

Organizadores

Miriam Vieira

Jørgen Bruhn

Intermedial Mediations of the Anthropocene

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Diretora da Faculdade de Letras

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Sônia Queiroz

Capa e projeto gráfico

Glória Campos

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Preparação de originais

Amanda Pavani

Diagramação

Katryn Rocha

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Amanda Pavani

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Endereço para correspondência

LABED – Laboratório de Edição – FALE/UFMG

Av. Antônio Carlos, 6.627 – sala 3108

31270-901 – Belo Horizonte/MG

Tel.: (31) 3409-6072

e-mail: vivavozufmg@gmail.com

site: www.letras.ufmg.br/vivavoz

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Editor's Foreword

Invited by Professor Thais Diniz to join the program “Cátedras”, sponsored by IEAT – Instituto de Estudos Avançados Transdisciplinares¹ –, professor Jørgen Bruhn spent the month of May 2016 as a visiting professor at the Literary Studies Post Graduation Program from Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais². The program aims at financing cutting-edge themes on an international scale that novels approach with transdisciplinary potential. The main focus areas of Bruhn's research are literary theory and criticism, intermediality and media studies, and adaptation studies.

During his stay in Belo Horizonte, professor Bruhn gave an open lecture to the whole university, participated in a whole-day research *Jornada* and a research group discussion with colleagues interested in intermedial questions. Bruhn also taught a 15-hour minicourse entitled *Aesthetic Transmediation of the Anthropocene* directed primarily to graduate students, but also attended by undergraduates as well as senior scholars. The chosen theme to be explored in his lecturing and teaching was the relation between intermediality and the notion of the Anthropocene.

The course was given in a series of four seminars, concluded by an assignment session. In a first moment, basic concepts of intermediality were presented, in particular related to analysis of narrative literary texts. The exemplary texts were directly related to his recently launched book *Intermediality and Narrative Literature: Medialities*

¹ Transdisciplinary Advanced Research Centre.

² Programa de Pós-graduação em Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras – PósLit, FALE, UFMG.

Matter (2016). In the following seminars, a common theme tied the discussions together: how can aesthetic media represent the questions of the Anthropocene and climate change? This working question directed the discussions ranging from relatively conventional questions of style and themes in literature and film to the less explored problems of the interrelations between science, politics and the arts. In a collaborative production, this volume presents this mini-course outcome.

As professor Bruhn's chaperone, not only I attended the course myself, but closely followed the conception of the course and helped him with a few adjustments in order to better meet the needs of Brazilian students. Since the result of the final works was quite consistent, we thought of sharing it by compiling illustrative cases in form of articles followed by an afterword by professor Bruhn with a reflection on the minicourse and a short essay on a performance that he has been currently interested in. In a collaborative process, all articles here presented were written, peer reviewed, and proofread by graduate students affiliated to the Literary Studies Program of the Faculty of Letters, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (PósLit, FALE, UFMG), edited by myself and professor Bruhn, and published as a volume of the collection *Cadernos Viva Voz*, by the university editorial lab, LABED³.

As a result, we present a volume divided into two sections. The first one is dedicated to mediations of the Anthropocene under different perspectives. In the opening article, Maria Isabel Bordini draws brief observations on the contribution of the Yanomami vision to the idea of the Anthropocene: She establishes a dialogue between the idea of the Anthropocene and the worldview presented to us in David Kopenawa's testimonial literary work *The falling sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*. Full of shamanic visions and ethnographic meditations on white people, for Bordini, the essay is not only a gateway to a complex and revealing universe; it is a powerful critical tool to question the notion of progress and development espoused by those whom the Yanomami – with prophetic intuition and sociological precision – call “people of merchandise”. Following the setups of the Anthropocene provoked by colonization, Marília Carvalho proposes a reading of the Anthropocenic

dangers presented by Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* (1851). In *La littérature em peril* (2007), Tzvetan Todorov discusses how the teaching of literature has moved away from the problems of the world and from the reflection on the human condition. As an attempt to approach these problems as well as life in community, Carvalho focuses on the social relations developed on board of the Pequod, Captain Ahab's famous ship, in order to observe how these relations reinforce anthropocentrism while also propelling interdependency and involvement between shipmates. Meanwhile, Flávia Monteiro chooses to revisit Shakespeare. According to her, the dynamism of literary texts enables potential interpretations detached from the historical moment of their production. We can find reflections of the Anthropocene in *The Tempest*, for example. The dynamics of power relations on the island reflect the dynamics of the Anthropocene, exposing different aspects of domination (Prospero and Miranda) and subjugation (Ariel and Caliban) between man and nature. This reflection corroborates the recognition of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch in which humans should acknowledge their agency on the current planetary conditions to prevent further problems for the planet. To close the section, Amanda Pavani, attentive to contemporary answers to the matter of the Anthropocene, presents Margaret Atwood's most recent novels' sub-theme: the fall of humankind from grace, that is, processes involving its destruction or, more clearly, its self-destruction. Several changes in the environment, fauna and landscape are described. It is notable that the concept of Anthropocene, that is, the era of human alterations on the planet's environment, pervades the plot development of *Oryx and Crake* (2003). Thus, Pavani contends that Atwood extrapolates on the final solution to the matter of the Anthropocene: a context in which humans have been decimated and their role is taken on by improved, biologically manipulated beings, the Crakers.

For the second section, this volume also evidences of the Anthropocene in different media, such as poem, novel, and film, but now read under the light of (inter)mediality. Clara Nogueira discusses how relocating the persona of “The Song of Exile” affects the overall signification of the poem. For doing so, the author discusses rewritings of

³ Laboratório de Edição, Faculdade de Letras, UFMG. More at: <http://www.lettras.ufmg.br/vivavoz/>

"The Song of Exile", by Gonçalves Dias, specifically a poem by Mario Quintana and a comic strip by Caulos, in which the speaker is resituated. The aforementioned change makes it relevant to discuss the Anthropocene-related notion of "solastalgia", the homesickness towards a non-existing home as described by Glenn Albrecht *et al.*, as a re-fashioning of Dias' romantic nostalgia. According to Nogueira, when these rewritings are considered, the nationalistic tone is reshaped into an anxiety in regard to environmental changes. After that, Victor Hermann discusses the relations involving the Anthropocene in Lars Von Trier's *Melancholia* (2012). In the Danish director's work, we are confronted with a paradox: on the one hand, there is the anticipation of the end of the world; on the other we see the never-ending petty dramas of bourgeoisie life, which tends to remain unchanged. In order to further discuss this paradox, under the light of intermedial studies, the article presents a dialogue among authors that deal directly with the problem of how to perceive the Anthropocene. To close this section, as well as the volume, Alex Keine aims at pointing out in the book *Água viva* (1973), by the celebrated Brazilian author Clarice Lispector, the presence of heteromediality (here meaning the inherent mixedness of all media) and some elements related to the topic of the Anthropocene. Keine proposes that *Água viva* may be read as an aesthetic transmediation of the Anthropocene.

We hope you enjoy the ride.

Miriam Vieira

Mediations of the Anthropocene

Brief observations on the contribution of Yanomami vision to the idea of the Anthropocene

Maria Isabel Bordini

This article aims to establish a dialogue between the idea of the Anthropocene, which emerges from the geological sciences but is not limited to that field, and the worldview presented to us in *The falling sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*⁴. The work is a testimonial literary work by David Kopenawa, who is member and representative of the Yanomami people, who inhabits the border region between Brazil and Venezuela. The work in question was written in collaboration with Bruce Albert, a French ethnologist.

The term Anthropocene, as mentioned, was first used by scientists to describe the latest geological period in planet Earth's history. There is still not an accurate and officially established start date for it, but many consider the late eighteenth century, when human activities began to have a significant global impact on the Earth's climate and on the functioning of its ecosystems. This date coincides with the invention of the steam engine by James Watt, in 1784. It is the beginning of what history denominates Industrial Revolution. Other scientists, however, believe that the Anthropocene began before that, with the advent of agriculture. The attempts for a precise dating show, however, the problem of the necessary historical distance when considering relevant events and magnitudes to the geological time scale. A hypothetical observer set millions, or perhaps only a few hundreds of years further on in the future, could, provided with sufficient information, de-

⁴Originally published in French, in 2010, under the title *La chute du ciel: paroles d'un chaman Yanomami*. The English edition was published in 2013, under the title *The falling sky: words of a Yanomami shaman*, the source of the citations presented in this essay.

termine more accurately a start date for the Anthropocene. Given the range of human action consequences in the evolution of Earth, the Anthropocene may come to be recognized and classified, in fact, as a new geological period or era. From a broader perspective, it is plausible to point its start from the emergence of *Homo sapiens* on the planet⁵.

Recent research in the field of geology, as shown in Waters *et al.*'s article, "The Anthropocene is functionally and stratigraphically distinct from the Holocene," (WATERS, 2016, s.p.) indicates that human activity on Earth has left stratigraphic marks on the soil, among other places and strata, which raises, more concretely, the possibility of considering the Anthropocene as a new geological period, and human action, in turn, as a geological force:

Recent anthropogenic deposits contain new minerals and rock types, reflecting rapid global dissemination of novel materials including elemental aluminum, concrete, and plastics that form abundant, rapidly evolving "technofossils." Fossil fuel combustion has disseminated black carbon, inorganic ash spheres, and spherical carbonaceous particles worldwide, with a near-synchronous global increase around 1950. Anthropogenic sedimentary fluxes have intensified, including enhanced erosion caused by deforestation and road construction. Widespread sediment retention behind dams has amplified delta subsidence. (WATERS, 2016, s.p.)

The idea of the Anthropocene is not restricted to geological studies; it is incorporated into anthropological and environmental studies as well as into sociology and political thought. As suggested by Bruno Latour, the concept of Anthropocene can be used as a political reflection tool, which provides a better understanding of what we call Modernity:

What makes the Anthropocene a clearly detectable golden spike way beyond the boundary of stratigraphy is that it is the most decisive philosophical, religious, anthropological and, as we shall see, political concept yet produced as an alternative to the very notions of 'Modern' and 'modernity.' [...] No postmo-

⁵ Recent studies suggest different start points for the Anthropocene. In Waters *et al.*'s article, "The Anthropocene is functionally and stratigraphically distinct from the Holocene", we can read: "Proposals for marking the start of the Anthropocene include an 'early Anthropocene' beginning with the spread of agriculture and deforestation; the Columbian Exchange of OldWorld and New World species; the Industrial Revolution at ~1800 CE; and the mid-20th century "Great Acceleration" of population growth and industrialization" (WATERS, 2016, s.p.).

dem philosopher, no reflexive anthropologist, no liberal theologian, no political thinker would have dared to weigh the influence of humans on the same historical scale as rivers, floods, erosion, and biochemistry. (LATOURE, 2013, p. 77)

The idea of the human being as a geological force, as derived from the notion of Anthropocene, breaks the boundaries between nature and culture, and that may be its most radical contribution. The classical opposition that puts man on the side of Culture and all the remainder of the planet on the side of the Nature loses its explanatory value considerably. Therefore, it is necessary to review the whole edifice of political thought, that is, the whole set of reflections about how we can and should organize ourselves as a collective. Notions such as State and Nation also have their explanatory and pragmatic value committed, against the fact that human action as geological category goes beyond the boundaries involved in traditional political divisions. However, would it be possible to simply replace traditional political categories with the concept of species as a political operator? This does not seem sufficient either, since it would eliminate the particularities and the diversity of human experience on Earth, turning a blind eye, for example, to the fact that certain communities have much more responsibility for planetary changes grouped under the Anthropocene sign than others. This is what Bruno Latour seems to suggest when he says:

It makes no sense to talk about the 'anthropic origin' of global climate warming, if by 'anthropic' you mean something like the 'human race.' Hundreds of different people will at once raise their voice and say that they feel no responsibility whatsoever for those deeds at a geological scale — and they will be right. Indian nations in the middle of the Amazonian forest have nothing to do with the 'anthropic origin' of climate change — at least so long as politicians have not been distributing chainsaws at election times. Nor do the poor blokes in the slums of Mumbai, who can only dream of having a bigger carbon footprint than the black soot belching out of their makeshift ovens. Nor does the worker who is forced to drive long commutes because she has not been able to find an affordable house near the factory where she works. This is why the Anthropocene, in spite of its name, is not a fantastic extension of anthropocentrism, as if we could pride ourselves in having been transformed for good into some sort of flying red and blue Superman. Rather, it is the human as a unified agency, as one virtual political entity, as a universal concept that has to be broken down into many different people with contradictory interests, opposing cosmo-

and who are summoned under the auspices of warring entities — not to say warring divinities. (LATOUR, 2013, p. 81, my emphasis)

In this sense, Latour proposes a new idea of what should be world diplomacy, from the concept of “cosmopolitics”. The “we” must be replaced with the ethnic and political particularity of the various existing human groupings. Thus, the several human collectivities become mutually translatable by explicitly expressing who they are, as well as which entities, deities or principles guide them:

If there is unity neither in nature nor in politics, it means that whatever universality we are looking for has to be composed. It is to render such a composition at least thinkable that [...] I introduced the little scheme by which every collective will present itself to the others as a people summoned by an entity and make explicit the way it distributes agencies. (LATOUR, 2013, p. 82)

Within Latour’s proposal of a world diplomacy based on the exposure of ethnic-political characteristics of each human collectivity, attention is drawn, in the sight of the so-called Western world, to testimonials such as David Kopenawa’s. A great shaman and spokesman for the Yanomami people, Kopenawa offers us in the book *The falling sky* an exceptional autobiographical testimony and shamanic manifest which is at the same time a libel against the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Originally published in French in 2010, the work offers the meditations of the shaman about the predatory contact with the white man, a constant threat to his people since the 1960s. *The falling sky* was written from the transmission of his words to an ethnologist with whom he nurtures a long friendship. More than thirty years in each other’s company have brought the authors together, not to mention another forty years of contact between Bruce Albert, the ethnologist-writer, and the Yanomami, with David Kopenawa acting as the shaman-narrator.

The shaman vocation from early childhood, a result of cosmological knowledge acquired through the use of powerful hallucinogens, is the first of the three pillars which structure the book. The second is the account of the advancement of the white man through the forest

and its catalogue of epidemics, violence and destruction. Finally, the authors bring the odyssey of the indigenous leader to denounce the destruction of his people.

Full of shamanic visions and ethnographic meditations on white people, this work is not only a gateway to a complex and revealing universe; it is a powerful critical tool to question the notion of progress and development espoused by those whom the Yanomami – with prophetic intuition and sociological precision – call the “people of merchandise”.

The Yanomami worldview, as set out in *The falling sky*, absorbs and explains recent changes operated on the planet in recent decades, such as global warming, deforestation, pollution of rivers and soil, the threat of extinction of several species. All such interferences, which can be grouped under the concept of the Anthropocene, are contemplated and explained by traditional Yanomami knowledge. Within the Yanomami view, the fall of the sky is a possible consequence of too much interference by white men on earth. The abusive exploitation of natural resources, denounced by the speech of David Kopenawa, is responsible, in the Yanomami vision, for diseases and epidemics (which the Yanomami call *xawara*) that claim the lives of indigenous people, including the shamans. Within the Yanomami tradition, the shamans are responsible for the protection of forest dwellers and, indeed, for all who live under the same sky. Shamans make the *xapiri* – a term we can translate, somewhat inaccurately, as “spirits” – act favourably to humans. The death of the shaman is seen as a part of the great environmental disaster that the actions of white men are causing on the earth. Without the intervention of shamans, those who know how to communicate with the spirits, we are all at the mercy of the destructive forces of the earth itself which, wounded, turns against us. That idea is explained by Kopenawa in chapter 24 of *The falling sky*, “The Shamans’ Death”:

When the white people tear dangerous minerals out of the depths of the earth, our breath becomes too short and we die very quickly. We do not simply get sick like long ago when we were alone in the forest. This time, all our flesh and even our ghosts are soiled by the *xawara* epidemic smoke that burns us. This

is why our dead shaman elders are angry and want to protect us. If the breath of life of all of our people dies out, the forest will become empty and silent. Our ghosts will then go to join all those who live on the sky's back, already in very large numbers. The sky, which is as sick from the white people's fumes as we are, will start moaning and begin to break apart. All the orphan spirits of the last shamans will chop it up with their axes. In a rage, they will throw its broken pieces on the earth to avenge their dead fathers. One by one they will cut all its points of support, and it will collapse from end to end. For this time there won't be a single shaman left to hold it up. It will truly be terrifying! The back of the sky bears a forest as vast as ours, and its enormous weight will brutally crush us all. The entire ground on which we walk will be carried away into the underworld where our ghosts will become aōpatari [cannibal spirits] ancestors in their turn. We will perish before we even notice. No one will have the time to scream or cry. The angry orphan xapiri will also smash the sun, the moon, and the stars. Then the sky will remain dark for all time. (KOPENAWA, 2013, p. 406)

The prophecy about the fall of the sky, a kind of apocalypse within the Yanomami cosmology, is both a consequence of greed as well as of white people's lack of knowledge. Ignoring the foundations of the earth and ignoring the deepest truths about the being of the earth are the reasons why the white man fiercely dug it in search of minerals. Such attitude, in the Yanomami vision, shatters the balance and support between heaven and earth. In the following excerpt from chapter 19, titled "Merchandise Love", David Kopenawa exposes a brief history of Western economic development, from the Yanomami perspective, that clearly approaches the reasons for white people to be considered ignorant regarding the earth as a being. That is basically because, in Kopenawa's vision, the thought of the western world is made misty by the passion for the goods:

In the beginning the first white people's land looked like ours. It was a land where they were as few as we are now in our forest. Yet little by little their thought strayed onto a dark and tangled path. Their wisest ancestors, those whom Omama [the Creator] created and gave his words to, died. Their sons and grandsons had very many children in their turn. They started to reject the sayings of their elders as lies, and little by little they forgot them. They cleared their entire forest to open bigger and bigger gardens. Omama had taught their fathers the use of a few iron tools. They were no longer satisfied with them. They started desiring the hardest and most cutting metal, which Omama had hidden under the ground and the waters. They began greedily tearing minerals out of the ground. They built factories to melt them and make great quantities

of merchandise. Then their thoughts set on these trade goods, and they became as enamored with them as if they were beautiful women. [...] By wanting to possess all this merchandise, they were seized by a limitless desire. Their thought was filled with smoke and invaded by night. It closed itself to other things. It was with these words of merchandise that the white people started cutting all the trees, mistreating the land, and soiling the watercourses. First they started all over their own forest. Now there are few trees left on their sick land, and they can no longer drink the water of their rivers. This is why they want to do the same thing again where we live. (KOPENAWA, 2013, p. 327)

It is possible to see how the Yanomami vision is quite accurate about the Western system of exploitation of natural resources, a predatory model without limits. This is the system responsible for the most catastrophic forecasts in environmental changes that characterize the Anthropocene. David Kopenawa's testimony allows the reader to think that a new relationship with the world is not only possible, but also necessary.

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The world in danger: *Moby-Dick* and the Anthropocene

Marília Nogueira Carvalho

Inspired by Tzvetan Todorov's book, *La littérature em peril*⁶ (2007), this article examines the social relations present in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), especially the developing friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg and the bond which connects Ahab to Moby Dick. These two relations reinforce anthropocentrism, while also propelling interdependency and involvement among shipmates. According to Todorov, literature is in danger due to the way we read, analyse, and thus, teach it, favouring beyond every measure the aesthetic and textual analysis rather than fostering reflections on the way literature helps us to broaden our minds and sense our social relations. Similarly, the world is in danger, because humans have lived their lives without worrying about the impact caused on Earth, because we as a species have seen Nature as our natural resource, because we have enslaved animals to serve us, because we spent a large amount of money and effort on developing science and technology that did not help us to look after our social relations. As a consequence, we have been distinguishing ourselves, for the last centuries, as the main agent of geological shifts, and we have entered a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene.

Moby-Dick was published in 1851 at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, a big propeller of the Anthropocene, and this period marks, for the seafaring world, the consolidation of the steamship, an important change in navigation. From this moment on, ships ceased more

⁶ This book has not been translated to English yet. For this work, I used Caio Meira's translation, entitled *A Literatura em perigo* (2009).

and more to depend on favourable weather and currents to sail; additionally, it was also possible to predict ship arrivals as well as to sail faster, making navigation a more profitable activity. The machine prompted a profound change in the "intimacy with which a seaman had to live with his ship of yesterday" (CONRAD, 2002, p. 44), because, as the machine stepped in between the man and the sea, it made him stop feeling the connection between his senses and hers. This change shifted the captains' attention from the weather, the winds, the currents, the signs of nature and also their senses, to the proper working of the machine.

This change of perspective distanced man from nature and wide open space, bringing him into closed, artificial ones. Half a century later came the Parisian galleries, the Passages, depicted by Walter Benjamin, which also recreate artificial environments so as to protect passers-by not only from bad weather but from pickpockets as well. As the steamship contributed to separate man and nature, by granting him a margin of independency from it, it also contributed to reassure the eerie and appalling image people had of the sea, the coast and of the seafaring activities. By the end of the XVII century, according to Alain Corbin (1989), the sea was a place inhabited by monsters and the ship was full of infection and plagues, which would bring death to sailors, who were worthy of pity and not of admiration. Corbin remarks that, at that time, people would not have the habit of strolling by the sea or simply contemplating it – Crusoe, for instance, in Daniel Defoe's novel from 1719, does not play by the sea nor bathe at the sea.

So it is not a coincidence that Ishmael is the first character in literature to voluntarily venture to sea, as argues W. H. Auden (1951); Ulysses, in the *Odyssey*, for example, in order to reach home, has to cross the sea, which is itself a great obstacle; Prospero, in *The Tempest*, once banned, as a punishment, has to face the waters; Horace's *Odes* contributes to this image by reporting the horror of being away from the port: "Oh ship, new billows are carrying you out to sea. What are you doing? Struggles to reach port" (HORÁCIO *apud* AUDEN, p. 17).

The port was the place associated with security; it was there that life would go on, except for sea workers who would regularly spend

more time on board than on land, especially those from New Bedford and Nantucket. From 1720 to 1860, it was usual business to set sail to hunt whales from these cities for voyages that would last up to four years. After this period, American whaling started to decay due to the discovery of mineral oil and to the advanced technology of the Norwegian ships, which carried powerful weapons. Such massive whale hunting led some species to the extinction by 1920; scientific and technological advances granted man with a resolute and unyielding power to kill other species and use them as his labor force. Nevertheless, man could not predict that, one day, this sovereignty would make him "a victim of his own success, finding himself absolutely alone in his 'clearing'" (DANOWSKI; VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2014, p. 43-47)⁸. Yes, this Promethean man had found his fire, but did not know how to use it to warm his solitary heart.

If *Moby-Dick* presents this anthropocentric, legislating man, it also discusses how this central position, ensured by his rationality, is not sufficient to moderate and placate his longing for something else; Ishmael, much like Hamlet, perishes lost in his own thoughts with no capacity for action, just as Ahab perishes from one single idea, a monomania, hunting Moby Dick. Both characters fall for something they lack and desire, which is why they set sail in the first place. How differently do they deal with that feeling? How do they act and interact with each other and with the world? The narrative starts by exposing Ishmael's lack of attachment, his longing for something that he does not even know what it is. All that he knows is that, when melancholy hits his soul, leaving to the sea is his "substitute for pistol and ball" (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 5). The very same place that, for Ulysses and Prospero, used to be an instrument of punishment and ordeal, turns itself into a place of salvation, redemption and union for Ishmael. James Miller notices that the path of Ishmael goes from "independency and solitude to interdependency and involvement" (MILLER, 1962, p. 78), a change that starts to take place even before boarding, when he gets

⁷ This book was published in Portuguese and has not been translated to English yet, so the quotations cited here were translated by the author of this paper.

⁸ In the original in Portuguese, "vítima de seu próprio sucesso, ao se descobrir absolutamente solitário em sua 'clareira'".

to know Queequeg, a savage, "a clean, comely looking cannibal" (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 17).

It is interesting to notice how Queequeg is described by Ishmael. Due to Ishmael's ignorance in regard to other cultures, Queequeg is frequently portrayed through paradox, in contrast with Christian habits and customs: "Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian" (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 17). This type of description and comparison restates an anthropocentric attitude while questioning at the same time some premises promulgated and confronted by Christianity. References to Christianity can be seen throughout the narrative, as in the biblical quotes, the characters' names and the division between the mates, who are all Christian; on the other hand, the harpooners are all pagan.

Ishmael has an opportunity to watch Queequeg's ritual with his little God, Yojo. He also attends a mass in the church of Nantucket, conducted by Father Mapple, a former sailor. Comparing these two rituals, Ishmael notices how the Father's isolation in the pulpit separates him even further from his devotees, which leads Ishmael to question this spirituality that manifests itself through segregation and hierarchy: "Can it be, then, that by that act of physical isolation, he signifies his spiritual withdrawal for the time, from all outward worldly ties and connexions?" (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 26). This idea of spirituality that does not only separate but also establishes a hierarchy between priest and congregation matches the belief that us, humans, must command all other living creatures, favoring our species over others, since our race is the only one that possesses the faculty of Reason. This has propelled us to treat other creatures as our servants and to see the natural world as "the other", which surrounds us and whose existence is at our disposal. Thus, Ishmael's questioning of Christian premises through contact with a spiritualized pagan also entails a questioning of our way of recognizing and interacting with the other. It is Queequeg who gives Ishmael a chance to practice tolerance. It is him who, according to Lawrence, opens "the flood gates of love and human connection in

Ishmael" (LAWRENCE *apud* STERN, 1960, p. 36).

During the voyage, this bond develops, as we can see in the monkey rope scene, when Queequeg is suspended ten feet below deck by a rope that envelops his waist while he cuts and skins the whale. The other end of the rope is tied around Ishmael's waist; no matter what happens, he cannot cut the rope.

So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two; that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death [...] I saw that this situation of mine was the precise situation of every mortal that breathes; only, in most cases, he, one way or other, has this Siamese connexion with a plurality of other mortals. (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 202)

The interdependency is apparent; the risk is shared; and Ishmael sees himself stripped of his own individuality. This interdependency also appears at the lowering of the boats, when the stakes are higher and terror befalls. The sights are clouded; sounds are not clear and distinguishable any more due to the vast swellings of the waves, whose whiteness passes for Moby Dick, the white whale. The boat's chief mate shouts and encourages the sailors; he's in charge of the big decisions, the moment to attack and recede; nevertheless, when facing a great danger either caused by the whale or by the boat itself each sailor has autonomy to do whatever he deems necessary, provided that his actions do not endanger someone else's life. According to Brodhead, "When Ahab, Starbuck and Flask are pulling after whales they are related as men engaged in a community of activity and excitement" (BRODHEAD, 1976, p. 13).

Man might sail all by himself, like Santiago, in *The Old Man and the Sea*; but when a vessel has a goal that surpasses a single man's skill, a crew is necessary, prompting a mode of association that puts sovereignty into question at moments of great risk, during extreme events caused either by natural factors, the meeting of other ships or even by the intricate contact between members of the crew. Sailing at the open sea entails accepting risk, engaging with it and defying it,

even though one fears it and knows its danger; maybe that is why the ship carries its men as if they were a single man:

They were one man, not thirty. For as the one ship that held them all; though it was put together of all contrasting things – oak, and maple, and pine wood; iron, and pitch, and hemp – yet all these ran into each other in the one concrete hull, which shot on its way, both balanced and directed by the long central keel; even so, all the individualities of the crew, this man's valor, that man's fear; guilt and guiltiness, all varieties were welded into oneness, and were all directed to that fatal goal which Ahab their one lord and keel did point to. (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 353)

The fatal goal that Ahab had designated was to relentlessly hunt a single whale, Moby Dick, thus betraying “the law of whaling ships which consists in pursuing any spotted sound whale with no exception or choosing” (DELEUZE, 1997, p. 91). Once he chooses, Ahab endangers his whole crew. His motivation was unsound, yet satisfactorily clear to inspire rage in all his sailors, making his vengeance a common aspiration: “they were one man, not thirty”. Nevertheless, for Ahab, Moby Dick is not just his object of hatred, but also a demand for something he knows he has lost, and his search is also a form of passion for Moby Dick, a feeling that “may be defined as passion of longing, of hope, of striving: a passion that starts from the deepest loneliness that man can know” (KAZIN *apud* CHASE, 1962, p. 44). Alfred Kazin believes that this passion is illustrated in the descriptive chapters on the whale and the whaling industry; I myself think that this passion is associated with the way Ahab interacts with the whale, the way he describes and chases it and in the way he actually turns himself into the whale, as an intense and irresistible process of becoming-whale, as argued by Gilles Deleuze.

Ahab feels like a prisoner – a prisoner of his anger and his passion, of a duty that keeps him alert and lurking, monitoring every change in the wind, every movement on the water. Is it not also in a state of alertness that an animal lives in his natural habitat, always watching out for other creatures, even while eating? Ahab does not recognize himself as an animal, but he also disagrees with Starbuck's description of Moby Dick as a dumb brute that does not speak. Ahab is

aware of the eliciting power of the white whale, though his impression is still grounded on his anthropocentric and, in a way, narcissistic view, as he sees his own hate, power and malice reflected on the eyes of the whale. Ahab is usually seen for his actions, in contrast to Ishmael who is seen for his thoughts. However, Ahab is also passively pulled by Moby Dick toward his own end. Who is leading whom? Who is human, who is animal? Instead of answering these questions through an anthropocentric view and saying that they differ from one another in the ability to think or even to imagine, I would like to suggest a different path to answer these questions based on the perspective of some Amazon tribes.

According to Débora Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2014), the way that Amazon tribes see animals might help the reader transcend the anthropocentric frame, illuminating questions concerning our relationship not only with animals, but also with the natural world that surrounds us or, even better, the natural world we are part of. If we understand that Nature is not a resource, the next step is precisely to see that it is not just an environment as well, simply because it is not separated from us; the subject/object dichotomy is false. For some indigenous people, the myth of the Garden of Eden does not make sense, for “humans are the first ones to arrive; the Creation proceeds from them”, and “that which we call ‘environment’ is a society of societies” (DANOWSKI and CASTRO, 2014, p. 92)⁹. In this sense, if everything proceeded from us, according to some Amazon tribes, it is not reasonable to differentiate ourselves from nature, to classify man as subject and nature as object, since we are all from the same root. Bruno Latour (2013) contributes to this discussion, though he may not be aware of this indigenous logic, by pointing out the connection between the words ‘human’ and ‘humus’, thus unveiling an intrinsic and primary relation between humans and the Earth. Latour exhorts us to abandon the word ‘soil’ for ‘Earth’, in order to change the course of history, for while ‘soil’ reminds us of the idea of fertile soil and cultivated soil, that is, that serves us, the word ‘Earth’, on the other hand, alludes

⁹ In the original, “os humanos são os primeiros a chegar, o restante da criação procede deles”, e o que ‘chamamos de ‘ambiente’ é para eles uma sociedade de sociedades”.

to an entity, an agent, an active and eliciting subject, prompting not a return to the “land”, but a return of the Earth. This return of the Earth as subject, brought into discussion either by the Amazon tribes or by Latour, leads us to regard animals as political entities, with subjective dimensions capable of organizing extremely complex societies.

What we would call the natural world or ‘world’ in general is, for the Amazon tribes, a multiplicity of multiplicities intricately connected. The animal species and others are conceived as types of “peoples” or “populations”, that is, as political entities. It is not the ‘jaguar’ that is ‘human’; it is the individual jaguars that acquire a subjective dimension (more or less pertinent, according to the practical context of interaction between them) once they are perceived as having a society ‘behind them’, a political and collective alterity. (DANOWSKI; VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2014, p. 93)¹⁰

Looking at animals through their subjective dimension and political alterity is different from anthropomorphizing them, that is, it is different from endowing them with human traits. Whales, in *Moby-Dick*, are frequently anthropomorphized, that is, they are not seen as a ‘people’ or a ‘community’ with subjective dimensions, but the abundance of descriptions concede them a certain ubiquity in the story and defy, to a great extent, the rational and anthropocentric discourse. As the connection between Ahab and Moby Dick is far beyond anger or revenge, the connection among the crew and the whales surpasses a relation of work, since the process of treating the whale is extremely long, complex and exhaustive and demands a great sense of collectivity.

While the work on the Pequod might be just a way of earning a livelihood, which is the case of Starbuck – the reason why he refuses to follow Ahab’s vision –, it might also be a way of coming back to life, as it is for Ishmael and most of the crew, who is easily convinced to follow their captain. It is during those procedures of treating the whale that hierarchy concedes to connection and union, especially when they are pulling after whales in little boats or sitting together around bar-

¹⁰ In the original, “O que chamaríamos de mundo natural, ou ‘mundo’ em geral, é para os povos amazônicos, uma multiplicidade de multiplicidades intrincadamente conectadas. As espécies animais e outras são concebidas como outros tantos tipos de ‘gentes’ ou ‘povos’, isto é, como entidades políticas. Não é o ‘jaguar’ que é ‘humano’; são os jaguares individuais que adquirem uma dimensão subjetiva (mais ou menos pertinente, conforme o contexto prático da interação com eles) ao serem percebidos como tendo ‘atrás deles’ uma sociedade, uma alteridade política coletiva”.

rels of spermaceti squeezing globules of crystallized oil. It was during one of these sessions that Ishmael felt all his anger subside; he found himself “unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers’ hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget;” (MELVILLE, 1989, p. 263). In this sense, whales and whale-related tasks are responsible for the interactions and the establishing of bonds between shipmates, whether it be because of greed or fear, the hunting activity, the division of work or even love. Cesare Casarino notes that “Moby Dick works as cement and, at the end, also as solvent of the social relations in the novel” (CASARINO, 2002, p. 86).

Similarly, Queequeg is also responsible for the transformation of Ishmael – he is the one who gives an opportunity for Ishmael to practice tolerance and to question his premises and prejudices deriving from his Christian background. Queequeg is the savage of strange ways and habits who, in possession of an innate sense of delicacy and compassion, amazes the white, Christian, civilized Ishmael. Stressing the role of Queequeg and the whale in the story may lead humankind to analyze our relations with others and with the world; the way we treat the “savage” and the animal grounds our values and defines the way we take responsibility for our choices and actions. Chakrabarty, in “The Climate of History” (2009), points out that it was not just our industrial way of life, connected to scientific discoveries and the advance of capital, that brought us into the crisis we are currently experiencing – this crisis has shed light upon certain elements that are not related to the history of capital, but are indeed connected to “the way different forms of life relate to each other and how the mass extinction of any given species might endanger others” (2009, p. 217). That is why the contribution of Danowski and Viveiros de Castro for Anthropocene studies is so important: the inclusion of the indigenous perspective in academic and anthropocentric thought shatters the fertile soil that we have been treading so comfortably and confidently and sends us into the open sea, to a fluid place where we cannot stand still, where our fundamental assumptions are broken, for there are no certainties nor assurances, and imminent danger invites us to interact more intensi-

vely with one another. As Glen A. Love remarks in *Practical Ecocriticism* (2003), "I believe that we are at such an 'Ishmael moment' today, ready for a story that reconnects us to the human universals" (p. 13).

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The Anthropogenic *Tempest*: Prospero and Reflections on the Anthropocene

Flávia Rodrigues Monteiro

Even if a Shakespeare sonnet does not appear explicitly to be "about" gender, nowadays we still want to ask what it might have to do with gender. The time should come when we ask of any text, "What does this say about the environment?"

Morton 5

Timothy Morton's quote makes readers think about the potential scope of literary texts. There are different layers of interpretation that may be revealed through time and meanings that emerge according to specific contexts. The ideologies of a particular historical, social, and cultural context have a direct influence on its literary criticism. For instance, due to issues raised by contemporary thought, Shakespearean texts may be interpreted in ways that were not in vogue during the historical moment of their production. The dynamism of literary texts, here Shakespeare's in particular, enables us to read the Bard even under the light of contemporary environmental issues. Therefore, this paper intends to explore *The Tempest* and its possible reflections regarding the Anthropocene. First, the term Anthropocene will be briefly contextualized along with media representations of current environmental issues. Then, some potential connections between the Shakespearean play and the Anthropocene will be presented and analyzed. Finally, based on the analysis, I will provide a conclusion concerning the formalization of the term "Anthropocene" and the role of literature as a reflective medium.

The Anthropocene and Media

Currently, humankind is experiencing environmental changes, which can be connected to human activities on the planet. Even though it is not a consensus among the scientific community yet, the term "Anthropocene" for a new geological epoch has gained strength and

attention. A wide range of evidence contributes to the formalization of the term. Colin N. Waters, along with 23 other scholars, published in *Science* a research overview indicating environmental evidence that corroborates the case for the formalization of the term Anthropocene, covering perturbations of the carbon and nitrogen cycles, production of new anthropogenic materials, climate variations, and the rates of vertebrate extinctions, among other issues. The study, entitled "The Anthropocene is Functionally and Stratigraphically Distinct from the Holocene", concludes that "[t]hese distinctive attributes of the recent geological record support the formalization of the Anthropocene as a stratigraphic entity equivalent to other formally defined geological epochs" (p. 2622-8). So, why does the impasse concerning this formalization still remain? The research article ends with the following claim:

This is a complex question, in part because, quite unlike other subdivisions of geological time, the implications of formalizing the Anthropocene reach well beyond the geological community. Not only would this represent the first instance of a new epoch having been witnessed firsthand by advanced human societies, it would be one stemming from the consequences of their own doing. (*idem*)

This final statement leads one to consider whether the non-formalization of the term "Anthropocene" may be a reflection of human denial regarding their role in the current planetary situation. Moreover, what consequences do humans and the whole planet face if this state of denial continues?

As an illustration in opposition to the denial to recognize and then formalize the Anthropocene, more recent media, such as photograph and film, have been used to display evidence of this new epoch. Films, documentaries, photography exhibits, and advertisements are some of the works produced recently that expose the marks of human activities on the planet. These works seem to be a warning sign of a not so bright future for human beings on the planet if climate changes

continue to be ignored.

The documentary *Chasing Ice* (2012), directed by the American filmmaker Jeff Orlowski, shows the efforts of the photographer James Balog to record the way ice has been affected by climate change. The climax of the film happens when a huge melting glacier, compared to the size of Manhattan, collapses. *Isle of Flowers* (1989) is a Brazilian short film directed by Jorge Furtado, which ironically portrays the route of food, from harvest to garbage, and different human interventions during the whole process. The works of Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado cover, additionally, the situation of exiles, poor miners, and African tribes. His approach to gold mining in Serra Pelada, Brazil, is one of the most impressive registers of the photographer on the exploitation of the environment and subhuman working conditions. Sebastião Salgado's lifework is portrayed in the documentary *The Salt of the Earth* (2014), directed by Win Wenders and Juliano Ribeiro Salgado. These are just some examples of how media have been documenting the Anthropocene.

Environmental organizations also employ new media to diffuse their causes. Besides using new media to spread their messages, organizations such as Greenpeace and Conservation International acknowledge the power of popular culture. In December 2015, Greenpeace's campaign "Winter is not coming" took advantage of the popularity of the TV Series *Game of Thrones*. The campaign video plays with the motto of the TV show, "winter is coming", and the menacing aspect of the characters known as white walkers: the video shows that climate change is a greater menace than the white walker as he walks through the snow and is swallowed by the melting ice. Conservation International used the popularity of actors such as Kevin Spacey, Liam Neeson, Julia Roberts, Harrison Ford, and Penelope Cruz, to expose nature's cry for help. The organization produced a series of videos in which the artists lend their voices to elements of nature that expose the dangers of human interventions, ending with the message, "Nature doesn't need people. People need nature".

The videos and documentaries mentioned above are just a small sample of how new media have been used to expose current environ-

mental issues. However, we can also find such issues portrayed by older media even though they may occur in a more implicit manner. Literature and its wide range of interpretations depending on different contexts provides a promising field of analysis. The next section will explore the Shakespearean play *The Tempest* and its possible reflections on the Anthropocene.

The Tempest: Reflections on the Anthropocene

Shakespeare lived during a time marked by the expansion of the world. The navigations planted the seed of globalization as new lands were discovered and explored by Europe: it was the beginning of the Age of Discovery. Europeans and natives from overseas lands were no longer isolated in their worlds; their contact made them part of the same world. The ocean was no longer an impediment of expansion but another element of nature conquered by human beings. However, nature occasionally stroke back. News of shipwrecks and lost vessels became common at the time and, according to Paul Brown, “[...] accounts of the miraculous survival of members of the company of the Sea Adventure, wrecked off Bermuda in 1609, are said to have provided Shakespeare with an immediate source for his production [...]” (p. 48). The production to which Brown refers is one of Shakespeare’s last plays: *The Tempest*.

Since the navigations were the starting point of colonialism, the play has been widely explored by postcolonial studies. Issues such as domination and subjugation have dominated that research, mostly focusing on the relation master/servant imposed by Prospero to Ariel and Caliban. However, the dynamics of power relations portrayed in *The Tempest* enable an anthropogenic approach if the characters are seen as representations of the dynamics between human beings and nature.

Prospero, the protagonist of the play, is the former Duke of Milan who has his position usurped by his brother Antonio. After drifting at sea, Prospero and his daughter, Miranda, end up on a remote island, where he establishes a relation of domination with the natives, Ariel and Caliban. The great sources of Prospero’s power and magic are his

books. This short summary of the story provides us with the material for a possible association between the play and the Anthropocene.

Prospero represents man, drifting away from nature and creating a new world. The island can be seen as a representation of contemporary human settlements, more and more urban, artificial, without nature in its essence and, mostly, with manufactured elements. Away from his origins, Prospero works his magic to dominate the island and its inhabitants, Caliban and Ariel, who serve his needs and desires:

ARIEL

All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure; be’t to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curled clouds. To thy strong bidding task
Ariel and all his quality.
(*The Tempest*, I. 2. p. 189-193)

PROSPERO

But as ’tis,
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us. [...]
(*The Tempest*, I. 2. p. 310-313)

More and more distant from nature, man exploits natural resources to build and maintain the modern features of humans’ way of life. So, as Prospero proclaims himself master of the island, man proclaims himself as the master of this new world, the world of technology in which nature is only a primary resource to be transformed into other things according to man’s needs and desires.

Prospero’s books can represent human knowledge of the world and how nature can be manipulated. As Prospero studies and perfects his magic, human beings try day by day to learn more about nature and natural laws. The more humans know about nature the more they think they can exploit and manipulate it. However, it is exactly by devoting himself to study that Prospero neglects his duchy, giving Antonio the opportunity to usurp it and send Prospero to exile. Likewise,

humans devote themselves to technology and other forms to support their lives with technological facilities and gadgets. The more technological we become as a species, the more we are banished from nature. In addition, humans ignore the warning signs given by nature: global warming, for instance, is a force that can turn the planet into a hostile place for humans in the future and, as some science fiction stories alert, humanity will have to search for "another island" to inhabit, i.e. another planet.

The relation Prospero builds with the natives of the island mirrors the relation of man and nature in the Anthropocene. As stated before, Prospero represents man; Ariel and Caliban represent the two faces of nature. Ariel is a spirit who was once imprisoned inside a tree by Sycorax, Caliban's mother. Prospero frees Ariel from his prison and the spirit serves him out of duty and gratitude. Actually, according to some readings, Ariel becomes Prospero's slave. Prospero commands and Ariel obeys. Prospero uses Ariel's magic to fulfill his goals. This way, the spirit represents the part of nature and its laws that are already known and manipulated by man, apparently with no further consequences to the planet. However, even this "good side" of nature sends its warnings to man just like Ariel reminds Prospero of his promise:

ARIEL

Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised,
Which is not yet performed me.

[...]

My liberty.

(*The Tempest*, I. 2. p. 242-247)

Even though Prospero promises to free Ariel, he keeps pushing the spirit to do his bidding. Likewise, nature daily sends man small reminders, warning that it has limits, but man chooses to ignore these signs since they are not of great consequence to humans' way of life.

Caliban, on the other hand, represents the menacing part of nature, which threatens man in a more explicit way. Caliban is the rebel slave who does not hide his hate for his master. He uses his master's

language to curse and show his dissatisfaction:

CALIBAN

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!
(I. 2. p. 363-365)

Caliban symbolizes the part of nature that is hurt by man and, instead of accepting the situation quietly, that shows it can hurt man in return, i.e. the part of nature that uses man's own language. Practical examples from the Anthropocene that reflect this relationship are the collapses of dams and oil rigs explosions. These accidents show that man cannot tame nature without paying a high price. Recently, the world witnessed the tragedy of Bento Rodrigues in Minas Gerais, Brazil:

The recent collapse of mining dam in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais is one of the biggest environmental disaster's in the country's history. Apocalyptic images of communities swallowed by mud and a river flooded by mining waste have shocked a population that has become hardened to tragedy. (PHILLIPS, "Brazil's Mining Tragedy: Was It a Preventable Disaster?")

The huge dams constructed by mining companies show how man can disturb nature and pay the price. According to DW (*Deutsche Welle*) reporter Sam Cowie, "Experts say Brazil's Rio Doce region will take decades to recover, after 2015's devastating mine waste spill. Fishermen face an uncertain future, while the potential for further accidents looms". As we can see, small communities are the most affected by nature's response to huge companies' exploits.

These communities are not at the same level of the companies regarding this "Anthropogenic tempest" over nature. In the same way, Miranda does not share the same power of her father over the natives of the island; however, Caliban expresses his will to hurt his master as he threatens to rape her. Thus, Miranda provides a representation of a part of human beings that do not share the same blame as the men represented by Prospero, but suffer the consequences of his dominan-

ce. She instigates our reflection on the constitution of the “anthropos” of the Anthropocene. This “anthropos” is not a unified entity. As Bruno Latour states:

It makes no sense to talk about the ‘anthropic origin’ of global climate warming, if by ‘anthropic’ you mean something like the ‘human race.’ Hundreds of different people will at once raise their voice and say that they feel no responsibility whatsoever for those deeds at a geological scale — and they will be right. [...] This is why the Anthropocene, in spite of its name, is not a fantastic extension of anthropocentrism, as if we could pride ourselves in having been transformed for good into some sort of flying red and blue Superman. Rather, it is the human as a unified agency, as one virtual political entity, as a universal concept that has to be broken down into many different people with contradictory interests, opposing cosmoeses and who are summoned under the auspices of warring entities — not to say warring divinities. The anthropos of the Anthropocene? It is Babel after the fall of the giant Tower. (p. 80-81)

The Shakespearean text provides representations of different natures and different human entities in the Anthropocene. The dynamics of domination/subjugation are somehow unstable because, as we can imagine the consequences of a joined uprising of Ariel and Caliban against Prospero and Miranda, it is not difficult to foresee the future of the planet if man continues to exploit nature recklessly.

In general, literature is not so explicit as other media in the portrayal of the dynamics of the Anthropocene. However, literature’s implicit nature, with its layers of meaning and open possibilities of interpretation, does not undermine its position and value as a medium that can reflect (on) environmental issues. Instead, the potentialities of literature work as a complement to the portrayal of the Anthropocene by other media because literature stimulates the constructions of connections, furthering the thoughts on the matter.

At the end of *The Tempest*, as all the conflicts are solved, Prospero acknowledges Caliban as his own by saying the famous sentence, “this thing of darkness I [a]cknowledge mine” (v. 1, p. 275-276). This speech may simply refer to the fact that Caliban was his slave or we can interpret it as Prospero’s confession of being part of the darkness in Caliban. After all, by teaching his language and making Caliban his slave, Prospero is responsible for the creature’s rebellion and hatred.

In other words, Prospero acknowledges that the darkness in Caliban is of his own doing as he subjugates the creature. If the possible representations of the dynamics of the Anthropocene presented by the play are considered, man must acknowledge his role in the current environmental issues. This darkness that nature’s wrath can cause can be attributed to human actions as the previously mentioned rupture of dams, explosion of oil rigs, and global warming. The term “Anthropocene” should be formalized as the denomination of this new geological epoch; as a result, humans would be more aware of their agency on the current planetary condition and, perhaps, might act to prevent a harder and more problematic future to the planet and the generations to come. A formal scientific recognition of the Anthropocene may be the starting point to changes and solutions connected to environmental issues.

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Margaret Atwood's Crakers as an answer to the matter of the Anthropocene

Amanda Pavani

Margaret Atwood's most recent novels share a subtheme: the fall of humankind from grace, that is, processes involving its destruction or, more clearly, its self-destruction. When the *MaddAddam* (2013) trilogy is at stake, that comes mainly through genetic manipulation: when the discussion concerns *The Heart Goes Last* (2015), ultra-capitalism and extreme poverty receive more attention. In *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first installment of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the reader is presented with a decimation that is nearly total and sudden: the virus developed by Crake manages to kill the vast majority of the Earth's human population. For the duration of this first novel, the main character, Snowman, believes that he is the last human alive.

Several changes in the environment, fauna and landscape are described throughout the book. It is notable that the concept of Anthropocene, that is, the era of human alterations on the planet's environment, pervades the plot development. I contend that Atwood extrapolates on the final solution to the matter of the Anthropocene: a context in which humans have been decimated and their role is taken on by improved, biologically manipulated beings, the Crakers. That extrapolation provides, as it often happens with works of contemporary science and speculative fiction, a sort of ironic cautionary tale on the consequences of uncontrolled modifications to the planet's attributes, as Jayne Glover mentions in her dissertation (2007, p. 59).

Firstly, it is important to mark what I mean when I use the term "Anthropocene". Bruno Latour's series of lectures and subsequent book

publication approach the idea, still in debate within the Geology field, that the Earth has suffered changes to its deepest layers – the ground, the air, the fauna and flora – thanks to the agency of humankind. Those changes are in the process of being considered enough to announce the beginning of another epoch – the end of the Holocene, to be followed by the Anthropocene. Commenting on a report by the sub-commission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, Latour (2013) argues that the Anthropocene is believed to have begun around 1800, that is, around the British Industrial Revolution. He adds,

And here, suddenly, in a complete reversal, we find geologists flabbergasted by the quick pace of human history; a pace that forces them to try lodging a 'golden spike' in a span of two hundred or even of sixty years [...] The phrase 'geological time' is now used for an event that has passed more quickly than the existence of the Soviet Union! (p. 77)

It is, indeed, curious that a species could have been able to alter a biome in less than three hundred years in a way no species had done before. And, yet, that is the most optimistic estimation, in the sense that Colin N. Waters *et al* (2016) argue that, if established, the Anthropocene might be set in the middle of the 20th century ("and several options have already been suggested within that interval, ranging from 1945 to 1964" (p. 262-8)). While the scientific debate includes themes from climatology, geology, among other areas, sociologists and even novelists have already begun to approach the problems that are raised by a planet deeply altered by the human species.

Specifically talking about the *MaddAddam* trilogy, Calina Ciobanu elaborates on the routes available to the surviving humans in "Rewriting the Human at the End of the Anthropocene in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* Trilogy" (2014). Her discussion is focused mainly on gender issues that, in her opinion, are pivotal to the reorganization of a remaining and self-rebuilding human society. For Ciobanu, "Atwood's trilogy, which is about the downfall of mankind, necessarily doubles as a canvas for figuring woman" (p. 154). While I agree that gender issues are extremely relevant in this view of a possible post-Anthropocene society, I intend to explore another facet of this post-apocalyptic

scenario: the idea that Crake, tagged by Ciobanu (among others) as a "mad scientist figure" (p. 153), proposed the post-human Crakers as an answer to the matter of the species' influence on the environment.

Arguably, Crake does not concern himself, in *Oryx and Crake*, with the environment. The character, shown since his teenage years in this first installment, is a privileged boy with a talent for the hard sciences, whose friend, the narrator Jimmy, comes to idolize. When visiting Crake at the bioscience top facility in Atwood's universe, the Watson-Crick Institute, Crake says,

"How much misery," Crake said one lunchtime – this must have been when they were in their early twenties and Crake was already at the Watson-Crick Institute – "how much needless despair has been caused by a series of biological mismatches, a misalignment of the hormones and pheromones? [...] As a species we're pathetic in that way: imperfectly monogamous. [...] Better plan – make it cyclical and also inevitable, as in the other mammals. You'd never want someone you couldn't have." (ATWOOD, p. 166)

Not only Crake disapproves of how mankind treats the planet – he disapproves of mankind's own biological constitution. Throughout the two first novels, in which he is present either as a young boy or as an adult scientist, there are several instances in which he comments on innate flaws of the species, or on the way individuals behave towards each other.

It is also notable that Crake, somewhere between beginning his studies in biology and setting free a virus that destroyed nearly the entire species, underwent a character shift. This can be particularly seen in Jimmy's two visits to Crake's room, when he notices his collection of fridge magnets. Although Crake's collection is not directly related to the character's motives, I believe that the two moments the narrator dedicates to their description constitute a clue to Crake's maturing process and his changes in opinions regarding humanity and its relation to science and the planet.

The infamous collection of fridge magnets, although seemingly a character quirk, indicates an initial praise to the rationality and constant progress that are associated with the scientific method and its surrounding practices (experiments, grants, laboratory structuring). "No

Brain, No Pain”, “Siliconconsciousness”, and “The proper study of Mankind is Everything” (p. 209) indicate the importance of the brain, of industrial processes in a reference to the Silicon Valley, and the grasp of the scientific method over all things on the planet and beyond. However, the altered collection includes “Where God is, Man is not”, “We understand more than we know”, and “Dream steals from its lair towards its prey” (p. 301). Atwood’s choice of words for that shift includes terms related to religion and understanding instead of study – at that point, Jimmy questions the change, but does not get a response.

Curiously, when Crake sets free the bio-agent that kills nearly all humans, he takes his time to make Jimmy immune to it. While the narrator does not quite understand that choice, the change in Crake’s fridge magnets can be seen as a foreshadowing of Snowman’s future responsibility to tell stories to the Crakers and to give them a foundational narrative – much like religious myths. That link between a careful process of bioengineering and a chosen storyteller provides a paradox: the way the Crakers were created as a solution to the planet’s destruction and as an improvement on a species doomed to end – but a post-human species that idolizes humans as their creators, in a distancing movement from the scientific method and hard sciences in general, towards a myth-based culture that would have frustrated its creator.

In fact, Crake takes his time to develop the Crakers so that they do not require much from their environment: the Crakers smell like citrus, in order to avoid mosquitoes (p. 102); there was no anxiety about the inevitability of death, since “they’re programmed to drop dead at age thirty – suddenly, without getting sick [...] They’ll just keel over. Not that they know it; none of them has died yet” (p. 303), he tells Jimmy. More importantly, their reproduction cycle, once independent from altered human embryos (p. 302), excludes the grief of rejection:

Since it’s only the blue tissue and the pheromones released by it that stimulate the males, there’s no more unrequited love these days, no more thwarted lust; no more shadow between the desire and the act. Courtship begins at the first whiff, [...] with the males presenting flowers to the females [...] Their penises turn bright blue to match the blue abdomens of the females, and they do a

sort of blue-dick dance number, erect members waving to and fro in unison [...] From amongst the floral tributes the female chooses four flowers, and the sexual ardour of the unsuccessful candidates dissipates immediately, with no hard feelings left. [...] blue colouring fades. And that is that. (ATWOOD, p. 165)

Surely, at this point, it becomes clear that Atwood’s post-humans are a very ironic response to the matter of the Anthropocene. Crake is not only concerned with the planet, with the senseless destruction to the point that he ensures that the Crakers only need to feed on leaves; he is also worried with the Crakers’ feelings, avoiding notions of rejection, anxiety and ambition. Based on that, Crake seems to conclude that a consequence of the rationality humankind is so proud of is the drive to know more, to explore, and to conquer – all of these traits ultimately leading to self-destruction.

Even more curiously, Latour, when commenting on the failure by science and theology in their attempts of seeing the Earth as a stable, closed system that could not be altered, voices a point very similar to what Crake might have thought when creating the Crakers:

But what fascinates me in this discovery is that exactly the same incoherence applies to the architectonic with which rationality has been built. The two images of the world in Christian theology are just as irreconcilable as the images that would represent, for instance, the physics of the electron as simultaneously everywhere in the world and safely located inside J. J. Thomson’s Cavendish laboratory [...] The ‘illusory bubble of philosophia perennis’ keeps ‘latent’ the ‘complete contradiction’ between ‘Nature One’ – cosmos-centric – and ‘Nature Two’ – laboratory-centric – making any ‘explicit dialog’ between the two just as impossible as the reconciliation of geo- and theocentric ‘images of the world’ in medieval cosmology. (LATOUR, p. 91)

Atwood’s Crake, towards the end of *Oryx and Crake*, concludes that the human species failed to conciliate these two views of the planet, the laboratory and the cosmos. He might have concluded, like Latour, that the world isolated in a laboratory did not account for objective knowledge, or even for a moral comprehension of life. Humanity, for Crake, is inherently flawed: the dialogue postulated by Latour between the two spheres of experience could never be achieved. The only way for life on Earth to go on would be to leave it for a species with less industrial and ambitious demands. Textual evidence from the

sequel novel, *The Year of the Flood*, indicates that Crake was in touch with the Gardener cult, considered ridiculous in the highest social spheres (ATWOOD, p. 147). He is seen secretly collaborating with their cause and even employs ex-Gardeners to work in the Paradise Project, that would create the Crakers.

Finally, another sense of the ironic in Atwood's post-humans of the also post-Anthropocene is the reversal in symbolic capacity. Crake engineered the Crakers so that they would not have cognitive skills enough to produce symbols or narratives. Snowman comments,

Watch out for art, Crake used to say. As soon as they start doing art, we're in trouble. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall, in Crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols, and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin, and Linear B, and kings, and then slavery and war. (ATWOOD, p. 361)

For Crake (and for Adam One, although that argument concerns *The Year of the Flood*), all symbols, including images and narratives, could be the beginning of another fall. The Crakers, however, long for narratives: Snowman provides them with a mythology for their creation and that of the animal and plant life around them: "The Children of Oryx, the Children of Crake. He'd had to think of something. Get your story straight, keep it simple, don't falter" (ATWOOD, p. 96). By the end of the series, in *MaddAddam*, the Cracker mythology is complex and elusive, including most of the human survivors.

Atwood's Crakers act, then, as an ironic proposal of a response to the matter of the Anthropocene – including a dreary conclusion that, for humankind, it is impossible to achieve a comprehensive or, in Latour's words, a sensitive view of Earth (that is, related to the senses, as opposed to rationalism) and how to live in it with equilibrium. However, at the same time, humans are not entirely extinguished; in a classic Atwoodian open ending, the reader is left to wonder if the Crakers' newfound symbolic skill, along with the colony of surviving humans, would begin a new long cycle, that may lead to another destruction or to a redemption and eventual peace with the space occupied in the

world.

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The Anthropocene under the light of (inter)mediality

“Under the Skies of My Own Land, I Sing The Song of Exile”: The re-situation of the persona in rewritings of “The Song of Exile”

Clara Matheus Nogueira

One of the most influential poems in Brazilian Literature, “Canção do Exílio” (“The Song of Exile”, in English) was written by the Romantic poet Antônio Gonçalves Dias, in the first half of the 19th century, soon after Brazil’s independence, and it has served as a source text for many rewritings. It has a highly nationalistic tone, homesickness being its major theme. More specifically, the persona expresses his feeling of longing for his homeland, and is, at the time of enunciation, living elsewhere. This article aims not only at investigating how the theme of nostalgia is substituted by the Anthropocene-related condition of “solastalgia” in a comic strip by Caulos, but also at discussing “solastalgia” in relation to the construction of Brazilian national identity.

Gonçalves Dias wrote “The Song of Exile” while living and studying abroad. In this poem the persona’s home(land)sickness is closely related to the absence of some typically tropical tree and bird, more specifically the palm-tree, and the *sabiá* (thrush bird), Brazil’s national bird,

My homeland has many palm-trees
and the thrush-song fills its air;
no bird here can sing as well
as the birds sing over there.

We have fields more full of flowers
and a starrier sky above,
we have woods more full of life

and a life more full of love.

[...]

Don't allow me, God, to die
without getting back to where
I belong, without enjoying
the delights found only there,
without seeing all those palm-trees,
hearing thrush-songs fill the air. (ASCHER,
1999, p. 34)

One can affirm that a special degree of importance to the palm-tree and thrush bird is conveyed by the steady repetition of the lines "my homeland has many palm-trees / and the thrush-song fills its air", which appear in four out of five stanzas that constitute "The Song of Exile". Thus, these species are certainly of great importance for this idea of Brazil, as are the "fields more full of flowers", the "starry sky above", and the "woods more full of life". Many aspects of the environment are, therefore, the "delights" that are not found elsewhere; the palm-trees and the thrush bird work as metonymies for Brazilian flora and fauna, which are of fundamental importance in constituting the persona's idea of their strongly missed "home". Moreover, as Darlene Sadlier puts it, "the importance of this simple poem for an emerging national literature cannot be overstated. It was one thing for a Portuguese colonial subject to praise the verdant and fertile Brazil over the landscape of other countries, but it was quite another thing for that subject to speak as a Brazilian" (p. 139). Thus, even though simple, this poem is of major importance in shaping Brazilian literature and, alongside with other Romantic artists, transformed this country's nature into a non-detachable aspect of its national identity.

Many influential authors from Brazil, such as Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Mario Quintana, and Oswald de Andrade, and Brazilian composers, such as Gilberto Gil, Chico Buarque, and Tom Jobim, for example, worked on rewritings of the poem. In these works, many are the triggers for the feeling of homesickness once reported by Gonçal-

ves Dias, being the exile imposed to artists during the Brazilian military dictatorship a striking and quite recurring example. Even though the "exile" on the title of this poem may presuppose that the one who sings this "song" is situated, most likely against their own will, on a foreign country, many are the appropriations of Gonçalves Dias' poem that deal with a feeling of "exile" while still in Brazil, due to environmental changes.

"Uma Canção" ("One Song"), written in 1962 by Mário Quintana, makes an intramedial reference to "The Song of Exile", and it is exemplary as a poem in which the persona misses his homeland without suffering any sort of displacement. In the 1962 poem, after denouncing the disappearance of the palm-trees and thrush birds, the persona affirms that, "under the skies of my own land / I sing The Song of Exile", reinforcing that this poem has a differently spatially placed persona, when compared to Gonçalves Dias'. Thus, in this rewriting, what remains from the word "exile" is not a sense of displacement, but the feeling of being forced to live in a different version of their own land. Similar is the comic strip in which this paper focuses, published by Caulos, a Brazilian visual artist, in *Vida de Passarinho (Bird's Life)*. In the comic strip, it is the thrush bird itself who, by means of quoting Gonçalves Dias, expresses his longing for palm-trees. Similarly to Gonçalves Dias' poem, in the comic strip the bird cannot fulfill his wish for palm-trees; once more, it is not because he is away from where he once lived, but because the palm-trees are not where they used to be. Moreover, on the last panel, see fig. 1, the bird sees what "used to be the palm-tree", and, due to the combination of text to the image of the tree, one can only imagine that the tree is no longer there due to deforestation. From the way the log is presented, it is possible to assume that the tree that "used to be" was cut down.



Fig. 1. *Vida de Passarinho* translated from Portuguese for this paper, using Nelson Ascher's translation as a reference, but making slight changes in the order of the lines as to maintain the coherence in Caulos' drawings. Caulos, "Vida de Passarinho" *Vida De Passarinho*. (Porto Alegre: L&PM, 1995).

Therefore, on the one hand, it can be argued that Gonçalves Dias' poem can be read as related to a feeling of nostalgia, which "was once conceptualized as a diagnosable illness associated with melancholia and experienced by people who were distant from their home and wanted to return" (ALBRECHT *et al.*, p. S96). On the other hand, in Caulos' comic strip, the feeling expressed by the thrush bird may be

read as analogous to "solastalgia". As Albrecht *et al* put it,

The word 'solace' relates to both psychological and physical contexts. One meaning refers to the comfort one is given in difficult times (consolation), while another refers to that which gives comfort or strength to a person. A person or a landscape might give solace, strength or support to other people. Special environments might provide solace in ways that other places cannot. Therefore, solastalgia refers to the pain or distress caused by the loss of, or inability to derive, solace connected to the negatively perceived state of one's home environment. Solastalgia exists when there is the lived experience of the physical desolation of home. (p. S96).

Hence, the meaning of this poem is drastically transformed due to a shift on the placement of its speaker. If spoken from abroad, this text sounds nationalistic, as it enhances and values the Brazilian ecosystem, but if it the speaker is located on Brazilian soil, it debunks the Romantic idea of Brazil as place of an astonishing, untouched and preserved fauna and flora.

The forest, rivers, animals and minerals were of enormous symbolic importance in the formation of the national identity of Brazil, as the idea of Brazil as a nation was constructed by Romantic poets such as Gonçalves Dias. As stated by Sadler, "in his works [Gonçalves Dias's] and others of his generation, however, we can see the intersection of national independence, patriotism, and literary romanticism that coalesced in the resuscitation and idealization of the Indian—who, in short time, would become a national icon" (p. 143). In order to establish a contrast with Europeans and Africans, the Indians were elected as the true representation of Brazilianness. Thus, the Brazilian identity was constructed upon the indian one, a "noble savage" who lived in perfect harmony with Brazil's exuberant nature. Many other national icons were constructed during this time, or inspired by these Romantic notions; from the "Brazilian National Anthem", which pays homage to "The Song of Exile" by incorporating some of its verses and which has Brazilian nature as a major theme, to the Brazilian flag, whose colors are said to represent the forests' green, the minerals' yellow and the skies' blue. Therefore, to observe and realize the impact of human intervention on the country's exuberant and powerful nature, upon

which the sense of a Brazilian nation was once constructed, has its consequences not only on a tangible level, but symbolically it represents a loss of national identity.

One cannot ignore the fact that various artists chose "The Song of Exile" as a source text to approach the theme of environmental destruction. While it is obvious that the placement of nature as the center of this poem signals some influence regarding this choice, it is also important to consider that these authors, in one extent or another, felt that their longing for their land as it once was can be related to the ideas expressed by Gonçalves Dias. As a result, in some of these poems, songs and strips, we see that the authors recognize themselves in the nostalgia expressed on Gonçalves Dias' poem, even though they are still in Brazil, possibly because they recognize that their distress, even though different, is also "environmentally induced". As Jørgen Bruhn puts it, "any rewriting or adaptation of a text is always influencing the original work" (p. 70), so even though it is very unlike that Gonçalves Dias' poem at the time of writing called the attention of its readership to the problems of deforestation, posterior works may broaden the universe of possible interpretations and add significance to that text. For instance, Caulos' comic strip, along with Quintana's poem, for example, and many other rewritings of "The Song of Exile" that are related to the impact of humans upon the earth, and more specifically upon Brazil, work as eye openers: the country's nature, meaning its fauna and flora, is suffering the impact of the rampant exploitation of its natural resources.

All things considered, one can argue that, even though the Romantic and contemporary personas both miss certain aspects of their homeland, in the poem by Gonçalves Dias the feeling is triggered by a spacial shift, while in the comic strip and other texts of similar themes, it is the environmental change that triggers the feelings of longing and loss. Therefore, the comic strip, by featuring Brazil's national bird in an analogous condition of the "solastalgia", makes a commentary on "The Song of Exile" and the Anthropocene. For a broader understanding of the scope of a change in the relationship with nature and placement of the persona in contemporary appropriations of "The Song of Exile"

further analysis and a larger corpus are required. However, to be acquainted with Caulos' comic strip and works of the like is to realize that "The Song of Exile", a cornerstone of Brazilian literature, risks having its meaning deeply transformed once the palm-trees and the thrush birds are no longer around.

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Transcendence in the Anthropocene: An Intermedial Analysis of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*

Victor Hermann Mendes Pena

The objective of this article is to analyze the movie *Melancholia* (2012), by Lars von Trier, trying to establish connections with the issue of the Anthropocene. In the movie, the viewer is confronted with the anticipation of the end of the world. The plot revolves around a planet called "Melancholia" that soon will be hitting the Earth and destroying all life; nevertheless, the characters awkwardly continue their bourgeois life almost as if nothing was going on. In my hypothesis, the problem that this paradox poses could be summarized in the following question: how is life within the Anthropocene perceived through the frame of bourgeois ideas?

The methodology of analysis I use is intermediality. A brief overview of this methodology enables an emphasis on a few key concepts: 1) the notion that something – an idea, a concept, a scientific statement or a work of art – has to be somehow "translated" if the author wants to use it in a new medium; 2) the idea that – besides the relationship between different objects or discourses – one object or discourse alone can be perceived in multiple ways, thus also be "translated"; 3) the view that all media messages are necessarily created through medial relationship to other media that might be or not of same category; 4) the notion that intermediality is a way of retaining historical information of media. Jørgen Bruhn proposes a three-step method of intermedial analysis, useful for the purposes of this article:

First, searching for and then writing a register of medial presences; second, structuring this register into a meaningful mediality relation; and third, interpreting the possible causes, often relating to text-external discussions, between the medial presence and relations. (BRUHN, 2016a, p. 10)

Before going further into the analysis of *Melancholia*, a brief overview of the concept of “Anthropocene” is necessary. Although there is a variety of definitions and historical interpretations, the concept is here circumscribed as, mainly, a scientific notion concerning the direct impact of modern human civilization upon Earth’s environment. By the term Anthropocene, it is stated that a whole new geological era has started with the advent of Industrial Revolution and the planet has suffered insofar a drastic impact upon the conditions of human life. It is possible to highlight some aspects that approach the Anthropocene: global warming; the water shortage in multiple parts of the globe; and the deep pollution of the atmosphere by carbon monoxide in urban cities. According to Bruhn, these are the effects of an unprecedented impact of modern human activity transformed into a force capable of interfering on a geological scale.

The Anthropocene states the idea that human beings are no longer only biological agents on the earth, but have taken on the role of a geological force, which means that human beings change the fundamental conditions of the entire planet in all its aspects, from the disappearing snow on Mount Everest to the enormous water supply dams in China – and to the changing atmospheric constituents of the air we breath. (BRUHN, 2016b, p. 1)

Albeit the concept of Anthropocene is mainly a scientific concept, it has been also used by philosophers and aesthetes in defining new interactions between discourses, social conditions and art. Intermediality, here, can contribute to discuss how a scientific concept can be turned into a philosophical or aesthetical one. In touching on the concept of “hyperobject”, created by philosopher Timothy Morton, Bruhn points out the significant departure that intermedialities with Anthropocene might engage in our traditional ideas of reality or art:

In intermedial terms, we will investigate media transformation or “transmediations” from the coining and dissemination of a geological concept by way

of scientific research media products into aesthetic media products [...] The anthropocene as a geological period and global warming as an effect of the central aspects of this period, may be characterized, I claim, with a term suggested by Timothy Morton (2013), as “hyperobjects”. That is, entities of such temporal and spatial dimensions and scale that they tend to defeat our traditional ideas about what a thing, a theory or a concept is. (BRUHN, 2016b, p. 1)

The significant change of temporal and spatial dimensions within the horizon of social sciences and humanities, caused by the interference of the “hyperobject” called Anthropocene, might be further discussed with the metaphysical discussion proposed by anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and philosopher Deborah Danowski. They argue that the first symptom of the intrusion of a hyperobject in the modern world is a kind of “dysphoric blooming” (2014, p. 12) that would be the opposite of the typical “euphoria” that has accompanied the emergence of technical revolution of the past. People nowadays have been increasingly inclined to eschatological thinking, as they are more and more aware of the possibility of the end of the world. For the authors, this radical change in future perspectives of life imposed by Anthropocene brings up a hard question: the comprehension that, from now on, the possibility of the end of humanity is not only a metaphysical problem but also a physical, concrete one:

It is true that many of these metaphysical ends-of-the-world [represented on film, art, philosophy, literature and so on] have only an indirect relationship with the physical event of a catastrophe of planetary dimension; but nevertheless they are expressing it somehow, reverberating the vertiginous sensation of incompatibility – if not impossibility – between the human and the world, because only few regions of the human imagination have not been shaken by the violent reentrance of the occidental noosphere in the earthly atmosphere, in a true and unprecedented process of transdescendency. (DANOWSKI, DE CASTRO, 2014, p. 14)¹¹

By coining the neologism “transdescendency”, the authors indicate that, within the new geological era called Anthropocene, hu-

11 In the original, “É verdade que muitos destes fins-de-mundo metafísicos tem uma relação motivacional apenas indireta com o evento físico da catástrofe planetária; mas nem por isso deixam de estar a exprimi-lo, de repercutir a vertiginosa sensação de incompatibilidade - senão de impossibilidade - entre o humano e o mundo, pois poucas regiões da imaginação contemporânea não foram abaladas pela violenta reentrada da noosfera ocidental na atmosfera terrestre, em um verdadeiro e inaudito processo de ‘transdescendência’”.

mankind is confronted with the impossibility of reconciliation between humans and earth. What is called "occidental noosphere" – a term coined by geologist Vladimir Vernadsky to conceive the world of ideas as third phase in development of Earth, just after geosphere and biosphere – can be summarized as the metaphysical idea of unlimited progress and emancipation of human life from its earthly conditions, developed by modern thinking. The notion of "violent reentrance", in turn, can be described as the traumatic discovery that rationality cannot exist outside earthly atmosphere, neither find ways of surpassing it. Modern rationality, thus, suffers a continuous transcendence by suffering a complete depletion of its eternal and progressive qualities that have been the very basis of its advent in the past.

I would like to propose that, at the core of *Melancholia*, there is very complex process of intermediality between the concept of hyperobject, the phenomenon of transcendence and the Anthropocene.

Before going further, a brief description of the movie's narrative is required. The plot starts with the acknowledgement of a previously unknown planet that suddenly appeared from behind the sun. Scientists also discover that the planet is moving too fast and there is a debate over the planet's route – whether it will be colliding or not with Earth. These assumptions, however, can only be guessed throughout the movie, as it appears only briefly in TV, digital media or by claims made by the character John (Kiefer Sutherland), husband of the protagonist's sister, Claire (Charlotte Gainsbourg), and scientist. The name given to the planet was Melancholia.

The whole movie takes place in a luxurious mansion, with golf camps and horse stables. Justine, the main character, has just gotten married; and most of the plot is concentrated on the wedding party – a typical haute bourgeois feast filled with extravaganza, a spectacle carefully created and paid by Claire and John. Despite the luxuriousness and euphoria, Justine feels somehow lost, confused and depressed amidst all the noise. Her motives are unclear. She wants to escape marriage, but cannot find a way out; as a result, she feels a strong

claustrophobia and melancholy, which pervades all her scenes.

Although the petty bourgeois drama confines Justine to pathetic attempts of escapism, her melancholy quickly develops and assumes a whole new universal level, reflecting the impossibility of escaping the destruction of life. Her irresolvable sadness imposes itself as the first symptom of an inevitable decay into void. In turn, both John and Claire prefer to pretend that nothing will happen – John remains skeptical until he commits suicide, a fact that confirms that he always knew that Earth would end, and Claire has devoted herself completely to the daily routine, which prevents her from thinking about death. Therefore, for them Justine is a stigma not only of failure – also of science, represented by John; and of moral, represented by Claire –, but it includes, too, the awareness about the complete meaninglessness of bourgeoisie.

As film critic Steven Shaviro poses, there is no interposition of anything between melodrama and cosmological catastrophe; the cosmic and inner realities are directly attached one to another. This contrast and juxtaposition of scales might be one instance of intermediality drawn up by the movie:

The film moves directly, and without any mediation, from intimate melodrama to cosmological drama and back again. It connects inner personal experience with ultimate cosmic realities, skipping over whatever might lie in between. It produces a kind of short-circuit between the petty constraints of bourgeois society, on the one hand, and the massive, inhuman forces of Nature, on the other. Melancholia is both Lars von Trier's intimate notebook on depression, and his metaphysical speculation on last things. The film, in other words, is both a new Anatomy of Melancholy, and a new Romantic Naturphilosophie. (SHAVIRO, 2012, p. 7)

Shaviro quotes the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, by Robert Burton, first published in 1638, and "Naturphilosophie", a term used to describe the transcendental philosophy of German Idealism applied to the study of nature in the earlier 19th century. Both describe their scientific objects – respectively emotions and nature – in mixed ways, entangling both inner realities and universe. Book reviewer Nicholas Lezard notices the wide range of themes used to discuss melancholy in Burnton's book: "goblins, beauty, the geography of America, digestion, the pas-

sions, drink, kissing, jealousy, or scholarship” (LEZARD, 2001). In turn, Naturphilosophie conceives mankind as a part of a multidimensional and interrelated whole, “which is structured in an ascending series of ‘potentials’ that contain a polar opposition within themselves. The model is a magnet, whose opposing poles are inseparable from each other, even though they are opposites” (BOWIE, 2016). These two discourses can be found in *Melancholia* through an intermedial analysis. *Melancholia*, first, appears as the very basis of everything that happens around and inside Justine; everything – her career, the wedding party, the horses in the stable, the idyll landscape – is a different form of manifestation of melancholy. However, as soon as Justine becomes aware of her melancholic condition, she becomes a kind of a magnet that, somehow, attracts the opposite of life and Earth – symbolized by the planet *Melancholia*. The translation of Naturphilosophie made by Trier, thus, is the transformation of the so-called ascending planes into a continuous transcendence: the acknowledgement that we, humans, are not any more a part of an interrelated whole and we will probably die by colliding with the hyperobject that is our opposite force. In the following dialogue excerpt, it is explicitly exposed:

Justine: The earth is evil. We don't need to grieve for it.
Claire: What?
Justine: Nobody will miss it.
Claire: But where would Leo grow?
Justine: All I know is, life on earth is evil.
Claire: Then maybe life somewhere else.
Justine: But there isn't.
Claire: How do you know?
Justine: Because I know things.
Claire: Oh yes, you always imagined you did.
Justine: I know we're alone. (TRIER, 2012)

Suffering, loneliness, evilness – all of that are the anticipation of the fact that drama is being absorbed by a reality that cannot admit drama itself: the event of the end of Earth. The impossibility of drama, but also the disappearance of the knowledge of things (especially, scientific knowledge), is translated into a sense of displacement and impossibility between humanity and Earth. The vanishing of all things

by a supernatural and cosmic malaise, by the appearance of a hyperobject to which science, but also our personal dramas, has nothing to do with.

Justine: Life is only on Earth. And not for long. (TRIER, 2012)

Another instance of intramediality might be found in relationship with the movie *El Ángel Exterminador*, 1962, by Luis Buñuel. There is a mysterious situation narrated in *Melancholia*: the fact that, when the planet arrives and the end is near, nobody, even the horses, is able to escape the perimeter of the luxurious mansion. In Buñuel's movie, a group of people from haute bourgeoisie are locked, for unknown reasons, inside a mansion. Left alone to their desires, they start to progressively act like animals. Even though neither Justine nor the other characters are completely absorbed by animal desires, they really end up recreating a primordial pit-house made with timber to shelter themselves in the moment of collision with planet *Melancholia*. This primordial shelter might indicate that they are trying to recover a spiritual existence that the bourgeoisie life thought to be lost forever.

Another puzzling intermedial relationship between Trier, Buñuel and the Anthropocene might be acknowledged with the fact that there is virtually no possible escape within the total catastrophe of nature we are facing nowadays. In *Melancholia*, Science has failed to control and overcome the challenge of saving human life. John, the wealthy scientist, is the first to choose suicide, probably because he was the most deeply enmeshed in the idea that capitalism and science are the most perfect tools of shaping mankind.

Thereby, *Melancholia* imposes a hard question about how we construct the dimensions of our world; how we perceive the interactions between them; and about what we would feel if these dimensions were not interconnected but represent a threat to each other. Steven Shaviro goes further into these cosmological and philosophical ques-

tions:

Writing on what he calls “the horror of philosophy,” Eugene Thacker distinguishes between three dimensions of the world. First, there is the world-for-us, which is “the world in which we live.” Second, there is the world-in-itself, or the world as it exists apart from us. And third, there is what Thacker calls the world-without-us, a “spectral and speculative world” that exists at the limits of our thought.

In *Melancholia*, Claire is concerned with the world-for-us. As a figure from melodrama, she is entirely confined to the domestic sphere; even her dreams and desires do not extend beyond this sphere. John, as the ostensible man of action, with his scientific hobbies and his telescope, would seem to be concerned with the world-in-itself. At the very least, he pretends to such a concern, with his pronouncements about the “wonderful planet” Melancholia, and his assurances that its passage will leave the Earth unscathed. Justine, however, in her melancholic withdrawal from both of these worlds, is attuned instead to the deep enigmas of the world-without-us. (SHAVIRO, 2012)

My conclusion is that an intermedial analysis of *Melancholia* reveals that the movie is grounded on the perspective of the Anthropocene symbolized by a previously unknown planet that would destroy the Earth. The perspective of an intervention of a destructive hyperobject does not only alter the way philosophy, psychology and cosmology are structured, but also imposes the difficult task of conceiving a “world-without-us”. From *Melancholia*'s point of view, we can guess that bourgeoisie cannot do anything but suffer a long and decadent transcendence which can only function as a kind of magnet to the destruction of life – a phenomenon that could only be overcome by the rediscovery of ancient spiritual forces deeply enmeshed in nature itself (symbolized here by the primitive shelter).

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Reading *Água Viva* through the lens of heteromediality and the Anthropocene

Alex Keine de Almeida Sebastião

Clarice Lispector (1920-1978) is perhaps the main female writer within the context of Brazilian literature. Since her first novel, *Near to the wild heart* (1943), literary critics remark that her work did not resemble anything that was being produced in Brazil at that time. If she presents, since the beginning, an introspective writing, markedly lyric and with no commitment to providing the reader with a traditional plot, it is in her last books that it is possible to identify a radicalization of writing, which becomes the actual protagonist of the text. That is quite evident in *Água viva*, which seems to be the result of an effervescent writing, produced all at once, as we can note in these fragments:

It's just that whatever I capture in me has, when it's now being transposed into writing, the despair that words take up more instants than the flash of a glance. More than the instant, I want its flow. (LISPECTOR, p. 10)

May whoever comes along with me come along: the journey is long, it is tough, but lived. Because now I am speaking to you seriously: I am not playing with words. I incarnate myself in the voluptuous and unintelligible phrases that tangle up beyond the words. And a silence rises subtly from the knock of the phrases. So writing is the method of using the word as bait: the word fishing for whatever is not word. (LISPECTOR, p. 15)

As Lispector aspires to explore the limits of writing, she is taken to follow its borders with other arts: painting, sculpture, music. If, on the one hand, there is an intense philosophical content in her text that could indicate a logocentric bias¹², on the other, there is also a plunge

¹²A logocentric bias is a way of thinking that considers reason as its main tool and truth as its main goal.

into the perceptions of the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling. She practices literature as an experiment and what she writes is the result of a genuine experience, of *pathos*. As we go into heteromediality in *Água viva*, we are interested in the references to other arts besides literature, as well as in the multiplicity of the sensory content of the text – that is, in the presence of the various channels through which we perceive the world. And the way we perceive this world is specially focused on the issues related to the notion of Anthropocene, which we shall discuss further on.

The narrator of *Água viva* is a female painter who turns to writing as an alternative channel of expression. Clarice Lispector moves in the opposite direction: she became famous as a writer and, at the end of her life, she devoted herself to painting as well; one may recognize in the book some features stemming from the author's life¹³. Besides, one should note that, in her practice as writer, Lispector produced not only literature but also chronicles for different newspapers and magazines, including extensive correspondence. She transited between different media, becoming a multimedial artist¹⁴.

When Lispector wrote her books, the Anthropocene was not an ongoing discussion yet, which does not prevent us from recognizing in her work some elements connected to the political proposals about how this new geological era ought to be faced. Among these elements, there are: critic of the anthropocentrism; absence of hierarchy between the mineral, vegetal and animal kingdoms; critic of the notion of progress; new ways to handle time and space. As the writer explores her sensing channels, she offers the readers a new way of life, a way of life that may be approximated to that of indigenous people, in so far as it considers Earth and its non-human inhabitants as subjects and not as mere objects destined to serving humans.

Heteromediality

¹³See *Clarice Lispector Pintora: uma biopictografia*, (in English, a possible translation of the title would be "Clarice Lispector Painter: a biopictography") by Marcos Antônio Bessa-Oliveira.

¹⁴Lispector was concerned with the similarities between different arts, as demonstrated by this excerpt extracted from *Para não esquecer* (in English, "Not to forget"): "In painting as in music and literature, what is called abstract so often seems to me the figurative of a more delicate and more difficult reality, less visible to the naked eye." (LISPECTOR, 1978, p. 31, my translation).

Although the term intermediality is more frequent when it comes to media studies, for our purpose, we prefer to use the term heteromediality, as suggested by Jørgen Bruhn (2010). According to him, "the apparently monomedial text always consists of several modalities" and he adds that, "the pure, distinct medium, and the equivalent to this on the level of specific texts, is a historical as well as an ontological illusion" (p. 228-229). Considering that all media are mixed media¹⁵, Bruhn proposes to take heteromediality as "a new umbrella" term, whereas intermediality shall be reserved to "parts of heteromediality" (*ibid*). He justifies the innovation as follows: "With heteromedial studies we shift the focus from relations between media (always concretized in forms, in 'texts'), to medial relations within texts, in other words. Therefore, the prefix 'hetero' (Greek, 'different' or 'other') is more suitable than 'inter' for these investigations" (p. 229).

Água viva is a literary work, a text formed exclusively of words and phrases. There are not, in the book, images or sounds in a strict sense but only by way of allusion. If the reading of the text often evokes images, sounds and movements, this always happens through words that reveal perspectives from painting, sculpture, music, photography, and dance. The verbal language is the medium in which the work builds itself. That is why we prefer to use here the term heteromediality rather than intermediality. The prefix "inter" could suggest the false idea that there would be a concrete switching from literature to other media.

Once this preliminary theoretical consideration is made, we go into the analysis of some excerpts extracted from *Água viva*, starting with its epigraph, by Michel Seuphor:

There must be a painting totally free of dependence on the figure – or object – which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence. (LISPECTOR,

¹⁵This idea has been formulated by W.J.T. Mitchell.

p. 1)

This epigraph shows that Clarice Lispector is not interested in what is represented whether through painting or literature: what really attracts her is the spirit and its incommunicable kingdoms. It is curious to notice that we are approaching the theme "media", and therefore the theme "communication", whereas that which captures Lispector is not what can be communicated, but what is incommunicable.

The book has many passages in which one may perceive heteromediality aspects such as this one:

All of me is writing to you and I feel the taste of being and the taste-of-you is as abstract as the instant. I also use my whole body when I paint and set the bodiless upon the canvas, my whole body wrestling with myself. You don't understand music: you hear it. So hear me with your whole body. When you come to read me you will ask why I don't keep to painting and my exhibitions, since I write so rough and disorderly. It's because now I feel the need for words – and what I'm writing is new to me because until now my true word has never been touched. The word is my fourth dimension. (LISPECTOR, p. 4)

This short fragment includes writing, painting, music, taste, body and you (the other). Despite this multiplicity of media inside the text, the "true word" remains untouched. The word and the world searched by the narrator belong to a fourth dimension and, therefore, they are beyond material reality.

How to transpose painting to writing? Is that really possible? These are classic questions in intermedial studies. The narrator of *Água viva* is concerned with the relationship between her work as a painter and her writing. She tells us:

Today I finished the canvas I told you about: curves that intersect in fine black lines, and you, with your habit of wanting to know why – I'm not interested in that, the cause is past matter – will ask me why the fine black lines? because of the same secret that now makes me write as if to you, writing something round and rolled up and warm, but sometimes cold as the fresh instants, the water of an ever-trembling stream. Can what I painted on this canvas be put into words? Just as the silent word can be suggested by a musical sound. (LIS-

PECTOR, p. 5)

The body is constantly present in *Água viva*, a body which explores different forms of feeling the world. The reader may feel invited to experiment their own senses in new ways, for instance:

I see that I've never told you how I listen to music – I gently rest my hand on the record player and my hand vibrates, sending waves through my whole body: and so I listen to the electricity of the vibrations, the last substratum of reality's realm, and the world trembles inside my hands. (LISPECTOR, p. 5)

Another frequent subject in *Água viva* is nature: the sun, water, a garden:

In this instant-now I'm enveloped by a wandering diffuse desire for marvelling and millions of reflections of the sun in the water that runs from the faucet onto the lawn of a garden all ripe with perfumes, garden and shadows that I invent right here and now and that are the concrete means of speaking in this my instant of life. My state is that of a garden with running water. In describing it I try to mix words that time can make itself. What I tell you should be read quickly like when you look. (LISPECTOR, p. 10-11)

While thinking over the process of writing, the narrator makes comparisons with painting, music and photography. There is no story to be told, unless that it be the story of writing the text. In *Água viva*, readers go through the performance of the narrator in her search for what is beyond words. She makes experiments through writing that are analogous to "sketching before painting" and "improvising as in jazz".

I write to you as an exercise in sketching before painting. I see words. What I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space. It's always current, and a camera's photometer opens and immediately closes, but keeping within it the flash. Even if I say "I lived" or "I shall live" it's present because I'm saying them now.

I also started these pages with the goal of preparing myself for painting. But now I'm overwhelmed by the taste of words, and almost free myself from the dominion of paint. I feel a voluptuousness in going along creating something to tell you. I'm living the initiation ceremony of the word and my gestures are hieratic and triangular. [...]

I know what I am doing here: I'm improvising. But what's wrong with that? improvising as in jazz they improvise music, jazz in fury, improvising in front of the crowd. (LISPECTOR, p. 12-16)

The Anthropocene

Although the notion of the Anthropocene is yet in its infancy, it already gathers around it millions of people from all over the world. At the same time one searches for grounds which may scientifically sustain the Anthropocene¹⁶, as a new geological era, there is political commitment of the supporters of the Anthropocene concept for changes in the lifestyle in capitalist societies. Bruno Latour (2013) welcomes the Anthropocene concept as an alternative to the notion of modernity and emphasizes its transdisciplinary nature. He affirms:

What makes the Anthropocene a clearly detectable golden spike way beyond the boundary of stratigraphy is that it is the most decisive philosophical, religious, anthropological and, as we shall see, political concept yet produced as an alternative to the very notions of "Modern" and "modernity". (p. 77)

Earth undergoes profound changes during the Anthropocene. Among them, we might cite these: presence of new minerals and rock types; chemical changes in the composition of atmosphere, seas and soil; increase in extinction rates of animal and botanical species; global warming due to greenhouse effect, increase in global sea levels¹⁷. As one might read in a recent article published in *Science*, entitled "The Anthropocene is functionally and stratigraphically distinct from the Holocene", an important specificity of the Anthropocene as a geological time resides in the fact that it not only would represent "the first instance of a new epoch having been witnessed firsthand by advanced human societies, it would be one stemming from the consequences

¹⁶As one may read in the report of the International Commission on Stratigraphy: "Broadly, to be accepted as a formal term the 'Anthropocene' needs to be (a) scientifically justified (i.e. the 'geological signal' currently being produced in strata now forming must be sufficiently large, clear and distinctive) and (b) useful as a formal term to the scientific community. In terms of (b), the currently informal term 'Anthropocene' has already proven to be very useful to the global change research community and thus will continue to be used, but it remains to be determined whether formalisation within the Geological Time Scale would make it more useful or broaden its usefulness to other scientific communities, such as the geological community" (*apud* LATOUR, 2013, p. 75, emphasis as in original text).

¹⁷See WATERS *et al.*, 2016.

of their own doing" (WATERS *et al.*, 2016, p. 8). That means the Anthropocene is happening right here, right now and most people are responsible for it. The idea of responsibility of mankind concerning its relationship with Earth is strongly attached to the Anthropocene. That is closely related to its political aspects.

The experience of reading *Água viva* is so overwhelming that one can hardly pick out only some fragments for analysis, especially when the subject is heteromediality and the Anthropocene. The book is a work of art and the reader might be numbed by the desire to remain silent, just contemplating it. In this sense, the critical work is a hard one. Before such an extraordinary text, it seems that the right thing to do would be to build silence around the words and to let the text speak for itself. At the same time, the reader is touched by the text in many ways and that asks for being expressed.

If reading *Água viva* is such an experience, that is related to the fact that writing *Água viva* was an experiment for Clarice Lispector. As she tells the reader in the lecture "Literatura de Vanguarda no Brasil" (in English, "Vanguard Literature in Brazil"): "all true art is also an experimentation, and, I regret going against many people, all true life is experimentation, no one escapes" (2005, p. 97). There is no plot in *Água viva*, but only experimentation, living experimentation, as we might perceive through this passage:

In writing I can't manufacture something as in painting, when I use my craft to mix a color. But I'm trying to write to you with my whole body, losing an arrow that will sink into the tender and neuralgic centre of the word. My secret body tells you: dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs, and plesiosaurs, meaning nothing but their sound, though this doesn't dry them out like straw but moistens them instead. I don't paint ideas, I paint the unattainable "forever": Or "for never"; it amounts to the same. More than anything else, I paint painting. And more than anything else, I write you hard writing. I want to grab the word in my hand. Is the word an object: And from the instants I extract the juice of their fruits. I must deprive myself to reach the core and seed of life. The instant is living seed. (LISPECTOR, p. 6)

In this quote, we feel a commitment to life which becomes more important than the narrator herself. This commitment to life in all its forms is a fundamental principle to face the Anthropocene. Even thou-

gh the reader may listen to the narrator's voice throughout all the book, that is not at all an ego trip. It is curious to remark that, while on the one hand the narrative may be classified as stream of consciousness, on the other, the reader may feel themselves thrown amid a delirious story produced by the unconscious.

Let us think about the text through the metaphor of a spider web, as Roland Barthes suggested¹⁸: one might notice that there are many threads composing Clarice Lispector's text. These threads come from different sources such as painting, writing itself, sound, time, the human body, animals, nature, language itself, and so on. The text is highly heteromedial from two main perspectives: it makes an effort to think about writing through comparing it with other media, as painting for instance; and it incorporates what is "hetero", what is other, different, with no intention of establishing a hierarchy between beings. The latter perspective is strongly connected to the proposals related to the Anthropocene in so far as it responds to the challenges of this new geological era that will require mankind to comprehend that we are not the center of the world and that integration and not exploitation should be our approach to nature. In fact, one might have to question the idea of a homogeneous "we" according to Latour¹⁹.

In *Água viva*, Lispector tries to merge language and nature. There is no hierarchy between humans, animals and Earth, which are all integrated by the text. So there is no anthropocentrism. One of the fundamental proposals for how to face the Anthropocene is that humans must abandon the culture of anthropocentrism. Below, a fragment in which the narrator becomes herself a medium for that mentioned merger:

I slowly enter my gift to myself splendor ripped open by the final song that seems to be the first. I enter the writing slowly as I once entered painting. It is

¹⁸Text means Tissue; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue-this texture-the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web" (BARTHES, 1973, p. 64).

¹⁹"It is the human as a unified agency, as one virtual political entity, as a universal concept that has to be broken down into many different people with contradictory interests, opposing cosmoses and who are summoned under the auspices of warring entities — not to say warring divinities. The anthropos of the Anthropocene? It is Babel after the fall of the giant Tower" (LATOUR, 2013, p. 81).

a world tangled up in creepers, syllables, woodbine, colors and words – threshold of an ancestral cavern that is the womb of the world and from it I shall be born. And if I often paint caves that is because they are my plunge into the earth, dark but haloed with brightness, and I, blood of nature – extravagant and dangerous caves, talisman of the Earth, where stalactites, fossils and rocks come together, and where the animals mad by their own malign nature seek refuge. The caves are my hell. Forever dreaming cave with its fogs, memory or longing? eerie, eerie, esoteric, greenish with the slime of time. Inside the dark cave glimmer the hanging rats with the cruciform wings of bats. I see downy and black spiders. Mice and rats run frightened along the ground and up the walls. Between the rocks the scorpion. Crabs, just like themselves since pre-history, through deaths and births, would look like threatening beasts if they were the size of a man. Old cockroaches crawl in the murky light. And all of this is me. All is weighted with sleep when I paint a cave or write to you about it – from outside it comes the clatter of dozens of wild horses stamping with dry hoofs the darkness, and from the friction of the hoofs the rejoicing is freed in sparks: here I am, I and the cave, in the very time that will rot us. (LISPECTOR, p. 8-9, emphasis added)

The transmediation of the Anthropocene

As noted above, the Anthropocene is a scientific notion used to describe our present time as a new geological era. We propose that *Água viva*, by Clarice Lispector, may be read as an aesthetic transmediation of the Anthropocene, meaning with Anthropocene not exactly the scientific discourse, but rather the political discourse. These two dimensions are connected in the notion of the Anthropocene. While the scientific discourse is more concerned with definitions, measures and forecasts about the Anthropocene, the political discourse tries to reflect on what human beings should do to face such a geological era. So, what one may find in *Água viva* is inspiration to adopt a new way of living. If the political discourse privileges reason and tries to persuade people, the literary work allows emotions to emerge and may inspire people to understand, to perceive and to do things differently.

One might object that *Água viva* was published already in 1973, whereas the notion of the Anthropocene was coined by Paul Crutzen only in 2002. So, how could *Água viva* be a transmediation of something that not even existed? We may note that if the Anthropocene as a concept did not exist yet, it existed already as a reality. In other words,

when Clarice Lispector wrote *Água viva*, the Anthropocene as a geological era had already begun. However, the objection may remain, considering that, for a transmediation to happen, a content to be transmediated is required²⁰. The traditional transmediation respects a linear time pattern. In the transmediation of *Água viva*, we may think in a non-linear time, a time that goes forth and back, a time that is not only progressive but also regressive. That is the time of our psyches, able to go back through memory and to go forward through imagination. It should be noted that our conception of time is one central aspect of the Anthropocene. Since the Enlightenment, humans think time as progress. The philosopher Walter Benjamin showed how catastrophic this way of thinking may be. In many moments of his work, Benjamin described the idea of unlimited progress as an illusion. He even created an allegory in which progress figures as a storm that keeps humans away from paradise and also as a permanent catastrophe that leads to a pile of ruins²¹. So let humans think about time as cyclical, in so far as “we” move from a point to another and there is no progress, only changes, differences.

Among the characteristics of a great work of art, there is the fact that it is both dated and timeless. It may always be interpreted from the present moment, since a work of art allows multiple reinterpretations. In the particular case of *Água viva*, we think that what confers to the text its perpetuity has to do with the fact that it talks about humans, about how “we” feel the world and how we may live differently on Earth. These are quite Anthropocene-related issues.

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20 By transmediation we mean the procedure of transposing a work into another medium.

21 See BENJAMIN. *Origem do drama barroco alemão*, 2011.

Afterword: Notes on a pedagogical experiment – and on *Superpowers of Ten*

Jørgen Bruhn

The essays in this publication are the result – as indicated in Professor Miriam Vieira’s Editor’s Foreword – of my two weeks in April 2016 as a guest lecturer at IEAT / UFMG in Belo Horizonte where I attempted to combine research fields that are not automatically put in contact with each other. First of all, our recent understanding of what has become known as the Anthropocene epoch (defined in several of the essays in this book); second, my training in intermedial studies and third and finally comparative literature which is the field from where most of the students came from. What started out as a kind of optimistic educational idea turned out, thanks to a very good group of students, to become a successful academic achievement. And what seemed, when I first met with the students, to be a rather airy and speculative conceptual framework, was quickly and energetically embraced by them.

The Anthropocene is a planetary umbrella concept collecting a number of sub-phenomena (overpopulation, decreasing biodiversity etc.) which, curiously, was coined in the science of geology (around 2000), a natural science which is not exactly known to deliver critical concepts to social sciences and the humanities. In this case, however, the conceptual export from one field to another has produced one of the strongest trends in contemporary transdisciplinary research. So much so that a whole terminological argument has arisen, challenging the central notions of the Anthropocene, first of all, perhaps the inherent risk in the concept of essentialising and homogenizing the idea of a “human”. Capitaloscene, Plantageocene, Chtulucene are some of

the competing terms that are under discussion and that might, in the future, take over the role of leading concept.²² For now, though, I think there is a valuable drive and an almost immediate, invaluable “understandability” in the term “Anthropocene” that is very hard to compete with.

The essays in this volume demonstrate several things. First of all, perhaps, that our hunch that the idea of the Anthropocene added to cultural studies in the broadest sense was a good move; the students directly grasped the relevance and importance of the abstract epochal concept, and they experienced and expressed a (I think, very healthy) mixture of chock and indignation: how could things have come so far; who – if anybody – is responsible; and what can we do to prevent that the bleakest and most terrifying of the predictions come true? Can we even prevent it?

Second, and as result of the initial point, we started discussing and reflecting upon the possible ways that this scientific notion, and our fears roused by it, may relate to our “own” fields of study in the humanities. Now the more specific questions concerning how, exactly, a scientific phenomenon like the Anthropocene can be “translated” into other media (taking as our starting point that the Anthropocene is first formulated as a scientific discourse). And if the Anthropocene as such is a peculiar and rather outlandish term, the process of understanding the transport from one text to another, or translating content and form from one medium to another is a well-known field of interest of intermedial studies, where adaptation studies, for instance, is a rich and well-developed sub-field – a sub-field I shall return to several times in this paper.

Third, and this occurred towards the end of the relatively short course, students started choosing the specific material they wanted to work with. And whereas I as the instructor had tried to lead the way in the initial stages of the course, Professor Miriam Vieira and I asked the participating students to write their final paper on aesthetic mate-

rial of their own choice. This material could relate either to a Brazilian historical or cultural context (more or less unknown to me) or to material of their own choice that went beyond the many examples we had discussed during classes.

Despite the deft organization and editing of the material there is no point in hiding that the result is, and the reader of this anthology will notice, sprawling – in the positive sense of the word! The concept of the Anthropocene is in some texts discussed theoretically and philosophically, while in others the Anthropocene is more hastily mentioned in order for the writer to get on with the analysis; in some of the essays the Anthropocene is manoeuvred directly into a contemporary discussion, whereas other students prefer to rethink historically distant material in the light of what we now consider to be Anthropocene developments. Several of the students – coming from comparative literature – chose literary material (Brazilian or not, contemporary or older stuff), whereas some students jumped out of the art and fiction categories entirely and reworked anthropological notions in the light of the Anthropocene and intermediality or wrote about comic strips.

Teaching this class was particularly exciting for me because it was my first attempt to combine the triangle mentioned above; the Anthropocene, intermediality, aesthetic artifacts. The teaching commitment, particularly because of all the comments and questions that I received from the participants in the class (which also included colleagues from the department), made me ponder the fundamental questions concerning the aesthetic mediations of the Anthropocene, some of which have also been formulated in the guest lecture that I delivered at the IEAT centre in Belo Horizonte.

After thinking about and analyzing examples that somehow landed inside this triad it occurred to me that there seem to be basically two poles that attract artists, writers and others communicating around the question of the Anthropocene. I called these two poles, respectively, a political/activist pole and a philosophical/abstract pole. Drawn towards the activist pole we find all the unambiguous and direct warnings and descriptions of aspects of the Anthropocene. In class we discussed Christopher Nolan’s Hollywood science fiction blockbuster

²²See Haraway, D. (2015) “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin”, *Environmental Humanities*, v. 6, p. 159-165, 2015.

Interstellar as well as one of the short films produced by the Conservation International, produced to raise funding as well as general awareness, in which celebrities give voice to aspects of nature such as ocean, rainforests, ice or the soil (the campaign material is available here: <<http://www.conservation.org/nature-is-speaking/Pages/default.aspx>>). Most of what we normally consider “ecologically” progressive or concerned art and thinking follows such a format, that is, these media products state clearly that our planet and thus humankind are in immediate danger, and they offer either solutions or relatively clear diagnoses of what has gone wrong in the relation between humans and the planet.

On the other hand I was also interested in a more speculative and indirect tradition of thinking about the human perception and human sensual and philosophical relations to the outer world: the works of this tradition are not explicitly directed against the Anthropocene condition, but they may give us some clues about how to think the man-world-relation in different terms nonetheless, perhaps with the ultimate result that at least aspects of the destructive aspects of the Anthropocene may be avoided. I tried to think about Alvin Lucier’s enigmatic but influential and much discussed sound installation piece “I am Sitting in a Room” from the late sixties, which we also tried to come to grips with in class. I wanted to understand this avant-garde work as an example of thinking via art that demonstrates that it is somehow possible to overcome the man-world (or subject-object) dichotomy which is, arguably, one of the fundamental reasons to the ecological disaster we are facing. If we begin to realize that the world is not something *out there*, but instead that we *are* the world (and the world is us), then perhaps we would start acting differently? This was my speculative argument (inspired by, among others, philosopher Timothy Morton’s short discussion of the piece). Such a tradition is, I repeat, not explicitly orientated towards ecological questions or the notion of the Anthropocene, but the inherent philosophical questionings in such a piece may reverberate in even more fundamental ways than the

more obvious eco-positions of what I called the activist-tradition.

Writing now, almost a year from when I started thinking by means of this dichotomy, I do not really feel satisfied with this initial division between an activist and a speculative position even if there might be something intuitively right in seeing these two poles as “vectors” that mark out movements in the field of possible aesthetic responses to the Anthropocene.

Instead of dividing responses into divergent groups in which the differences may be difficult to defend let me instead offer some thoughts on a highly rewarding aesthetic mediation of the Anthropocene which *combines* the activist with the speculative vectors.

I would like to reflect upon a small cluster of different media products that came to my knowledge when I was reading the magnificent exhibition catalogue edited by Bruno Latour called *Reset Modernity*. The originating exhibition in 2016 at ZKM Center for art and media in Karlsruhe in Germany as well as the resulting catalogue expressed the by now rather well-known approach of Latour; he is trying to solve the greatest imaginable problems (in this case: the planetary threats of the Anthropocene which is the result of an inherently destructive Modernity) by way of step-by-step philosophical procedures. The reset modernity project is thus clearly affiliated with his AIME-project (An Inquiry into the Modes of Existence) launched a few years ago and perhaps we should consider *Reset Modernity* a transmediated exhibition-version of AIME.

The catalogue is a veritable goldmine of exciting examples of literature, film, philosophy and visual art (and mixes of these!) that in sometimes direct, sometimes oblique ways reflect upon our Anthropocene condition. I became particularly interested in Latour’s brief description of a performance piece hitherto unknown to me, but in order to get to that point I need to offer a brief description of the documentary film that lies behind it all.

So first a few words about Charles and Ray Eames’ rather famous, short documentary film *The Powers of Ten: A Film Dealing with the Relative Size of Things in the Universe and the Effect of Adding Another Zero*, was funded by IBM in 1977 (with a first sketch

being made in 1968). The official version is available here: <<http://www.eamesoffice.com/screening-room/>>.

The first half of the 9 minute-film shows the human being as minuscule part of the immense universe and in the second half the human body is seen as a gargantuan corpus incorporating numerous smaller parts, ending with the quarks. Technically and aesthetically it offers amazing visual features that seems to optimistically underline the possibilities of math and science, and it has been widely distributed in schools all around the world, functioning as a pedagogical representation of mathematical principles. The film was based on a book by the Dutch educator and writer Kees Boeke, "Cosmic View: The Universe in 40 Jumps" from 1957, so *Power of Ten* was, in other words, an adaptation.

The media product I want to focus on here is made by the architectural bureau Office for Political Innovation, led by Andrés Jaque, and it is a sort of adaptation of *The Powers of Ten* from documentary film to a theatrical performance; it lasts circa 45 minutes, and one version of the performance is available as a video recording here: <<https://vimeo.com/162905806>>. This, by the way, is not the only adaptation of *Powers of Ten*: on YouTube and Vimeo there are numerous versions of *Powers of Ten* ranging from updated technically enhanced versions to comical parodies – for instance an opening to a Simpsons-episode!

The performance consists of four parts, called "acts" in order to stress the theatrical aspect. Act 1 is the Office's verbal-only introduction to Ray and Charles Eames' *Power of Ten*. In Act 2, the group re-enacts the *Power of Ten* in real time, with actors using props on stage, but re-using the original voice-over from 1977. The reenactment produces comical effects in the clash between the original voice-over of the *Power of Ten* in the new and very different theatrical or performance setting. The two first acts last just under 10 minutes. Act Three, which I shall describe below, is the longest part, lasting circa 30 minutes, and the performance ends with a fourth, concluding act which is, like the introduction, solely verbal.

For Latour, who writes some lines about the Office of Political Innovation in *Reset Modernity*, the theatrical performance is an im-

portant demonstration of his own critical observation that zooming is in fact an impossible action. We do not live in a Google Earth space, he notes (p. 54), and effortlessly zooming in and out – which is the main visual strategy of *Powers of Ten* – becomes a prime example of the negative, homogenizing tendencies of western modernity. We can say, therefore, that *Powers of Ten* takes as its scientific and visual starting point the existence of a homogenous, monistic substance ranging from the smallest particles to the largest entities and to the empty space surrounding planet Earth: all of it is possible to visualize in recognizable images, all of it is somehow humanely perceptible. However, science, based on mathematics, only manages to convey this image of the world because it works with an imaginary viewpoint which is, so to speak, no viewpoint at all. Smoothly zooming in and out gives the viewers a false sense of surplus of seeing that makes "seeable" not only – scaling up – our earth, planetary system and the systems of planetary systems, but also – scaling down – the smallest entities of our bodies, atomic and even subatomic structures. The educational film thus teaches us to believe that there is no "gaps" from one level of materiality to the other, that it is possible to travel frictionless up and down in scales, and that such a roller coaster ride is made possible by the efforts of the mathematical sciences. Latour formulates this elegantly: "Truth and objectivity depends on how many discontinuities are being foregrounded, not on how many are being smoothed over." (p. 54). And foregrounding is of course exactly what the Office of Political Innovation is producing in its new version.

Let me note, parenthetically, that for me personally, the rising understanding of the Anthropocene condition relates to a feeling of changing my quotidian scales, from my own little phenomenological sensibility to a dramatically larger understanding of my own temporal as well as spatial place, and as such it is hard for me not to feel attracted to the Eames brothers' vision of the world. It gives an almost childishly ravishing understanding of ourselves and it in many ways is an ambitious, visual version of the list of names that I believe almost all

bored kids in school have written at least once in their
lives;
Jørgen Bruhn
3a
Byskolen
Helsingør
Sjælland
Danmark
Europa
verden
mælkevejen
universet – and then it got difficult!!

The Office of Political Innovation who produced *The Superpowers of Ten* wants to deprive us of this only apparently innocent scaling up and down and they do it in a way that is highly ambitious and surprisingly simple. Let me, from a basic intermedial point of view, state the obvious by noting, of course, that *The Superpowers of Ten* is an adaptation of *The Powers of Ten*, which means that this adaptation, like all adaptations, transfers form and content and transform this form and content. *The Superpowers of Ten* does convey both the form and content of *The Powers of Ten*, but it does so by two interrelated and mutually enforcing strategies; it *estranges* (in the tradition of the Russian Formalists and Bertolt Brecht) the adaptation process and it develops the original by *expanding* and thus exhibiting what might seem to be a “neutral” version of the powers of science and mathematics to be highly targeted. This is the “foregrounding” Latour was mentioning above (and the aesthetical foregrounding produced here is a parallel to Latour’s entire anthropological critical science project: it consisted in foregrounding all the hitherto unnoticed or repressed jumps between data sets and observations in order to make clear the materially constructed aspects of science).

Superpowers operates in this foregrounding or estranging mode by translating, in Act 2, the smooth visual transitions of the *Power of Ten* into materialized, heavy-to-handle illustrations in corporeal three-

e-dimensional performance. The zooming efforts gets *embodied*, literally; the “neutral”, non-materialised point of view is gone. The effect of this materialisation is double: first of all, it underlines that what looks like smooth and effortless shifts in scale actually ought to be understood as a both complex and material process of putting things (data sets, viewpoints, theories) together in a meaningful way. It shows that it takes human work and material manipulation to produce meaning. Second, and as an effect of the first point, the foregrounding materialisation makes it possible to “fill out” the secret holes of the Eames’ original source with new, and subversive material; this will be the tactical effort of Act 3.

So if the estranging aspect is the aspect of the visual adaptation of the second act, in the third, and by far longest, part of the *Superpowers*, another strategy is put to use, and here another kind of approach, less based on the visual, comical puns, and more on critical investigation, historical research and cultural criticism, all ending in a strong discursive text which is then being put into materialized, three-dimensional tableaux. And this brings me to the textual basis of *Superpowers*, which necessitates at least a superficial understanding of the text.

What is characteristic about the textual basis of the performance (that I admit I am happy to be able to read in print, otherwise it would be quite difficult to follow, I think) is probably its meandering, complex form. It seems to follow no systematicity at all, but a scrutiny of the text does disclose a distinct way of thinking. The text in Act three consists in the printed version in the Exhibition catalogue of *Reset Modernity* of 7 scenes. And the subjects range from the scientist, writer and activist Philip Morrison who read the voice-over of *Power of Ten*, it includes gender issues but also genetically modified lawn grass products; space junk plays a role, along with transgender persons, the meat industry of Chicago and many other things. As compared to the smooth, logical and strictly mathematically sequenced up and down zooms of *Power of Ten*, the logic of *Superpowers of Ten* is of a totally different sort: we can call it associative, rhizomatic, or perhaps critical. It is a way of thinking that embodies all the facts and objects

that are being ironed out over and forgotten in the Eameses version of the world. Here I come to think of another imaginative adaptive text, Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (2002), which is a feature film, based on a book, that only deals with all the things that are normally hidden or left out in an adaptation from literature to film: the negotiations with agents, the work with a screenplay, writer's block, sexual desires directing the interests etc. *Superpowers of Ten* does the same thing: in Act 2 the Office revisualized *Powers of Ten* in order to criticize some of visual and epistemological underlying structures of the original. But in Act 3, the textual strategy is to point to all the ideological aspects that *could have been* in the original film, but that was left out. It observes that the leisurely *picnic* of the white, heterosexual couple in Chicago actually reverberates with earlier politically engaged marches and picnics, and we are asked not to forget that the racially white heteronormativity has been contested in technology (in the history of colour photography). Similarly, regarding the pure, so-called "empty" space which we glide through in *Powers of Ten*, we learn that human produced space-junk, circling over our heads, is actually a growing problematic. What appears to be a playful, non-committed associative string of curiosities eventually turn out to be a strong, political statement. It tells us that all is connected in myriad ways, and that we should consider this from both an activist and a more abstract perspective (referring back here, to my working dichotomy above). We could say, perhaps, that the world of *Powers of Ten* is a pre-Anthropocene world (in the sense that the understanding of Anthropocene was not yet developed in 1977) it is an Anthropocene world that does not yet know that it is Anthropocene. The 1977 version happily zoomed in and out without even once alluding to or hinting at some of the gloomier aspects of early postmodernity and the Anthropocene, but *Superpowers of Ten* does the exact opposite. From a viewpoint that is embodied, materialized, we move around in a rhizomatic space, from one point and level to another, without ever being given the impossible possibility of seeing it all at once, from one, omniscient and omnipotent perspective.

If we switch register and instead resonate in literary terms we might say that *Superpowers of Ten* destroy the illusion of an omnis-

cient narrator like we know it from the 19th century novels; this old-fashioned way of representing the world seems actually fully intact in *Powers of Ten* when the voice-over is in sync with the image-plane that the narrator can logically and seamlessly describe and comment upon, like the narrators of Thackeray or a Balzac writing in the 1840s. If we continue in the literary register, we must admit that this is not the authorial form of *Superpowers of Ten*. The original authorial voiceover in Act 2 (the re-enactment of *Powers of Ten*) are clearly questioned, not to say parodied; the control manifested by the original film is made a laughing stock in the new version. And in the rhizomatic Act 3, the content of the authorial voice-over is far from a logical, authoritative position: instead it seems to follow intuitively and curiously any upcoming interesting thread and by doing that, paradoxically, offers a valid version of our contemporary world. From an intermedial point of view, thinking about the relation between words and images, we can say, perhaps, that the voiceover and the performative visualisation in Act 2 and 3 question each other in a way that *Powers of Ten* ought to have done, but refrained from doing.

Going back to the adaptation question once again, we can repeat that any adaptation is not only a transfer and a transformation from the original: to this I would want to add that any adaptation is also a dialogic feedback process.²³ Adaptation is not a one-way transport but a back and forth movement, the result of which is in this case very clear: after having witnessed the Office for Political Innovation's *Superpowers of Ten*, even *Power of Ten* has been changed. The 1977 version of the world seems naïve and one-dimensional now that we have been given access to a version where some of all the (potentially infinite) suppressed possibilities have been marked out, as in a new primitive but highly realistic map over the planet and our universe has been given.

This, I think, is also what is being hinted at in Act 4, which functions as a conclusion to the performance, and parallel to the in-

23See Bruhn, Jørgen (2013) "Dialogising Adaptation Studies. From one-way transport to a dialogic two-way process" in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, (eds. Bruhn, Gjelsvik, Hanssen), Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York.

roduction in Act 1 it is a verbal-only voiceover. "We are configured by otherness", it is claimed here, and I take this to the central formal as well as ideological claim of this performance. As mentioned several times already, *Superpowers of Ten* aims to fill all the gaps of *Powers of Ten*, and they want to fill it with *otherness*. Racial, sexual, technological otherness, that goes beyond the implicit norms of the heteronormative couple doing a "picnic near the lakeside in Chicago [...] early one October" (the first words of *Powers of Ten*). By filling the neutral, mathematical zooming in and out, which in reality is a way of hiding all the potential real energy of conflictual zones, powers may become superpowers. "Please gaze through the complexities of our societies. These are the *Superpowers of Ten*. Let us herald and applaud their beauty!" – those are the last words of *Superpowers of Ten*, combining an acute activist awareness of aspects of our Anthropocene condition while also succeeding in including the activist anger into a more speculative, formally challenging framework. *Superpowers of Ten* offers, I would argue, a fun and thoughtful version of the often abstractly formulated need to embody the otherwise general "planetariness". This is why Andrés Jaque and his Office for Political Innovation becomes such a magnificent example of Latour's philosophical procedure of "Relocalizing the Global" which is one among several procedures in *Reset Modernity*. Even though *Superpowers of Ten* may feel avant-garde and arty, the performance is actually doing a very simple thing: it demonstrates the groundedness, the necessarily local beginning of any global awareness and action, including the global and even planetary awareness of the Anthropocene.

About the collaborators

Alex Keine is a doctorate student in Literary Studies at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. He is a Master of Philosophy from the same institution. His current research focuses on the writing of Clarice Lispector under a psychoanalytical perspective. His fields of research include Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis.

Contact: keine74@uol.com.br

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/2826449520207980>

Amanda Pavani is a doctorate student at FALE/UFMG, with a CNPq scholarship. She is a Master in Literatures in English and a Bachelor in English and Translation Studies from the same institution. Her master's thesis and ongoing dissertation approach issues of mediated reality in contemporary science fiction, with tangents from Utopian Studies, Science Fiction Studies and postmodern theories, in particular Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum. The authors included in her research are Margaret Atwood, Suzanne Collins, Connie Willis, Marge Piercy, Octavia Butler, among others.

Contact: mandiepavani@gmail.com

Clara Nogueira holds an MA in Literary Studies and a BA in English, with emphasis in Literature, at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. Her fields of research are Comparative Literature; Intermediality; Digital Media; and Shakes-

peare Adaptation.

Contact: claramatheusnogueira@gmail.com
<http://independent.academia.edu/ClaraMatheus>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7656380591130129>

Flávia Monteiro is a member of the Intermídia Research Group, which studies issues concerning art and media relations. She holds Teaching and Bachelor degrees in English, language and Literature, and a Master's in English Literature with focus on semiotics. Currently, she is a doctorate student and an assistant professor in the Department of Literatures in English at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais. Her main fields of research are English Literature and Intermediality; her present study focuses on Shakespearean rewritings through various media.

Contact: flaviarmwork@yahoo.com.br
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/80919454275146703>

Jørgen Bruhn is a professor of Comparative Literature at Linnæus University, Sweden. His main focus areas are literary theory and criticism, intermediality and media studies, and adaptation studies. In 2013 he edited (with Anne Gjelsvik and Eirik Frisvold Hansen) and contributed to *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions* (Bloomsbury). His most recent book is *Intermediality and Narrative Literature – Medialities Matter* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

Contact: jorgen.bruhn@lnu.se
<http://linnaeus.academia.edu/jorgenbruhn>

Maria Isabel Bordini is currently a Substitute Professor of Brazilian Literature at Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR), Brazil. She holds a Master of Arts from the same institution. She holds a BA in Law and in Portuguese Language from Universidade Federal do Paraná. She is a doctorate student at Literary Studies at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Her fields of research are Brazilian Literature, Literatures in Portuguese, Literary Theory, Comparative

Literature and proletarian literature.

Contact: bordini.literaturaufpr@gmail.com
<https://ufmg.academia.edu/MariaIsabelBordini>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/6757146796063959>

Marília Carvalho is an Assistant Professor in English Literature at the State University of Ceará (FECLESC), in Quixadá, and also a doctorate student at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), working on a dissertation on *Moby-Dick*.

Contact: mariliancarvalho@gmail.com
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/3468060688468807>

Miriam Vieira is a Professor of Literatures in English at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil. Doctor in Comparative Literature, with mobility funded by Erasmus Mundus at Lund University, and Master in English Literature from UFMG. She holds a BA in Architecture and a specialization in Teaching English as a Second language. Her fields of research are Literature, Painting, and Architecture; Intermediality; ekphrasis; cinematographic adaptation.

Contact: miriamvieira@gmail.com
<https://ufmg.academia.edu/MiriamVieira>
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/1117606028406532>

Victor Hermann Mendes Pena is currently a PhD student in Literature, other Arts and Medias at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Brazil. Master in Visual Arts at Escola de Belas Artes, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). His fields of research are Literature, Visual Arts; Anthropocene; catastrophe.

Contact: victormendespena@gmail.com
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7160127015668176>

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