mining

One of the crucial aspects that articulates the texts in this chapter is extractivism, more specifically, predatory mega-mining. Regarding the structural consequences of this industry, Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale explain

> This combination of aspects – the ultimate expression of economic dispossession, expropriation of territories, deterioration and environmental contamination- is what makes mega-mining a sort of extreme figure, a symbol of predatory extractivism. That is why, using the expression of Mirta Antonelli (2010), we can affirm that mega-mining synthesizes a "territorial occupation model", since the activity advances with a vertical logic, from top to bottom, without social license or consultation with the population, imposing them over the existing, alternative, or latent territorialities, whether these uphold the defense of regional economies, or link a language of valuation to the territory other than the hegemonic one." [44] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 176-177)

If this industry is characterized by being structured vertically, imposing itself and suffocating alternative or dissident perspectives on territoriality, the novels and films analysed in this section shift the perspective, opposing this totalizing viewpoint by offering a bottom-to-top perspective. In the first part of my analysis, I compare the novel *Poso Wells* and the film *Falls around Her* in relation to the dynamics of the global and the local, with a particular emphasis on the relations between the Global North and the Global South. In the second part of my analysis, by establishing a connection between the representation of the sacrifice areas in *Poso Wells* and *Enterre seus mortos*, I compare the portrayal of Christianity in both novels.

The territorial occupation model imposed on the Anishinaabe nation in *Falls Around Her* comes from a Canadian mining company with a long-standing presence in the

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[44] Esta combinación de aspectos -máxima expresión del despojo económico, expropiación de los territorios, deterioro y contaminación ambiental- es lo que convierte a la megaminería en una suerte de figura extrema, símbolo del extractivismo depredatorio. Es por ello que, utilizando la expresión de Mirta Antonelli (2010), podemos afirmar que la megaminería sintetiza un "modelo de ocupación territorial", pues la actividad avanza con una lógica vertical, de arriba hacia abajo, sin licencia social ni consulta a las poblaciones, imponiéndoles por sobre las territorialidades existentes alternativas o latentes, sea que estas enarbolen la defensa de las economías regionales o que vinculen un lenguaje de valoración al territorio diferente al hegemónico.

area, whereas in *Poso Wells* the Ecuadorian politicians are in the initial stages of the negotiations for potential extraction sites with a fictional Canadian business, Eagle Copper Corporation, probably inspired by Barrick Gold Corporation. The modus operandi of multinational mining conglomerates ridicules nation-state boundaries and even the deterritorialized notion of "Global South, in which it refers to the resistant imaginary of a transnational political subject that results from a shared experience of subjugation under contemporary global capitalism." (Garland Mahler, Oxford Bibliographies, 2017) Framed within the Global North, Anishinaabe individuals undergo comparable circumstances to individuals living in the Global South in matters regarding land exploitation and violation of rights.

Considering that the logics of mining corporations blur nation-state boundaries, in a provocative stance, Wenzel asserts that:

> The shape of the world charted by the liability-limiting structure of the multinational corporation poses legal difficulties that remain unresolved. It also offers (or demands) new approaches to literary study […] More fundamentally, in terms of the discipline's organizing categories, what if the transnational footprint of a corporation, rather than the boundaries between nation-states and national literatures, were the axis for literary comparison?" (Wenzel, 2020, 208)

When pivoting the comparison to the "transnational footprint of a corporation," the similarities between the characters living in Poso Wells and the Anishinaabe reservation become clear, as well as some of the differences. In both texts, the mining representatives show a complete disregard for public opinion and communal consensus, even more so, they repress manifestations against their business. Furthermore, the inhabitants of both regions are predominantly indigenous nations.

In order to counteract the weight of this corporate footprint, Gabriela Alemán and Darlene Naponse strategically propose to imagine a world from below. They choose to focus their narratives from the viewpoint of marginalized yet agentic characters. At the

same time, they resort to literary and visual narrative strategies to situate their viewpoints below the surface of the earth. The two textual ways by which they propose a world imagining from (a physical) below is by creating an underworld allegory in *Poso Wells*, and low angle underwater shots in *Falls Around Her*. On one hand, the allegorical hole in the novel conceals both the patriarchal structures that undermine the Ecuadorian society, and the corrupt political weavings that enable multinational extractive companies to deplete foreign lands. On the other hand, Naponse's use of repetitive below the frozen layer low angle underwater shots serves a dual purpose: to refer to the invisibly high arsenic levels in the water and to challenge the audience to move beyond that distorted stereotypical layer of indigenous representation to a more nuanced one.

Building on shifting the axis of analysis to the impact of multinational corporations, the extreme action of these companies is transforming places into sacrifice zones. Wenzel suggests that "this reading practice [using multinational corporations as an axis for literary comparison] could render legible the webs of risk and harm linking sites around the world, thereby charting alternative maps of solidarity and responsibility." (Wenzel, 2020, 210) I propose to highlight the web of harm denounced in the novels *Poso Wells* and *Enterre seus mortos*, and to evaluate if the authors outline networks of solidarity and responsibility. Both novels represent areas of utter depletion with few possibilities of restoration which are referred to as sacrificial zones in geographic terms. The authors' incorporation of Christian characters with negative features in both fictional sacrifice zones is no coincidence.

The underworld in *Poso Wells* is inhabited by five old men "that mixed biblical texts with the most esoteric beliefs"[45] (Alemán, 2012, 86) and are described as wearing long tunics, having leafy white beards, and speaking with archaic Spanish terms. These men decide to kidnap the only presidential candidate in order to ask him to bring them to the surface as his advisors. Alemán is denouncing the connivance of the local political power with patriarchal and conservative sectors of society which seek power and economic benefit regardless of the socio-environmental consequences.

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[45] que mezclaban textos bíblicos con las más esotéricas creencias.

Furthermore, in *Enterre seus mortos*, the town is described as a hellish consequence of the quarry. While Edgar travels the streets working, he observes the presence of a group of Evangelical people who "walk night and day along the road, moving from one evangelical temple to another, declaring the good news of the Gospel and announcing the imminent end of all things."[46] (Maia, 2018, 20) Far from advocating for peace, this group announces the apocalypse and fuels division on Earth. Edgar describes their rhetorical style as follows:

> Everywhere the speech is incendiary. Night and day the flame of hell burns in their mouths. The heart only desires revenge. God is alive and wants to kill.
>
> "Peace? - asks one of the faithful when they question him-.
>
> Who said we came to bring peace? We come to bring a sword, to bring division! I saw the son revolt against the father. That's what Jesus said!"
>
> With their backs twisted under the weight of a wrathful Christ full of judgment and torment, they walk displaying their Bibles with one arm in front like someone pointing a gun. They speak of souls, but they are looking for viscera, blood. They claim to be imbued with divine authority received directly from God and speak strange tongues, words of a supernatural language that only the chosen ones understand. And everything that does not fit under that divine mantle becomes cursed and condemned for centuries to come to a sectored hell[47]. (Maia, 2018, 22)

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[46] Movimentam-se dia e noite pelas estradas, de uma igreja evangélica a outra, proferindo as boas-novas do Evangelho e anunciando o fim iminente de todas as coisas.

[47] Por todos os lados o discurso é inflamável. De dia e de noite as chamas do inferno ardem em suas bocas. O desejo do coração é de vingança. Deus está vivo e quer matar.

Paz? - anuncia um dos fiéis ao ser interpelado. – Quem disse que a gente ia ter paz? Eu vim trazer a espada, eu vim

trazer a divisão, eu vim jogar o filho contra o pai. Foi isso o que Jesus disse.

Encurvados aos pés de um Cristo irado cheio de juízo e de fúria, eles apontam suas Bíblias como quem aponta uma

pistola. Falam de almas perdidas, mas desejam o sangue e as vísceras. Revestem-se de uma autoridade divina que insistem ter recebido de Deus e falam em línguas estranhas, uma espécie de idioma sobrenatural que somente os escolidos podem compreender. Tudo o que não está debaixo desse manto divino é maldito e condenado nos séculos

vindouros a um inferno setorizado.

This Evangelical divisive discourse contrasts with Edgar's pious and silent actions. He wants to believe in God, looking "up at the sky and moves his head from side to side trying to find some vestige, a minimal trace of truth. But he sees nothing: no fury, no angels, no saints. It is an empty sky, completely colorless and silent. Inert."[48] (Maia, 2018, 24)

In both novels, the authors advance a critique of recalcitrant and archaic viewpoints on Christianity by contrasting monstrous religious characters whose actions are juxtaposed with the protagonist's pious actions. Why are all of these characters included in sacrifice areas? Who is being sacrificed in these places? Is it only the environment? Gabriela Alemán and Ana Paula Maia portray a shift in which the environment, communities, and individuals are no longer offered to deities but to faceless multinational mining corporations in exchange for capital.

In the following section, I consider another vector of comparison between the texts which is the representation of Indigenous ecologies.

2.7.2 Searching for Pluriversal Paths: Indigenous Ecologies and Cosmopolitics

In the previous section I examined how in *Poso Wells*, *Falls Around Her*, and *Enterre seus mortos* present different perspectives of world-imagining-from-below by portraying a physical *belowness* and in doing so, opposing the hegemonic viewpoint of mega-mining corporations. Jennifer Wenzel sustains that the shift in perspective that world imagining from below entails not only a spatial position but also a class position, and I would add we can think of ethnic and gender position as also being tied with class.

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[48] Olha para o alto e gira a cabeça de um lado para outro na tentativa de encontrar algum vestígio, alum traço míni-

mo de verdade. Porém, não há nada no céu: nem fúria, nem anjos, nem santos. É um céu vazio, completamente sem cor e som. Inerte.

In this part, I structure my comparison around the representation of Indigenous nations in relation to their environments in *Poso Wells*, *El verano de los peces voladores* [The Summer of the Flying Fish], and *Falls Around Her*. The three intertwining notions that sustain my comparison are Indigenous Ecologies, Pluriverse (Mignolo, 2018; Kothari, Salleh, et. alt., 2019), and Cosmopolitics (De la Cadena, 2010). Considering that Indigenous Ecologies is a complex idea that refers to an array of approaches and disciplines, I prefer to focus on "Indigenous ecologies are often tied to language, religion and spirituality, philosophies and ideologies, and the politics of land recognition and land rights". (Mc Elwee, Ferández-Llamazares, Ahn Thorpe, et. alt, 2018) Moreover, we can include in the aforementioned politics what Peruvian anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena has named Indigenous Cosmopolitics,[49] namely plural politics in which earth-beings are incorporated into the public debate rather than made invisible. This inclusion challenges hegemonic universalist perspectives that obscure non-Western cosmogonies. Decolonial scholars such as Walter Mignolo have worked on epistemological alternatives that posit: "The pluriverse consists in seeing beyond this claim to superiority, and sensing the world as pluriversally constituted. […] Universality is always imperial and war driven. Pluri-and multiverses are convivial, dialogical, or plurilogical. Pluri-and multiverses exist independently of the state and corporations." (Mignolo, 2018, x-xii) Informed by these ideas, my purpose is to analyze the ways in which Gabriela Alemán, Marcela Said, and Darlene Naponse challenge universalist claims by presenting Indigenous situated standpoints.

While in the first few pages of *Poso Wells* the relevance of Indigenous defense of their territory and beliefs is not manifest, towards the second part of the novel, the inhabitants of the Cotacachi-Cayapas reserve stand up against the mining project led by the Canadian company in connivence with the Ecuadorian government. Having said this, not for a moment the narrator presents the viewpoint or lends its voice to any Indigenous

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[49] Marisol de la Cadena built on Isabelle Stengers' concept of cosmopolitics published in "The Cosmopolitical Proposal". In *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds. Pp. 994–1004. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.

character. Gabriela Alemán positions herself as an ally to Ecuadorian Indigenous nations by bringing to the foreground their vulnerability in territorial matters, as well as by denouncing the lack of communal consultation by the Ecuadorian government regarding socio-environmental issues. Moreover, she foresaw that these underlying issues would continue even after the inclusion of Nature's right in the Ecuadorian constitution. Regarding this, De la Cadena states that "clearly annoyed, Rafael Correa, president of Ecuador and at times anti-neoliberal, blamed an "infantile" coalition of environmentalists, leftists, and indigenists for the intrusion of Pachamama–Nature in the Constitution." (De la Cadena, 2010, 336) The logic of environmental defense present in these reviled and so-called "infantile" activists that had an impact of national policy is present in *Poso Wells*. Alemán managed to imbricate the infringement of indigenous, women, and nature rights by representing a fictional web of oppression.

In *El verano de los peces voladores*, the conflict between the Mapuche nation and Chilean settlers becomes apparent in the film's opening scenes. In contrast with Alemán's approach, Marcela Said includes Mapuche characters that voice their standpoint. The first clear connection between the environment and a Mapuche character is when Pedro becomes deaf in one ear after Pancho makes him throw explosives in the lake to exterminate the carp. The situation escalates when he also decides to install barbed wire around his estate and Pedro expresses "people from the community are not happy, they say that they can walk wherever they want and hunt wherever they want. And you put barbed wire." Pedro's claim voices a clear interference of Pancho in the lives of the Mapuche people, who are no longer free to walk their lands or continue with their practices to provide for their livelihood. A clear clash of cosmogonies is represented in this scene. According to Walter Mignolo's conceptualization of the pluriverse, "Universality is always imperial and war driven. Pluri-and multiverses are convivial, dialogical, or plurilogical." (2018, xii) Pancho's imposition is an example of the imperial thrust of his worldview. Moreover, although there are no political figures in the film, unlike in *Poso Wells*, there is a representation of repressive armed forces, the carabiniers [*carabineros*], in complicity with the economic power, represented by Pancho. Regarding this tension between indigenous representatives and the hegemonic political power, Marisol de la Cadena specifies:

> the “things” that indigenous movements are currently “making public” (cf. Latour 2005) in politics are not simply nonhumans, they are also sentient entities whose material existence— and that of the worlds to which they belong—is currently threatened by the neoliberal wedding of capital and state (De la Cadena, 2010, 342)

Filmmaker Marcela Said stages the escalation in the threat when Mapuche members of the community protest logging in the area, which culminates in Pedro’s assassination.

The film *Falls Around Her* is the only text in this section of the corpus written and shot by a self-identified Indigenous woman, Darlene Naponse. She strives to position her films as a counter-cinema that exposes the stereotypes around Indigenous individuals, specifically Anishinaabe, by challenging the taxidermic gaze (Tobing Rony, 2013). Not only does Naponse historicise Anishinaabe characters and the conflicts they have been and keep struggling with, but she also incorporates Indigenous-Canadian performers in her productions. The resistance posed by Naponse is echoed by Aymara-Bolivian activist and decolonial scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui when she declares:

> we indigenous people were and are, above all, contemporary, coetaneous beings and in that dimension -the aka *pacha*- our own commitment to modernity is realized and unfolds. The culturalist postmodernism that the elites impose and that the state reproduces in a fragmented and subordinate way is foreign to us as a tactic. There is no "post" or "pre" in a vision of history that is neither linear nor teleological, that moves in cycles and spirals, that marks a course without failing to return to the same point. The indigenous world does not conceive of history linearly, and the past-future are contained in the present: regression or progression, repetition or overcoming of the past are at stake at every juncture and depend on our actions more than our words. The project of indigenous modernity may emerge from the present, in a spiral whose movement is a continuous feedback from the past on the future, a "principle of hope" or "anticipatory consciousness" (Bloch) that envisions decolonization and carries it out at the same time[50]. (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010, 54)

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[50] los indígenas fuimos y somos, ante todo, seres contemporáneos, coetáneos y en esa dimensión -el *aka pacha*- se realiza y despliega nuestra propia apuesta por la modernidad. El posmodernismo culturalista que las elites impostan y que el estado reproduce de modo fragmentario y subordinado nos es ajeno como táctica. No hay "post" ni "pre" en una visión de la historia que no es lineal ni teleológica, que se mueve en ciclos y espirales, que marca un rumbo sin dejar de retornar al mismo punto. El mundo indígena no concibe a la historia linealmente, y el pasado-futuro están contenidos en el presente: la regresión o la progresión, la

Indigenous individuals such as the Aymara and Anishinaabe are part of contemporary political discussions without renouncing to their past and it is precisely this conviction that will allow them to prosper in their decolonial efforts. In the following section I analyze the nature of the labour carried out by the characters in the novels and films, in a context of environmental depletion.

2.7.3 Natural and Human Resources: A Comparative Analysis of the Representation of Labour

One common aspect that unites all the texts in this chapter is the representation of working individuals within a context of climate crisis and environmental exploitation. These characters work in wide range of activities, such as caretakers, artists, waste management, and journalism. Within the narratives, some of these characters are treated as so-called natural resources by enterprises or political powers, and others channel their efforts to resist this equivalence. Venezuelan anthropologist Fernando Coronil explains that under this logic

> in which "people may ‘count more’ or ‘less’ than natural resources only in terms of a perspective that equates them; the value of people can be compared to the value of things only because both are reduced to capital. The definition of people as capital means that they are to be treated as capital--taken into account insofar as they contribute to the expansion of wealth, and marginalized if they do not. (Coronil, 2000, 365)

In the Brazilian novel *Enterre seus mortos*, the mechanisms of this logic are in motion not only in the work that Edgar Wilson, the protagonist, does as a dead animal collector, but also in that performed by other members of institutions such as the police and forensic doctors. I have analyzed the parallel in which Ana Paula Maia equates the treatment of the car parts in the dumpster and the dismembered body parts in the morgue. Also functional

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repetición o la superación del pasado están en juego en cada coyuntura y dependen de nuestros actos más que de nuestras palabras. El proyecto de modernidad indígena podrá aflorar desde el presente, en una espiral cuyo movimiento es un continuo retroalimentarse del pasado sobre el futuro, un "principio esperanza" o "conciencia anticipante" (Bloch) que vislumbra la descolonización y la realiza al mismo tiempo.

to the expansion of wealth are the caretaker indigenous female characters in *El verano de los peces voladores*. Circumscribed to the private sphere, they sustain the household by preparing the food, cleaning the house, watching over the children of their *patrón* [boss] without getting involved in the conflicts of the male Mapuche workers who resist and protest the subjugation they are placed under.

In contrast, journalist Vargas in *Poso Wells* and Mary Birchbark in *Falls Around Her* are two characters who work against the grain to challenge and expose the gears of the aforementioned utilitarian logic. Vargas was fired from his job because he continued to investigate a case not worthy of the front page, the disappearance of women, which was tightly connected to the local political power in charge of granting the concessions of mining exploitation of the Cotacachi Cayapas ecological reserve. In a similar manner, Mary once retired from her musical career, opposes the advancements of the mining company directly linked to the leak of arsenic in local lakes. In Mary's case, her past life out of the reservation comes back materialized in the form of the manager who demands that she keeps working for him against her will.

2.7.4 Women

In this final section a comparative analysis is offered of the roles performed by the women in *Poso Wells*, *El verano de los peces voladores*, and *Falls Around Her*, as well as of the agencies they show throughout the text. The first part of *Poso Wells* is structured around the disappearance of local women who are eventually located by journalist Vargas in the underworld. In her fiction, Alemán is denouncing the lack of social and media interest on the disappearance and in the overarching violence against women in Ecuador. Even more, she narrates the trauma experienced by some of these women in the character of Valentina, who was unable to utter a word after being rescued and only reacting when seeing the perpetrators on television. In view of this, although the author is calling for attention on a gender issue unattended by local media, she does not grant robust agency to female

characters. Although the action is catalyzed by Valentina, she has no voice throughout most of the novel; she is a voiceless character.

In juxtaposition to the Ecuadorian novel, the directors of *El verano de los peces voladores* and *Falls Around Her* focus on the bonds created by female characters under neo-colonial and environmentally threatened contexts. Most of the interaction between settler and Mapuche women are staged indoors in the Chilean film, whereas in the Anishinaabe-Canadian film, women navigate both the public and private spheres. The only female character that Marcela Said grants agency to is Manena, Pancho's daughter, who begins to question her father's methods for running their estate. Manena's proactiveness contrasts with the quietness and passivity of her mother, a character who seems to be in line with the stereotype of women promoted "throughout the dictatorship," when "official discourse designated women as the cornerstone of the Chilean *patria* in their role as self-abnegating, apolitical, spiritual, and moral housewives within the sanctity of the home." (Tinsman, 2004, 282) Confronted several times by her husband, Manena's mother remains silent on matters regarding the upbringing of the children, the political issues with Mapuche individuals, and even the management of the local lake. Even less vocal are the Mapuche women working as care providers in the Ovalle estate. Unlike their male counterparts, they do not participate in the public sphere and are not part of the resistance. Though Manena is the only female character with agency, the last scene of the film, after she discovers that Pedro has been killed by the carabiniers [*carabineros*], is ambiguous enough for spectators to question her subsequent actions.

Falls Around Her integrates both the private and public spheres of Mary's life by showing the ways in which she builds her relationship with her sister, friends, and partner, as well her work as a musician and activist. In contrast with *El verano de los peces voladores*, where the Indigenous Mapuche women working in the settler's estate cannot even speak freely, Mary decides where she wants to live, has the choice to leave her work, and confronts a mining company to stop leaking arsenic on rivers and lakes. One of the strongest elements in Naponse's film is the representation of women, young and mature, enjoying life together and learning from each other. Mary's character has many facets and in all of these aspects she exercises her ability to choose.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed a corpus of four texts in which the depletion of the environment is represented by women novelists and filmmakers in Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, and Canada. These texts are all part of the poetics of environmental destruction given that they represent different ways of environmental depletion while at the same time denounce the underlying structures of *maldesarrollo* [bad development]. For most of them, such as Gabriela Alemán, Marcela Said, and Darlene Naponse, extractivism is closely linked with neo-colonialism and patriarchy. All these storytellers imagine the world from below (Wenzel, 2020) by introducing subaltern characters and underground or underwater perspectives, thus creating counter narratives that challenge hegemonic discourses such as developmentalism and progress. In the following chapter I offer an analysis of four texts that are part of the poetics of care, specifically, environmental care.

Chapter 3

3 Poetics of Environmental Care: Expanding Care "As a Life Sustaining Web"

How to care becomes a particularly poignant question in times when other than humans seem to be utterly appropriated in the networks of (some) Anthropos.

–María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*

Relations of care are deeply embedded in some texts in which environmental degradation and injustices are represented. Previously, I have explored how the poetics of environmental destruction in novels and films by women in the Americas challenge the causes and consequences of *maldesarrollo* by portraying standpoints from below. In this chapter, the focus is on how other artists from the above-mentioned group represent care among individuals and in relation to the environment. The notion of care, which is foundational to this chapter, was theorized by feminist scholars such as Joan Tronto (1987, 1993) and then expanded by María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017). Although the relation between poetry and care was theorized by Martin Heidegger, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Wordsworth, and Stanley Cavell,[51] and many others, these philosophical and literary theorizations have not been helpful to my research from an environmental perspective. Moreover, from a reception theory perspective, in the publication *Care Ethics and Poetry* (2019) Maurice Hamington and Ce Rosenow develop the following hypothesis: "engaging poetry is a species of aesthetic experience that can facilitate the ability to care" (Hamington and Rosenow, 2019, 2). Given that the existing notions about the poetics of care do not include feminist notions of care or indicate a recurrence of themes, motifs, figures, use of time, or narrative devices, I propose the term poetics of environmental care

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[51] For a detailed analysis, refer to Adam Bernard Clay's doctoral dissertation: "Poetry as a Way of Being: Poetics of Care in Heidegger, Emerson, Wordsworth, and Cavell" (2020).

to analyze the formal and thematic aspects of the texts. Drawn from the selected corpus of this chapter, four main principles were identified. The first principle is that in representing the proximity between humans and more-than-humans,[52] the body acquires a key role as a source of knowledge through the enhanced senses. To that end, authors and filmmakers use narrative devices such as detailed descriptions and close-up shots of moments of contact, be it haptic or visual. The second principle, as the narration progresses, the relationship between humans and more-than-humans strengthens and to portray that bond, some storytellers choose to represent environmental components mimetically or allegorically. The third principle is the central presence of labour, paid or unpaid. Including maids, caretakers, mothers, and activists, these stories show the work of providing care among humans and the environment. Often these workers are vulnerable because of racial, gender, or age differences. The last principle is the oppositional standpoint adopted by the care provider. The protagonist or group of characters who are involved in caring are usually confronted by a hegemonic system, corporation, or institution which enforces their power against the individuals involved in caring.

My theoretical framework for this chapter is informed by feminist studies on care. Care is ambivalent and expressed in our daily lives in a myriad of ways such as affection, joy, work, obligation, and can "denote concern, anxiety, attention, solitude, charge, protection, and even grief." (Carriere, 2020) Despite care being ubiquitous, caring activities have been historically relegated; hence, "feminist interest in care has brought to the forefront the specificity of care as a devaluated doing, often taken for granted if not rendered invisible" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 53). Feminist scholars indicated that this invisibility was marked by gender and ethnic intersections, and they propose to understand the complexities of care in feminist rather than feminine terms.

Fundamental for my analysis is Joan Tronto's general definition of care in which the environmental component is contemplated: "everything that we can do to maintain,

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[52] The notion of more-than-humans was introduced by David Abram in his 1996 book Spell of the Sensuous to name our immersion in a sentient greater realm. See Emily O'Gorman and Andrea Gaynor "More-Than-Human Histories" in *Environmental History*, volume 25, number 4, October 2020, 711-735.

continue, and repair "our world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all that we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web" (Tronto, 1993, 103). In *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, María Puig de la Bellacasa unpacks Tronto's explanation by indicating that the first part of the definition refers to ideas on care work as well as to the search for a good life; in the second part, by pointing towards the interconnected and interdependent aspect of care, Tronto underscores its relational nature. Building on this definition, Puig de la Bellacasa refers to the triptych understanding of care: "three dimensions of care -labour/work, affect/affections, ethics/politics" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 5). These interwoven aspects of care allow me to analyze the films and novel using different approaches.

Moreover, Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale (2014) in their concluding section titled "To Think the Transition and Post-Extractivism"[53] indicate that reciprocity, solidarity, and social economics are key for the presentation of successful examples of *alterdesarrollo* [alter development], as well as for charting a "horizon of desirability". They acknowledge the contributions made by feminisms towards this shift

> [I]t is necessary to underline the role of popular feminisms in the emergence of a pro-communal *ethos*, especially those visions linked to feminist economics and ecofeminism, based on the ethics of care and values such as reciprocity and complementarity. The principle of reciprocity is based on the idea of interdependence, not automatically, but as a product of a socially instituted voluntary complementarity (Servet, 2013: 198). In Latin America, it is also inspired by the idea of community, understood from the revitalization of pre-existing spaces that privilege the collective over the State and the market, to the emergence of new spaces and forms of sociability that claim the production and reproduction of the common, as horizon and destiny"[54]. (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 398)

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[53] Pensar la transición y el post-extractivismo.

[54] [P]or último, una vez más, es necesario subrayar el rol de los feminismos populares en la emergencia de un ethos procomunal, en especial aquellas visiones ligadas a la economía feminista y al ecofeminismo, sustentado en la ética del cuidado y valores como la reciprocidad y la complementariedad. El principio de la reciprocidad está basado sobre la idea de interdependencia, no de manera automática, sino como producto de una complementariedad voluntaria instituida socialmente (Servet, 2013: 198). En América Latina se inspira, asimismo, en la idea de comunidad, entendida esta desde la revitalización de espacios preexistentes que

Thus, they acknowledge feminist perspectives on care ethics as the path towards alternative models to depleting extractivism.

In this chapter I bring together the films *El niño pez* [The Fish Child] (2009) by Lucía Puenzo, *Vozes da floresta* [Voices of the Rainforest] (2019) by Betse de Paula, and *Beans* (2020) by Tracey Deer with the novel *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] (2015) by Rita Indiana. In the next section I seek to contribute to the extensive bibliography on *El niño pez* [The Fish Child] by Lucía Puenzo through the analysis of the environmental imbrications on how care is represented in the film. The following subsection will focus on the caring aspect of the sense of touch in *La mucama de Omicunlé,* then the attention will be turned to the political commitment and ethical implications of environmental activism in the Amazon River basin in *Vozes da floresta*. And in the last one, is examined how care for the family, the community, and the environment is performed and taught to younger Mohawk-Canadian generations in *Beans* (2020).

3.1 Thinking with Care: A Reading of *El niño pez* by Lucía Puenzo

Many of Lucía Puenzo's body of work indicate her sustained interest in disrupting heteronormativity (Frohlich, 2011; Blanco and Petrus, 2011; Punte, 2012; Shaw, 2017), to which I would add that she also shows an ongoing engagement with matters related to caring for the environment. Her commitment can be appreciated in her film *El niño pez* [The Fish Child] and the twelve-episode series *Cromo* (2015). I begin this section by referring to the Nuevo Cine Argentino [New Argentine Cinema] to contextualize the work of Puenzo. After briefly summarizing the plot of the film, I will focus on the narrative relevance of the fish child in the lake in relation to ideas around environmental care, such as interdependence, involvement, caring relations, and life-sustaining web, among others.

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privilegian lo colectivo frente al Estado y el mercado, hasta la emergencia de nuevos espacios y formas de sociabilidad que reivindican la producción y reproducción de lo común, como horizonte y destino.

By situating Puenzo's cinematographic work within the context of the New Argentine Cinema, commonalities are indicated as well as disruptions with this heterogenous group of filmmakers. During the 1990s, once democracy was re-established, a group of directors began to produce films to question the neoliberal ideal by defying the new status quo and narrating peripheral stories that were overlooked within a frame of socio-economic globalization. Horacio Bernades, Diego Lerer, and Sergio Wolf (2002), and Gonzalo Aguilar 2010) agree that the pioneering film the gives birth to this movement is *Pizza, birra, faso* [Pizza, Beer, Smokes] (1997) by Adrián Caetano and Bruno Stagnaro, which won the Special Price of the Jury at the *Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata* [International Film Festival of Mar del Plata] (Argentina). According to Gonzalo Aguilar (2010), although these filmmakers cannot be unified by a unified aesthetic program, the common production conditions sustain a new creative regime (2010, 14). Access to new technology is one of the common production conditions; productions with relatively low budgets partially financed by the INCAA (*Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Visuales*) [National Institute of Film and Visual Arts]; other films financed by international foundations such as the Hubert Bals Fund, Fond Sud Cinéma, Sundance, and Ibermedia; the formation of some of the filmmakers at the ENERC (*Escuela Nacional de Experimentación y Realización Cinematográfica*) [National School of Cinematographic Experimentation and Realization].

Similar to what had happened in the context of Third Cinema during the Sixties and Seventies, when women filmmakers where initially unacknowledged (rendered invisible) by the critics, much of the early scholarly emphasis on the New Argentina Cinema was set on male filmmakers, with one exception, Lucrecia Martel. However, Ana Forcinito points out

> in addition to [Lucrecia] Martel (and Albertina Carri, who received more critical attention after *Los Rubios* [The Blonds]), Paula Hernández, Sandra Guigliotta, Julia Solomonoff, Ana Katz, Anahí Berneri, Ana Poliak, Lucía Puenzo, Verónica Chen, Gabriela David, Sabrina Farji, Paula de Luque, Mercedes García Guevara, María Victoria Menis and Celina Murga are some of the new filmmakers. It is a significant number of women, so it is difficult to ignore not only the appearance of a women's

> cinema in the mid-nineties but also its constant production until the present.[55] (Forcinito, 2013, 37)

Lucía Puenzo's work is not isolated, but part of a broader national and regional phenomenon. According to María José Punte, Puenzo is part of a generation of women filmmakers whose works push further the feminist advances proposed by predecessors such as María Luisa Bemberg. (Punte, 2012, sine data) Much like other New Argentine cinema filmmakers, Lucía Puenzo graduated from the ENERC in 2000 and also with a BA in Literature from the University of Buenos Aires. She began her artistic career as a novelist in 2004, with the publication of the novel *El niño pez*, which was followed by *Nueve minutos* [Nine minutes] (2005), *La maldición de Jacinta Pichimahuida* [The Curse of Jacinta Pichimahuida] (2007), *La furia de la langosta* [The Fury of the Lobster] (2009), and *Wakolda* (2010). Entandem with her literary career, she debuted as screenwriter and director in 2007, with the feature film *XXY*, which was followed by the film adaptation of her own novel *El niño pez* (2009), and then by another adaptation, *Wakolda* (2013). In 2015 she directed the TV series *Cromo*.

El niño pez (2009) received a large critical reception and academic research. Scholars have analyzed this film mainly from three disciplines: Gender Studies (Frohlich, 2011; Blanco and Petrus, 2011; Punte, 2012; Shaw, 2017); Indigenous Studies (Cisneros, 2013; Grinberg, 2017); Environmental Studies (Frohlich, 2011; Forné, 2017). From the body of work analyzed through a Gender Studies perspective, Fernando A. Blanco and John Petrus propose a reading of the queer protagonist couple framed within the genres of the *Bildungsroman* and the road movie. In a similar vein, Punte proposes to read the film from Teresa de Lauretis' critical feminist notion of "figures of resistance" (De Laurentis,

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[55] [A]demás de [Lucrecia] Martel (y de Albertina Carri que a partir de *Los rubios* recibe más atención de la crítica), Paula Hernández, Sandra Guigliotta, Julia Solomonoff, Ana Katz, Anahí Berneri, Ana Poliak, Lucía Puenzo, Verónica Chen, Gabriela David, Sabrina Farji, Paula de Luque, Mercedes García Guevara, María Victoria Menis y Celina Murga son algunas de las nuevas cineastas. Se trata de un importante número de mujeres por lo que resulta difícil ignorar no sólo la aparición de un cine de mujeres a mediados de los noventa sino además su constante producción hasta el presente.

2007). In a different line of work, Deborah Shaw traces the representation of domestic workers in Latin American cinema, which is particularly relevant for my research because it focuses on one of the protagonists of *El niño pez* who is a care worker. I intend to relate this to the environmental component of the film. From the perspective of Indigenous Studies, Vitelia Cisneros focuses on the role of Indigenous languages, specifically Guaraní and Quechua to propose a comparative analysis between *El niño pez* and *La teta asustada* [The Milk of Sorrow] (Claudia Llosa, 2009). Valeria Grinberg posits that Puenzo's film challenges the representation of Indigenous women as mere victims. From an ecocritical approach, Ana Forné introduces the notion of hydrography which is useful for her analysis of the representation of fluid subjectivities in the film.

El niño pez tells the story of a young Guaraní-Paraguayan woman, Ailín (played by Mariela Vitale), also known as La Guayi, who has been employed as a care worker in Judge Bronté's household since the age of thirteen, in Argentina. Ailín is in a love relationship with the judge's daughter, Lala (Inés Efron), and the audience soon discovers that she is also in a non-consensual sexual relationship with the judge. In her comparative analysis of *El niño pez* and *La mujer sin cabeza* [The Headless Woman] by Lucrecia Martel, Deborah Shaw indicates that Ailín's position within the family is muddled and unclear given the tension between close familiarity and distanced dehumanization exacerbated by her relationships with father and daughter (2017, 140). In a particularly telling scene with neo-colonialist undertones, the judge asks Ailín to sing at the dinner table, to which she replies that she only knows how to do it in Guaraní and proceeds to sing a lullaby. Within Latin American film, Lucía Puenzo is not an exception by focusing her narration on an Indigenous-speaking character. "In the cinematographic context of recent years, within the group of Latin American films that have reached international distribution," Vitelia Cisneros remarks,

> several have included some native language in different modalities. For example, *Qué tan lejos* (2006), *Madeinusa* (2006), Claudia Llosa's first film, and *Dioses* (2008) include the Quechua language in different ranges that go from short dialogue to its presence in more developed scenes; *Zona Sur* (2009), provides the Aymara with a leading role not only because of the length of the dialogues, but also because it includes characters from their speaking community in the main roles, and

> *Hamaca Paraguaya* (2006) is the most daring in this regard, because it is made entirely in Guarani.[56] (Cisneros, 2013, 52)

I will refer again to the centrality of Guaraní culture in my analysis of the character of the fish child in Paraguay.

The tension within the household escalates when Lala attempts to kill herself by drinking poisoned milk, but instead commits parricide, by letting her father drink the milk. She escapes to Paraguay, while her mother and the local justice system blame Ailín for the murder, without proof. La Guayi is sent to prison where given her age, class, and ethnicity, she is forced to attend sexual parties with other inmates at the house of the police chief. When Lala learns that Ailín has been unjustly imprisoned, she returns to Argentina, and visits her in jail, but La Guayi refuses to let her take the blame. Finally, once Lala discovers that La Guayi is forced to attend the house of the chief of police, she tracks her down and after a shooting, they escape together to Paraguay. The final scenes, when Ailín reveals the real reason why she left her home country, are crucial for my argument. She discloses to Lala that she had a child before leaving for Argentina, and that he was dying, so she left it on the lake to be protected by the *mitya pyra* [fish child].

The most salient analysis of the film in terms of care is Deborah Shaw's comparative chapter with *La mujer sin cabeza* [The Headless Woman], in which she studies the representation of domestic servants and maids in contemporary Latin American film. She states that "while the focus is on the private relationships established behind closed doors, the films reveal structural economic and social inequalities in a highly effective way" (Shaw, 2017, 128). If we refer again to the trifold conceptualization of care

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[56] En el contexto cinematográfico de los últimos años, dentro del grupo de películas latinoamericanas que han alcanzado distribución internacional, varias han incluido alguna lengua nativa en diferentes modalidades. Por ejemplo, *Qué tan lejos* (2006), *Madeinusa* (2006), el primer filme de Claudia Llosa, y *Dioses* (2008) incluyen la lengua quechua en diferentes rangos que van desde el corto diálogo hasta su presencia en escenas más desarrolladas; *Zona Sur* (2009), proporciona al aimara un rol protagónico no solo por la extensión de los diálogos, sino porque incluye dentro de los roles principales a personajes de su comunidad hablante, y *Hamaca paraguaya* (2006) es la más audaz en este sentido, pues está realizada enteramente en guaraní.

as labour, affect, and politics, Shaw's analysis focuses on paid care work. According to Soledad Salvador and Patricia Cossani, consultants for the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, "between 11 to 18 million people in the region are engaged in paid domestic work, of which 93% are women" (2020, 3). They refer to the "global care chains" which is a global phenomenon where care workers migrate from poorer areas to higher income regions. These migratory paths can occur within the same country, between countries in the same region, or towards countries outside the region. The film *El niño pez* represents the second path, particularly from Paraguay to Argentina. However, in a utopic turn, at the end of the film, both young women undertake the opposite journey.

I build on Deborah Shaw's analysis on care as labour, by contemplating the affect dimension of care, not only in human relationships but also in the interwoven complex, life sustaining web that Joan Tronto refers to (1993). In the initial scenes of the film, Ailín is in a precarious position within the Bronté household because of the unclear limits of her responsibilities as an employee. Shaw reflects upon this by saying:

> This form of naturalising labour and not seeing it as proper work results in the invisibility of domestic servants and means that their position is open to abuse, as it is an occupation rarely governed by employment or union laws, which are enacted for more traditionally male forms of employment. (Shaw, 2017, 125)

In Ailín's case, the naturalization of her labour is exacerbated by the fact that she arrived to the Bronté family when she was thirteen years old. However, despite her vulnerable position, she is capable of forging a genuine connection with Lala. The film shows the transformation within these two young women's relationship, which is caused by a redistribution of care, more specifically, of care as affect. At the beginning of the film, theirs is an asymmetrical relationship in terms of power; however, as the narrative progresses, it gradually becomes a balanced one, especially after Lala leaves her house and Ailín stops working there.

Furthermore, once the relationship between the two women begins to shift, and the affection nuance of care becomes prevalent, there is another narrative element that gains

weight: non-human nature. Deborah Shaw refers to Barry Higman's historical study on the ties between colonization and domestic service in Latin America and the Caribbean, specifically to the plantation system. Higman's research enables me to think about the underlying socially constructed connections between care workers and the environment.[57] Relegated to working on the plantation, in close contact with the environment, people forged relations of interdependency with their milieu. María Puig de la Bellacasa in her conceptualization binds tightly together the praxis of care with knowledge when she affirms that "adequate care requires a form of knowledge and curiosity regarding the situated needs of an "other" –human or not– that only becomes possible through being in relations that inevitably transform the entangled beings: living with is for Haraway a becoming-with." (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 90) Her remarks on the situated needs point out the key aspect of proximity in matters of care. It is in the close, everyday relationships forged both with humans and non-humans that caring takes place.

In her trip to Ailín's house in Paraguay, Lala discovers the *Ypoá* lake, the habitat of the mythological *mitya pyra* (fish child), and in a crucial underwater scene, she dives and sees the fish child. Although this legend might pass inadvertently as veridic to the audiences, when Puenzo was asked in an interview about the origin of this story, she stated that "I'm always fascinated by myths and legends, how they are built, why they are so important... In general, they start from a very dark fact that finds its luminous counterpart in the legend. In *The Fish Child* I had the pleasure of inventing a legend"[58] (Puenzo in Black, 2012, 79). Inspired by Guaraní mythology, the story is about a hybrid fish child who guides drowned children to the bottom of the lake. From this initial encounter between this

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[57] I need to insist on the fact that I consider these connections to be constructed, not essential or inherent. The perils of essentializing individuals by their labour, ethnicity, among other factors, is expressed by Vera Coleman in her analysis of the relations between humans and non-human animals. She states that "throughout history, colonial, patriarchal, and heterosexist power systems have crafted essentialist discourses of "animalization" to justify the subordination of entire groups of people based on race, gender, and sexuality." (2016, 694)

[58] [S]iempre me fascinaron los mitos y las leyendas, cómo se construyen, por qué son tan importantes... En general parten de un hecho muy oscuro que encuentra en la leyenda su contratante luminosa. En *El niño pez* me dí el gusto de inventar una leyenda.

creature and Lala, the environmental aspect of the narration is intensified. La Guayi reveals her secret to Lala by retelling her traumatic migration from Paraguay where she was raped by her father (played by Paraguayan soap opera star Arnaldo André), became pregnant at thirteen years old, and gave birth to a child with physical impediments and left him in the lake "so that he could live in peace. For him to breathe".[59]

The mythological story of the fish child can be symbolically read if we think of the lake as a place of affective solace for parents who lost their children. It is the environment, in this case the lake, that provides care and protection to the young ones. Puenzo symbolically grants agency to a body of water through the Guaraní-inspired-legend that she created. Care is redistributed throughout the film. In the beginning we witness a hierarchical work care relationship between la Guayi and the household, which gradually becomes more balanced and nuanced by affection, when Lala chooses to help her in jail and out of the police commisioners' house. And finally, care is extended beyond the human realm, to the lake, symbolically through the fish child, who protects the dead children. They now inhabit a caring environment; they care for each other and the environment cares for them. This dynamic understanding of affective connections is reflected upon by Thom van Dooren, Environmental Humanities academic, when he refers to the notion of world making:

> Haraway's commitment to a dynamic world of active agency in which everything participates, everything acts, in an ongoing process of world making—a process in which all of the various actors literally and physically are the world, as well as being actively involved in the processes and negotiations in which the world takes the specific form that it does. This understanding of the world, which acknowledges that non-human others—many of whom are often considered to be 'inanimate objects'—are endowed with meaning, power and agency of their own. (Van Dooren, 2005, 43)

Puenzo's representation of caring and entangled relationships is in tune with Puig de la Bellacasa's thoughts on transformative connections, by which "kinships and alliances

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[59] [P]ara que viviera tranquilo. Para que respirara.

become transformative connections- merging inherited and constructed relations." (2017, 73) By the end of the film, not only did the human relationships shift, but the human and non-human liaisons have also become more balanced.

Despite this bold redistribution of care, Puenzo does not address the problems of thinking about Paraguay in idealist or bucolic terms. The last scenes of the film show La Guayi and Lala's bus trip from Buenos Aires to Paraguay. I agree with Ana Luengo when she affirms

> [t]he state of precariousness in which the Paraguayan state remains, and which it drags, is also a fundamental ingredient for contemporary utopia: a land still pure, a land still green and red, a land still to be discovered, to be built, an original land to which to return. Land in the heart of South America, which is also a producer of green gold.[60] (Luengo, 2017, 43)

Far from being *terra nullius*, according to World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Paraguay is the world's fourth producer of soy, green gold, which implies the use of agrochemical toxins, as well as the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, and the collapse of forests, wetlands, and grasslands. Furthermore, the economic growth produced by soy weakens the social fabric through the polarization of income and the migration of vulnerable communities due to toxic fumigation. Some of the contemporary issues in Paraguayan society such as exile, diaspora, and loss are all showcased by filmmaker Paz Encina in films such as *La hamaca paraguaya* [La Paraguayan Hammock] (2006) and *Eami*[61] (2022).

My reading of Puenzo's *El niño pez* proposes to look beyond the meaning of care as labour. Throughout the narration the two main female characters establish a balanced

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[60] [E]l estado de precariedad en que queda el estado paraguayo, y que arrastra, también es un ingrediente fundamental para la utopía contemporánea: tierra aún pura, tierra aún verde y roja, tierra aún por descubrir, por construir, tierra originaria a la que volver. Tierra en el corazón de América del Sur, que es además productora de oro verde.

[61] The latter is of particular interest given that it represents the diasporic Indigenous nation Ayoreo Totobiegosode. Given that I work on a selected corpus, I decided not to include this film for the dissertation. However, I consider including this film in future research projects.

and reciprocal affective relationship that ultimately is also symbolically translated to the environment in the mythological creature that gives title to the film. In the next section, the Dominican novel *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] (2015) by Rita Indiana is examined through the lens of poetics of environmental care in relation to caring proximities.

3.2 The Lure of Touch: Caring Proximities in *La mucama de Omicunlé* by Rita Indiana

In the following pages I seek to contribute to the robust scholarship on Rita Indiana by offering an analysis of the representation of the webs of care through the sense of touch in *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] framed under the poetics of environmental care. Indiana raises the question of care beyond its denotation as labour, explicitly referred to in the work of the protagonist, Acilde, who is a maid. In as much as Indiana extends the caring relationships to the sea by weaving African-Caribbean religion, in this case the Yoruba sea creature Olokún. Through haptic relationships, the characters establish contact zones with their environment, and in these touching moments the narration bifurcates temporally, blurring the distinctions between bodies, genders, continents, and time periods. In this kaleidoscopic novel Rita Indiana denounces gender inequities and environmental injustices that persist in Dominican society today.

Situating Rita Indiana's oeuvre within the broader context of Caribbean literature provides a panorama on the continuities and differences within the region. Characterized by its linguistic and cultural diversity, encompassing Spanish, English, French, and Dutch, Caribbean literature began to be recognized as such, and not as peripheral literature, from the 1970s onwards. Of particular interest to my study is the revitalization process that women's literature underwent in the region. Ronald Cumming and Alison Donnell contend

> [t]he period extending from the late 1970s to the late 1990s witnessed an extraordinary flourishing of Caribbean women's writing in the anglophone, hispanophone and francophone contexts. Critics began to read works by Erna Brodber, Lorna Goodison, Jamaica Kincaid, Olive

> Senior, Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Rosario Ferré, Astrid Roemer and Nancy Morejón as a body of Caribbean women's writing that offered new ways of understanding literary subjectivities, new concerns with mother–daughter relationships and with the politics of domestic and intimate encounters, as well as different literary voices and styles. (2020, 5)

This process was not isolated. For this to happen, the development of a Caribbean feminist theory and the emergence of new publishing houses that focused on women's narrations were crucial. These authors are the immediate antecedents of Rita Indiana.

In their edited volume *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (2005), Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Reneé K. Gosson, and George B. Handley refer to the embeddedness of history in the environment, explaining that "in the battle against amnesia induced by colonialism's erasures, the deterritorialization and transplantation of peoples, and even natural disasters, the Caribbean writer often seeks nature as an ally." (2005, 3) Of particular interest for my research are environmental entanglements presented by women. Regarding the relation between female bodies and nature, the editors of the volume indicate that

> foregrounding the discourse of power assures an interrogation of the ways in which the multiple ethnicities of the Caribbean have constituted the local environment, just as the history of enslaved and indentured women's labour helps to expose the Northern conceit of conflating women's bodies with passive nature. (DeLoughrey, Gosson, Handley, 2005, 4)

These authors condemn the ecofeminist essentialist perspective, a perspective which is also criticized by Caribbean women authors such as Puerto Rican Mayra Santos Febres in *Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006) [Our Lady of the Night] when she portrays the socio-economic ascent of Isabel "La Negra" Luberza to a businesswoman within a post-plantation context. Another example of a novel that is focused on female and queer bodies in relation to the environment is the Caribbean diasporic *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996) by Shani Mootoo, Trinidadian-Canadian author.

La mucama de Omicunlé [Tentacle] partakes in the topic of cross-dressing which has been extensively studied by academics in Caribbean studies. In *The Cross-Dressed Caribbean: Writing, Politics, Sexualities* (2013) the editors reflect upon the semiotic and

cultural relevance of clothing in relation to repression and sometimes even resistance. They contend that "the disruptive life of gender subversion is therefore a privileged setting for the exploration of Caribbean history." (Fumagalli, Ledent, Del Valle Alcalá, 2013, 13) The Dominican Republic has a historical antecedent: Romaine Rivière or Romaine the Prophetess, historical leader of the 1791 Saint-Domingue slave rebellion, and African freed slave who was a husband and a father, cross-dressed, and claimed to be a Catholic prophetess and the Virgin Mary's godson.[62] Echoes of Romaine Rivière resonate in Indiana's novel, the authors establish a link between African colonial forced migrations and gender politics when they state that "the transcorporality of the Afro-diasporic religious tradition of Vodou greatly facilitated the assumption of cross-gender subjectivities." (Fumagalli, Ledent, Del Valle Alcalá, 2013, 6) This characteristic of the African diasporic religions is instrumental for my analysis of the Yoruba deity Olokún in the novel and the gender transmutation it underwent in the trans-Atlantic voyage. The authors refer to Puerto Rican author Mayra Santos Febres when they elaborate on the constant metamorphosis the Caribbean is under, claims that

> [Mayra] Santos Febres claims transvestism as the ploy through which the Caribbean signifies itself in a permanent process of reinvention that privileges the logic of transversality and what Edouard Glissant calls "opacity" and "relation." The cultural specificity of the Caribbean is located here in its protean human worlds—embodied by the unruly figure of the cross-dresser-and in its irreducibility to the imported taxonomies of Euro-Atlantic sexual politics. (Fumagalli, Ledent, Del Valle Alcalá, 2013, 14)

To Santos Febres's remarks, I add that in *La mucama de Omicunlé*, the protean worlds comprise both human and more-than-human.[63] Finally, the editors' considerations on ideas related to queerness are crucial for my analysis of the novel. They affirm that

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[62] For further analysis of this historical figure, see *The Priest and the Prophetess: Abbe Ouviere, Romaine Riviere, and the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (2017) by Terry Rey.

[63] "A term used positively to highlight the absolute dependence of humans on a vast and complex array of non-human entities, only some of which are subject to human control. In both cases the more-than-human accents a relational worldview in which parts cannot be dissociated readily." Clark, Nigel. *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*. SAGE, 2011.

> transvestism is here put in dialogue, but never conflated, with transsexuality (to be understood here as a form of gender reassignment, not of gender violence), transgendered identities (characterized by the irreducible social contradiction of sex and gender expression in the same individual), intersexuality and hermaphroditism, and the "open mesh of possibilities" represented by the term “queer”. (Fumagalli, Ledent, Del Valle Alcalá, 2013, 16)

In Indiana’s novel, given the procedure the protagonist undergoes, transsexuality is the adequate term.

La mucama de Omicunlé [Tentacle] (2015) by Rita Indiana was awarded the Gran Prix Littéraire Région Guadeloupe and was nominated for the Premio Bienal de Novela Mario Vargas Llosa. This novel has received considerable attention in academic circles from a Queer Studies perspective (Aponte García, 2016; Pacheco, 2017; Large, 2018; Lugo Aracena, 2018; Estévez Ballestero, 2019); African Religious Studies (Humphrey, 2016) and Environmental Studies (Saetremyr Fylling, 2018; Boswell, 2020; Deckard and Oloff, 2020). Within the scholarship focused on the queer analysis of the novel, some point out that Indiana represents subaltern minority groups in the Dominican Republic (Lugo Aracena, 2018), while others elaborate on the complex representation of the body in the text by explaining the notion of monstrosity (Aponte García, 2016). The bibliography specialized in Religious Studies elaborates processes of transculturation in the Caribbean. Regarding Environmental analysis, in 2018 Anette Sætremyr Fylling published her MA thesis titled “*La amenaza ambiental. La conciencia ecológica en dos novelas latinoamericanas*" [The Environmental Threat. The Ecological Awareness in Two Latin American Novels]. Within her thesis she proposes a comparative analysis between *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015) and *Distancia de rescate* [Fever Dream] (2014) by Samantha Schweblin. Sætremyr Fylling compares the ecological consciousness represented in both novels to the supernatural treatment of environmental phenomena in relation to the monstrous and the unsettling. Sharae Deckard and Kerstin Oloff present an analysis using Critical Ocean Studies in which they assert that this novel can be categorized in the subgenre of “Oceanic Weird” in which Eco-critical Gothic, Science Fiction, and Weird Caribbean fiction unite. Finally, Suzanne Boswell mentions Indiana's novel in her analysis of the figures of the Anthropocene within Caribbean Climate fiction in relation to

apocalyptic climate disaster and the impossibility of sustaining a tourist-based economy in the Dominican Republic.

Rita Indiana Hernández is a novelist, short-story writer, songwriter, and advocate for the queer community in Santo Domingo. Her most renowned novels are *Papi* (2005); *Nombres y Animales* (2013); *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle] (2015), and *Hecho en Saturno* [Made in Saturn] (2018).

La mucama de Omicunlé is focused on the character Acilde, who when the novel begins in an apocalyptic 2027 is a maid for a *santería* priestess named Esther Escudero. The latter was an advisor for the President of the Dominican Republic. Esther was initiated in Cuba by a Yoruba priest who baptized her as: "Omicunlé, the mantle that covers the sea, because I have also been prophesied that my godchildren and I would protect the house of Yemanyá."[64] (Indiana, 2015, 23). Acilde had obtained that position after working as a transexual prostitute at the pier. From this first employment onward, Acilde's main dream was to be able to complete her transformation, becoming a man. The priestess protects in her house a sanctuary which Acilde discovers is a living anemone, a rare specimen after the climatic disaster that took place in 2024 which destroyed the island's ecosystem. Acilde decides to sell the anemone on the black market to be able to buy the "Rainbow Bright", a drug capable of reassigning sexual organs and gender without surgical intervention. During the transaction Esther is killed and Acilde escapes with the anemone. In distress, she calls Eric, a Cuban doctor, former customer, and Omicunlé's friend, to exchange the anemone for the "Rainbow Bright". At this point in the narration, the readers discover that Eric is also a *Babalosha* [Yoruba priest] that had to fulfill the prophecy. In addition to injecting Acilde with the desired drug, he also carries out a rite of initiation. In Indiana's words

> Eric didn't have time to explain and knelt at the foot of her headboard with the animal's tentacles facing the shaved crown. […] The priest began to pray in a high-pitched, nasal voice, "iba Olokun fe mi lo´re. Iba Olokun omo re wa se fun oyio"[I praise the spirit of the vast ocean.

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64 Omicunlé, el manto que cubre el mar, porque también me profetizaron que mis ahijados y yo protegeríamos la casa de Yemanyá.

> I praise the spirit of the ocean that is beyond comprehension], as he attached the stinging tips of the anemone's tentacles to the points on Acilde's head, who moaned and cursed weakly, but not moving[65]. (Indiana, 2015, 69)

The moment Acilde becomes the "legitimate son of Olokún, the one of the seven perfections, the Lord of the depths"[66] (Indiana, 2015, 68) narrative time is disrupted becoming threefold. Being the embodiment of Olokún allows Acilde to mock human time by inhabiting the bodies of people across centuries. On the one hand, in the present of the narration in 2027, Acilde is captured by the police for the alleged murder of Esther Escudero (Omicunlé) and is imprisoned, but under the political protection of the president. In a parallel narration that takes place in 2001, Acilde is already transmuted into a man named Giorgio Menicucci and married to Linda, a marine biologist. Together they inaugurate an arts academy dedicated to raising money to build a laboratory in which Linda can take care of her cherished ecosystem. One of the artists hired for the artistic Sosúa Project is a *démodé,* frustrated, painter fascinated by Francisco de Goya, called Argenis, who is bitten by an anemone in the first days of his stay at Bo Beach. After this incident, which he believes to be a dream, another timeline starts, in which Argenis now is the last survivor of a shipwreck and lives on the same beach but in 1606 with a group of buccaneers. One of these pirates is Roque, another character inhabited by Acilde.

It follows from this succinct plot summary that care is explicitly referred in the novel to in terms of work, analogously to *El niño pez* by Lucía Puenzo. Indiana as well touches upon the naturalized sexual abuse suffered by maids but also refers to the changes that took place with the advent of technology:

> Acilde's room in Esther's house is one of those obligatory little rooms in the Santo Domingo apartments of the 20th century, when everyone

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[65]Eric no tenía tiempo para explicarle y se arrodilló al pie de su cabecera con los tentáculos del animal mirando hacia la coronilla afeitada. […] El sacerdote comenzó a rezar con voz aguda y nasal, "iba Olokun fe mi lo´re. Iba Olokun omo re wa se fun oyio"[alabo al espíritu del vasto océano. Alabo al espíritu del océano que está más allá de la comprensión], mientras unía las puntas urticantes de los tentáculos de la anémona a los puntos en la cabeza de Acilde, quién gimió y maldijo débilmente, pero sin moverse.

[66] [H]ijo legítimo de Olokun, el de la siete perfecciones, el Señor de las profundidades.

> had a maid who slept at home and, for a salary below the minimum, cleaned, cooked, washed, cared for children, and attended to the clandestine sexual requests of the men of the family. The explosion of telecommunications and free zone factories created new jobs for these women who abandoned their slavery little by little.[67] (Indiana, 2015, 17)

Although Acilde did not suffer this established form of exploitation, since her grandparents did not approve of her sexuality, they tried to "convert" her by subduing her to a rape. Once again, as in *El niño pez*, a domestic act of violence resulting in trauma expels the characters from their home into care service.

Indiana expands the representation of care associated with labour in the beginning of the novel to include the affective and ultimately its ethical dimension. The act of touching is present in crucial moments in *La mucama de Omiculé*, those in which the narration is propelled, and timelines are opened. I am referring to the initiation rite of passage when Eric places the anemone on Acilde's head and when Argenis is touched by an anemone while swimming. Before diving into the symbolic and mythological connotation of the anemone, some of its material characteristics need to be underscored. Sea anemone are animals whose existence has been documented from the Paleozoic Era and have a distinct morphology given that they are able to alter their shape significantly by expanding, contracting, and bending. Moreover, they establish symbiotic or mutualistic relationships with algae and fish, in which they mutually benefit from the production of oxygen, the sources of food, and are provided protection from other predators (Jakimovski, 2011, 69). The immemorial presence of the anemone in the aquatic medium is both useful for Indiana to use this animal, a synecdoche of the sea, as a pivoting tool which causes time bifurcations, and as a witness for change over time. The protean nature of the anemone speaks equally to the regional cultural diversity as well as to the particular metamorphosis of Acilde-Giorgio-Roque. Ultimately, the symbiosis of the anemone with its ecosystem can

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[67] La habitación de Acilde en casa de Esther es uno de esos cuartuchos obligatorios de los apartamentos del Santo Domingo del siglo XX, cuando todo el mundo tenía una sirvienta que dormía en casa y, por un sueldo por debajo del mínimo, limpiaba, cocinaba, lavaba, cuidaba niños y atendía los requerimientos sexuales clandestinos de los hombres de la familia. La explosión de las telecomunicaciones y las fábricas de zona franca crearon nuevos empleos para estas mujeres que abandonaron sus esclavitudes poco a poco.

illuminate the ideas of interconnectedness represented by Indiana in her novel. In Puig de la Bellacasa's words, "thinking the webs of care through sensorial materiality, as chains of touch that link and remake worlds, troubles not only longings for closeness but also the reduction of reciprocity to logics of exchange between individuals." (2017, 120) By granting such relevance to the sense of touch, Indiana calls to question the motivations behind the connection among humans and non-humans, is it a transactional relationship, or is it grounded in care?

The symbolic, literary, and mythological connotations of the sea animal are contemplated. At least two main traditions, one African-diasporic and the other European,[68] converge in the representation of sea entanglements and webs of care. In the first place, refers to Indiana's incorporation of the Yoruba religious figure of Olokún, and later elaborate on the way in which the epigraph of the novel, *The Tempest* (1611) by William Shakespeare, serves as a reading key for the entire novel. My analysis of the representation of African-diasporic religions is informed by the impact of the notion of the Anthropocene in literary narratives, as well as by the idea of temporalities of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

As evidenced by the plot of the novel, the writer's representation of time is not merely a display of literary skill but an accelerating vector that carries substantial consequences for humanity. A crucial concept is that of the Anthropocene, an idea generated in the science field, later adopted by the Humanities (Morton, 2013; Clark, 2015; Grusin, 2017; Yusoff, 2018). Originally coined by ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer in the early 1980s, not until the early 2000s the concept became popularized by atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen. This idea names the geological age that the Earth is going through since the industrial revolution when humans began to have an environmental and geographical impact on the environment. Among the scientific community this term is not homogeneously accepted, and scientists question the precise period of origin: some name

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[68] For a comprehensive analysis of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's intertext in *La mucama de Omicunlé*, refer to Deckard and Oloff, 2020.

the industrial revolution, others go as far as the first agricultural revolution, and others even pinpoint the year 1945 when the intensity of noxious human impact accelerated. History of science scholar Naomi Oreskes posits that humans have become geological agents with the power of changing physical processes of our planet (2004). Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty refers to a possible counterargument by indicating that not all humans have had the same responsibility and contribution to the current climate emergency. He argues "one could object, for instance, that all the anthropogenic factors contributing to global warming — the burning of fossil fuel, industrialization of animal stock, the clearing of tropical and other forests, and so on– are after all part of a larger story: the unfolding of capitalism in the West and the imperial or quasi-imperial domination by the West of the rest of the world." (Chakrabarty, 2009, 216)

In *La mucama de Omicunlé*, the so-called disaster of 2024 is a watershed moment for all ecosystems in the Caribbean. In the novel, the president of Venezuela sent bio-hazardous material to the Dominican Republic and after a tsunami hit the island, all the harmful chemicals were spilled into the sea. This catastrophe intensified the existing inequalities in the area, such as racism, and created new ones, like environmental migration and toxicity. In one of the passages that takes place in 2027, Acilde describes how a Haitian migrant infected with the virus is captured: "recognizing the virus in black [man], the tower's security device fires a jet of lethal gas and in turn informs the rest of the neighbors, who will avoid entering the building until the automatic collectors, who patrol the streets and avenues, pick up the body and disintegrate it."[69] (Indiana, 2015, 11). Even though the disaster affected an entire geographical region, some individuals are more affected than others. Based on the work of economists Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez-Alier (1997), Rob Nixon coined the term slow violence to refer to "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." (Nixon,

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[69] [A]l reconocer el virus en el negro, el dispositivo de seguridad de la torre lanza un chorro de gas letal e informa a su vez al resto de los vecinos, que evitarán la entrada al edificio hasta que los recolectores automáticos, que patrullan las calles y avenidas, recojan el cuerpo y lo desintegren.

2011, 2) Both spontaneous and slow violence are represented in Indiana's novel, and they are directed at women, racialized individuals, and ultimately the ecosystem.

The Anthropocene has challenged authors to re-think the dimension of time and how it is represented narratively. In Indiana's case, she structures her text in three historic periods and as the novel develops, chapters become shorter, and the narrative rhythm accelerates. One of the key literary devices used by Indiana is allegory. In recent studies on the Environmental Humanities, the notion of allegory has been revisited as a literary tool to condense the complexities and magnitudes of the climate crisis. The theoretical development posed by Postcolonial ecocritic Elizabeth DeLoughrey regarding the use of allegories in relation to the ocean is productive for my analysis. She coined the term

> "oceanic turn" […], which complicates the limits of the nation-state through recourse to the trajectories of migration, diaspora, and the global flows of empire, capital, and culture. While the early humanities scholarship on the transoceanic was concerned with humans, new work on the oceanic turn, alternatively called critical oceanic studies, the blue humanities, and the oceanic humanities, is exploring geopolitical, biopolitical, ecological, and ontological dimensions. (DeLoughrey, 2019, 138)

In *La mucama de Omicunlé*, Indiana represents the African diaspora produced by slavery during the colonial period, the more recent migrations within the Caribbean, but also how these flows impact the environment. Thinking of the ocean under these terms allows for considerations on the "fluidity between bodies as well as an embodied ocean" (DeLoughrey, 2019, 139).

Rita Indiana places at the centre of her story African diasporic religions, more precisely Olokún, from the Yoruba religion, as an oceanic allegory, which ultimately allows Acilde to navigate through time in an attempt to save the Caribbean Sea. If we have a closer examination of Olokún, it encapsulates three main ideas that are key for Indiana's text. The first notion is that Olokún is the master of the seas who protects the waters and all the creatures that live in it. The second key aspect is that given its historical trans-Atlantic trajectory there is a masculine and feminine component to the deity. Black Studies scholar Marcus Harvey indicates that "Olokún has been rendered in masculine terms in the

Black Atlantic Diaspora. However, many Yoruba communities in Nigeria and other parts of West Africa view Olokún as female" (Harvey, 2008, 73). The last element that proves to be useful for Indiana is the association between Olokún and mystery. Harvey states that "Her [Olokún] reigns over the waters of the earth and her ownership of the mysteries of divination points us to one of the ideas she most symbolizes: the unknown" (Harvey, 2008, 73).

By challenging the anthropocentric linear idea of time, Rita Indiana in *La mucama de Omicunlé* promotes different experiences of time by considering other-than-human beings. In her analysis of temporalities of care, Puig de la Bellacasa claims that

> making time for care time appears as a disruption of anthropocentered temporalities. Contrasted but interconnected temporalities are at work in contemporary conceptions of soil care in scientific research and other domains of soil practice. Alternative practical, ethical and affective ecologies of care are emerging that trouble the traditional direction of progress and the speed of technoscientific, productionist, future-driven interventions. (2017, 23)

Although she focuses her study on soil times, the framework that Puig de la Bellacasa proposes is useful for my analysis. By proposing a threefold time structure, Indiana portrays the noxious consequences of teleological conceptions of time driven by unleashed economic progress. In contrast to this conception of time, by bringing to the foreground the sea in the form of the deity Olokún, Indiana raises the question of ecological relations where both human and non-human timescales are considered. According to Jacob Metcalf and Thom van Dooren, "ecological well-being depends on aligning the temporal dimensions of many beings, and the consequences of disruption and slippage between times." (2012, vi) The alignment, or lack thereof, of these temporalities, have material, political, and ethical consequences. Some of these effects are fictionally represented in the ending of the novel, specifically with Giorgio's decision not to use his time-mocking skills to warn the future president about the ecological disaster caused by geopolitical decisions the president would take in the future. Giorgio is aware of his duty as the embodiment of Olokún but is not willing to sacrifice his life as a man with his wife Linda. Regarding the issue of choice in relation to care, "caring, or not caring however, are ethico-political problems and agencies," Puig de la Bellacasa remarks

> that we mostly think as they pass *from* humans toward others. But thinking care with things and objects exposes that the thick relational complexity of the intratouching circulation of care might be even more intense when we take into account that our worlds are more than human: the agencies at stake multiply. (2017, 122)

Throughout the novel the "thick relational complexity" of care is expressed by entwining human characters with non-human personified agencies such as Olokún. However, the key decision that alters the overall outcome is in the hands of one human being, Giorgio.

3.2.1 *The Tempest* as an Intertext

The Dominican novel opens with the following epigraph, which informs the representation not only of the sea but also of queer sexualities and the Caribbean identity in general:

> Full fathom five thy father lies,
>
> Of his bones are coral made,
>
> Those are pearls that were his eyes,
>
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
>
> But doth suffer a sea-change,
>
> into something rich and strange,
>
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell, Ding-dong.
>
> Hark! Now I hear them, ding-dong, bell.
>
> (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*)

In Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, Ariel sings this song in Act 1, Scene 2, to convince Ferdinand that his father has drowned in the shipwreck. The reference to the polymorphous character of Ariel in the opening pages of the novel sets the magical tone for the text and immerses the reader in the depths of the sea with mythical creatures such as nymphs.

Although not a magical sea creature, Ariel does share with Olokún the evasion of gender classification. Even more so, Acilde shares with both creatures the protean abilities and the servile position. Moreover, on a literary aspect, the use of alliteration in Shakespeare's song is infused in the title of the novel which brings together Spanish and Yoruba words and alludes to the word *macumba*[70] which refers to syncretic ritual practices.

In a speculate way, the allusion of Ariel implies his counterpart, Caliban. Because of the lengthy academic attention this character has received from postcolonial perspectives (Fernández-Retamar, 1974; Nixon, 1987; Carey-Webb, 1993), I will only underscore some ideas presented by materialist feminist Silvia Federici in *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Her work helps to inscribe the key presence of labour in the novel and Indiana's critique of capitalism and its material inscription in the body. Federici argues that "Caliban represents not only the anti-colonial rebel whose struggle still resonates in contemporary Caribbean literature, but is a symbol for the world proletariat and, more specifically, for the proletariat body as a terrain and instrument of resistance to the logic of capitalism." (2014, 11) The two characters touched by the anemone in the novel, both workers, a maid and an artist, represent that resistance Federici speaks about and even more, the environmental consequences this economic model carries. Furthermore, Federici's analysis of Prospero in relation to a Cartesian conceptualization of the body and the environment illuminates a dualistic idea that Indiana challenges in her novel. Federici claims that

> placed in a soulless world and in a body-machine, the Cartesian man, like Prospero, could then break his magic wand, becoming not only responsible for his own actions, but seemingly the center of all powers. In being divorced from its body, the rational self certainly lost its solidarity with its corporeal reality and with nature. Its solitude, however, was to be that of a king: in the Cartesian model of the person, there is no egalitarian dualism between the thinking head and the

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[70] In *Textos e contextos sobre religiao*, Antonio Paiva Rodrigues indicates that the word macumba has Quimbanda origins (ma'kômba) which "represents the generic designation of syncretic Afro-Brazilian cults derived from religious practices and deities from Bantu people, influenced by candomblé and with Amerindian elements of Catholicism, Spiritism, and Occultism." (2010, 144)

> body-machine, only a master/slave relation, since the primary task of the will is to dominate the body and the natural world. (2014, 148)

By accentuating the importance of the sense of touch and the diversity of sexual identities, Indiana challenges the long-lasting tradition of Cartesian corporeal and environmental dualisms. The key moments in which the characters touch the anemone imply a deep environmental connection and awareness. Moreover, Indiana represents the detrimental consequences of the master/slave logics in the life of Acilde whose grandparents tried to violently change her bodily perception.

3.2.2 Final Remarks

This section has proposed a reading of Indiana's novel in relation to the poetics of environmental care, in this case expressed in the caring proximities of touch. The two pivotal moments in the novel are touching scenes, both Acilde and Argenis are touched by the anemone. These moments speak to the transformative power of contact. Their individual lives are altered as well as the global path of humanity changes in these moments. In her initiation rite, Acilde becomes aware of environmental issues once she comes in contact with the anemone. Rooted in the culturally hybrid Caribbean, the author combines Yoruba and European traditions to represent the human and the more-than-human entanglements over a time period of more than five centuries. In denouncing the possible outcomes of overseeing potential environmental hazards such as a toxic tsunami, Rita Indiana interweaves environmental, economic, and gender vulnerabilities. In Puig de la Bellacasa's words: "caring here is a speculative affective mode that encourages intervention in what things could be." (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 66) In the next section, an analysis of the poetics of environmental care in terms of political and activist engagement is presented in the Brazilian documentary *Vozes da Floresta* by Betse de Paula where she focuses on the activist work of Amazonian women.

3.3 Care as Political Engagement in *Vozes da floresta* by Betse de Paula

My study of the documentary *Vozes da floresta* [Voices of the Rainforest] (2019) by Betse de Paula is analyzed through the poetics of environmental care, with a specific emphasis on the activist, ethical, and political aspect of care.[71] Thus far, two fiction texts were examined, *El niño pez* and *La mucama de Omicunlé*, in which it was demonstrated that even though care as labour is the most evident nuance, upon closer examination the affective side of care emerges entangled with environmental matters. With the aim of studying Betse de Paula's representation of care in her film, a succinct presentation of the history of contemporary Brazilian documentaries with a special emphasis on women's production is offered; by referring to Bill Nichols's (2001) canonical categorization, some general notions regarding documentaries are presented with a view to later compare this film with the other two fiction texts. Introducing Betse de Paula within the context of Brazilian filmmaking illuminates my analysis of her film.

According to Gustavo Procopio Furtado (2019), internal and external factors impelled the production of contemporary (1990 onwards) Brazilian documentaries. The main national consideration is its tight correlation to the democratization process which began in 1985 after twenty years of dictatorships. The political reconfiguration brought with it the *Lei do Audiovisual* [Audiovisual Law] in 1993 which paved the way for public funding and private tax deductions for cinema, boosted the professionalization of the filmmakers, and facilitated the emergence of specialized film festivals. Furtado indicates that two film festivals, *É tudo verdade* which was inaugurated in 1996 and *Festival de Cinema Documentário e Etnográfico* (Forumdoc) began in 1997, were key at promoting the documentary genre, creating communities of filmmakers and audiences. Moreover, on a global scale, the impact of low-cost digital technologies boosted the production of documentaries.

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[71] I would like to thank Betse de Paula and the producers at Aurora Cinematográfica for providing me a copy of the film and their eager enthusiasm and support.

Regarding women's contemporary film production in Brazil, the 1960s and 1970s filmmakers influenced by second wave feminism in the region are a strong antecedent. Between 1960 and 1970 the percentage of women's participation in directing doubled, and between 1980 to 1990 the increase was 2.47 times. (Alves, Alves, Silva, 2012, 378) According to Karla Holanda, between 2000 and 2009 "there were 319 documentary films directed by women in Brazil." (2017, 16) Furthermore, Cássio dos Santos Tomaim, Francine Nunes and Naiady Machado (2020) charted seventy-four women documentary filmmakers in southern Brazil and conducted semi-structured interviews with four of them. Among their findings they state that most of them have a professional background in journalism, and regarding the thematic interest they affirm

> that despite the recurring female themes in the films directed by women, in documentary cinema these themes have not been the priority of Brazilian female filmmakers. For feminine themes, we can consider what is popularly identified as issues of the universe of women, such as motherhood, childhood, sexuality, and gender. (Tomaim, Nunes, Machado, 2020, 195)

This argument is at least polemical, provided that for some filmmakers the idea of the feminine is contested, as that of feminine gaze. Femininity cannot be understood as a static universal idea, but rather, socially constructed attributes, behaviours, and traits associated with women. According to Laura Mulvey, the feminine gaze refers to the viewpoints of the filmmaker, the characters within the narration, and the spectators[72]. *Vozes da floresta* is a profoundly feminist film in which the claims asserted by the women interviewed speak to global geopolitical and environmental issues.

Before introducing Betse de Paula and her work, some general ideas on the documentary genre are presented which will prove to be helpful for my final comparison between the three texts analysed in this chapter. The key distinction offered by Nichols is that documentaries are not a reproduction or replica of reality but a representation, which means that the audiences see the filmmaker's interpretation.

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[72] For further discussion on the female gaze, see Dirse, Zoe (2013), and Ulfsdotter and Backman (2018).

Betse de Paula is a filmmaker, screenwriter, and producer from Rio de Janeiro with an eclectic body of work. She was born into a family of artists, daughter of producer Vera María de Paula and filmmaker Zelito Viana, niece of Chico Anysio, actor, writer, and composer. A clear artistic distinction can be drawn between Betse de Paula's first feature films *O casamento de Louise* [Louise's Wedding] (2001), *Celeste & Estrela* (2005), and *Vendo ou alugo* [Sell or Rent] (2013), which are commercial comedies, and her subsequent work as documentary filmmaker with Aurora Production Company. From *Revelando Sebastião Salgado* [Meeting Sebastião Salgado] (2012) to *A luz de Mário Carneiro* (2020), de Paula pays tribute to Brazilian photographers and filmmakers in seven documentaries.

Vozes da floresta [Voices of the Rainforest] (2019) is representative of the documentary facet of De Paula's productions, it premiered at the *Festival Cine Ceará* and showcased at the *Festival Internacional de Cine Ambiental* (FINCA). This recent Brazilian film has not received substantial critical or academic attention yet. Luiz Zanin Oricchio (2019) remarks that this documentary gives voice to the hidden reality of African descendants and Indigenous women in the Amazon River basin. The film traces twelve communities along the Amazon River and presents the viewpoint of women: Indigenous, *quilombolas* [African-Brazilian descendants of escaped slaves who lived in the *quilombos* and who worked in the slave plantations up until 1888], coconut breakers, riverside inhabitants, and women affected by the creation of the Xingu dam and the Aero-Spatial Centre in Alcântara, Maranhão.

This film calls into question our understanding of care by directly linking caring practices with the public sphere. The interviewed women recognize themselves as political actors, either as Indigenous or union leaders. They explain the hardships they had to confront to achieve and maintain that position, while being intimidated by the state and corporations. Some of the threats included death threats and the murder of family members. Even more so, these public demonstrations affect the domestic realm: Marilene Rocha, an activist of the RESEX (*Reserva Extrativista*) [Extractivist Reserve] Tapajós Arapunis in Pará against rubber extraction and logging, declares that she had to come to an agreement with her alcoholic husband, who disapproves of her activist work because she neglected the care work of the household and even became violent towards her. Despite all this, these

women endure in their struggle to defend their communities and environments. Puig de la Bellacasa links care practices with women when she affirms that

> [c]are is a necessary practice, a life-sustaining activity, an everyday constraint. Its actualizations are not limited to what we traditionally consider care relations: care of children, of the elderly, or other "dependents," care activities in domestic, health care, and affective work —well mapped in ethnographies of labour— or even in love relations. Reclamation of care is not the "veneration of feminine values'" (Cuomo 1997, 126) but rather the affirmation of the centrality of a series of vital activities to the everyday "sustainability of life" that has been historically associated with women's lives. (Carrasco 2001) (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 161)

The women in *Vozes da floresta* represent the affirmation of activities referred to by Puig de la Bellacasa, in this case, which are related to sustaining life in the Amazon.

In *Photography and Documentary Film in the Making of Modern Brazil* (2013), Luciana Martins argues that

> [i]n the late nineteenth century, in the positivist spirit of the New Republic [of Brazil], faith in the documentary power of photography gained further momentum. Pictures of large-scale engineering works, new roads and railways, urban improvements and sanitary campaigns were increasingly deployed to promote the idea of a new civilization in the tropics. (2013, 5)

Contrary to the nineteenth-century use of panoramic shots analyzed by Martins which portrayed the innumerable economic possibilities of the territory, De Paula roots Indigenous communities in these places. *Vozes da floresta* is precisely the reverse side of the progressive impulse that Martins speaks of. Without falling in the traps of ethnographic primitivist documentaries, Betse de Paula weaves the particular and collective stories of women. From the opening scenes of the film, it is made clear to the audiences that we are facing a contested political, legal, and activist issue. Indigenous lawyer, Joênia Wapishana, presents the case of Barro, Maturuca, Jacarezinho, Tamanduá Indigneous communities on land demarcation and tenure in front of the court during a trial. Betse de Paula introduces Joênia once again in her community through aerial shots of the Raposa Serra do Sol in Roraima, a liminal state between Venezuela and Guyana.

The polyphonic nature of this film is reinforced in scenes where women sing while working. The first protest song is pleasantly sung by the coconut breakers while they process the babassu (see Figure 4) by holding the ax with their legs and pounding on the shell of the nut, they say: "Hey! Don't destroy the palm trees! You know you can't cut them down. We must preserve our natural riches." The communal aspect of the endeavor is underscored by the lower positioning of the camera, almost at the level of the women. Although not expressed in the lyrics, the song is addressed to landowners who tricked Indigenous peoples into giving up their lands. One of the women argues that "[the farmer owner of the estate] wouldn't trade one of his oxen for a hundred black people from Monte Alegre." Even the Babassu Law that tried to patch up colonial structures by allowing the local communities to enter private property safeguarded by barbwire and take the babassu nuts, does not grant Indigenous and *quilombolas* communities the land tenure they demand. The second song in the film is sung by a woman living in the riverside of the Xingu who denounces the genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide perpetrated by the developers of the 4000 km long *rodovia Transamazônica* [Trans-Amazonian highway] initiated in 1972 during the military dictatorships and the dam in the Xingu River. The Belo Monte woman sings:

> I hear you complaining. You can't stay silent. Xingu, Xingu, Xingu. I see you crying, I see you silencing yourself. But you can't stay silent. Xingu, Xingu, Xingu. People of the land, people of the water, all must unite, we are going to fight. For the beauty of your water, of your land, we are going to fight.

She gives voice to the river and also to the communities living with it. Who is complaining and crying? The river and the people living by it.

Figure 4: Still shot *Vozes da Floresta* (2019) by Betse de Paula. Babassu workers in Monte Alegre community. © Aurora Cinematográfica and Galo de Briga Filmes.

Some of the women are both activists and producers of local food; the babassu workers are not an exception. A member of the Organization of Working Women in the Lower Amazon (AOMT-BAM), Odila Duarte Godinho, advocates for the protection of the Arapiuns River by establishing the tourist entrepreneurship Anã Paradise Inn. In order to provide food both for the community and the inn, Odila began an aquaculture project in which she farms fish sustainably, along with other women. A similar scenario takes place in RESEX Lago Grande in the state of Pará, where Ivete Bastos is the union leader of the rural workers and a local producer of manioc flour. These alternative modes of production go hand in hand with the oppositional work they perform as activists to defend interdependent relationalities with the environment and resist the attacks from multinational corporations and state law enforcers. Puig de la Bellacasa proposes to think about the relations established by the production of food goods in terms of relationality,

she says that "thinking multispecies models such as foodwebs[73] through care involves looking at the dependency of the (human) carer not so much form soil's produce or "service" but from an inherent relationality." (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 192)

Vozes da floresta showcases Betse de Paula's engaged filmmaking. In this participatory documentary she traces the voices of women who advocate for caring about socio-environmental causes in the Amazon River basin. By underscoring their activist and ethical involvement in their communities, de Paula represents a form of caring that is public, where women are not relegated to the domestic realm but are community leaders and entrepreneurs. Their commitment to local knowledge of plants such as babassu, fish, and crops like manioc enable them to establish foodwebs of close-knit relationships among humans and more-than-humans.

3.4 Caring Visions: Teaching Beans How to Care

This section analyzes the Canadian film *Beans* (2020) by Tracey Deer informed by the notion of caring standpoint. I investigate the ways in which domestic care is related to communal-environmental care in the representation of a key historical moment of Canadian politics, the Oka conflict. By offering a comparative analysis with Alanis Obomsawin's documentaries, I indicate Deer's use of metacinema not only to assert her place in a lineage of Indigenous women filmmaking in Canada, but also to reflect on the expressive mechanisms of the medium, particularly, the gaze.

In the previous chapter, I referred to the economic and cultural context of Indigenous filmmaking in Canada, with a specific emphasis on the role of Indigenous women. *Beans*, a fiction film that premiered at TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) in 2020, is thematically and expressively linked to a series of documentaries by Alanis

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[73] The foodweb model refers to the complex interactions between species that allow for the circulation of energy and nutrients. This model follows the patterns of predation and how some species waster becomes another's food. (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2015 and 2017)

Obomsawin in which the Abenaki activist and filmmaker chronicles two environmental crisis that affected Indigenous nations in Quebec. In *Incident at Restigouche* (1984) Obomsawin worked with archival footage, photographs, maps, and drawings to represent the conflict over salmon fishing rights between the Mi'kmaq and the Quebec government. Following the Oka crisis in 1990, she directed a tetralogy[74] in which she focused on the Mohawk resistance; the first film of this series, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) is fundamental for my analysis.

Both Canadian filmmakers in *Incident at Restigouche*, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, and *Beans* represent historical events which affected their nations. Obomsawin and Deer include their own bodies in their films, and they share recurring motifs and images. Obomsawin's documentaries offer a historical background to contemporary conflicts through her voiceover narration. The conflict arose in the town of Oka, Montreal, when the mayor announced the plan to build a housing complex and to extend the golf course into the woods where a Mohawk cemetery was located. During the seventy-eight-day conflict, the tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples escalated and the provincial police force, the *Sûreté du Québec* (SQ) were involved, and later, even the Canadian Armed Forces[75]. In contrast, Deer represents a snapshot of the Oka conflict from the viewpoint of a girl, which allows the filmmaker to explore Indigenous relationships in depth. In her 1984 documentary, Obomsawin participates in an on-camera interview with Lucien Lessard, the Minister of Fisheries who ordered the raid. After listening carefully to Lessard's comments, she rebuttals his arguments by raising the crucial point of sovereignty. She contends that it is hard to believe that he does not deem valid Indigenous sovereignty claims when the province of Quebec has been advocating for the same right. On the other hand, although Deer does not appear on-camera, she has claimed "I am

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[74] *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, *My Name is Kahentiiosta* (1995), *Spudwrench – Kahnawake Man* (1997), *Rocks at Whiskey Trench* (2000).

[75] For further historical context of the Oka crisis, refer to https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/oka-crisis.

Beans."[76] Even though she is not within the frame, a representation of her younger self is. Deer explains that she was twelve years old in 1990 and at that moment, decided she wanted to become a filmmaker to tell this story. Finally, Deer pays homage to Obomsawin's *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* by using the same image in the opening scenes: the golf course shot from the Mohawk holy ground. The contrast between the clownish golf flagstick in the hole with the solemn headstone illustrates the absurdity of the settler's claim. The last recurrence between the 1993 documentary and the 2020 feature film is the motif of the laughing policeman. Obomsawin shows a *Sûreté du Québec* (SQ) enforcer scornfully laughing at her. Deer returns to this image in one of the tensest moments of her film, this point will be analysed later. Deer's homage to Indigenous Canadian filmmakers, especially to the work of Alanis Obomsawin, through specific intertextual references to images and motifs, are some elements of metacinema (Gerstenskorn, 1987; Limoges, 2008) that she explores in *Beans*.

Tracey Penelope Tekahentakwa Deer has an extensive documentary filmmaking career engaged with Indigenous claims, some examples are *Mohawk Girls* (2005), *Kanien'keha:ka: Living the Language* (2008), *Club Native* (2008), and TV series such as *Mohawk Girls* (2010-2017). She has consistently worked with Rezolution Pictures, a production company based in Montreal, Quebec, that focuses on the representation of Indigenous stories.

Deer's film follows the story of a young Mohawk girl, Tehakatahkhwa (played by Kiawentiio), during the Oka crisis when her life changes drastically. In this coming-of-age story, the initial scenes show Beans's (Tehakatahkhwa's nickname) application process to Queen Heights Academy supported by her mother but not by her father, who questions the need to be educated outside the reserve in an Anglo-Canadian institution. Deer inserts archival footage of news programs that the family watches to keep up to date. While watching her aunt on television, Beans states that she would like to be a part of the resistance because she "cares about our rights" and along with her younger sister Ruby is

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[76] https://www.emafilms.com/en/film/beans/.

thrilled to go to the pinery. In a festive scene, the pregnant mother and two daughters drive to the pine forest to join the resistance while singing "The Power" by Snap. This initial joy experienced by the family is quickly overturned leaving only room for fear when the *Sûreté du Québec* becomes involved and raids the Mohawk occupation.

Two interlinked expressions of care are represented in the film: care within the family and care for the Mohawk nation and its environment. This interdependent connection is not fortuitous. Much like the Brazilian documentary *Vozes da floresta*, *Beans* represents the ethical dimension of care. For the Mohawk nation, care for the personal and the collective are the same. Puig de la Bellacasa relates care and the publish sphere by posing that "care is an ethico-political issue, not only because it is made "public" but because it pertains to the collective and it calls upon commitment" (2017, 160) Given that care for the family and the environment are deeply intertwined, are analyzed parallelly. The film represents several female characters who provide care for their young ones such as mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and even friends. Beans's mother, Lily, is a central character for the development of both her daughter and the resistance because she adopts a caring standpoint. In line with feminist theorizations, Puig de la Bellacasa affirms that "standpoints come to be through a transformation of habits of perception, thinking, and doing that happen through attachment to particular concerns, interests, and commitments" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 59). Throughout the film there is a clear contrast between Lily's and her husband's, Kani'Tariio, standpoints regarding their position within the resistance and their daughter's upbringing in relation to their Indigenous identity. In an initial scene, the family is confronted by a lack of care, even hostility, when they try to purchase food in the local supermarket in Montreal, but the cashier and manager refuse to let them pay and take the goods. The spite escalates when the empty-handed family tries to take the boat again to cross to the reserve and a group of settlers obstruct them. To be able to escape, Lily and her sister-in-law embrace the children and jump into the vessel. Even after going through these violent aggressions against her life and her children, Lily avoids by all means armed conflict between the Mohawk resistance and *Sûreté du Québec.* Not only she cares but she also teaches her children how to care, especially Beans, who closely follows her mother's actions. Throughout the film, Deer shoots several scenes in which Beans is looking at how her mother proceeds and, on some occasions, the girl

emulates her actions. In a crucial passage, failing to stop verbally the armed escalation between the barricades, Lily gathers a group of Indigenous women, forming a human chain to block the open fire (see Figure 5). By positioning the camera behind the Mohawk side of the barricade, situating Lily in the middle of the frame as a focal point, and using a deep depth of field, Deer asserts the standpoint of the characters. The women's bodies become involved in defending their nation, their people, and their land. Once again, a caring action implies proximity between bodies, in this case a group of women holding hands.

Figure 5: Still shot of *Beans* (2020) by Tracy Dear. Mohawk women standing between the SQ forces and Mohawk men to impede open fire. ©EMA Films.

Tracey Deer contrasts the strong female caring presence with the lack of it by introducing the character of April, a teenage Mohawk girl who lives with her brother and father. April and Beans meet in the initial demonstration and although the older girl is aggressive, Beans tries to become friends with her. After some time, April allows Beans into her company. In a telling scene, the older girl tries to "toughen up" Beans by showing her how to punch in order to take care of herself with an improvised boxing bag, a pillow tied to a tree trunk. April argues that she is doing this so that Beans can defend herself from potential mean girls. However, the protagonist uses these defense skills later on in the film

against April's brother, Hank, who tries to abuse Beans. When she reveals this to her friend, April is not surprised and discloses that her father, Gary, had been doing this to her after her mother died. Tracy Deer exposes not only the state and settler violence, but also gender violence within the reserve. Because of the internal and external violence, Indigenous peoples teach their young ones strategies to become resilient. An example of this is the recurrent admonitions Beans receives from her father and April: "toughen up!".

However, the filmmaker represents another form of resilience based on vulnerability and caring standpoints in the character of Lily. Halfway through the film the families need to separate because of the intensifying tension between the Mohawk resistance and the Canadian Armed Forces. On their way to a safe place outside the reserve, a group of non-Indigenous protesters protected by the armed forces throw stones at the cars driven by Mohawk women. Tracey Deer structures this scene in a shot/reverse shot alternating from the inside of the car and the outside from the viewpoint of Beans. As Lily realizes the danger she is facing, she tells Beans and Ruby to duck under the seat away from the windows. From Beans's viewpoint the audiences can see the transformation of her mother's expression from alert, to worry, to utter desperation (see figure 6). Once they are out of danger, Beans sees a group of policemen having a coffee and laughing, causing her indignation, and in an out-of-character attitude she yells at them "Fuck you!" while punching them. This outburst is the consequence of facing the absence of care. The girl expected to be protected by the police, but confronted by the lack of care, she feels contempt and anger. Puig de la Bellacasa affirms that "even neglect, the biocidal absence of care, reveals it as inescapable: when care is removed, we can perceive the effects of carelessness." (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 70) In line with this statement, Tracey Deer represents the deadly effects of the absence of care in her film, not only for Indigenous peoples but for the environment.

Figure 6: Still shot of *Beans* (2020) by Tracy Deer. Lily cries in the car while she moves through a violent crowd that is throwing stones at her vehicle. © EMA Films.

Beans represents the potential risk of eviction by using the motif of circulation or the obstruction of movement. Lily and her two daughters are constantly moving in and out the reserve to be safe. All these displacements entail high levels of risk because the borders are militarized. Oka's claim to Mohawk land jeopardizes the sovereignty of the Indigenous nation and their right to live in that place. Although this is not a case of environmental migration because the displacement is not caused by the climate crisis, it is still produced by a land dispute. This quarrel originates in a fundamental difference in the way in which the value of the environment is understood. In the vein of what had happened in 1971 in the James Bays Cree hydroelectric conflict, and in 1981 in the Restigouche incident, the 1990 Oka crisis exposes Quebec's utilitarian understanding of the environment as a repository of resources that produce capital. Contrary to this view, the Mohawk nation defends a world view in which environmental, social, and cultural patrimony belongs to the community, possesses a value that exceeds any price, and should not be listed in the market. In the next chapter, the difference in cosmogonies will be revisited when presenting my analysis of the Argentinian novel *Las aventuras de la China Iron* [The Adventures of China Iron] (2017).

Towards the end of the film, once the crisis ends, Beans's family is sitting around the dining table for breakfast, mirroring a scene in the beginning of the film. The young girl enters the room dressed in her new school garments and Lily reminds her that she can change her idea about going to the Queen High Academy at any moment. Unlike the initial scene, Beans's father, Kani'Tariio, supports his daughter's decision by stating "she has made her choice. She's got this". To ease her mother's fear of letting Beans outside the reserve, she says: "I'm just doing what you said mom. We need more friends, right? That's what I'm going to do. So they will never throw rocks at us again." By observing her mother's choices and actions throughout the resistance, she learned that it is through care and education that complex social problems can be solved. In the closing scene of the film Tracey Deer pays homage to Alanis Obomsawin by referring to her film *My Name is Kahentiiosta* (1995). Shot from behind, Beans is standing in front of her class and her hair brooch with the Iroquois flag is in the centre of the frame (see Figure 7). This flag represents the Haudenosaunee six nations (Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscarora). This visual assertion of Beans's identity is reinforced in a frontal close-up when she states: "My name is Tehakatahkhwa." She chooses to introduce herself not by her easily pronounced nickname, but by her Indigenous name. The right to be called by her name was the protagonist's key struggle in Alanis Obomsawin's documentary.

Figure 7: Still shot of *Beans* (2020) by Tracy Deer. Beans's first day of class at the Queen Heights Academy. © EMA Films.

Tracey Deer explores in *Beans* the close relationship between domestic and environmental care in the Mohawk nation during the Oka crisis. To do so, she focuses her story on an Indigenous girl's upbringing in which she is exposed to dissonant approaches to taking care of herself, her community, and their environment. In line with her previous work on the TV show *Mohawk Girls*, Deer represents what entails to be a child and how to raise children for Indigenous peoples in Quebec. Throughout the film, Beans observes different approaches to defending Indigenous identity and land; some are based on violence and others on care. By portraying Beans's mother with a strong caring standpoint and her daughter recurrently gazing at her actions, Deer represents the work entails caring for the environment and also teaching this form of care to younger generations. This learning gaze on camera is replicated at a directorial level, through Deer's formation as a filmmaker by watching and paying homage to Alanis Obomsawin. Immersed in a crucial historical moment for Canadian Indigenous nations, Beans navigates between the tension of a careless state, the violence and contempt this causes in Mohawk peoples, and her mother's commitment to resisting with care. In the next section, the four texts are studied under the poetics of environmental care for a comparative analysis.

3.5 Environmental Care Matters: A Comparison

In this chapter it was offered an analysis of four texts in which the webs of care exceeded the human world to embrace the more-than-human world. In each of the four cases the author and filmmakers present a different understanding of care which was analyzed under the light of the poetics of environmental care, informed by Joan Tronto and María Puig de la Bellacasa's ideas. In this section a comparative analysis is presented between the novel, the two feature films, and the documentary regarding the entanglements of care with racial, sexual, and environmental issues. Moreover, the comparison concludes by contrasting the water mythologies present in the texts, particularly in relation to lakes, seas, and rivers, and how they are connected to caring relationalities.

The most manifest commonality between the texts is the representation of care as labour performed by female characters, whether caretakers, maids, activists, or mothers. All these women are undoubtedly racialized, either Indigenous or of African descent. To her considerations on care, Puig de la Bellacasa adds that "the notion of care is also marked by gender and race politics; it brings to mind particular labours associated with feminized work and its ethical complexities." (2017, 43) Some of these ethical complexities are associated with sexual coercion, blurred distinctions between family and work (Shaw, 2017), and neo-colonialist practices. The aspect of sexual coercion will be adressed shortly. La Guayi in *El niño pez* is a Guaraní care worker who migrated from Paraguay to Argentina at a very young age and thus the work and affection aspects of care become precariously entangled, with her imprisonment. Equally, in *La mucama de Omicunlé*, Acilde is also a maid working for a Yoruba priestess. Even more so, all the Indigenous or *quilombolas* women in *Vozes da floresta* are part of the process of feminization of struggles[77] (Svampa, 2015), in this case socio-environmental conflicts.

The ethical complexities mentioned by De la Bellacasa are not restricted to race but encompass gender and sexuality. La Guayi's migration from Paraguay was triggered by a

[77] Proceso de feminización de las luchas.

traumatic incestuous rape followed by the death of her child. Her sexually precarious condition persisted once she migrated to Argentina in the Bronte household, where the abuse was perpetrated by the judge, patriarch of the family. Analogously, Acilde also experienced trauma in relation to her sexuality, in her case perpetrated by her grandparents who put her through a forced "gender correction," by hiring a man to rape her. Once she escaped from this environment, she sustained herself as a sex worker, and later was employed as a care worker in Omicunlé's house. Not only do these two texts represent the profound sexual implications of the labour performed by care workers, but at the same time these are two caring queer love stories. Both *El niño pez* and *La mucama de Omicunlé* interweave the affective component of care with the labour component. On the one hand, La Guayi and Lala, a lesbian couple, and on the other, Acilde transitioning to Giorgio and establishing a relationship with Linda.

One of the characteristics of care that Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) and Hamington and Rosenow (2019) agree upon is its intrinsic relation with knowledge. Informed by Puig de la Bellacasa's affirmation: "relations of thinking and knowing require care and affect how we care " (2017, 69), a comparison is presented of the ways in which knowledge is correlated to care in the four analyzed texts. The film *El niño pez* represents an arch in affective care between the two young women. As Lala acquires more knowledge about La Guayi and her life story, her affection for her increases. Knowledge in this film is correlated to interpersonal care. The novel *La mucama de Omicunlé* displays complex connections between committed knowledge, specifically on environmental issues, and care. In the first few pages of the narration, Acilde was not aware of the prophecy that would later alter her life, but Omicunlé and Eric had found her and realized that Acilde was the son of Olokún. Both priestess and priest knew that they needed to sacrifice their lives for Olokún to incarnate in Acilde's body, ultimately possessing the ability to save the Caribbean Sea from toxicity and the Dominican Republic from becoming a toxic wasteland. In a narrative counterpoint, at the end of the novel, Acilde metamorphosed into Giorgio and decides not to warn the president of the republic of the perils of accepting the bio-hazardous materials sent from Venezuela. Giorgio understood that, by concealing this information, the toxic tsunami would be unleashed a few decades later. In this case, self-care prevailed over care for the environment. Contrary to the Dominican novel, the Brazilian documentary *Vozes*

da floresta is in line with Maurice Hamington and Ce Rosenow's affirmation: "the more information known about the one cared for –the more that individual becomes a relation for the one caring– the greater emotional potential for empathy and compassion." (2019, 13) Each and every one of the women living in the Amazon River basin knew not only the specificities of their environment but also the ways in which the current laws enabled its exploitation and granted them no rights whatsoever. Ranging from specific botanical knowledge to productive knowledge on how to process specific fruits (babassu) or tubercles (manioc), these women knew the environment in which they lived, its history, and stood up for it against corporations, landowners, and the Brazilian state. Furthermore, these twelve women know the threats posed to them and their environment. Throughout the documentary, there are three moments in which three different women use maps to indicate the potential harms (see Figures 8, 9, and 10). De Paula recurrently uses extreme closeup shots of the hands on the map as an example of caring knowledge. Contrary to the historical colonial creation and use of maps to chart the land to conquer it, along with the subjugation of its inhabitants, these women use maps to locate neo-colonialist enterprises, demonstrate against their hegemonic power, and denounce them in the documentary. Marilene Rocha traces the channel of the Tapajos River on the map to show the potential flooded areas by the hydroelectric project (see Figure 8). The red areas signal the possibly affected areas which visually contrast with the green zones. She reappropriates the map not as a tool for conquest but as an instrument for awareness. Ivete Bastos also uses a map, worn and discoloured, to support her argument, but in her case is to show the location of the five communities that she helped connect to confront the agrarian economic system (see Figure 9). The last woman to use cartographic tools to support her ideas is Neta de Canelatiua who points at the disproportionate extension of land granted by the Brazilian state to the aero-spatial centre leaving scarce land for the *quilombola* community. By representing her in a mid-shot with the map by her side, de Paula underscores Neta's bodily involvement in her cause. These women's ethical investment is in line with Puig de la Bellacasa's claim: "we need a notion of everyday ethics as agency that is invested by collective commitments and attachments." (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 140) These Brazilian women understand their caring actions as a quotidian endeavour in which the entire community bands together to resist the infringement of rights. A similar case of

practical knowledge is represented in *Beans*. The fiction film represents all aspects of the tryptic understanding of care and how they are taught from one generation to another. Taking care of the family implies caring work and being part of the resistance entails ethical care. Beans's mother, Lily, encompasses the combination of all three aspects, including the affective one. Contrary to Kani'Tariio and April who urge Beans to protect herself by toughening up, Lily embraces her vulnerability and teaches her daughters how to resist peacefully.

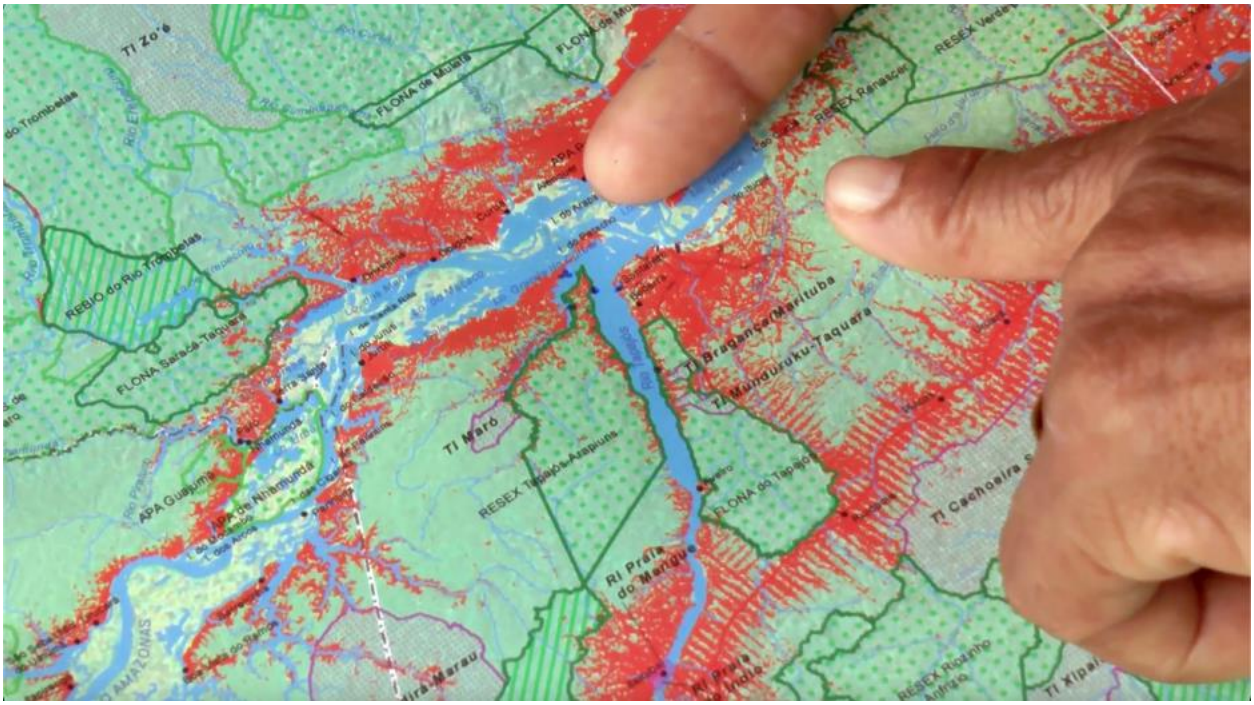

Figure 8: Still shot of *Vozes da floresta* (2019) by Betse de Paula. Marilene Rocha, inhabitant of the basin of the Tapajos River, indicates the location of possible dam in the area, while narrating the possible noxious effects. © Aurora Cinematográfica and Galo.

Figure 9: Still shot of *Vozes da floresta* (2019) by Betse de Paula. Ivete Bastos, union leader of the rural workers and a local producer of manioc flour, indicates the four cities in which public hearings were conducted in order to create an Agrarian Reform Policy and Land Law. © Aurora Cinematográfica and Galo de Briga Filmes.

Figure 10: Still shot of *Vozes da floresta* (2019) by Betse de Paula. Neta de Canelatiua, inhabitant of Alcântara in Maranhão, points at the location of the Aero-Spatial Centre, which leaves little to no land to the communities. © Aurora Cinematográfica and Galo de Briga Filmes.

The most powerful potential in relation to care is the imagination. Caring for someone or something entails anticipating the ways to respond to their needs. Imagination is the bridge that enable to envision what said needs might be. According to Hamington and Rosenow,

> Just as empathy is not a sufficient condition of care, neither is knowledge. Empathy and knowledge must be turned into action if care is to be realized. The connection between knowledge and caring action is facilitated by imagination. We are continually making imaginative leaps from the known to address an unknown future including speculating about how our actions might positively impact others. Ultimately, care is demonstrated by real action in the world, but it starts out as imagined futures. (2019, 14)

La mucama de Omicunlé, a speculative fiction novel, could potentially provoke that imaginative leap in their readership. By branching the narrative time, Rita Indiana fictionally represents the repercussions of Acilde's choices in different historical periods.

Finally, three texts share a connection to aquatic environments: lakes, sea, and rivers. In the previous chapter, most of the texts presented land-based imaginaries (DeLoughrey, 2019), while in this one the environment is dynamic and some of the characters are fluid in gender terms. Geographer Philip E. Steinberg conceptualizes the ocean "as continually being reconstituted by a variety of elements: the non-human, and the human, the biological and the geophysical, the historic and the contemporary." (2013, 157) I propose to extend Stenberg's notion to the other aquatic media in my reading of the mythological creatures or personifications represented in the narratives. The title character in Lucía Puenzo's film is a hybrid creature who protects the young ones in the lake and is inspired by Guaraní mythology. In a similar way, Rita Indiana incorporates African diasporic mythology to embody the Caribbean Sea in an androgynous deity, Olokún. Finally, one of the Riverside women in *Vozes da floresta* personifies the Xingu River in a song where the river cries and cannot stay silent in a context of violence perpetrated against the river.

To draw this chapter to an end, I have introduced the notion of poetics of environmental care to name artistic narratives that represent engagements with care among humans and extend care ethics to the more-than-human world. Considering the overlapping characteristics of care that can be expressed in a variety of forms, I referred to the triptych notion of care in terms of labour, affection, and ethics with politics. The four narrations represented the tangled aspects of care as labour and affection, but *La mucama de Omiculé* challenges the ethical implications of environmental care, and *Vozes da floresta* represents the caring labour of twelve Brazilian women who engage in a sustained commitment and attachment to their socio-environmental community. In the following chapter, "The Poetics of Environmental Insurgency in Defense of Common Goods: Reimagining Environmentally Equitable Societies Through Alternative Worldviews," three texts, two novels and one documentary, are analyzed. The authors and filmmakers challenge the political, economic, and gender structures that hinder the environment. The main characters

in these narratives do not seek to resist, challenge, protest from within the current system, but to overturn it and seek alternative modes of living.

Chapter 4

4 Poetics of Environmental Insurgency in Defense of Common Goods: Reimagining Environmentally Equitable Societies Through Alternative Worldviews

The two previous chapters presented an analysis of how Latin American and Canadian women novelists and film directors enmesh environmental discourses within their artistic praxis; in chapter one, regarding the resistance of bad-development, and in chapter two, by relating ethics of care to care work. Chapter three shifts the focus to narratives that reimagine alternatives to the current hegemonic way of living under socio-economic models of unsustainable development. The analysis in this section moves away from apocalyptic or dystopic scenarios by proposing substantial socio-environmental changes through the use of insurgency within the narratives (Gudynas, 2019). These texts are the Argentinian novel *Las aventuras de la China Iron* [The Adventures of China Iron] (2017) by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, Canadian novel *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood, and the Mexican documentary *Bosque de niebla* [The Cloud Forest] (2017) by Mónica Álvarez Franco. The concept of common goods is underscored by all three texts. (Bollier and Helfrich, 2012; Svampa and Viale, 2014) This concept is profoundly imbricated with ideas such as *Buen Vivir* [Good Living] (Quijano, 2012; Gudynas, 2015; Brand, Boos and Brad, 2017), environmental justice (Coolsaet, 2021), and post-extractivism (Brand, Boos, and Brad, 2017).

Drawing upon Eduardo Gudynas's idea of insurgent narratives, the three texts in this chapter present counter-narratives that antagonize the logic of developmentalism by proposing other ways of structuring societies. Gudynas expands on insurgent narratives by stating that "its purpose would be to explore alternatives that the extractivist — and developmentalist — common sense considers impossible and even unthinkable. They are ways of operating on the deepest roots of contemporary Latin American cultures."[78]

[78] Su propósito sería explorar alternativas que el sentido común extractivista—y desarrollista— considere imposibles e incluso impensables. Son modos de operar sobre las raíces más profundas de las culturas contemporáneas latinoamericanas.

(Gudynas, 2019, 126) It is precisely by situating themselves in the realm of the "unthinkable" that the Argentinian and Canadian novels as well as the Mexican film envision post-extractivist communities. The texts in this chapter present equitable societies where the environment is not understood as a commodity. The main principle identified in the poetic of environmental insurgency is the representation of two contrasting socio-environmental models, one of these settings follows the logics of *maldesarrollo* while the other proposes an opposing social structure. The counter-hegemonic model supports sustainable ways of living and advocates for economic degrowth. The second principle is the representation of education or re-education of young characters through which the authors and filmmakers outline the principles, values, behaviours, and structures of the new social order. The third principle is that stylistically, the texts that partake in the poetic of environmental insurgency are comparative. The authors and filmmakers compare unsustainable and sustainable modes of living.

The concept of common goods is crucial for the analysis of the new imaginaries proposed by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, Margaret Atwood, and Mónica Álvarez Franco. This notion enables us to pursue an emancipatory paradigm shift, moving away from a developmentalist neo-extractivist model. According to Marisella Svampa and Enrique Viale, common good can be used to refer to two different concepts. First, it refers to natural spaces and a construction of territoriality that goes beyond market prices (and should be kept out of the market). Second, it signals the social relations and community formations within natural spaces (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 372). The first aspect of common goods opposes the utilitarian conception of the environment, essentially, treating nature as a commodity. The authors differentiate between common goods, public goods, and private goods. From a judicial perspective, a good is considered public when it is available for use by all inhabitants and is owned by the state; this includes entities such as rivers, streets, parks, among others. However, common goods are distinguished from public ones in that the latter are under the domain of the state and there is no obligation to consult with the local communities. Svampa and Viale define the ownership of common goods as goods which neither the state nor the private sector has full jurisdiction over, but inhabiting communities are involved in the decision making and have power over it in matters such

as the use, destiny, and exploitation of these goods. This idea seeks to put forward a new understanding of territory informed by the protection of the shared patrimony.

The second aspect of common goods emanates from the first one, in the sense that this new understanding of territory has social implications. By reconfiguring new places, new forms of social cooperation emerge characterized by a pro-communal ethos (Echeverría, 2002). This latter notion, originating in the Andean Aymara nation, refers to webs of cooperation and interdependence. With regards to common goods, Svampa and Viale state that "it presupposes that the will of the communities is oriented to overcome the neocolonial development model, to respect the diversity of knowledge, pre-existing experiences and solidarity and regional economies" (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 375).

In the context of Latin America, the twofold complementary understanding of common goods is in line with the concept of *Buen Vivir* [Good Living or Living Well] (Cortes, 2011; Quijano, 2012; Gudynas, 2015; Brand, Boos and Brad, 2017) which has roots in both local Indigenous cosmogonies and Western philosophies. Under this way of living, alternative forms of relationships between humans and non-human nature and other humans are offered. This paradigm distances itself from the model of unlimited economic growth and proposes a solidarity and sustainable economy that challenges exploitation. From this perspective, non-human nature is perceived through new languages of valuing which strive towards the conservation of life. According to Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta (2010), this stance entails a change in paradigm from an anthropo-centric to a socio-bio-centric one. Through this paradigm shift, the proponents of *Buen vivir* can envision a movement towards a post-extractivist society.

By examining how Cabezón Cámara, Atwood, and Álvarez Franco rethink common goods, the focus is placed on the socio-environmental alternatives that they propose in their respective texts which challenge structural injustices.

4.1 A New Foundation for the Argentine Nation

In *Las aventuras de la China Iron*, Cabezón Cámara is not simply displaying her profound knowledge of the history of Argentine literature or acknowledging the lack of gender representation in the early stages of this literary history, but also advancing a vision of a sustainable and equitable society that contrasts with the social structures revealed in her intertext, the nineteenth century canonical epic poem, *El gaucho Martin Fierro* (1872), and with the current historical context. This reading proposes to interpret how Cabezón Cámara re-imagines an alternative nation-founding text influenced by her present, ruled by the laws of neo-liberalism and globalization.

Known for her dynamic style, her feminist and queer perspective, and commitment to represent society's most vulnerable groups, Gabriela Cabezón Cámara studied Literature at the University of Buenos Aires and before graduating, began working as a journalist for local media. Her first novel was *La virgen cabeza* [Slum Virgin] (2009), followed by *Le viste la cara a Dios* [You've Seen God's Face] (2011), *Beya* [Biutiful] (2013), *Romance de la rubia negra* [Romance of the Black Blonde] (2014). One common thread between *La virgen cabeza* and *Romance de la rubia negra* is the housing conflict under neoliberalism. Ecocritic Gisela Heffes (2013), offers a reading of Cabezón Cámara's opera prima in her chapter "Destrucción. El vertedero de basura como tropo de una biopolítica global" [Destruction. The Garbage Dump as a Trope of Global Biopolitics], where the representation of the bodies of the dwellers of *villa miseria* [slums] is analyzed in relation to marginal spaces destined for garbage.

Las aventuras de la China Iron was a finalist for the Man Booker International Award in 2020 after the English translation was published by Charco Press (Scotland). This novel has received robust attention not only in Argentina but also abroad. In academic circles this text has been mainly analyzed from the theories of literary canon as a subversion of the *gauchesca* genre from a gender perspective (Lanctot, 2017; Fandiño, 2019). To date, only one published article has carried out a posthuman analysis of the novel: Philosophy scholar Paula Fleisner posits that, "we attempt to think about the post/in-human space that

opens up with the interaction, hybridization and co-emergence of everything that exists, a space in which human actors are present but instead of being the centre of action inhabit a mix of diverse agencies" (Fleisner, 2020, 12). While Fleisner makes a good point by indicating that novel confronts anthropocentric viewpoints, my interpretation differs from Flisner because Cabezón Cámara does not propose a post-human even less so an in-human space in her novel.

In the Fall of 2013 during her tenure as a writer in residence at the University of California, Berkeley teaching the course "El ritmo de la violencia: A Writing Workshop" [The Rhythm of Violence: A Writing Workshop] in the Centre for Latin American Studies, Cabezón Cámara conducted exhaustive research on the *gauchesca* sub-genre to design her course. *Gauchesca* poetry was established in the area of the basin of the Río de la Plata [River Plate] during the nineteenth century, a period defined by the wars of independence in the region. Even though Jorge Luis Borges argued that "deriving *gauchesca* literature from its subject, the *gaucho*, is a confusion that disfigures the notorious truth" (1950 [2004], 179), for explanatory purposes an overview of the historical figure of the *gaucho* is introduced followed by the theorization by Jorge Luis Borges (1950), Ángel Rama (1983), and Josefina Ludmer (1988) around the sub-genre and its main misconceptions.

The gaucho was a countryman that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries dwelled in the area of the River Plate and the coasts of Argentina, Uruguay, and Southern Brazil (Lois and Núñez, 2001, 510). Much of the misunderstandings regarding the *gauchesca* stems from the illusion of reality generated by texts in which the distinction between literature and historical document is deliberately blurred. Ángel Rama insists that the study of the *gauchesca* should be focused not on the themes or characters, but on the literary operations writers produced (Rama in Lois and Núñez, 2001, 1051). A central distinction that must be rendered is that the authors of this fictional genre were in fact not *gauchos* but urban poets who in many cases were also politicians. The literary operation of emulating the voice of these countrymen was studied in detail by the aforementioned urban poets. Even more so, these metropolitan authors considered the targeted audience of their work, and the ideology they needed to develop in their poems. *Gauchesca* poets sought to achieve a mimetic illusion by disguising themselves behind the *gaucho*'s style of speaking

to a *gaucho* audience. Authors abandoned the "cultured" Spanish language and replaced it with the spoken language of the rural dialect of the River Plate. *Gauchesca* poets attempted to unite political independence through linguistic independence. On this matter, Josefina Ludmer argues that "it is about the use of the voice, a voice (and with it an accumulation of senses: a world) that is not the one who writes" (Ludmer, 1988 [2019], 34). This difference between the voice and the writer is highlighted by Cabezón Cámara returns in *Las aventuras de la China Iron*. The class disparity between the educated authors and the illiterate audience calls for an ideological examination of this sub-genre.

During the nation-building process the *gauchesca* emerged as a genre in which there were two political phenomena taking place, with literature playing a key historical role. According to Josefina Ludmer, these two phenomena were the oligarchy's viewpoint of gauchos as delinquent and lazy nomads, and at the same time, the oligarchy's political need to utilize the gauchos as soldiers and agricultural workers. Hence, these dispossessed, so called "delinquents," through the *ley de Leva*[79] [cam law], were abducted and forced to fight in the army during the independence war. Moreover, members of the literate culture used the *gaucho*'s voice and the *gauchesca* genre to incorporate the *gauchos* into the so-called civilized law.

Literature, in this case, was the popular channel that represented and at the same time enabled the incorporation of gauchos into the social fabric. Ludmer pushes her analysis forward by correlating the use of voice and weapon when she states

> [The *gauchesca* genre] also narrates the passage between "delinquency" to "civilization" and places the genre as one of the producers of this passage. It also postulates, in the center, a parallel between the use of the *gaucho*'s body by the army and the use of his voice by the literate culture, which defines the genre. […] The *gaucho* can "sing" or "speak" for everyone, in verse, because he fights in the armies of the homeland: his

[79] Through the cam law national and provincial governments sought to prevent nomadism and rural delinquency. They established that every male between eighteen and forty years of age that did not own property, lacked an established home or could not prove to be employed would be detained and made available to the authorities. The detained men were sent to work in public infrastructure or to fight against the Indigenous nations.

> right to have a voice is based on arms. Because he has weapons, he must have a voice and because he has weapons, he now takes a voice. So what defines the *gaucho* genre at the outset arises: the language as a weapon. (Ludmer, 2019, 39)

Ludmer's theorization of language and literature on this genre will prove productive in the analysis of the novel.

Offering a brief chronology of the *gauchesca* literature provides a historical perspective of its ideological mutations. The first period is inaugurated in 1818 by Bartolomé Hidalgo's *Cielito patriótico*, where the first poem is enunciated by a gaucho who fought in the independence wars (1810 – 1825). According to Rama, in this critical moment of the revolution against the Spanish army literature started to incorporate gauchos, Indigenous peoples, and black slaves as characters to offer an explanation to these underrepresented groups (Rama in Lois and Núñez, 2001, 1060). The text that is central for the second moment of *gauchesca* literature is *Faust* (1866) by Estanislao del Campo, in which the audience shifts, and these texts are read by rural societies as well as urban ones. However, for our analysis the third period is the most relevant because José Hernández published both *El gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872) and *La Vuelta de Martín Fierro* (1879) during this time. Historically, Rama affirms that "the subsequent conquest of the *pampas*, the fencing of the fields, the introduction of severe rural codes, the laws of vagrants and crooks, the impulse of an export economy required in European markets, all these are contemporary events of the third period of the *gauchesca*" (Rama in Lois and Núñez, 2001, 1060).

Scholars agree that the most renowned text of the *gauchesca* genre is the *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández. Although this analysis is not going to delve in depth into the historical processes that consolidated these two poems as Argentinian national texts,[80] it will refer to its author, given the fact that Gabriela Cabezón Cámara fictionalizes him in the second part of *Las aventuras de la China Iron* to give voice to the hegemonic ideology

[80] For further information about this matter: the section "Recepción crítica" [Critical Reception] (pp. 839-1167) in José Hernández, *Martín Fierro*, ed. Élida Lois and Ángel Núñez, 2001.

of the ruling class in the late twentieth century. Argentinian historian Tulio Halperin Donghi traces the development of José Hernández's public persona in his essay *José Hernández y sus mundos* [José Hernández and His Worlds] (1985) from his military days, his trajectory as a journalist, and later on, as the national poet. Halperin Donghi suggests that it is through the consecutive prologues written by Hernández to his poem that one can analyze his relation to the *porteño* [citizens of the city of Buenos Aires] political class and how he achieves their recognition (Halperin Donghi, 1985, 303). In the preface to the first part, which adopts the form of a letter to José Zoilo Miguens, Hernández denounces the vulnerable conditions of the *gaucho* in Argentine society and for that reason he insists that his poem is a "faithful" representation of this social class. The underlying cause for this constant pursuit to preserve the image, customs, traditions of the *gauchos*. Hernández states that

> [I have endeavored] to portray, in short, as faithfully as possible, with all its own specialties, that original type of our pampas, so little known for the same reason that it is difficult to study, so wrongly judged many times, and that, as the conquests of civilization advance, it is being lost almost completely.[81] (Hernández, 1872)

With this last remark, Hernández refers to one of the key ideological binarisms that informed Argentinian politics in the nineteenth century: civilization or barbarism. Hence, these words in his prologue establish a dialogue with another Argentinian foundational text, *Facundo: civilización o barbarie* [Facundo: Civilization or Barbarism] (1845) by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Although Sarmiento considered *gauchos* to be part of the barbaric pole, this was not Hernández's viewpoint. However irreconcilable their standpoints might have been, both writers and politicians agreed that the Indigenous populations in Argentina were barbarians, a point that I will further address shortly.

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[81] [Me he empeñado] en retratar, en fin, lo más fielmente que me fuera posible, con todas sus especialidades propias, ese tipo original de nuestras pampas, tan poco conocido por lo mismo que es difícil estudiarlo, tan erróneamente juzgado muchas veces, y que, al paso que avanzan las conquistas de la civilización va perdiendo casi por completo.

The prologue to the second part of *Martín Fierro* published in 1879, has a notable difference in tenor. The author of the epic now adopts a moralizing tone with profuse use of verbs such as: teaching, reminding, instilling, and fostering. Hernández argues that he seeks to be

> teaching that honest work is the main source of all improvement and well-being. Exalting the moral virtues that are born from natural law and that serve as the basis for all social virtues. Instilling in men the feeling of veneration towards their Creator, inclining them to do well. […] Affirming in citizens the love of freedom, without departing from the respect due to superiors and magistrates[82] (Hernández, 1879).

A profound ideological distance emerges between this passage and the first part published in 1872 in which Martín Fierro defied the law and law enforcers. Cabezón Cámara bases her fictional character of José Hernández on this previous passage.

If initially the gaucho was considered by the Argentinian elites as marginal, through the validation of *gauchesca* poetry, historians and critics (Lugones, 1916; Rojas, 1919; Martínez-Estrada, 1948) established "the gaucho as the Argentinian man" (Ludmer, 1988 [2019], 49). However, other social groups exist that have even lower representation in literature by being either silenced, exoticized, or even erased. This is the case for Indigenous peoples, African slaves,[83] and women. These three groups did not belong in the social fabric of the "patria" [homeland]. In the *gauchesca* genre, Indigenous characters are the "other," the extreme opposite of civilization, usually referred to as "savages". Migrant populations have been almost erased from this poetic genre despite Argentina's 1853

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[82] Enseñando que el trabajo honrado es la fuente principal de toda mejora y bienestar. Enalteciendo las virtudes morales que nacen de la ley natural y que sirven de base a todas las virtudes sociales. Inculcando en los hombres el sentimiento de veneración hacia su Creador, inclinándolos a obrar bien. […] Afirmando en los ciudadanos el amor a la libertad, sin apartarse del respeto que es debido a los superiores y magistrados.

[83] Regarding the history of slavery in Argentina, Erika Edwards indicates that in 1587 the first slaves arrived in Buenos Aires. They came primarily from Brazil via Portuguese slave trace from Angola and other western states in Africa. Due to its strategic geopolitical location, by the end of the 18th century the Río de la Plata had become a strong economic power. In order to win the wars of independence, the participation of slaves was key. Gradual abolition of slavery was introduced in 1812 with the Free Womb Act. The first Constitution of Argentina abolished slavery in 1853. For a more detailed account, see Erika Edwards "Slavery in Argentina", Latin American Studies, Oxford Bibliographies.

constitution which advocated for the resettlement of people in its lands under the motto "to govern is to populate" (Alberti, 1852, Ch. XXXI). Even more so, female characters in the *gauchesca* are usually simply mentioned in relation to a male character, or in Victoria Ocampo's words, "women only peep out [in *Martín Fierro*]" (Ocampo, 1972, 16). In this same text, Ocampo points out how telling is the specific order in the enumeration in which Martín Fierro chooses to refer to his partner: "I had in my village once / children, property and wife ..." (Hernández, 1872, I, 289-290). In his critical study of José Hernández's work, Ángel Núñez specifies that female characters appear either as an enigmatic shadow, a symbolic lioness, or a choir of voices (Núñez, 2001, 814-819). None of these perspectives implies women's agency.

From this discursive absence, Gabriela Cabezón Cámara elaborates an alternative nation-building text from a Martín Fierro partner's viewpoint. Her reading is informed by a new grassroot feminist movement, that emerged in Argentina in 2015, to confront patriarchal social structures, denounce femicides, and demand legal abortion rights. One of the initial actions was a gathering of female journalists, writers, students, and activists in a reading marathon to raise awareness about femicides. Gabriela Cabezón Cámara was among the twenty-three women leading this event. A few months after this initial congregation, on June 3, 2015, the first national protest under the dictum "Ni una menos" [Not One (woman) less] took place, and later on this movement extended to all of Latin America. Another member of the initial twenty-three women is Sociology professor María Pía López who in her prologue to the third edition of *El género gauchesco* by Josefin Ludmer, argues

> The age of my rereading of *El género gauchesco* is the age of writing that novel [*The Adventures of China Iron*] and of its revision of the corpus of the *gauchesca* from an indomitable and desiring perspective, which thinks of these texts from the political utopia of a multilingual, non-national, mestizo, lesbian, gay, transsexual alliance.[84] (López in Ludmer, 2019, 15)

[84] La edad de mi relectura de *El género gauchesco* es la edad de escritura de esa novela [*Las aventuras de la China Iron*] y de su revisión del corpus de la gauchesca desde una perspectiva indómita y deseante, que

To her remark regarding language, nationality, and sexuality, I would also add the foundation of a new socio-environmental order. This aspect has been overlooked by most scholars thus far and it is key for my argument. The environmental awareness in this envisioned alternative society causes the re-evaluation of gender, political, economic, and cultural structures of this community. This is one of the boldest aspects put forward by the author in her novel.

Gabriela Cabezón Cámara usually situates her narratives in spheres of vulnerability, her characters tend to inhabit precarious living conditions. Although this is also the case of this novel, the opening of *Las aventuras de la China Iron* contains ample linguistic markers that signal a vivid new beginning for her, such as "brillo" [bright], "luminoso" [luminous], "luz" [light], "radiante" [radiant], and "refulgía" [glowed]. The protagonist is an unnamed 14-year-old girl[85] who, once her partner (Martín Fierro) is taken by the national forces to fight for his country, she ceases the opportunity, and escapes from the *toldería* [awning] or *rancho* [humble ranch]. During this escape, far from an oppressive relationship, she re-discovers herself and her environment. The first few chapters are dedicated to describing how this recently freed girl perceives the non-human nature of the *pampas* region. In the following statement, la China describes the luminous effect of the rain in the plains as a purging flood:

> It was dawn, the clarity was filtering through the clouds, it was dripping, and when the oxen began to move, we had an instant that was pale and golden, and the tiny drops of water that were stirring in the breeze flashed and the weeds of that field were green as never before and it started to rain hard and everything fulgurated, even the dark gray of the clouds; it was the beginning of another life, a splendorous omen was[86] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 17)

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piensa esos textos desde la utopía política de una alianza plurilingüe, no nacional, mestiza, lésbica, gay, transexual.

[85] Throughout the novel, la China is not referred to as a girl and only in the beginning of the novel the author states "antes de cumplir catorce años ya le había dado dos hijos"(2017, 13) [before turning fourteen she had already given him two children]. Cabezón Cámara does not address in her novel the implications of her relationship either with Martín Fierro or Elizabeth.

[86] Estaba amaneciendo, la claridad se filtraba por las nubes, garuaba, y cuando empezaron a moverse los bueyes tuvimos un instante que fue pálido y dorado y destellaron las mínimas gotas de agua que se agitaban

This description of a purging flood heralds a new beginning in la China's life. The reflection of the water on the plants allowed la China to see non-human nature under a new light, with new eyes.

Entwined with her journey of self-construction, the author presents another strand that will unravel along la China's path, namely, a different formulation of the Argentine nation-state itself. The confluence of a girl protagonist with a luminous beginning, and the rewriting of an emblematic national text from an environmentalist perspective calls for an evaluation of the discourses that establish a relation between girls and nations in a context of climate crisis. According to Jessica Taft, "by the mid 2000s, however, girls were increasingly invoked as model citizen-subjects who were not only expected to thrive as empowered self-reliant individuals, but to also uplift their communities and nations" (Taft, 2020, 4). She continues by explaining the burden imposed on girls by avoiding structural changes, when she states

> having moved through a rhetorical chain from girls can do anything to girls can save the world, we seem now to now (sic) have arrived at girls *must* save the world. The responsibility for social change thus shifts away from governments and other powerful actors, as well as from broader public engagement and political activism (Taft, 2020, 11)

Although Cabezón Cámara uses the cultural association of girls with futurity to connote hope, la China will end her quest in a community that challenges the socio-environmental structures that facilitate climate destruction, Indigenous erasure, and patriarchal oppression. As part of constructing her identity, she becomes a political actor by confronting the ruling class and later integrating a new equitable community. Far from enunciating an individualistic discourse of girl power which is rooted in neoliberal and colonial logics, Cabezón Cámara calls for collective organization to effect structural change.

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con la brisa y fueron verdes como nunca los yuyos de aquel campo y se largó a llover fuerte y todo fulguró, incluso el gris oscuro de las nubes; era el comienzo de otra vida, un augurio esplendoroso era.

Adding to this, in their introduction to *A Companion to Latin American Women Writers* (2012), Brígida M. Pastor and Lloyd Hughes Davies refer to a set of contemporary texts that resist univocal generic typology. This is the case in *Las aventuras de la China Iron* because "such texts display not a clear genre affiliation but rather 'anti-genres' as antithesis to existing genres (Fowler, 2000, 237); or 'out-law genres' which facilitate the deconstruction of the 'master' genre (Kaplan, 1992, 119)" (Pastor and Hughes Davies, 2012, 16). The two main genres that Cabezón Cámara disarticulated in this novel are the *gauchesca* and the *Bildungsroman*. The genre established in the title of the novel is adventure, which allows the character to engage in different situations with various characters. However, a complementary reading is proposed as a parodical bildungsroman expanding on Paula Fleiser's analysis of the novel (2020). A straightforward reading of the novel allows for the identification of the three classical parts of the structure of the bildungsroman, namely, *Jugendlehere* [learning phase], *Wanderjahre* [pilgrimage], *Läuterung* [perfecting]. However, rather than narrating it as a formation novel, Cabezón Cámara introduces her readership into a de-formation novel in which the individual journey is meshed with a community. Building upon this notion, the author represents a parallel deconstruction and re-articulation of both la China's identity and the dominating Argentinian nineteenth century ideology. In the first part of the novel, Cabezón Cámara sets the scenario on the personal and national level in order to question it, dissect it, and finally reveal a new way of living.

The journey begins when once freed, this girl joins the excursion of an English woman called Elizabeth with whom she embarks on a voyage across the desert. During this time of travel in the cart with Liz, la China begins to question her place in the world by changing her clothes, her habits, and ultimately her name. At first, she embraces the European habits and feminine clothes which were introduced by Liz, and with a wink to Claude Levi-Strauss, la China states that she: "had changed from the raw to the cooked".[87] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 25) However, in her gradual adjustment to an itinerant way of living in the cart with Liz, she realizes that she is not comfortable in those garments.

[87] Había pasado de lo crudo a lo cocido.

Through the anaphoric use of the verb "aprender" [to learn], la China expresses that she not only learned about the external non-human nature, but also about her own nature. When she decides to try Liz's husband's cloth and cut her long braids, Liz kisses her and a sudden realization strikes la China like lightning: "I was surprised, I did not understand, I did not know that it could be and it had been revealed to me as a nature, why should it not be possible?".[88] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 39) She sheds the ladylike garments and becomes a young gentleman. From that moment onward, la China, Liz, and their stray dog Estreya [Star] form a family unit.

Liz paints a picture of a larger world to la China, not just her most immediate surroundings. She tells her stories about Britain and its colonies. Through Liz's tales about her home, la China begins to understand how labour operates, specifically from a colonialist perspective. Cámara points out

> The one with the tea strands, brown almost black, started in the green mountains of India and traveled to England without losing the humidity or the astringent perfume that was born to the tear that the Buddha shed for the evils of the world, evils that also travel in tea: we drink green mountain and rain and we also drink what the queen drinks, we drink queen and we drink work and we drink the broken back of the one who bends down to cut the leaves and the one who carries them. Thanks to steam engines we no longer drink the lashes on the rowers' backs. But we do drink the suffocation of the coal miners.[89] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 52)

In this fragment, the colonialist logic of extraction of "natural resources" for export and consumption is exposed. By means of a fluid use of punctuation, the symbolic tea is no longer represented as an object for consumption, but as a process that requires time, labour,

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[88] Me sorprendió, no entendí, no sabía que se podía y se me había revelado como una naturaleza, ¿por qué no iba a poderse?

[89] El de las hebras del té, marrones casi negras, arrancaba en las montañas verdes de la India y viajaba hasta Inglaterra sin perder la humedad ni el perfume astringente que le nació a la lágrima que Buda echó por los males del mundo, males que viajan también en el té: tomamos montaña verde y lluvia y tomamos también lo que la reina toma, tomamos reina y tomamos trabajo y tomamos la espalda rota del que se agacha a cortar las hojas y la del que las carga. Gracias a los motores a vapor ya no tomamos los latigazos en las espaldas de los remeros. Pero sí la asfixia de los mineros del carbón.

and suffering to maintain a colonial ideal. Tea, as a quintessential imperial product, is emblematic of extractivist practices, slave labour, and health hazards. Furthermore, technological changes in the means of production and transportation do not imply improvements for workers, an example of this is the transition from rowing boats to steam engines.

The formation of la China's identity overlaps with the formation of the nation. She is able to understand the place Argentina had in the global capitalist and geopolitical order in the late nineteenth century by contrasting the fast pace of industrialization with the slow rhythm of the *pampas*. The process of industrialization that was taking place in Britain not only implied a new stage for capitalism but at the same time, in terms of Dipesh Chakrabarty, "the way to it [the Anthropocene] was no doubt through industrial civilization" (Chakrabarty, 2009, 217). From this historic moment onwards there was an upwards shift in the scale of production and consumption of goods. This growth brings with it a shift in the use of time, this has been named the Great Acceleration (McNeill and Engelke, 2016). Cabezón Cámara juxtaposes the economic structures of Argentina and England by referring to their different speeds in the following passage:

> Mine is a country of vegetable adventures; the most important thing that happens happens to the seed, it happens deaf and blind, it happens in that primordial mud from which we came and to which we are going for sure: the seed swells with moisture in the blackness, it dodges *cuises* and *vizcachas*, it breaks into a stem, in a green leaf, it crosses the entrails, it emerges still full of its two cotyledons until it manages to extract enough force from the sun and water to let them fall and there the cow appears and eats the herb that was born in the ground and it reproduces, the cow, and multiplies slowly and surely in generations of animals that end up, all of them, at the slaughter, and the blood falls to the ground from the seeds and the bones build a skeleton of delicacies for vultures and worms and the meat travels in the refrigerated ships to England, another vein, a bloody and frozen one, of that fabric that goes from everywhere to the center, to the voracious heart of the empire. Ours is the matrix. Deaf, blind processes, as I said, primordial, invisible, linked to the magma of all principles and all ends. England's thing is something else. It is the island of iron and

> steam, that of intelligence, which is built on the work of men and not on that of the earth and the flesh.[90] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 57)

The first sentence of the fragment is structured first through the use of asyndeton to grant fluidity to the narration and in the second part, the author uses the rhetorical technique of polysyndeton to express the value added to the process. By trying to reproduce the cinematographic technique of zoom-in, Cabezón Cámara situates the reader below the earth throughout the entire process of blooming and decomposition of that plant. In the last four sentences, when speaking about England, the prose becomes fast paced and lacks the vital fluidity that it had initially. By repeatedly using the adjective "primordial," Cabezón Cámara stresses the fundamental importance of environmental processes which she reinforces in the last part of the novel. The juxtaposition in speeds contrasts how these two societies, Argentinian and English, value these environmental processes.

In their journey, they stop at a fort and in a meta-literary turn, they are hosted by a fictionalized José Hernández, author of the *Martín Fierro*. La China enters as a man into the realm of the hegemonic biopolitical power mocking those patriarchal structures that substantiate this power. Far from being the Hernández who defended the *gauchos* from injustices inflicted by the government, this historical character gives voice to the hegemonic ideology of the local elites when he refers to the civilizational process *gauchos* should be put under:

> [Hernández] needed to accustom new men to work, tire them so that at night they would faint before getting drunk and then not have to punish them, you have to have a very cool head to know how to drink, accustom

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[90] Es un país de aventuras vegetales el mío; lo más importante que pasa le pasa a la semilla, sucede sordo y a ciegas, sucede en ese barro primordial del que vendríamos y al que vamos seguro: se hincha de humedad la semilla en la negrura, esquiva cuises y vizcachas, se rompe en tallo, en hoja verde, atraviesa la entraña, emerge todavía munida de sus dos cotiledones hasta que logra extraer la fuerza suficiente del sol y del agua como para dejarlos caer y ahí aparece la vaca y se la come la hierbita esa que le nació al suelo y se reproduce, la vaca, y se multiplica lenta y segura en generaciones de animales que van a parar, así todos, al degüello, y cae la sangre al suelo de las semillas y los huesos le construyen un esqueleto de delicias para caranchos y lombrices y la carne viaja en los barcos frigoríficos hasta Inglaterra, otra vena, una cruenta y helada, de esa trama que va de todas partes al centro, al corazón voraz del imperio. Lo nuestro es lo de la matriz. Procesos sordos, ciegos, ya lo dije, primordiales, invisibles, ligados al magma de todos los principios y todos los fines. Lo de Inglaterra es otra cosa. Es la isla del hierro y del vapor, la de la inteligencia, la que se construye sobre el trabajo de los hombres y no sobre el de la tierra y la carne.

> them to getting up and going to bed at the same time, accustom them to the cycles of industry and hygiene.[91] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 105)

Once again, discourse is based around the configuration of labour. Two key aspects in Hernandez's description are the need to tame humans as non-human animals and the division of time in terms of labour. The demand to be inserted into the global economic market implied for Argentina a restructuring of the distribution of time which needed to be adapted to the external metropolis. This meant a shift in the way goods were produced. In this passage, the central topic of another national founding text emerges: *Facundo. Civilización o barbarie* by Domingo F. Sarmiento. He contends that in order for Argentina to enter modernity, the country needed to become "civilized", in other words, stop being "lazy" and establish long working cycles.

In the novel, Hernández refers to the need for adjustment to achieve progress and development. However, with her characteristic irony, Cabezón Cámara reveals that the origin of such progress is in fact theft, not only material but also symbolic. One of the many *gauchos* that were taken from the so-called desert was la China's husband. Hernández says:

> So, I gave the *gaucho* writer [in English in the original] an artist job and sometimes I would listen to him, and you have to see the verses that the brute was putting together: it was, let me tell you, in this way, a poet of the people, that beast. Some of his verses I put in my first book; he was not entirely wrong. I also put his name in the title, Martín Fierro was the name of that inspired beast.[92] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 119)

The ironic use of the pejorative words "beast" and "brute " contribute to the inversion since, in this case, Hernández is the brute thief and Martín Fierro is the immortal poet. Moreover, in Cabezón Cámara's deconstruction of the progressive discourse for the consolidation of

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[91] [Hernández] necesitaba acostumbrar a los hombres nuevos al trabajo, cansarlos para que de noche se desmayaran antes de emborracharse y entonces no tener que castigarlos, hay que tener la cabeza muy fría para saber tomar, acostumbrarlos a levantarse y acostarse a la misma hora, acostumbrarlos a los ciclos de la industria y a la higiene.

[92] Así que le di trabajo de artista al gaucho writer y yo a veces lo escuchaba y hay que ver los versitos que se armaba el bruto: era, déjame decírtelo, así, un poeta del pueblo la bestia esa. Algunos de sus versos puse en mi primer libro; no andaba del todo equivocado. También le puse su nombre en el título, Martín Fierro se llama la bestia inspirada esa.

the Argentine nation, *Martín Fierro* (the poem) becomes a key factor. The fictionalized Hernández recites to Liz apocryphal verses of the poem in which Indigenous people capture a white woman and kill her son in front of her. Liz is horrified by the tale to which Hernández mockingly replies: "Gringa, darling [in English in the original], do you believe everything you read? […] The nation needs these lands to progress. And the *gauchos*, an enemy to become good Argentinians. We all need them. I am making the Fatherland myself, on the land, in battle and on paper, do you understand me?[93]" (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 134-135) Hernández refers to how in the original poem, Indigenous populations were discursively constructed as savages that needed to be exterminated, but this representation did not correspond with reality. It was through his poems that this image of Indigenous peoples was reinforced and consequently shaped policy making.

After leaving the fort for the desert, Liz and la China encounter a group of Indigenous people. Far from the bloodthirsty creatures depicted in national epics, Cabezón Cámara romanticises these men and women by representing them as strong and beautiful. In an ironic reference to the gifts brought by Spanish colonizers, these Indigenous people look themselves in the mirrors "and what could have seemed a trait of idiocy became completely understandable to me; they looked at the beauty in their faces, they were beautiful"[94] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 155). Throughout the novel, Indigenous characters are idealized, but they lack complexity and voice. In a parody of the figure of the *cautivas* [women captives], Liz and la China decide to join the Indigenous community. The two women choose to go with them; they are not captives.

The third part of the novel "Tierra adentro" [Inland], represents a new socio-environmental structure. After her oppressive experiences in the *rancho* with Martin Fierro and the knowledge she acquired in the fort with the fictional José Hernández, la China joins

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[93] Gringa, darling, ¿vos te creés todo lo que leés? […] La nación necesita esas tierras para progresar. Y los gauchos, un enemigo para hacerse bien argentinos. Todos los necesitamos. Estoy haciendo Patria yo, en la tierra, en la batalla y en el papel, ¿me entendés?

[94] y eso que podría haber parecido un rasgo de idiotez se me hizo completamente comprensible; miraban la belleza en su rostro, eran hermosos.

a community in which progress is not the organizing principle. In this third part, the hegemonic ideology that defends globalized development, modernity, capitalism, state power, and masculine rule are challenged. La China's observation "there was no centre"[95] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 155), hides her astonishment at the lack of power concentration. The relation among humans has shifted, allowing a more horizontal structure, and he hierarchies between human and non-human nature also became more balanced. This community, rather than being immovably settled and protected by a fort, is itinerant and organized around fluvial environments.

> Now, the sound of the water, the undertow of the tide are our music and they take care of us, our rivers and streams are animals, they know that they will live with us, that we kill only what we eat and that our good creole bulls and our good cows are our industry, an industry that hardly needs them to come and go as you want on the islands and eat and shit, which are *Iñchiñ* [we] too. Our work is little and happy, although not without effort ... [96] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 172)

La China now perceives the environment as a sentient being, she explains that they only kill to subsist. We can read in this passage an allegory for an alternative mode of living and economic system in the region. The journey from the fort to the inland symbolizes the passage from a growth economy to a sufficiency economy based on local food systems. By mentioning that their work is "little and happy" she establishes a contrast with the intensive labour, both for humans and non-humans, represented in the second part of the novel but also for contemporary Argentina. Even though the fiction is diegetically situated in the late nineteenth century, the economic system described in the novel still applies today. The long-term consequences of the geo-political, economic, and environmental model

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[95] No había centro.

[96] Ahora, el sonido del agua, la resaca de la marea son nuestra música y nos cuidan están vivos nuestros ríos y los arroyos son animales, saben que van a vivir con nosotros, que matamos sólo lo que comemos y que nuestros buenos toros criollos y nuestras buenas vacas son nuestra industria, una industria que apenas necesita de ellos que vayan y vengan como quieras en las islas y que coman y que caguen, que son Iñchiñ también ellos. Nuestro trabajo es poco y feliz, aunque no exento de esfuerzos…

established in the late nineteenth century, affect contemporary Argentines. The *gauchesca* was a constitutive literary discourse that helped forge this model. Currently, Argentine exports monocrops which implement an extractive economy, and to meet the required quotas, landowners use genetically modified crops and chemical fertilizers. These monstrous harms are represented and criticized by Samantha Schweblin in *Distancia de rescate* [Fever Dream] (2014).

A remarkable element that distinguishes *Las Aventuras de la China Iron* and *The Year of the Flood* from the rest of the corpus I have analyzed, is the intention of imagining an alternative to this mode of living. In the Argentinian novel, altering the economic model conjointly implies a restructuring of the familiar liaisons, sexual prohibitions, and care work. In accordance with feminist economists Corina Dengler and Brite Stunk (2018), for Western societies to shift towards a degrowth economic model, the solution "does not solely depend on political or institutional changes, but also on a change in values and narratives" (Dengler and Stunk, 2018, 178). On a modest scale, Cabezón Cámara's novel contributes to challenge the "growth-based roots of the social imaginary of Western societies to open up conceptual space for new narratives" (Dengler and Stunk, 2018, 172). A key aspect in the formulation of these new narratives is the distribution of care work which carries a reformulation of the gender-based division of labour.

Through the description of their labour organized by solidarity-based chains of production and work sharing, their environmental commitment is revealed as well as their leisure time:

> Nobody works every day in the *Y pa `ü* [island on a river]: we take turns, we work a month out of three. That month, we take care that our cows do not sink into the *tuju* [mud] and if they sink, we all help; we stand guard so that the tides do not surprise us, it takes a little time to mount the cows on the *wampos* [canoes], put grass and water up there, calm them until they accept the necessary stillness to keep their balance. […] For those of us who are not on duty, the day goes by in the contemplation of the *yvyra* [trees], we never tire of lying on the ground to see the play of light and shadow in the swaying of its branches, the fringed edges of a radiance that in England - Liz is no longer English but she does not forget - is only seen in churches in the auras of the saints: our leaves, those of our *yvyra* [trees],

> our eternal mountain, are a prodigy of vegetal sanctity.[97] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 178)

In a similar vein as Dengler and Stunk, this passage strives to defend a new set of values, such as solidarity, collaboration, sharing, and responsibility. This community co-participates in the collective management of common goods as well as caring for the children. In this sense, la China points out that "our families are large, they are assembled not only by blood".[98] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 165) Hence bringing up the young ones is a collective endeavor.

Furthermore, in the paragraph above, Cabezón Cámara once again refers to the semantic field of light ("luz" [light], "sombra" [shadow], "resplandor" [radiance], "auras") in this case to establish this community's understanding, in contrast with the English community's understanding, of the sacred. In England, as in most of Europe, the area dedicated to religious worship is limited to churches, while in this community, only non-human nature is venerated. This cosmovision is closely tied with Indigenous populations. Although the community they join cannot be identified with just one Indigenous nation in the territory, the reference to certain Guaraní ideas such as *Y pa 'u* [island on the river], *yvyra* [tree], *tujú* [mud] and means of transportation in Mapuche *wampos'* [canoes] suggests that Cabezón Cámara blended elements from both Guaraní and Mapuche communities. Although these two Indigenous nations do not share a common environment, Cabezón Cámara subtly meshes both elements to represent indigeneity in Argentina. From the Indigenous viewpoint the environment is understood as a sacred entity rather than as a consumable resource. They still eat cows, navigate the rivers, but not on a massive scale. This respect and integration are also translated into language, since in the last part of the

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[97] Nadie trabaja a diario en las Y pa 'ü: nos turnamos, trabajamos un mes de tres. Ese mes, cuidamos que nuestras vacas no se hundan en el tuju y si se hunden ayudamos todos; hacemos guardia para que no nos sorprendan las mareas, exige un poco de tiempo montar a las vacas sobre los wampos, ponerles pasto y agua ahí arriba, calmarlas hasta que se aceptan la quietud necesaria para conservar el equilibrio. […] A los que no estamos de turno se nos va el día en la contemplación de los yvyra, no nos cansamos de tirarnos en el suelo para ver los juegos de la luz y la sombra en el vaivén de sus ramas, los bordes orlados de un resplandor que en Inglaterra -Liz ya no es inglesa pero no olvida- sólo se ve en las iglesias en las auras de los santos: nuestras hojas, las de nuestros yvyra, nuestro monte eterno, son un prodigio de santidad vegetal.

[98] Las familias nuestras son grandes, se arman no solo de sangre.

novel, Guaraní, Mapugundún, Spanish, and English are spoken by the characters. This ideological engagement of giving value to marginal languages is in consonance with a process of making visible the native cultures in the area. In this line of thought, postcolonial ecologist Elizabeth DeLourghrey affirms that "language develops in a long historical relationship to a particular environment and culture and becomes integral to the process of recuperation, even if this recuperation is necessarily limited." (DeLourghrey, 2011, 7) The untranslated inclusion of Indigenous words becomes a structural part of the narration as well as a political tool of cultural reclamation and valuation. Moreover, the individualism that characterises the *gauchesca* poetry, now gives way to an all-encompassing plurality. The insistence on the Mapudungún, Mapuche language, first person plural pronoun *Iñchiñ*, indicates a cosmovision at odds with the anthropocentric worldview.

Contrary to a static notion of settlement, the author proposes an itinerant community: "our nation slowly migrating through the Paraná and its *ysyry* [waters]: an entire *pueblo* advancing in silence on clean rivers"[99] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 184). Two words are relevant for my analysis in this description, namely, "advancing" and "clean". Through this fictional community, the author proposes alternative ways of moving forward, advancing as a nation, ensuring that the environment remains clean. Moreover, I point out a key difference in the use of this word, given that for hegemonic male authors in the nineteenth century, this notion was applied to human groups rather than the environment in the form of racial hygiene. The same ideology that defended the purge of certain groups also fueled the accelerated "uncleanliness" of the rivers.

Following this idea of a fluid *pueblo*, la China also gains a fluid perception of her identity which is crystalized in her name: "my name is China, Josephine Star Iron [both in English in the original] and Tararira, now".[100] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 12) The way in which she names la China evidences an understanding of identity in terms of process. She

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[99] nuestra nación migrando lentamente por el Paraná y sus ysyry [aguas]: un pueblo entero avanzando en silencio sobre los ríos limpios.

[100] Me llamo China, Josephine Star Iron y Tararira, ahora.

keeps the term "china" which is a Mapudungún word to refer to a young woman, this is also how she was referred to in Hernandez's original poem. La China adds the way in which Liz called her, Josephine, as homage to *gauchesca* scholar Josefina Ludmer. Finally, La China adds the Anglophone name of her stray dog "Estreya" [star]. Implicitly in her English lady name Josephine, is hidden her masculine identity of Joseph. From her past life, she decides to conserve her husband's last name, Fierro, but Anglicized, Iron. Yet again, by using this last name, there is an intertextual allusion to Hernández's appendix to *Martín Fierro* titled *Camino tras-andino* [The Trans-Andean Road] in which he advocates for the construction of a "vía férrea" [iron track, railway] to connect Argentina and Chile through the Andes to boost industrial production and commerce. The last piece of the puzzle of la China's name is the Indigenous[101] voice *tararira,* a native fish of the Paraná River. The inclusion of this word not only signals a blurred division between humans and non-human animals, but also refers to the overall fluidity of la China's identity.

In *Las aventuras de la China Iron,* Cabezón Cámara defies the literary tradition of la *gauchesca* by placing a girl as the protagonist. While doing so, the author questions the cultural foundations of Argentina and envisions an alternative society which is contrasted with the current Argentine society. In the following section, an analysis of a Mexican documentary is proposed to study the representation of a counter-hegemonic lifestyle based on permaculture in Mexico. Its inhabitants also strive to live by values other than economic development.

4.2 Framing Scales: Documenting an Alternative Society in Veracruz

Latin American women filmmakers have also chosen to put forward representations of counter-hegemonic modes of living. This section offers an analysis of the documentary

[101] According to the Diccionario de la Real Academia Española [Royal Academy of Spanish Dictionary], the origin of this word is ambiguous. It could either be a *Tupí* or *Guaraní* voice.

El bosque de niebla [Cloud Forest] (2017), Mónica Álvarez Franco's opera prima, which is focused on the ecofeminist viewpoint of the filmmaker, the use of scale in cinematographic shots to refer to climate degradation in Mexico, and the representation of the role of children's, particularly girls', education in relation to their environment.

After studying Audio Visual Media in Mexico and completing a Masters in Creative Documentary in Spain, Álvarez Franco was an organizing member of the Guadalajara International Film Festival and DOCSDF (International Documentary Film Festival of Mexico City). Álvarez Franco explains that she began working on this film when she was pregnant with her first daughter, Martina, which made her question the world she is bringing her baby into. "In a crumbling world, surrounded by violence, and with little hope" (Álvarez Franco, 2021), it was important for her to approach people who were trying to change this situation.

This film is the opera prima of Álvarez Franco and it has been showcased in venues such as the Margaret Mead Film Festival (New York), Ambulante (Mexico City), *Festival Internacional de Cine Morelia* (Morelia), Festival Internacional de Cine UNAM (Mexico City), DocLands (California), Downtown Film Festival LA (Los Angeles), Heartland International Film Festival (Indianapolis), and *EcoFilm: Festival Internacional de Cortometrajes Ambientales* (Mexico City). More recently, it has been made publicly accessible through Amazon's Prime Video platform.

The director spent four years living with "Las Cañadas" cooperative community, in the state of Veracruz, to shoot a documentary in which she represents the daily routines and ways of living of the members of the group. In consonance with Helen Hughes's classification of green documentaries, this Mexican film articulates a contemplative response to the problem of climate change. Hughes argues "contemplation is the frame of mind that allows for attention to shift between these levels of perception and reflection, and that allows for awareness of how feeling and reasoning interact. For some ecocritics this frame of mind is itself an achievement of many—particularly experimental—environmental films" (Hughes, 2014, 81). Even though the *Bosque de niebla* is not an experimental film, given the overall pace of the narration it can be considered a "slow

environmental film" (Hughes, 2014, 52) that focuses on the long-term processes occurring in the community and that allows the audience to perceive the environment in multi-scales at a rhythm that encourages reflection.

The inscription at the beginning of the film provides a historical-geographical contextualization of the cloud forest in Mexico. It informs the viewer about the ecosystem variety in the area, the threats posed to it, and the work of the community that is dedicated to re-forest an old ranching farm in the area. The concluding sentence reads as follows: "Nowadays, in this place, there is a cooperative where each member plays an important role for the development of the community, thus seeking a simple life in harmony with their own environment."[102] An emphasis is placed in the work sharing, co-participation, and responsibility of the members of the cooperative.

The initial sequence of the film opens with an extreme long-shot of the cloud forest, and it is followed by an extreme close-up of the water flowing in a local river. The juxtaposition of abrupt shots indicates one of the major themes within climate justice: scales. The interconnectedness of environmental degradation presents at least two challenges: expanding our daily understanding of spatial-temporal dimensions and examining the consequences of our behaviours. Ecocritic Timothy Clark explains how the global epoch that we are living in defies our everyday notion of dimensions, by stating that

> the Anthropocene entails the realization of how deeply this [human] scale may be misleading, underling how (worryingly) our 'normal' scales of space and time must be understood as contingent projections of a biology which may be relatively inexorable. This is now manifest in the disjunctions between the scale of planetary environmental realities and of those things that seem immediately to matter to human engagement from one day to another. (Clark, 2015, 30)

Álvarez Franco's invitation to re-evaluate our daily lives scales is not limited to the formal aspects of the film, it is also translated into the central theme of the film, namely the functioning of a small sustainable community in Mexico.

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[102] Actualmente, en este lugar, existe una cooperativa en donde cada socio cumple un papel importante para el desarrollo de la comunidad, buscando así una vida sencilla y en armonía con su propio entorno.

Prior to any images of the human body, the initial sequence of the documentary is set in the depths of the forest with extreme close-ups of ladybugs, stick insects, and ants, along with the sounds of birds chirping. The first human element is the voice-over of a man narrating the story of lumberjacks in that forest. He explains that a group of loggers was chopping down trees when suddenly, a puma appeared frightening one of them, causing him to stop, and leave the area. The next day, this man returned with a group of men to continue with his work, but they were intercepted by a *chaneque* [the guardians of nature in the Aztec pantheon of deities] who forbade them to cut down trees in that region. This brief introduction serves two main purposes, it establishes that within the Aztec pantheon there were specific creatures that cared for the environment, and given the creatures' early introduction within the film, it links the sustainable spirit of the community in Las Cañadas to the *chaneques*, the guardians of nature. Because the reference to this eco-legend sets the tone of the film, an overview of characteristics and symbolism of these ancient deities is presented.

According to Mesoamerican Anthropology researchers Andrés Sánchez Bain and Jacques Chevalier, "the actions of the guardian *chaneques* go beyond lessons of environmental wisdom or sustainable development and are grounded in ancient precepts concerning commerce between humans and spirits dwelling in nature" (2003,129). By choosing the word "precept" these scholars are signaling a deeper, religious, meaning in the *chaneque* legend. It is not merely the warning against taking, or consuming in excess, but a call to question the relationship between humans and the places they inhabit. At the same time, by using the word "commerce" they convey that in the legend there is also a transactional element concealed. These religious and economic elements are conjoined in the Indigenous idea of the *buen vivir* [good life]. Sánchez Bain and Chevalier explain that

> *chaneques* are central to the native view of relations between humans and spirits and between humans themselves. Local beliefs and healing rituals pertaining to these ancient gods illustrate a pivotal rule that pervades the indigenous world view: the notion that the good life must be obtained at some cost. Blessings of the good life are granted only to those who know

> when to renounce them and to give credit where proper payments are due. (Sánchez Bain and Chevalier, 2003, 126)

Even though the film begins with this story, there is no explicit reference to Indigenous peoples or knowledge throughout the rest of the documentary. The inhabitants of Las Cañadas produce their own food, educate their children; essentially, they live the *buen vivir*. They do not overtly acknowledge that they are settled in Indigenous territory or that some of its members could possibly identify as Indigenous.

Regarding the land tenure and land use of the area inhabited by the Las Cañadas community, two consecutive scenes which take place in the initial fifteen minutes of the film are revealing on this matter. In the first scene, Ricardo, a member of the cooperative, is sitting in front of a portable computer looking at a digital map of the forest surface of Veracruz while explaining the changes in the territory since the conquest to another member of the community. Pointing at a map with almost all green territory, Ricardo explains that before the Spanish conquest the vegetation included "low rainforest, high rainforest, mangrove swamps, cloud forest, pine and oak forest". In the computer screen we can read that the cartographic work was carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography [Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)]. He quickly changes the map to another one dated 2002 where the change is drastic, almost all the region is light green, indicating severe loss of surface and diversity (see Figure 11). He then presents a zoomed-in map of the 306 hectares of Las Cañadas region in 1995 when it used to be a cattle farm, before the current community's formation in which the situation was similar to the map of Veracruz in 2002. Finally, he moves on to a map of the same region but in 2015, clearly showing a re-growth of vegetation. He states that they moved the cows and planted fifty thousand native trees and used six hectares to plant corn for the community. In a few minutes, Ricardo visually ties the history of colonialism with ecological depletion. According to postcolonial eco-critic Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "to deny colonial and environmental histories as mutually constitutive misses the central role that exploitation of natural resources plays in any imperial project" (DeLourghrey, 2011, 10). Even though Ricardo addresses the problem of deforestation as a consequence of imperialism, he does not mention or acknowledge the human loss suffered by the Indigenous populations of Veracruz. The Atlas of the Indigenous Populations of Mexico

(INPI, 2020) shows that in the 2015 census there are at least eleven Indigenous nations living in the state of Veracruz: Chinanteco, Huasteco, Mazateco, Nahua, Oluteco, Otomí, Sayulteco, Tepehua, Texistespequeño, Totonaco, and Zoque, among others (INPI, 2020). This absence throughout the film speaks of a social problem in which even permaculture[103] projects like Las Cañadas cannot integrate a vital part of that environment they are living in.

Figure 11: Still shot *El bosque de niebla* (2017) by Mónica Álvarez Franco. Ricardo showing a comparative map of the vegetation before the conquest and in 2002. © Viento del Norte Cine, Cacerola Films.

[103] Bill Mollison coined the term permaculture to refer to permanent agriculture. "It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people — providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way." (Mollison, 1997) This agricultural model integrates landscape and people by implementing conceptual tools from aquaculture, animal systems, community development, economics, energy systems, forestry, hydrology, and waste management. For further research, see: *Permaculture: A Designers' Manual* (1997) by Bill Mollison and https://www.permaculturenews.org.

A few scenes later, the audience learns that Ricardo is in fact the owner of the land and that he is considering donating the land to a non-profit organization in which each partner is a co-owner of the land. He is talking in his kitchen with Haya, his teenage daughter, explaining that if he goes on with the process, she will no longer inherit the land. Haya tells her father that she fully understands what that implies for her future, but she considers this to be the best option she asks "what would I do with all this land? And besides, if you have the land, the co-op members would feel safe because they are building on your land. If one day you decide to end the co-op, you remain with all the goods, which are collective. And I don't like that idea." To which her father replies "sell the land and go on a trip" to which Haya tops it off with "but that money would not last forever" (Haya in *Bosque de niebla*, 2017). From this moment onwards, this girl will become the gravitational centre of the narration. The filmmaker will focus on the different roles that the girl plays as daughter, friend, and student. It is clear that she is in a privileged position because she is the daughter of Ricardo the landowner, and Tania the schoolteacher.

Ideas developed in Girlhood Studies scholarship are used to analyze the character of Haya. This is an area of studies recently established whose main objective is to analyze what it means to be a girl in different historic, geographic, and social contexts. Scholars have approached different aspects of this object of study such as girls at risk (Harris, 2003), empowered girls (Bent, 2016), activist girls (Taft, 2011), queer girls (Monaghan, 2016), among many other aspects. A seminal publication in the area is *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* published in 1994 by Mary Pipher. Despite its original popularity, this book became quite polemic because of the negative conception about the processes which teenage girls undergo. Recently, Girlhood studies scholar Jessica K. Taft questioned Pipher's perspective in her chapter "We Are Not Ophelia. Empowerment and Activist Identities" published in *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change across the Americas.* This text is useful to study Haya.

Jessica K. Taft refuses to analyze teenage girls in negative terms. On the contrary, she emphasises the agency power they possess. Taft affirms "girls" empowerment is all too often focused on incorporating girls into the social order as it stands, rather than empowering them to make any meaningful changes to it." (Taft, 2011, 23) In the book she

explains that she conducted her research in the Americas to understand the ways in which girls exerted an impact on the *status quo*. While interviewing the girls she found a recurring factor, which had been previously coined by Paul Lichterman as "public-spirited commitment," by which girls, rather than being focused on their individuality, sought the well-being of their communities. Even though Haya cannot be analyzed in terms of a protest activist, she is an activist that strives for a sustainable way of living.

Haya's filial role is the first aspect presented to us. After the decisive dialogue with her father, we will also see her planting crops alongside him. Although Haya is privileged, she is not an "exceptional girl" (Taft, 2020). She is anchored in her community and does not seek personal recognition. She is not exceptional in the sense that she is not represented as a singular heroic individual whose sole effort will solve socio-ecological problems. In Taft's words: "in emphasising activism as a collective, rather than individual, project and highlighting their organizational affiliations, girl activists reject the notion of activism as the act of heroic individuals." (Taft, 2011, 44) Not only does Haya engage with the current state of her community, she also sacrifices her future economic stability in order to strengthen the bonds with the members of the cooperative. In a scene between both her parents, they discuss the future of the cooperative. Once again, the topic of girls and the future in relation to the environment emerges. Her parents are debating whether Haya will remain in Las Cañadas or if she will leave for university to return after she finishes her education. The lack of higher education and sophisticated resources in the community is a barrier for future generations to stay. One of the last scenes in the documentary is a long shot in which we can see Haya getting dressed and walking out of her house towards the forest in which the camera follows her steps from behind. We can read that Haya's path is one to be followed by others as a positive example.

The film also shows the perspective of Haya as a student and a friend. The community school is operated by Karla Arroyo and Tania de Alba, two members of the cooperative. A singular aspect of the education received by the children is the pedagogical content, grounded in the context of the children's environment, their everyday lives in Las Cañadas. In one scene situated at the school, Tania is teaching both geography and biology when explaining how to adapt the harvest of crops according to the season, and in another

scene situated at the school, she explains the mathematics and economics of water consumption within the community. Haya is a good student who can grasp the complexities of globalization in the contemporary world.

Given that this documentary was shot during a span of four years, Mónica Álvarez Franco was able to capture the development and unraveling of Haya's personality throughout her teenage years. The filmmaker shoots two scenes that have a similar structure but are separated by a period of time. In both of them, Haya is talking in the forest with two of her friends, a girl and a boy named Rafa. In the first scene, the children in their early adolescence are discussing their plans for the future. Haya expresses her desire to become a "plant doctor" with the possibility of being a writer in her spare time, while Rafa states that he wants to join the army, "not to be a hitman, but a military doctor." Later in the conversation, Haya asks Rafa whether he would prefer to live in the country or in the city, to which he answers, "I don't know," and she finishes ironically with a "oh, what a prospect for the future." In the second similar scene, the three friends reunite again but now some years have passed and Rafa no longer goes to the school in Las Cañadas. They once again talk about their future studies, and Haya asks the boy "do you still want to become a doctor?" and Rafa nods but his immediate objective is to graduate from high-school since he flunked five courses. During both conversations, the main gravitational theme is the children's future in relation to the community. Haya expresses that even though she would leave for university, she would come back to the community later on, but this is not the case for her two friends. They must choose either to support and be a part of a sustainable community or leave it and integrate hegemonic ways of living in other Mexican regions. The crisis of futurity (Pratt, 2012) can aid to understand the predicament these children are in: on one hand in global terms the cost of modernity is the current global crisis, on the other hand undeveloped countries do not enjoy the benefits of modernity at all (Wenzel, 2020, 33).

The view that the filmmaker has in relation to women and their environment is at least problematic. Despite the fact that the cooperative is formed by both male and female members, the filmmaker focuses on the everyday lives of women both in the private and public spheres. An example is the character of Karla Arroyo, who at the beginning of the

film is pregnant with her second child. The director decided to narrate Karla's gestation through alternate montage with the pregnancy of a goat. This editing choice reveals an essentialist eco-feminist viewpoint, by pointing out the inherent parallelism between the mothers, regardless the species. To add to this point, one might argue that the filmmaker might actually find herself in the perilous position of animalizing Karla. These two storylines converge when Karla visits the goat's corral with her newborn in her arms.

Through Karla's story the filmmaker shows the reasons why some of the members migrated to Las Cañadas cooperative. Once Karla has her second child, her mother comes to stay at her house in the cloud forest. At this point it is revealed to the audience that Karla's family has a well-off urban life, that she had a university education as a biologist and decided to leave that behind to establish her new life with her husband in the cooperative. Her mother initially had objections regarding her daughter's decision to move, but once she saw how happy Karla was, she accepted her daughter's wishes. Her mother was fearful that Karla's quality of life would deteriorate given that the members of the cooperative provide for themselves regarding their food, education, and basic needs.

Even more so, the cooperative Las Cañadas is a small scale of a possible way of living which is antagonistic to the neo-liberal and extractivist structures that are currently place in Mexico. Yet, the fact that the girls and boys graduating from the community high school have to leave if they want to pursue further education, signals both a problem for the future of the cooperative and raises the question: is this mode of living viable on a larger scale? The answer lies within the documentary, by returning to the initial idea of the use of scales within the cinematographic frame. Although the documentary does show us that different modes of dwelling in consonance with the environment are possible, we cannot think that this model is easily transferable into a larger or even global scale. Building on ecocritic Timothy Clark's claim that it is a fallacy of scale framing to project individual levels as a viable transformation for a whole population (Clark, 2015, 77), Álvarez Franco's representation might be deceptive because it considers this cooperative a miniature, functioning on a small scale. Towards the end of the documentary, some of the children are graduating from high-school and during the ceremony Tania, Haya's mother

says: “A lot of small people in small places, doing small things can change the world”.[104] Behind this motto, which is boosted by an idealistic impetus, once again the question of scales is revealed. Even if this way of living is not plausible on a larger scale, Tania is calling for humans to re-evaluate the measure of our every-day behaviours, no matter where we live. This documentary challenges urban consumer societies and raises awareness about the impact of our everyday actions.

In this film, the director frames a world from such a perspective that the audiences are invited to ponder the ways in which we inhabit our environments. To achieve this, she represents women educating children with pragmatic objectives while fostering the need to think about solutions for environmental issues. Mónica Álvarez Franco highlights the importance of educating girls in an active role within their community. Using scales within the cinematographic frame, she raises the question of the impact of human actions in her community and globally. In the subsequent section, an analysis of the second volume of the *MaddAddam* trilogy is offered through the lens of environmental insurgency within a dystopian setting.

4.3 The Insurgence of the Gardeners in *The Year of the Flood* (2009) by Margaret Atwood

Pioneer environmentalist and feminist activist, Margaret Atwood, narrates the apocalypse in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, consisting of three novels: *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAdam* (2013). The second volume tells the story of the dissident group God’s Gardeners who seek an alternative to the economically

[104] Mucha gente pequeña en lugares pequeños, haciendo cosas pequeñas podemos cambiar el mundo.

polarized society governed by the CorpSeCorps. This novel partakes in the poetics of environmental insurgency by representing the stark contrast between two societies: one ruled by an extreme *maldesarrollo* model and another led by a community of religious and scientific environmentalists. Unlike Gabriela Cabezón Cámara, Atwood does not represent an idealized pristine community living harmoniously despite their dissimilarities. She narrates the incongruencies and schisms within the Gardeners by telling the story from the viewpoint of two female outsiders, Toby and Ren, who join the radical collective hesitantly.

Atwood's prolific literary career began in the 1960s and since then she has written poems, novels, short-stories, and essays which have been recognized with numerous awards. Some of her writings have been adapted into films and TV shows, such as *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which has surpassed the fictional realm to become a symbol of feminist activism.[105] Her remarkable literary talent is matched with massive popularity. Her work has been extensively studied. An academic journal is dedicated to her work, Margaret Atwood Studies Journal (published by the Margaret Atwood Society), and a *Cambridge Introduction* to her work (Slettedahl Macpherson, 2010). Provided that studies on gender and environment have been published on *The Year of the Flood* (Kuribayashi, 2010; Wieczorek, 2018), the present analysis contributes to this scholarship by focusing on the representation of environmental insurgency.

The Year of the Flood continues the storyline of *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by narrating concomitant events, but this time from the viewpoint of characters outside the compounds living in the Pleeblands. The first volume of the trilogy immerses the reader in the dystopian universe of an extreme form of capitalism characterized by unscrupulous scientific research, police brutality, and steep social inequalities. The second volume develops the story of a religious and environmentalist community which opposes the

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[105] In their article for The Guardian, Peter Beaumont and Amanda Holpuch observe that since 2017, women activists across the globe began to wear the outfit of the handmaids from Atwood's 1985 novel and TV adaptation for protesting. The authors note that the symbolic use of the read cloak and the white bonnet represents a myriad of concerns such as abortion rights, and division between Church and State. (Beaumont and Holpuch, 2018)

system and the values represented in the first book. Unlike the organization of *Oryx and Crake* and *MaddAddam*, the titles of the chapters of *The Year of the Flood* indicate the narrator and the period in which the story is situated. Because the narration is told from the Gardners's perspective, time begins for them when the community was created. Atwood starts the story in the year twenty-five, the beginning of the pandemic, soon shifting back to a pre-pandemic moment in the year five. This temporal oscillation reinforces the contrast between the watershed moment of the pandemic while affirming that the characters' actions will not impede the catastrophe. We are introduced to the life of God's Gardeners by one of the two main narrators, Toby. She is a young woman, who was orphaned at a young age, working as a server for the local fast-food chain SecretBurgers that sells meat of dubious origin, and that employs Blanco, Toby's boss, who sexually exploits her. One morning, Toby observes from the restaurant's window a group of people forming a procession with vegetarian slogans and decides to go out to have a closer look at them. Soon Blanco follows her and threatens the leader of the procession, but the Gardeners enclose Toby and take her to the garden. Contrary to what she predicted, a "wodge of dying mud, a few draggled marigold, a mangy row of pathetic beans, broiling in the unforgiving sun" (Atwood, 2009, 39),

> [t]he Garden wasn't at all what Toby had expected from hearsay. It wasn't a baked mudflat strewn with rotting vegetable waste - quite the reverse. She gazed around it in wonder: it was so beautiful, with plants and flowers of many kinds she'd never seen before. There were vivid butterflies; from nearby came the vibration of bees. Each petal and leaf was fully alive, shining with awareness of her. Even the air of the Garden was different." (Atwood, 2009, 43)

This contrasting description suggests Toby's lack of imagination of alternative ways of living other than a grey life in the Pleeblands. She can't even picture vivid images of vibrant plants or animals, or even foresee the purifying effect of plants on the air quality. Through her stay with the Gardners Toby's feeling of estrangement doesn't dissipate.

The readers discover God's Gardeners' system of beliefs and behaviours through Toby's viewpoint. They preach the goal of "reconciling the findings of Science with their sacramental view of Life." (Atwood, 2009, 240) Their environmental doctrine is built throughout the novel by Adam One, leader of the Gardeners, in his homilies, with which

each part of the text begins along with a hymn the community sings. Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson points out that "within the space of the novel itself, it is clear that the religion is being manufactured, and the doctrine itself is being constructed." (2010, 83) The religious, scientific, and activist building blocks are gathered from a diverse array of traditions and cultures. The aspects analyzed in this section are the origin of the notion of the garden; the relation of stewardship between men and animals; the dualism of the body and the mind; the education of the children in this radical community; their system of saints and martyrs.

The idea that Eden is a garden of God's creation which was spoiled by man and needs to be restored is drawn from the "Book of Genesis". In one of the first hymns, they sing:

> When Adam has first breath of life
>
> All in that golden place,
>
> He dwelt in pace with Bird and Beast,
>
> And knew God face to face. […]
>
> How shrunk, how dwindled, in our times,
>
> Creation's mighty seed —
>
> For Man has broke the Fellowship
>
> With murder, lust, and greed. (Atwood, 2009, 16)

Atwood builds on the figure of the Golden Age referred by Hesiod's *Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι* [Works and Days] (~700BC), which was later re-elaborated by Plato, Ovid, and Virgil. Later on, the Fathers of the Church elaborated a synthesis of the biblical garden and the topoi of the *aurea aetate*. Much of God's Gardeners's doctrine revolves around the liaisons between men and animals. In a historic epoch characterized by the constant extinction of species, this radical group questions the interpretation of the scriptures:

> Ours is a fall into greed: why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? We have

> betrayed the trust of the Animals, and defiled our sacred task of stewardship. God's commandment to "replenish the Earth" did not mean we should fill it to overflowing with ourselves, thus wiping out everything else. How many other Species have we already annihilated? Insofar as you do it unto the least of God's Creatures, you do it unto Him. Please consider that, my friends, the next time you crush a Worm underfoot or disparage a Beetle (Atwood, 2009, 52)

With her distinctive irony, Atwood brings together in one paragraph the elevated complexities of Biblical hermeneutics with the low, almost hyperbolical, littleness of insects. Moreover, the Gardeners recognize Noah as the second figure of stewardship, after Adam, and then, they refer to St. Francis of Assisi. The Gardeners' respect for all living creatures is translated into practice by adopting vegetarianism.

Borrowing from Darwinism, the Gardeners contend that humans evolved from apes but this origin is a cause of shame for them. In line with Platonic, Christian, and Cartesian ideas of body and mind division, Adam One laments: "Why did He not make us pure Spirit, like Himself? Why did he embed us in perishable matter, and a matter so unfortunately Monkey-like?" (Atwood, 2009, 52) Adam One blames the fall of humanity on its corporeal anchorage that, according to him, is the cause of emotions, desires, and appetites. In consonance with Stoic philosophers, the leader of the group encourages taming any emotion arising from the body. The reason behind adopting monk-like tunics aside from practicalities, perhaps, originates from the disdain of the body.

This system of environmental beliefs is disseminated within the community through homilies performed by Adam One and the teachings for the children conducted by the Adams and Eves. Atwood introduces the teachers and the ideas taught to the children. Inspired by Pythagoreanism, the Gardeners don't encourage writing or leaving a permanent trace of their education. For this reason, they rely on orality and memory. These practices serve three purposes. First, they leave no evidence for legal persecution. Second, because they are pre-announcing an imminent Waterless Flood, they release the dependency on materials while training memory. Third, since paper is a tree-derivative product, they reduce waste. Children's education is crucial in *The Year of the Flood*. Atwood describes, extensively, the courses taught, the teachers' nicknames, and the students' behaviour during class. Most of the teachers used to be professionals, engineers or doctors, in their

previous life at the Compound. They teach courses on mathematics, culinary arts, garden botanicals, recycling, holistic healing, meditation, and animal camouflage. Their saints and martyrs, inspired by Christian practices, provide a source of learning for the community. Atwood draws from diverse cultures and eras to build the Gardners's pantheon: some examples of the saints are Augustinian friar Gregor Mendel, father of Genetics; Juliana of Norwich, English mystic, author of *Revelations of Divine Love*; Jacques Cousteau, French oceanographer and filmmaker; and Rachel Carson, American marine biologist and author of *Silent Spring*, in which she denounces the effects of pesticides. Adam One also refers to martyr Dian Fossey, an American primatologist killed for her activism. The practical education represented in *The Year of the Flood* is analogous to *El bosque de niebla* [The Cloud Forest], which will be analyzed in the following section. The Gardeners's curriculum contrasts sharply with the one imparted in HelthWyzer High, the school at the Compound. Through the second female narrator, a woman named Ren who moved out of the community, the reader can perceive the discrepancies in the style and content of the education. Theoretical techno-scientific classes prevailed over experimental and practical knowledge.

Life within the radical religio-environmental community is not as harmonious as the Gardeners try to show. Adam One preaches equity among God's Gardeners but the cult of personality around him contradicts his statements. Unlike the Indigenous community that La China joins, in Cabezón Cámara's novel, where everyone was equal under a new distribution of work and reorganization of the traditional heteronormative family, *The Year of the Flood* represents a hierarchical insurgent community. The narrator focuses on Toby, an outsider, to compare the Gardeners' social order to that of a monastery. "Figuring out the Gardener hierarchy," the narrator states,

> took her some time. Adam One insisted that all Gardeners were equal on the spiritual level, but the same did not hold true for the material one: the Adams and the Eves ranked higher, though their numbers indicated their areas of expertise rather than their order of importance. In many ways it was like a monastery, she thought. The inner chapter, then the lay brothers. And the lay sisters, of course. Except that chastity was not expected. (Atwood, 2009, 45)

The distribution of knowledge, and thus power, within the community is not balanced. Only the Adams and Eves can teach at the school, and later in the novel the reader finds out that although technology is forbidden in the community, the most powerful Gardeners have access to computers. This hierarchy of this society has one clear head, Adam One. Throughout the novel Toby observes the dissonance between who Adam One is and who he is perceived to be. Before entering one of the conclaves, she states that "Adam One was a different person behind the scenes. Not entirely different - no less sincere - but more practical. Also more tactical." (Atwood, 2009, 246) This duality is symptomatic of a lack of authenticity. Eventually, this hypocrisy contributes to the dissolution of the community.

Towards the end of the novel the reader can perceive hints of a possible internal power struggle between Adam One and Zeb, who in *MaddAddam* are revealed as half-brothers. Their disagreements lead to a schism within the community. Atwood represents an insurgence within the insurgency in *The Year of the Flood*. The following passage illuminates the differences between these two characters:

> "Our way is the way of peace," said Adam One, frowning even more.
>
> "'Peace goes only so far," said Zeb. "There's at least a hundred new extinct species since this time last month. They got fucking eaten! We can't just sit here and watch the lights blink out. Have to begin somewhere. Today SecretBurgers, tomorrow that fucking gourmet restaurant chain. Rarity. That needs to go."" (Atwood, 2009, 252)

Even though both brothers agree on rebelling against the capitalist-extractivist system imposed, one of them is a pacifist while the other is not. Zeb's anger is palpable even in his use of violent language with the consecutive repetition of the word "fuck".

Although God's Gardeners's insurgency fails after the Waterless Flood and the internal schism, the novel ends with a hint of hope for a possible socio-environmental reorganization. In *Las aventuras de la China Iron* the beginning of the novel is narrated through the semantic field of luminosity to indicate a new bright foundation in La China's life, in *The Year of the Flood,* this luminous genesis is placed at the end. Once Toby is united with Ren, she claims:

> Here comes the sun, a hot rose lifting out of peach-coloured clouds. The leaves on the overhanging trees are covered with tiny droplets that shine in the strengthening pink light. Everything looks so fresh, as if newly created: the stones on the rooftop, the trees, the spiderwebbing slung from branch to branch. Sleeping Ren seems luminous, as if silvered all over. With the pink top-to-toe tucked around her oval face and the mist beading her long eyelashes, she's frail and otherworldly, as if made of snow. (Atwood, 2009, 383)

Atwood and Cabezón Cámara choose to describe these beginnings with warm colours, referring to the light refracted in droplets. Both authors also use the expression "as if" (Cabezón Cámara says "*como si*" [as if]) to introduce similes what they know and the society that they are building. The characters are trying to understand by comparing the new way of living with their previous experiences.

Admitting that this section analyzes in depth the God's Gardeners' insurgency, the reason for selecting *The Year of the Flood* to conclude this dissertation is to also include the other two books of the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Atwood represents elements of destruction, care, and insurgency throughout her tryptic novel. The first novel, *Oryx and Crake*, is set in a spatially split society between the Pleeblands and the Compounds. Before the reader's eyes the apocalypse unfolds caused by a bioengineered drug and a few characters try to stop the disaster. *The Year of the Flood* portrays the peaceful insurgency of God's Gardeners and the schism within their community. Elements of environmental care are scattered across the trilogy. In line with Joan Tronto's definition, Toby is preoccupied with repairing the life sustaining web she inhabits. Her character unites three dimensions of care which are labour, affect, and politics. After quitting her job at SecretBurger she altered her life by becoming a teacher with the Gardeners and eventually the prophet for the Crakers. Throughout the novels she displayed an oppositional standpoint against the hegemonic power and helped build the new order.

In *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood narrates an alternative socio-environmental formation through God's Gardeners but does not idealize their community. Instead, through the eyes of two outsiders, she describes the structures, rituals, education, behaviours as well as the hints that indicate a lack of honesty or genuine social equity.

Although the Gardeners practiced a life of environmental care and communal economy, they could not survive the Waterless Flood or the internal schism.

4.4 Antinomies to Developmentalism: A Comparison

Despite the aesthetic distance that separates the Argentinian and Canadian novels and Mexican documentary, there are thematic and narrative points of convergence, such as the use of the narrative point of view of girls to organize the story, the pursuit of ways of life in consonance with *Buen Vivir* in places that can be considered common goods, the artist's challenge to blind developmentalist policies through insurgent narratives, ideologic alignment with economic degrowth practices, the representation of issues regarding land tenure, and the meta-discourse on art in an age of climate destruction. The main dissonance between the texts is the artistic treatment of Indigenous populations within the areas represented.

The core structural similarity between the texts is the narrative viewpoint of a girl. La China, Ren, Toby, and Haya are girls although they have very different life experiences. Given her marriage and early motherhood, la China was abruptly cut from experiencing her girlhood whereas Ren and Haya are going through that process. It is through the girls' worldview that the narrations are filtered to the audiences and readers. La China, Ren, and Haya undergo a process of personal discovery tied with socio-environmental processes. These three characters speak to what Jessica Taft referred to when she advocates for a reconfiguration of girls as political actors. Taft denounces media narratives that empower individual girls to ease anxiety about the future by representing girls as hopeful and harmless heroes (Taft, 2020). Given that "figures are not immutable and figuration is an ongoing material and symbolic process," Taft argues that "girl activists could, therefore, be re-figured in ways that acknowledge their transformative leadership and support, rather than undermine, their efforts to build collective power and resistance" (2020, 13). Haya, Ren, and la China have agency and are leaders, but they are tied to their communities and work collaboratively within them. However, there are differences regarding their personal traits. While Haya and Ren gradually build their personality before the spectator's eyes by

engaging in complex debates in school, sustaining meaningful conversations with adults, and supporting her friends, la China undergoes a process of deconstruction in order to understand her ever-changing identity by interacting with different characters.

This difference can be read through the symbolism of their names. Haya is not a common name in Spanish. It refers to the tree genus *Fagus*, superficially to the *Fagus Mexicana*, native to northeastern and central Mexico, common in cloud forests (Téllez-Valedés, Dávila-Aranda, and Lira-Saade, 2006, 36). The *Fagus* is characterized by its sturdiness and its medicinal uses, but most importantly, the Mexican subspecies is used for ecological restoration (Valencia and Flores-Franco, 2006). In contrast, la China Josephine Star Iron Tararia has a composite name which conveys her fluid identity. The initial lack of denomination was not substituted by a name, but rather by an accumulation of nouns, adjectives and names in Spanish, English, and Guaraní. The noun *tararira* is the Indigenous name for the *Hoplias argentinensis*, a river fish found in the Southern Cone. Analogously, several characters in *The Year of the Flood* have multiple names. Toby, whose childhood and teenage years are also referred in the novel, adopts different names, like Ren, throughout the novel. During her time with the Gardeners Toby becomes Eve Six after Pilar's passing and thus becoming a figure of authority and knowledge in her community. Traits of her life as Eve, the beekeeper, follow her even after she is forced to leave the radical community. After undergoing physical transformations to avoid Blanco, Toby becomes Tobiatha the manager of the AnooYoo aesthetic spa. Moreover, Ren is called Brenda by her mother and this latter name is associated with her life at the Compound. Their names Haya and la China are namesakes of environmental creatures, but the symbolism is contrasting. One of them is anchored in her biotic community, is materially and symbolically part of the restoration of the area, and the other one is known for navigating fluidity.

The principal theme that nucleates the comparison is the artists' movement beyond criticism or dystopian possibilities to envision alternative modes of living. The three texts are tacitly based in the concept of *Buen Vivir*. This idea is not aligned with individual economic prosperity, but "appears to complement other efforts to seek new ideas in light of general unease with traditional concepts of growth and progress" (Fatheuer, 2011, 9).

This mode of living is founded on three pillars: it "relies on Indigenous traditions and visions of the cosmos, it breaks with traditional concepts of development, and it focuses on the relationship to nature" (Fatheuer, 2011, 17). According to Eduardo Gudynas, researcher at the Centre of Latin American Social Ecology [Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social] (CLAES), "*Buen Vivir* is plural and also is a concept under construction, therefore it is difficult to pretend to have a recipe book for specific measures of something that is being gestated at this moment"[106] (Gudynas, 2011, 17). The plurality of the idea is nourished by Indigenous cosmogonies from across the continent. Gudynas then reiterates that *Buen Vivir* cannot be essentialist and it is different for each specific context. The Aymara communities in Bolivia are in consonance with *suma qamaña,* meaning a fulfilled life achieved through deep connections with the community. The latter also comprises all living beings located in the *ayllu,* or territorial framework (Gudynas, 2015, 202). Additionally, *Buen Vivir* is also in agreement with the Ecuadorian notion of *sumac kawasay* which expresses a welfare system within communities, understood in its social and ecological dimensions. To these two worldviews, Gudynas adds that "several Indigenous peoples have analogous concepts, such as the *ñande reko* of the Guaraní people, the *shiir waras* of the Ashuar in Ecuador or the *küme mongen* of the Mapuche in southern Chile" (Gudynas, 2015, 203).

The community that the protagonist joins in the last part of *Las aventuras de la China Iron* is tacitly grounded on *Buen Vivir*. The characters that are part of that society not only are Indigenous, *mestizos*, *gauchos*, Argentine *criollos* [creole] but also English captives, German scientists, among many others. This heterogeneous group seeks a mode of living that contrasts with the one most of them used to live in. The juxtaposition between the mode the characters lived within, the walls of the *fortín* [fort], and in the community is expressed by the difference between *vivir bien* [living well] and *vivir mejor* [living better]. Regarding this distinction, David Choquehuanca Cespedes, Bolivian chancellor for the Pluractional state and *Buen Vivir* advocate affirms that

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[106] el Buen Vivir es plural y además un concepto en construcción, y por lo tanto resulta difícil pretender contar con un recetario de medidas específicas de algo que se está gestando en este momento.

> *Vivir bien* [living well] means complementing each other and not competing, sharing, and not taking advantage of the neighbor, living in harmony with people and with nature. *Vivir bien* is not the same as *vivir mejor* [living better], living better than the Other. Because to live better, in front of others, it is necessary to exploit, producing deep competition, and concentrating wealth in a few hands[107]. (Cespedes, 2010, 1)

In an analogous manner, the members of Las Cañadas moved to the cooperative seeking the harmony that characterizes *Buen Vivir*. Nevertheless, there are two key dissonances between the texts: the lack of Indigenous representation in characters or language, and the absence of sexual dissidences in the community. The documentary opens with the Aztec eco-legend of the *chaneque* but there is no further reference to Indigenous traditions throughout the film. Even in the scene when Haya's father points out the differences in the maps, he does not mention Indigenous communities that used to live in the area. Likewise, at no point during the film does any character speak in an Indigenous language. At the end of the film, as part of the graduating ceremony, the community is gathered around a corn arrangement made of corn kernels. This crop has a long mythological tradition in Mexican culture which can be traced back to the sacred book *Popol Vuh* (see Figure 12). The absence of explicit references to the foundational cultures within Mexico is notorious given the Indigenous roots of the concept of *Buen Vivir*.

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[107] Vivir Bien significa complementarnos y no competir, compartir, y no aprovecharnos del vecino, vivir en armonía entre las personas y con la naturaleza. El Vivir Bien no es lo mismo que el vivir mejor, el vivir mejor que el otro. Porque para vivir mejor, frente al prójimo, se hace necesario explotar, se produce una profunda competencia, se concentra la riqueza en pocas manos.

Figure 12: Still shot *El bosque de niebla* (2017) by Mónica Álvarez Franco. A corn offering created by the members of Las Cañadas cooperative. © Viento del Norte Cine, Cacerola Films.

Although Atwood does not come from an Andean or Latin American background, the radical community of God's Gardeners that she imagines in *The Year of the Flood* shares key ideas with the notion of *buen vivir*. "These [contemporary feminist currents] and other examples serve to point out that even within Western thought," Gudynas (2011) states,

> there are critical currents, that seek alternatives to development, and that in almost all cases have been marginalized or subordinated, and that for that reason remain under the coverage of the concept of *Buen Vivir*.[108] (2011, 9)

[108] Estos [corrientes feministas contemporáneas] y otros ejemplos sirven para señalar que incluso dentro del pensamiento occidental, existen corrientes críticas, que buscan alternativas al desarrollo, y que en casi todos

In his theory he enumerates a series of motivations proposed by *Buen vivir* including: to abandon the will to dominate humans and non-human nature, to challenge the notion of Nature as resource, to encourage dialogue and interactions of different ways of knowing, to decolonize knowledge, to build amplified communities which include people, nature, and to value experience and affects. (Gudynas, 2011, 15) These aims are present in the system of beliefs proposed by God's Gardeners. Adam One preaches against human dominion over Nature by proposing a relationship of stewardship in the sermon "The Feast of Adam and All Primates" (Atwood, 2009, 51). The Gardeners's beliefs entail positioning humans as part of the environment. Nature is not external to human nature. For instance, Toby overcomes her difficulty to treat bees as sentient beings when she begins to talk to them as Pilar did. In this sense, the community they form as members is enlarged because not only humans shape it but also their gardens, animals, and even their religious beliefs. Toby is part of the community and poses criticism from within it, and Adam One welcomes her remarks. This shows that the Gardeners encourage dialogue and interaction among different viewpoints. Moreover, Atwood brings together religious, environmental, and scientific knowledge together in a community where these ways of knowing are legitimate and respected. Finally, in this radical community different life experiences and feelings are welcome. The Gardeners place a high value on the spiritual and affective life of their members.

The effort that Cabezón Cámara makes in her novel to assemble heterogenous Indigenous nations from the Southern cone with settlers from different provenances is in agreement with the plural nature of the *Buen Vivir*. Gudynas argues that

> *Buen vivir* should not be understood as a Western reinterpretation of a particular indigenous way of life. Nor is it an attempt to return or implant an indigenous worldview that supplants conventional development. In reality, *Buen Vivir* is defined as a platform where various elements are

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los casos han estado marginalizadas o subordinadas, y que por eso mismo quedan bajo la cobertura del concepto de Buen Vivir.

> shared with an eye on the future: it has a utopian horizon of change[109] (Gudynas, 2011, 18).

In his explanation, Gudynas remarks both on the vector towards the future of *Buen Vivir* as well as the utopian nature of it. If we examine both texts in relation to the future, the scenario is quite ambiguous. On one hand, the last part of *Las aventuras de la China Iron* has a festive and utopian tone, but is historically situated in an alternative to the late nineteenth century. Therefore, the novel is not only a utopia but also a uchronia. A reading of the ending of the novel is illuminated by its production context and a way of moving forward as a nation. Cabezón Cámara calls for an inclusion of marginal characters, many of which are sexual and gender dissidents, into the body of society. On the other hand, Las Cañadas cooperative in *El bosque de niebla* is attempting to live by the *buen vivir* principles but some of the arguments posed by the younger inhabitants call into question the subsistence of the community in the future.

The second aspect in which the three texts are different is the representation of non-hegemonic sexual orientations. In the documentary the families that inhabit the cooperative are heterosexual and there is no reference either from the children or the adults to this matter. This representation of the family leads me to consider that for the filmmaker questioning socio-environmental and economic structures is not accompanied by challenging the heterosexual norm and family structure. In a similar way, the Gardener's families are heteronormative. Even though some couples adopt newly arrived children, the structure of the hegemonic family is not questioned. This is not the case in *Las aventuras de la China Iron*. At the beginning of her journey, the protagonist is metaphorically reborn after her acquired freedom and embarks on a process of discovery in which she questions her convictions, her acquired social roles, and gradually the social structure in which she is immersed. In Cabezón Cámara's novel, questioning gender roles and the socio-economic

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[109] Buen Vivir no debería ser entendido como una re-interpretación occidental de un modo de vida indígena particular. Tampoco es un intento de regresar o implantar una cosmovisión indígena que suplante el desarrollo convencional. En realidad el Buen Vivir se delimita como una plataforma donde se comparten diversos elementos con una mirada puesta en el futuro: posee un horizonte utópico de cambio.

model coincide because there is a radical call to question the existing power structures. Given that power is acquired, sustained, and expressed through relations, it is precisely a re-organization of such bonds that the author experiments with. The Western hegemonic ties that are being challenged in the novel are love, family, communal relationships, and inter-species relationships. The main characters in the novel, la China, Liz, and Fierro understand their sexuality in fluid terms by engaging both in heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Furthermore, family structures are modified in the new established society given that the children are raised communally. This modified family structure could lead to a new social configuration where, according to la China, "women have the same power as men. We do not care about the vote because we all vote and because we can have both male bosses and female bosses or double souls ruling".[110] (Cabezón Cámara, 2017, 181) The gender equity described by la China also translates to the relation between human and non-human nature which is represented in terms of harmony rather than exploitation.

Furthermore, the *buen vivir* is associated with the defense of common goods. The latter idea has a twofold definition (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 372). The first aspect is the need to keep from the market the goods and "resources" that, given their natural, social, and cultural value, belong to the community and whose value exceeds any price. The second aspect is the new perspective on social relations by configuring new spaces, ways of social cooperation, and common joy in harmony with a pro-communal ethos. Svampa and Viale explain that

> historically, our peripheral territories have been factories of solidarity. Located outside the formal market and facing the absence of the State, a large part of the popular sectors have had to develop and reproduce through self-managed structures of cooperation.[111] (2014, 374)

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[110] En mi nación las mujeres tenemos el mismo poder que los hombres. No nos importa el voto porque todos votamos y porque podemos tener tanto jefes como jefas o almas doble mandando.

[111] históricamente, nuestros territorios periféricos han sido fábricas de solidaridad. Situados por fuera del mercado formal y frente a la ausencia del Estado, gran parte de los sectores populares han tenido que desarrollarse y reproducirse mediante estructuras autogestivas de cooperación

Both components that sustain the notion of common goods are represented in the documentary and in the novels, given the agro-extractivist shared past. The film opens with a caption that explains the historical background of Las Cañadas: "The cloud forest is the most diverse ecosystem in Mexico and is one of the most threatened tropical forests in the world. In Veracruz, since 1996, a small community has dedicated itself to reforesting an old cattle ranch".[112] The film is anchored in the aftermath of the passage from a productive territory that exploits natural resources to a cooperative where the members collectively decide upon the use of the land. The film shows the interdependence of the members of "Las Cañadas" considering that some work the land, others cook the food, while others educate the children, and so on. On several occasions, the filmmaker portrays how the members, before making a decision, take into consideration the greater good of the cooperative.

In an analogous way, in the second part of the novel la China questions the progressive narratives that consider "natural resources" as commodities, reducing them to transferrable goods, whose worth is defined by the international market (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 373). Feminist philosophy scholar Noelia Billi,[113] takes it a step further by arguing that Cabezón Cámara represents how the Argentinian state sought to install a Plantationocene system to make territories available for *latifundismo* (Billi, 2020). The system that Billi refers to was named by Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing as a revision to the Anthropocene to specify that

> the Plantationocene forces attention to the growing of food and the plantation as a system of multispecies forced labour. […] The plantation system requires either genocide or removal or some mode of captivity and replacement of a local labor force by coerced labor from outside, either through various forms of indenture, unequal contract, or out-and-

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[112] El bosque de niebla es el ecosistema con mayor diversidad en México y es uno de los bosques tropicales más amenazados del mundo. En Veracruz, desde 1996, una pequeña comunidad se ha dedicado a reforestar un antiguo rancho ganadero.

[113] NeMLA (North Eastern Modern Languages Association) Conference 2021 presentation "Reimagining Plantationocene's Legacy in Gabriela Cabezon Camara's Las aventuras de la China Iron". In the panel "The Return of the Plantation".

> out slavery. The plantation really depends on very intense forms of labor slavery, including also machine labor slavery, a building of machines for exploitation and extraction of earthlings. (Haraway, 2019, 5)

If this system is characterized by the systemic erasure of beings and forced labour, the last part of the novel contrasts the established pro-communal ethos with seasonal and collaborative labour. The new mode of living establishes new territorialities which protect the common goods, namely, cultural, social, and natural patrimonies.

Metadiscourse is utilized by four storytellers of the selected corpus to reflect upon art and artists in the context of climate change. These texts are the three novels *La mucama de Omicunlé, Las aventuras de la China Iron, The Year of the Flood*, and the film *Beans*. Rita Indiana introduces the question of the role of art in relation to the environment through the Sosúa Project created by Acilde-Giorgio. The reason behind the creation of the art gallery was an economic one: to raise funds to create a marine laboratory for Linda, Acilde-Giorgio's wife. The narrator explains that

> [t]hrough Iván, Acilde knew that the success of an artist is a mixture of public relations, a bit of talent and an extremely developed sense of timing, that is, what Iván called "the dead man", a voice with a different sound than his that said "go", "don't go", "say this, say that", "put on the Marc Jacobs jacket", "Cartier better than Rolex". […] With the money produced by the art gallery I could finally make Linda's dream come true: to build a marine laboratory in Playa Bo, equipped with state-of-the-art technology where they would study and cultivate corals to reimplant them, when necessary, in their natural environment. (Indiana, 2015, 144)

Indiana criticizes the commodification of art and artists by mocking the idea of inspiration. The voice Iván hears sounds more like a sales agent than a muse. The function of art, according to Acilde, is purely economic.

In *Las aventuras de la China Iron* and *Beans* the Argentinian author and the Canadian filmmaker both reflect upon the past of their own media. Gabriela Cabezón Cámara includes in the plot the historical figure of José Hernández and his character Martín Fierro to ponder both exploitation of land as well as the voice of gauchos. She explicitly

accuses *gauchesca* authors of stealing gauchos' verses. While Cabezón Cámara denounces the despotic literary and ideological mechanisms in Argentinian national genre, Tracey Deer elevates the work of fellow Indigenous woman filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin in her film *Beans*.

The meta-artistic reflection in *The Year of the Flood* is represented both in Martha Graham's Academy and Amanda Paynes's bio-art installations. The Arts and Humanities post-secondary institution is underestimated in contrast with the renowned Watson-Crick Institute. However, three of the survivors at the end of the novel are Martha Graham's Academy alumni. Toby, Ren, and Jimmy have managed to overcome obstacles and survive the pandemic. Moreover, Amanda is a well-established artist who in the plains of Wisconsin, once overflowing with life, now a sacrifice zone, creates installations with animal remains. "Amanda was in the Wisconsin desert", Ren recounts,

> putting together one of the Bioart installations she's been doing now that she's into what she calls the art caper. It was cow bones this time. Wisconsin covered with cow bones, ever since the big drought ten years ago when they'd found it cheaper to butcher the cows there rather than shipping them out – the ones that hadn't died on their own. She had a couple of fuel-cell front-end loaders and two illegal Tex-Mexican refugees she'd hired, and she was dragging the cow bones into a pattern so big it could only be seen from above: huge capital letters, spelling out a word. Later she'd cover it in pancake syrup and wait until the insect life was all over it, and then take videos of it from the air, to put into galleries. She liked to watch things move and grow and disappear. Amanda always got the money to do her art capers. She was kind of famous in the circles that went in for culture. They weren't big circles, but they were rich circles. This time she had a deal with a top CorpSeCorps guy – he'd get her up in the helicopter, to take the videos. [. . .] Her Wisconsin thing was part of a series called The Living Word – she said for a joke that it was inspired by the Gardeners because they'd repressed us so much about writing things down. She'd begun with one-letter words – I and A and O – and then done two-letter words like It, and then three letters, and four, and five. Now she was up to six. They'd been written in all different materials, including fish guts and toxic-spill killed birds and toilets from the building demolition sites filled with used cooking oil and set on fire. Her new work was *kaputt*. When she'd told me that earlier, she'd said she was sending a message.

> "Who to?" I'd said. "The people who go to galleries? The Mr. Rich and Bigs?"
>
> "That's who," she'd said. "And the Mrs. Rich and Bigs. Them too."
>
> "You'll get in trouble, Amanda."
>
> "It's okay," she said. "They won't understand it."
>
> The project was going fine, she said: it had rained, the desert flowers were in bloom, there were a lot of insects, which was good for when she'd pour on the syrup. She already had the K done, and she was halfway through the A. But the Tex-Mexicans were getting bored. (Atwood, 2009, 56)

Gabriele Rippl proposes the term eco-ekphrasis (2019) to name this environmental artistic description of the work of art. In this case, the eco-ekphrasis works as a *memento mori*. Analogously to *La mucama de Omicunlé*, the authors explore the artist's need to sell their work. In Amanda's case she sells it to the group of people who caused the environmental crisis.

The texts in this chapter represent discourses and imaginaries that challenge notions of progress and economic growth. Feminist economists Corina Dengler and Brite Stunk call for a cultural shift and renovation of narratives regarding degrowth. Latin American scholars Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale contribute by stating: "*Buen vivir* entails a particular conception of nature, other languages of valuation (ecological, religious, aesthetic, cultural), which suggest that economic growth must be subject to the preservation of life".[114] (Svampa and Viale, 2014, 365). Researchers from Social Sciences and Law refer to a cultural renovation that accompanies an economic shift away from the current paradigm of growth through the search for new alternative languages. One of these alternative languages that question the status quo and valorize other languages is the poetic of environmental insurgency. This chapter proposed an analysis of three texts that not only

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[114] Good living entails a particular conception of nature, other valuation languages (ecological, religious, aesthetic, cultural), which suggest that economic growth must be subject to the preservation of life.

show the devastating effects of extractive and neo-extractive development but stepped beyond to represent different modes of living away from oppressive systems. The authors and the filmmaker choose to explore the possibilities brought about by three adolescent girls who question and try to change the world they inhabit.

In the next chapter, the conclusion brings together the arguments exposed thus far to answer my research questions and finally propose future avenues of research.

Conclusion

In their introductory chapter, Maristella Svampa and Enrique Viale indicate that by openly questioning the development models in their countries a group of social actors such as indigenous communities, environmental NGOs, and intellectuals pave the way for a fruitful dialogue between diverse disciplines and ways of knowing (2014, 4). I have shown that storytellers, specifically women filmmakers and novelists are also part of that group and deserve to be acknowledged as such. They represent different viewpoints on socio-environmental issues. Some focus on the destructive power of extractivism; others underscore the role of caretakers; while some others create alternative social structures to envision better ways of living in consonance with *buen vivir*.

This dissertation examines why discourses on environmental justice are critically important to the artistic work of contemporary women novelists and filmmakers in the Americas. These artists are engaged with environmental justice matters because these issues are urgent and ubiquitous. They advocate for awareness and change through their stories. However, these activist filmmakers and writers know that representing environmental issues is not enough. Action is needed at a systemic level. Why do contemporary women filmmakers and novelists in the Americas embed the discourse of environmental justice in their representations of gender, race, place, class, age, and labour? Because ideas on climate injustice are analogous to a thread that, once pulled, untangles a wool ball. In this case, the ball consists of interwoven oppressions in relation to gender, age, ethnicity, class, age, and labour conditions. These women artists are environmental writer-activists (Nixon, 2011) who denounce and challenge these interconnected oppressions in their oeuvre. The identification of a set of characteristics has allowed me to analyze in depth the similarities and differences in which environmental connections are represented.

The four texts comprising the corpus of the poetics of environmental destruction share three principles. The first is the representation of a mirroring structure. This bifurcation can be spatial or temporal. The second is the presence of destruction perpetrated by corporations, institutions, governments, or individuals. The last is the inclusion of characters that work to resist environmental destruction. *Poso Wells* combines a critique of

extractivist practices and the ways in which they are entangled with gender violence and indigenous invisibility. Gabriela Alemán uses the poetics of environmental destruction to represent a spatially mirrored settlement in which representatives of the patriarchy, the government, and international corporations connive to begin a large-scale mining extraction site in an Indigenous reservation. *El verano de los peces voladores* [The Summer of the Flying Fish] denounces the destructive actions of one settler man, Pancho Ovalle, who becomes a symbol of the neo-colonialist mindset. He oversees his logging company and during his summer vacations, he unsettles the local ecosystem in the Araucanía by exterminating the fish in the artificial lake he installed. Marcela Said criticizes how extractivist violence is interwoven with the exploitation of Mapuches' land and labour, while at the same time she showcases gender inequality within the settler family. The direst example of the violent consequences of extractivism is represented in the Brazilian novel *Enterre seus mortos* [Bury Your Dead]. Ana Paula Maia represents a sacrifice zone: environmental depletion causing health hazards which ultimately result in environmental migration. The town described by Maia does not allow work or life. One of the few jobs still available is the collection of animal corpses. If the Brazilian novel is the most severe representation of the poetics of environmental destruction, *Falls Around Her* is the most hopeful one. For that reason, I placed the analysis of this film at the end of the chapter for it to be a bridge to the following chapter on the poetics of environmental care. Darlene Naponse links the poisoning effects of mining activities with the systematic infringement of Anishinaabe rights.

The poetics of environmental care entails, the following principles: first, the storytellers' stylistic insistence on the use of narrative devices such as detailed descriptions or close-up shots of moments of contact, be haptic or visual. Second, on a thematic level, as these plots progress, the relationship between humans and other-than-humans strengthens. To portray this bond, authors and filmmakers choose to represent environmental components mimetically or allegorically. The third principle is the representation of characters that are caretakers both of humans and the environment. The last principle is the oppositional standpoint of the main character. The protagonist or group of characters that are involved in caring usually confront a hegemonic system, corporation, or institution aiming to oppress them. Lucía Puenzo in *El niño pez* [El Fish Child] tells a

story in which care shifts from being only directed to humans within a patriarchal and neo-colonialist family to being redistributed among humans and the environment, symbolized by the mythological creature, the fish child. In a similar way, Rita Indiana pushes the reader's understanding of care to include the environmental aspect in *La mucama de Omicunlé* [Tentacle]. This Dominican novel combines environmental injustices with all forms of oppression: gender, sexual, race, age, class, and labour. Acilde, a former sex worker who became a maid, lives in a futuristic and devastated Santo Domingo. After a life of marginality and violence, she is able to become Giorgio and is also granted the power of embodying the Caribbean Sea in the form of Olokún. In *Vozes da floresta* [Voices of the Rainforest], the twelve women activists in the Amazon River show political engagement while caring for their environment. These Indigenous women, *quilombolas* of African-descent, have a caring standpoint for the environment. They know that they are marginalized because of their lack of economic and political power. Environmental displacement and the quest for indigenous sovereignty are united in *Beans*: Tracey Deer focuses on the story of one Mohawk family during the Oka crisis in which the mother teaches her two daughters how to care for their nation and their environment.

The last group of texts studied here reimagines alternatives to the current hegemonic way of living under socio-economic models of unsustainable development. Once the characters join or create a new social order with environmental awareness, relations shift in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, class, and labour. La China traverses the pampas observing different social structures and decides to stay with a welcoming Guaraní-Aymara-inspired community in the Argentinian littoral. In this society there is no traditional nuclear family formation or work schedules. In *The Year of the Flood,* Atwood imagines a religious environmentalist community whose beliefs contrast with the dystopian society in the Compounds. Furthermore, she takes a step further in representing an insurgence within the insurgency. In *El bosque de niebla* [The Cloud Forest], the residents of Las Cañadas create a sustainable cooperative within Mexico in which they cultivate their food, school their children, and work their land.

Across the three chapters, the storytellers represent girls within a story of environmental crisis. These young characters are usually confronted by environmental

dispossession enmeshed with all the other forms of oppression mentioned above. The girl protagonists in *El verano de los peces voladores*, *Beans*, *Las aventuras de la China Iron*, and *El bosque de niebla* experience a learning process that requires displacement. They all start a journey, some longer than others, to seek better living conditions for all beings in their communities. Most of these girls, Beans, La China, and Haya, are part of their communities and although the stories focus on them, they are not represented as "exceptional" (Taft, 2011) or "global saviors." (Taft, 2020) The authors and filmmakers don't place the burden of shifting a worldwide economic system or behavioral patterns on these characters. The choice of representing girls is related to their quest for a sense of belonging in the world. In these Girl Environmental *Bildungsromane* the change in these characters is correlated to the socio-environmental structures. These girls are trying to change and improve the world in which they live.

This dissertation was motivated by the lack of sustained scholarly attention and analysis of the work by women storytellers in the Americas. Authors such as Samanta Schweblin or filmmakers like Jennifer Baichwal are not an exception. The production of environmentally committed texts is sustained across Latin America and Canada by several filmmakers and novelists. Their activism is reflected in their artistic work. My analysis offered a way to understand the similarities while contemplating the differences. The notion of poetics, specifically poetics of environmental destruction and care, allows a common structural ground to be established among the texts.

The analyzed films and novels can be a starting point for readers and audiences to become aware of how deeply environmental justice issues are interwoven into society. However, just being aware is not enough. Recently, the hunger stones[115] in Central Europe revealed the inscription "Wenn du mich siehst, dann weine" [If you see me, then cry]. Let's not become paralyzed with fear. Work and education are not coincidentally key themes in the stories. We need to re-educate ourselves and work towards an equitable way of living.

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[115] Hydrological landmark. Inscriptions in riverbanks that mark the levels of historic droughts while warning about famine.

The scope of my study is limited to only two narrative media. The most significant limitation is linguistic. Given the Indigenous engagement with environmental matters, I have excluded narrative works in languages such as Aymara, Mapugundún, Guaraní, Ojibwe, Mohawk, and Creole, among others. Moreover, the increasing number of environmentally engaged films, TV shows, novels, and poems by women across the Americas is rising. My corpus comprises texts produced between 2007 and 2020 in which authors and directors represent contemporary aspects of the climate crisis. Every selection implies the exclusion of materials. Provided that this field of study is expanding, some texts that are part of the universe of my research and can be examined are, the Mexican petrofiction novel *Temporada de huracanes* [Hurricane Season] (2017) by Fernanda Melchor; the Uruguayan cli-fi novel *Mugre rosa* [Pink Slime] (2020) by Fernanda Trías; the Argentinian TV show *Cromo* (2015) created by Lucía Puenzo, in collaboration with her brother, Nicolás, and Pablo Fendrik; the two-season Brazilian TV show *Desalma* [Unsoul] (2020) written by Ana Paula Maia; and the Paraguayan film *Eami* (2022) by Paz Encina. These texts can be a starting point for future research. Some countries such as Canada have a longer tradition of environmentally engaged stories produced by women such as Alanis Obomsawin and Margaret Atwood. However, this is not the case across the Americas. Younger voices are emerging now to denounce increasing bad development in the region, represent multiple ways of caring, and imagining better futures. I trust that there are other researchers, currently at work or still to come, who will conceive of other and new environmental poetics.

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