2 Anthropocene Narratives I: Geo-Poetics

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The Vanishing Metropolis

Environmental Justice and Urban Narrative in Latin America

1 Environmentalism and Environmental Justice between Place and Planet

Since its emergence in the 1960s and 70s, the modern environmental movement has been fertile ground for the imagination, re-imagination, and counter-imagination of globalisms and globalization. Environmental movements, in the plural; struggles for the conservation of nature – have never been cut of one cloth across different regions, languages, and cultures. Some strands of environmentalism have emphasized the urgency and necessity of global perspectives: from René Dubos' slogan "Think globally, act locally" and the adoption of the 'Blue Marble' image produced by the Apollo 17 mission in 1972 to Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* and contemporary activism around climate change, planet Earth in its entirety and the more abstract concept of "planetarity" have been central figures of thought for environmentalism. Planetarity, understood as a counter-term to globalization, approaches Earth as "an undivided 'natural' space rather than a differentiated political space" (Spivak 2003: 72). To the extent that environmentalism seeks to understand the interconnectedness of planetary ecological systems, processes, and crises, it continues to be fundamentally invested in certain types of globalism. The highly influential notion of the Anthropocene, proposed as a new geological era of pervasive human influence on global ecosystems by the scientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), continues this kind of thinking about planet Earth in its entirety.

This understanding, however, has often entered into complex and sometimes contradictory combinations with commitments to localities, bioregions, or nations[1]. From the association of indigenous identities with particular territories in the Americas and Australia to the call for a "sense of place" as an indispensable prerequisite for environmental ethics in the North American environmentalist movement, localisms have played a central role in conflicts over the uses and

1 For a detailed discussion of the dialectics between local, regional, and global orientations in environmentalist thought, see Heise 2008: 17–67.

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misuses of nature in many parts of the world. At times, such localisms have been based on a spiritual, political, and ethical commitment to local communities or ecosystems, at other times on the pragmatic reasoning that political participation and legal change are defined and shaped by citizenship. Given the relative strength of local and national institutions compared to the limited political power of supranational organizations, environmentalist activism at these levels has arguably been more successful than for the planet as a whole. But it is also true that local knowledge and engagement do not invariably guarantee environmentally desirable outcomes (for example, when local residents benefit materially from the exploitation of fossil fuel resources), and that they can sometimes lead to NIMBYism and the outsourcing of hazardous industries and waste sites from privileged to less powerful and environmentally protected communities (for instance, the export of European and North American plastic trash and other waste to China before the 2018 ban).

For these reasons, and in view of continuing world-wide ecological crises such as biodiversity loss, ocean pollution, and climate change, I proposed the concept of "eco-cosmopolitanism" in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (Heise 2008). Building on a quarter-century of theories of cosmopolitanism in anthropology, literary studies, political science, and philosophy that sought to rethink cosmopolitan citizenship outside its historical framework of European privilege, eco-cosmopolitanism seeks to "envision individuals and groups as parts of planetary 'imagined communities' of both human and nonhuman kinds", to "explore the cultural means by which ties to the natural world are produced and perpetuated, and how the perception of such ties fosters or impedes regional, national, and transnational forms of identification" (Heise 2008: 61). At a historical moment when collective action in response to such crises as climate change and global pandemics is ever more urgent, the need for this kind of critical cosmopolitan thinking has only increased.

Unlike the humanisms and universalisms that underwrote European, North American, and East Asian imperialisms of the past, eco-cosmopolitanism seeks not to generalize one human community's way of living in and with nature as a universal parameter, but instead to understand and negotiate the true diversity of ecological inhabitation across different ecosystems, cultures, and languages. Eco-cosmopolitanism therefore entails a focus on the unequal distribution of geopolitical power and the inequities generated by differences of class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and language. Whether an animal species is endangered because poor communities turn its forest habitat into subsistence farmland or because affluent communities consume it for food or medication, for example, makes a difference not only in how we assess the crisis in ethical terms, but also what practical conservation measures are likely to be successful.

Whether a coastal city is able to protect itself from sea level rise, more frequent king tides, and hurricanes depends crucially on its material wealth and its political influence. Whether climate change is even perceived as an important problem or not depends on historical memories and the relative urgency of other problems such as housing, employment, health care, and access to clean water. In these instances and many others, the ecological embedding of a human community cannot be understood, negotiated, and transformed without a simultaneous grasp of its historical experiences and memories, its current socio-economic structures, and its cultural frameworks for approaching nature.

Eco-cosmopolitanism converges in some of its emphases with the environmental justice movement, which has gained increasing importance for environmental theory and activism worldwide since the turn of the millennium. In the US, the environmental justice movement emerged in the late 1980s, putting an emphasis on the unequal exposure of different communities to environmental risks and their unequal access to environmental benefits. Work by the African American sociologist Robert Bullard, and later the Latinx studies scholar Laura Pulido, highlighted the siting of hazardous industries and waste disposal sites near poor communities and communities of color, a process that they came to refer to as "environmental racism". This term was adopted by the US federal government under Bill Clinton in 1994, and the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which was held in Washington in 1991, proposed 17 principles of environmental justice.

Internationally, issues of human rights and particularly indigenous rights came to be discussed increasingly in connection with environmentalism, and an international environmental justice movement took shape that was not always as focused on racism as the one in the United States, but engaged with a broad range of environmental inequalities. By "taking shape", I do not mean that such movements were newly instituted – though some, of course, were, such as the movement for climate justice. In many cases, social movements that had already existed came to be recognized as "environmentalisms" for their important ecological dimensions. The sociologist Ramachandra Guha and the political scientist Juan Martínez-Alier contributed crucially to this recognition with analyses of environmental movements in India and Latin America, respectively, in their jointly authored book *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (1997). They argued that struggles in these regions that were mainly anti-colonial fights for social justice often contained important environmental elements: the fight against the construction of megadams or the Chipko movement's struggle against deforestation in India, for example; or Chico Mendes' advocacy for the rights of peasants, rubber tappers, and indigenous people in the Brazilian rainforest, which also included advocacy for forest preservation. Such movements might

not have labeled themselves "environmentalist" as European and North American organizations in the late twentieth century did, Guha and Martínez-Alier argued, but they were nevertheless working in practice for natural conservation. Often, this work was not done with the goal of preserving nature for its own sake or for aesthetic and leisure enjoyment as it often was in the global North, but in order to preserve the foundations of local peoples' subsistence. Hence, Guha and Martínez-Alier argued, they should be counted among the "varieties of environmentalism" and be acknowledged as the "environmentalism of the poor".

This phrase has come to be widely used in environmentalist thought from the turn of the millennium onward, and it shifted common narratives in the global North about the emergence and spread of modern environmentalism. While North American environmentalists in particular had tended to portray the modern environmental movement as emerging from the United States – with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) as a global catalyst – the prevailing narrative from the 1990s onward offered a far more varied picture, seeing movements for the conservation of nature as having emerged in many different places at different moments during the twentieth century, with varying motivations, goals, and organizational structures. In this expanded sense, environmental justice came to be recognized as a far more global phenomenon than it had been considered before.

Environmental justice theories and activisms differ by region and have gone through their own transformations. In the United States, environmental justice started out with a focus on distributive justice, that is, the question of who benefits from environmental resources and who does not, who is exposed to environmental risks and who is not or has the means of shielding themselves from the consequences (Bullard 2018). In parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the question of who might be disadvantaged by environmental activism itself – for example, local communities whose uses of local resources are curtailed or who are displaced when a national park or wildlife sanctuary is established – became a focus of political confrontation (see Agrawal and Redford 2009; Dowie 2009). Subsequently, especially with the work of David Schlosberg (Schlosberg 2007) and David Pellow (Pellow 2007), environmental justice was expanded to include other dimensions. Participatory justice addresses the questions of who is involved in environmental decision-making, who implements these decisions, and who has the right to veto them. Capabilities justice asks who has the practical ability to attain well-being, not just a theoretical right to it. Recognition justice, finally, revolves around the acknowledgment that Western science does not always have the last say on environmental matters, but that other knowledge systems and epistemologies (for example, indigenous cosmologies in the Americas

and Australia) deserve to be respected and included as a foundation of ecological knowledge and management.

Regional differences add to the complexity of the body of theory as well as the legal and political practices that surround environmental justice today. The emergence of environmental justice as a movement that was separate from – if connected to – "mainstream" environmentalism is to some extent specific to North America. As Bullard has frequently pointed out, the first wave of North American environmentalism attracted mostly white and middle or upper-class followers but did not successfully integrate working class and non-white nature advocates. In addition, the valuation of wilderness untouched by humans as the ideal form of nature to be conserved (Cronon 1995) – as distinct from the idealization of rural and other human-altered landscapes in Asian and European environmental movements – made connections with other forms of social struggle more difficult to conceive.

In other regions, however, the substance and demographics of what came to be called environmental justice emerged in quite different ways. "Environmental justice, in fact, is an important part of popular environmentalism in much of the world", David V. Carruthers has argued (Carruthers 2008: 2). He elaborates:

> While environmental justice in Latin America is not anchored in the hazardous siting inequities that fueled its rise in the United States, environmental concerns are deeply woven into the fabric of Latin American popular mobilization for social justice and equity. Environmentalism in Latin America generally begins with a stronger social justice component than its counterpart in the United States. [. . .] Environmental resistance weaves into existing struggles for social justice because people face environmental threats in every corner of their daily lives (Carruthers 2008: 7).

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, Carruthers emphasizes, environmental justice issues have emerged in the context of urban movements and shantytown dwellers' organizations, women's movements, labor movements, struggles for the autonomy and recognition of indigenous communities, fights between landowning elites and land-poor peasants, movements for the rights of farmworkers and for *campesino* identity, and battles against the imposition of the Washington Consensus and economic liberalization, among others (Carruthers 2008: 9–14). In other words, while it makes sense to identify such concerns as "environmental justice" in Latin America, it is important to recognize that they did not arise in the context of a movement specifically intended to address them, as they did in the United States, but in broader struggles for social, political, and economic justice. For these reasons, some Latin American researchers such as the Mexican economist and sociologist Enrique Leff have preferred to draw on the vocabulary

of political ecology rather than that of environmental justice (Porto-Gonçalves and Leff 2015)[2].

With these differences as a background, Latin American institutions have given crucial impulses to environmental justice thinking over the past two decades. Amazonian indigenous cosmologies as investigated by Philippe Descola and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro rely on what Viveiros de Castro has called a "multinatural perspectivism" that does not rely on the same categorical distinction between humans and nonhuman species as that envisioned by European-based science and philosophy (Viveiros de Castro 1998; cf. Descola 1986 and Latour 2009), and thereby enables fundamentally different relationships and ideas of justice between species. The question of how human rights and indigenous rights intersect with environmental justice has been given been given powerful new impulses by the new constitutions of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009), both of which rely on indigenous ideas that translate into Spanish as "vivir bien" and into English as "good life" or "living well" (cf. Acosta 2013; Cadena 2015). They attribute legal rights to a nature understood as the "Madre Tierra" or "Pachamama" of indigenous cosmologies, defined in the Bolivian "Ley de derechos de la Madre Tierra" of 2010 as "el sistema viviente dinámico conformado por la comunidad indivisible de todos los sistemas de vida y los seres vivos, interrelacionados, interdependientes y complementarios, que comparten un destino común" (*Ley 71* 2010: Art. 3). "Para efectos de la protección y tutela de sus derechos, la Madre Tierra adopta el carácter de sujeto colectivo de interés público", the same law continues (*Ley 71* 2010: Art. 5)[3]. How such rights might be legally implemented and enforced is still an open question. But it is true that these legal texts are as close as any currently living environmentalist will come to eco-utopian visions with actual legal force (cf. Heise 2016: 122), and they also present an interesting model for eco-cosmopolitanism in their combination of secularism and the discourse of rights with regionally specific and spiritual conceptualizations of the natural environment. These relatively recent Latin American developments have yet to be fully integrated into theories of environmental justice that have, to date, principally relied on the work of scholars from Australia, Canada, and the United States. They promise to take

2 Political ecology and environmental justice address many of the same issues. As Eric Sheppard at the Department of Geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, has highlighted, political ecology tends to focus more on the structural causes of environmental inequity, whereas environmental justice tends to focus on its consequences (personal communication). In practice, the two overlap, and Leff has also used the term "justicia ambiental" (Leff 2001).

3 For a more detailed discussion, see Heise (2016: 111–122) and Hindery (2013).

environmental justice theory and practice to a new level, including the idea of "multispecies justice" (Heise 2016: 166–167, 202–204) as well as other types of justice that environmental movements have recently focused on: climate justice, energy justice, just transition, food justice, spatial justice, shade equity, and housing justice, to name a few.

2 Urban Narrative and Environmental Justice

Reasoning about justice is often intertwined with storytelling: as Michael Sandel's magisterial volume *Justice* shows, narrative scenarios are often useful for exploring what principles and assumptions are at stake in our ethical and legal decision-making. Environmental justice, nourished as it is by activism on specific issues and in particular contexts, is no exception, and the narrative templates that stories about environmental justice and injustice follow are of course of particular interest to narratologists and cultural studies scholars. Such story templates matter in particular for comparative analysis, since they offer a set of tools for analyzing why and how different communities approach what scientists would define as identical ecological problems – for example, pollution, biodiversity loss, or deforestation – as very different issues depending on their historical memories, cultural frameworks, and social practices.

This essay will focus on stories about environmental justice that are set in cities. Given the association of many environmental justice conflicts in Latin America with struggles for indigenous rights, land ownership, and resource extraction, this focus may at first appear counterintuitive. Yet cities are of central importance – on the one hand, because urbanization is one of the most salient characteristics of the Anthropocene. Today at least 50% of the global human population lives in cities, and this proportion is expected to rise to 70% by mid-century (UNDESA 2008). On the other hand, since the late nineteenth century, cities have often functioned as the imaginative and narrative territories where conflicts, convergences, and negotiations between local, national, regional, and global interests occur, from the novels of Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens, and Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky to those of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Alfred Döblin, and John Dos Passos. They are therefore narrative sites of particular interest for the analysis of global, anti-global, and post-global impulses – as later texts in the Latin American tradition such as Carlos Fuentes' *La región más transparente* (1958) about Mexico City and Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963), which unfolds in Paris and Buenos Aires, clearly demonstrate.

Socio-economic injustice as well as gender and racial discrimination form part of many if not all of these classic urban narratives. What we now call environmental injustice is a reality in many cities in the global North as well as the South, in that residents of megacities often have unequal access to infrastructures of water, electricity, and sanitation, unequal exposure to pollution, and unequal access to housing, green spaces, and biodiversity. Especially but not only in the global South, such inequalities are compounded by what urban studies researchers call "informal urbanism": uncertain or undocumented property rights, building codes that are either non-existent or not enforced, and a lack of electricity, water, and sanitation infrastructures. The geographer Mike Davis has therefore warned that rapid urban growth in many parts of the world may ultimately lead to a "planet of slums" (Davis 2006).

The North American literature on urban environmental injustice from Robert D. Bullard's *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (1990) onward has analyzed in detail how the distribution of environmental risks maps onto that of poverty and race. Recent work on the future of cities in the age of climate change has highlighted similar associations across various regions of the world between the risks of rising sea levels, increased flooding and drought, and more hurricanes and wildfires, on one hand, and socio-economic, racial, and ethnic inequalities, on the other, as nonfiction books such as Jeff Goodell's *The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of Civilization* (2017), Ashley Dawson's *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (2017), and David Wallace-Wells' *The Uninhabitable Earth* (2019) show.

North American works of fiction have foregrounded similar patterns, from the Latina workers exposed to unemployment, poverty, and toxicity in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993) to the so-called "pleeblands" in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and the African American working-class characters who experience a Katrina-like hurricane in Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones* (2011). Some Latin American authors explore similar scenarios. The Nicaraguan writer Gioconda Belli, for example, features a toxic incident based on a real scenario in her novel *Waslala* (1996), where it functions as a paradigm of the reality that the protagonist must return to after searching for, and finding, the eponymous utopian community. Melisandra, the main character, sets out on a quest for Waslala to find utopia and also her parents, who disappeared decades earlier during their own search for it. Her journey takes her through varied landscapes in the fictional country of Faguas that the novel is set in.

On the way to Waslala, Melisandra and her companions pass through the city of Cineria, "'la gran ciudad señorial, la más antigua de Faguas, quemada y reconstruida varias veces'" (Belli 1996: 149). Their main contact in Cineria is a

woman named Engracia, who runs an enterprise of trash that is brought to the city from around the nation and the globe, including materials so toxic that not even the Policía Ambiental wants to investigate them. Landfills in the global South where the commodities discarded by the global North end up have, of course, functioned as one of the main icons of global environmental injustice for several decades now, and the enormous inner courtyard of the complex where Engracia does the recycling "parecía la playa donde la civilización moderna depositara los despojos de su naufragio" (Belli 1996: 157). Cineria, in other words, functions as a global garbage dump underneath its majestic historical appearance. Engracia listens to but dismisses warnings about the dangers of the materials she processes.

But in spite of her physically and intellectually towering presence, she and her crew of orphaned boys fall victim to the global garbage they process. A container with a bluish powder that glows in the dark becomes the main entertainment at a party they celebrate, with Engracia and her crew covering themselves with the powder. Too late, her lover Morris, a scientist, discovers that the powder is the radioactive chemical Cesium 137, which is used in nuclear power recycling and disposing generation. Covering their bodies with Cesium condemns Engracia and five members of her crew to death from radioactive poisoning within a week. As she waits for her death, Engracia decides to use her coming end as a way of striking a blow to the wealthy, drug-trafficking Espada family that has oppressed the city and the region for decades. She and her contaminated crew members cover themselves once again with Cesium 137 and cross the city with their ghostly appearance in the night to blow up the barracks from where the Espadas exercised their dictatorial control of the region and of Faguas more generally. She thereby turns a moment of grave environmental injustice into an act of revolution that, through the presence of an American journalist in Melisandra's company, is sure to reach the world outside Faguas. This is the real world that Melisandra, after finding her mother in the remote community of Waslala, whose utopian aspirations have foundered because of a mysterious decline in fertility, has to return to and live her life in[4].

Belli indicates in an afterword to the novel that even though the events in Cineria may appear to be among the most fantastic in the novel, they are based on a real incident in the Brazilian city of Goiania in 1987 (Belli 1996: 381–382). Here, too, Cesium 137 was improperly deposited and went through the hands of several poor trash handlers to end up at the birthday party of a girl who subsequently died from the contamination, along with six others who had been

4 For a more detailed analysis of utopian thought in Waslala, see DeVries (2013: 282–286).

exposed to the substance. Both Belli and Eduardo Galeano, who wrote about the incident, highlight the contrast with the nuclear accident in Chernobyl the year before: whereas Chernobyl was covered extensively in the international press, Goiania was barely noticed, a translation of environmental injustice into the realm of media that Belli's novel seeks to redress by fictionalizing the incident. Arguably, the explosion in Cineria is what makes it possible for Melisandra to reach Waslala – Engracia leaves her a pet parrot who ends up being her guide through the mountain forests around the utopian community – but also what makes her decide to return to the everyday world of environmental inequality after finding the community. Through this plot structure, the city as the site of national history as well as international environmental injustice comes to function as a crucial pole in the dialectic between lived reality and utopian imagining that the novel outlines, as well as in the dialectic between local and global contamination crises.

3 Environmental Injustice and the Vanishing Latin American Metropolis

But if Belli's *Waslala* highlights the exposure of the poor in Latin America to the toxic wastes of the entire globe in ways that resonate with North American thinking about urban environmental justice, other Latin American writers have constructed quite different narratives about the city and its ecological injustices. In part, this divergence may have to do with different urban realities. As Carruthers has emphasized,

> clear correlations between race or poverty and environmental risk do not typically appear in Latin American cities. Instead, studies suggest that industrial hazards are distributed widely throughout metropolitan zones and outskirts. While factories and waste-storage facilities might be concentrated in industrial parks, in most cases they are dispersed across many neighborhoods of all social classes. The risks that lower-class and working-class urban Latin Americans face are not consistently greater than those of middle-class and upper-middle-class residents. (Carruthers 2008: 5–6).

But the difference is one of literary strategy as much as of divergent urban realities. While questions of humans' relation to urban and non-urban environments and experiences of ecological crisis loom large in Latin American literature, such environments and crises are often as much allegories of social and political upheavals as they are engagements with nature itself. Jorge Marcone has shown how the journeys of the protagonist from the city to the forest and back to the city in the *novela de la selva* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

function as allegories for Latin America's engagement with modernity (Marcone 1998; cf. DeVries Ch. 4). George Handley has found a similar pattern on a more transcontinental scale in Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos,* which takes the protagonist on a voyage from a North American metropolis into the Latin American rainforest and back to the city (Handley 2011). When ecological crises surface as a topic in Latin American novels of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, they often function in a similarly double fashion as allegories for political or economic turning points. But by the same token, an ecocritical approach can unearth the ecological underpinnings of such allegories to highlight their implications for current crises of ecosystems and environmental injustices. Two novels will serve as examples of such a reading: the Brazilian novelist Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Não Verás País Nenhum (Memorial Descritivo*), published in 1981 during the military dictatorship, and Pedro Mairal's *El año del desierto* (2005), which engages with the Argentinian economic crisis of 2001 and the country's history at the same time that it explores environmental and multispecies justice.

Não Verás País Nenhum presents a dystopian allegory of Brazil's military dictatorship that was, at the time the novel was published, in its last few years. In Loyola Brandão's futuristic São Paulo, so-called "mili-techs" rule and have divided the city into different districts that residents can only cross into with special passes, often getting caught in violent conflicts between the mili-techs and criminal gangs. The city suffers from intense heat, drought, and crowding, from which the privileged shelter in "Superquadras Climatizadas" (Loyola Brandão 1981: 297). Slums proliferate, basic services have been rationed or have disappeared, and the media are censored. Civil liberties have been abrogated: Souza, the novel's protagonist and first-person narrator, is a former history professor who has been blacklisted. When he finds himself one morning with a mysterious hole in one hand, he begins to search not just for medical help but also the ontological explanation for something that should not be logically possible, and his life begins to degrade. His wife's nephew, who is part of the regime, moves strangers into his apartment; his wife moves out and disappears; and as his physical space shrinks, his options for action equally diminish. National space also shrinks: the military regime has sold some northeastern parts of Brazil to other countries as "Multinational Reserves", and displaced persons from these areas end up in Souza's apartment. Souza himself is gradually pushed out of his apartment by these new arrivals and his nephew. He meanders around various sites in and beyond São Paulo, witnessing many of the city's darkest sides. As Souza's wanderings progress, Loyola Brandão articulates a scathing critique of Brazil's so-called "Economic Miracle" and the market-driven economy the military dictatorship fostered with the help of enormous loans from the IMF and the

World Bank, as well as of the growth of socio-economic inequality under this regime.

Nature forms a surprisingly central part of this satirical and speculative portrait of urban and national life under a dictatorship. *Não Verás País Nenhum* has recently come to be seen as an environmentalist novel and has been included in the canon of "cli-fi", climate fiction, because of the outsized role that intense heat, drought, and water shortages play in its portrayal of São Paulo[5]. Extreme heat functions as an allegory for the way in which daily urban life becomes unlivable under conditions of extreme political oppression, but it is described in its very literal consequences in ways that resonate with climate change: water shortages that in recent years have become a bitter part of urban reality in São Paulo and heat pockets so intense that they instantly kill unprotected pedestrians. The entire Amazon basin and large parts of the rest of Brazil have turned into the largest desert in the world. Animals have completely died out, and plants have become a luxury commodity available only to rich collectors who buy them in art galleries and water them illegally. The livable and aesthetically pleasing parts of nature, in this scenario typical of environmental injustice, have become the privilege of the wealthy elite.

As his nephew takes him farther and farther away from his apartment, Souza witnesses the city itself disintegrating under the impact of heat and political oppression:

> À medida que andávamos, os bairros iam se modificando, os conjuntos residenciais eram mais simples, cada vez mais feios, maltratados. Cruzamos uma grande avenida e mergulhamos numa zona em completa decadência. Mais um pouco, atravessamos blocos de ruínas sombrias (Loyola Brandão 1981: 238).

"Ainda estamos em São Paulo?" Souza asks (Loyola Brandão 1981: 229), in a first indication that he is losing his ability to cognitively map the city in which he has lived all his life. He undergoes a momentary reprieve when he runs into a fellow history professor, Tadeu Pereira, a friend who has also been blacklisted. Pereira, it turns out, runs a secret compound on the outskirts of São Paulo where he raises a few animals and grows real vegetables, in a glimpse of a resistance movement. But when a hungry mob discovers the secret farm and consumes or destroys all it has to offer, Pereira lapses into depression and commits suicide, and Souza's own experience of urban space becomes ever more disjointed. Suffering from hunger and being arrested by security forces, he

5 The novel's ecological dimensions have been explored by Gouveia (2017a and 2017b) and Pereira dos Santos and Libanori (2018); it has been analyzed as climate fiction by Anderson (2019).

becomes more and more disoriented as he is transported in prison trucks to parts of the city he does not know, and as he is chased away from neighborhoods he does not recognize.

At the end of the novel, the loudspeakers of "O Esquema" announce that a giant concrete marquee has been constructed as a shelter from the sun – obviously an absurd and cynical project of urban climate resilience, and Souza is transported to this shelter. "Digo que nem saímos de São Paulo. Tenho a impressão que conheço aquelas ruínas de freeway que se vê aqui", a woman with whom Souza strikes up an acquaintance remarks. But he dismisses even this rudiment of spatial recognition: "Podem ser de qualquer estrada. Eram todas iguais" (Loyola Brandão 1981: 353). The city has vanished as a recognizable entity, let alone as a livable space: none of the refugees under the marquee know whether they are still inside São Paulo, or if not, how far from the city they might be. Even as the physical city crumbles, its psychological representations evaporate for the refugees who are no longer able to recognize or map it: the ultimate consequence of environmental injustice is the narrative disappearance of the metropolis.

While Souza waits under the marquee, he discovers a lonely plant and the remote possibility of some rain on the horizon: a weak hope for at least temporary relief from the environmental crisis that may or may not materialize. Loyola Brandão's novel, then, remains relentlessly dystopian in its joint portrait of injustice in the environmental as well as civic domains. But it has become an increasingly important text in the decades since its publication even as political conditions in Brazil have changed, as its vision of warming climate and intensifying injustice has turned out to be increasingly prophetic of the challenges many other cities face under conditions of global climate change.

The vanishing metropolis is also the structuring motif of the Argentinian novelist Pedro Mairal's *El año del desierto* (2005). The novel describes the one-year journey of the protagonist, María Valdéz Neylan, through Argentinian landscapes that allegorize stages of the nation's history all the way back to the moment of European arrival. Starting in Buenos Aires at about the time of the 2001 financial crash, María works as a receptionist at the financial company Suárez & Baitos. She loses her job when the streets become insecure and she can no longer commute to work, and the city and her own life gradually decline. She works as a nurse's assistant in a hospital, as a maid, and finally as a prostitute before moving out to the countryside. After some time in a poor farming community, she falls in among bandits, and finally ends up living with an indigenous tribe. When the Indians undertake an exploratory survey of Buenos Aires, she is captured by her former bosses, now turned savages and cannibals,

and deported onto a ship that takes her back to the country of her ancestors, Ireland, from where she writes her account.

The novel's chronological structure – its move backward through historical periods as María moves forward in space and ages by a year – has been commented on in detail and with great lucidity, as has its critique of finance capital and of military and other dictatorships (Campisi 2019; Zimmer 2013). What befalls Buenos Aires and gradually erases it over the course of the novel is called the "intemperie" – a term that fluctuates between several different meanings. It means economic crisis. It refers to the collapse of effective government and military conflict between different political factions. It also evokes a both political and ecological process whereby Argentina's provinces rebel against the capital and gradually invade it, reconverting it to countryside. Further, it is mentioned in connection with an environmental crisis that brings heat and floods – climate change, in other words. And it seems to refer to an ontological crisis whereby areas that are affected by the "intemperie" turn into wastelands, with buildings not just falling into ruin, but simply disappearing. As the concept of the "intemperie" oscillates between these different meanings, it evokes layers of injustice that range from the present to the colonial past and from local urban space to the global networks of imperialism and capital markets.

El año del desierto is detailed and graphic in its portrayal of the structures of injustice that propel María from a middle-class life into various forms of prostitution, slavery, and exploitation. Her bodily and psychological condition, the food and clothing she has access to, and the kinds of labor she learns to perform clearly signal her gradual deterioration. Already in the different districts of Buenos Aires she moves through, and afterwards in the landscapes she traverses, María is incessantly silenced, constrained, exploited, abused, beaten, abducted, robbed, raped, and held captive, mostly by men, more rarely by other women. Through the declines and humiliations María has to endure, *El año del desierto* foregrounds a long history of gender injustice. It also, almost invariably, juxtaposes the treatment of women with the treatment of nonhumans. This parallel is most obvious in the animal character that accompanies María through almost her entire story: a dog that originally belongs to the neighbors to whom María's father rents their suburban house after he and María move downtown. This dog, sometimes called Anit and more often Negra, barks insistently at María when she goes to collect the rent in the first phase of the crisis, to María's surprise:

> No paraba de ladrar, como si estuviera advirtiéndome todo lo que me iba a pasar en los meses siguientes, todas las penurias que íbamos a terminar pasando juntas. Era raro

> porque siempre le ladraba a papá y no a mí; esa mañana parecía realmente querer decirme algo. (Mairal 2005: 34)

When María goes back at a later and more destitute stage when the house itself has collapsed, Negra starts to follow her. And she keeps reappearing at every stage of María's journey through Argentina, though it is not always clear how she manages to follow her. The dog ages far more than María: "ya estaba vieja y huesuda", María comments during her stay with the indigenous "ú" tribe toward the end of the novel (Mairal 2005: 260). Negra is left behind on the shore when María is put on a rowboat that takes her toward the ship to Europe: "Avanzamos hacia atrás mirando la orilla. Oí el ladrido y la vi a la *Negra* ladrándome, mi sombra, mi perra vieja. Se perdió en la costa. Se habrá sumado a las jaurías que corrían por el campo o se la habrán comido los hombres que se quedaron" (Mairal 2005: 272, emphasis in the original). Negra functions, then, as María's animal alter ego, and perhaps also as the quintessentially Argentinian part of herself that she has to leave behind as she departs for the land of her European ancestors. The dog stands for the domestication of nature that gradually unravels as the novel moves backward in time, from urban commodity consumption to rural small-scale farming, to hunting and gathering, and finally to the indigenous stewardship of nature. Negra is the residue of the urban connection with the nonhuman world that remains with María almost until the end. But she also signals the violence and brutality that is inflicted on nature in this process of domestication, and the invisibility that so often afflicts domestic animals, women, and more rarely nonwhite characters in the novel. Through the parallels between these mistreatments, *El año* foregrounds what I have called multispecies justice: it portrays humans as inextricably entangled with animals and sometimes even with trees, and all caught in the same networks of inequality and injustice (cf. Heise 2016: Ch. 5).

The city of Buenos Aires also deteriorates as María and Negra do. María first lives in an apartment complex that is gradually turned into a sort of fortress by its residents as a defense against rural invaders – similar to the fortified apartment complex Souza inhabits at the beginning of *Não Verás Pais Nenhum*. Like Souza, María is forced to leave the complex and has increasing difficulty recognizing even familiar boulevards and plazas as the "intemperie" erases the city: "La calle estaba alfombrada de volantes. Agarré uno. Decía: 'La intemperie que el Gobierno no quiere ver'. Tenían fotos de una cuadra antes y después de la intemperie. En el *antes*, había casas una al lado de la otra y, en el *después*, se veían sólo los baldíos" (Mairal 2005: 15, emphasis in the original). As the building residents look at a map of city districts affected by the advancing "intemperie", "era

como una lista demuertos" (Mairal 2005: 48). Later, María moves through neighborhoods she barely knows – as does Souza – before migrating to the countryside.

The city itself shrinks as the countryside overruns it: "La Provincia ha decidido que el municipio de la Capital ya no tenga 18 mil hectáreas sino 4 mil" (Mairal 2005: 141), and "[e]l campo se estaba comiendo la ciudad" (Mairal 2005: 149). Environmental changes contribute to its deterioration, with warming temperatures, a monstrously flooded river, and an unprecedented snowfall (Mairal 2005: 31, 117, 121). Buenos Aires gradually loses its material reality: "El avance de la intemperie me había hecho sentir que toda la ciudad, a medida que se borraba de la realidad, debía quedar grabada en mi cabeza. Yo tenía la obligación [. . .] de memorizar cada rincón, cada calle, cada fachada, y no dejar que los nuevos terrenos baldíos se superpusieran sobre la nitidez de mi recuerdo" (Mairal 2005: 176). The "intemperie" that the novel revolves around, then, unfolds from its historical urban center in Buenos Aires in 2001 through concentric circles of environmental and especially multispecies injustice that spread out to the Americas and Europe and far back into the history of humans' domestication of nature. Modern economic globality, through the backward temporal movement, gradually vanishes along with the city of Buenos Aires, which shrinks and becomes increasingly diffuse. It is replaced by a different globality that encompasses both humans and nonhumans – characterized by relationships of violence and oppression between humans and their nonhuman Others, but also allowing for relationships of solidarity and even identification, as particularly María's stay with the indigenous ú tribe makes clear.

In North American novels and films that focus on social and environmental injustice, cities sometimes persist while their natural components are degraded and inhabitants lose their health or lives; but in many cases, they are destroyed in a spectacular manner, with flood waves or hurricanes smashing them to pieces. Cities in Latin American novels vanish under the onslaught of environmental change and political injustice in more subtle ways, even as the main characters survive – though barely. While effective resistance is not within the power of the protagonists I have discussed here, their survival and their narratives function as stinging reminders and scathing critiques of economic modernity and global capitalism. Climate change – whether it is oppressive urban heat in São Paulo or unprecedented snowfall in Buenos Aires – allegorizes the impact of global networks of power and finance that ultimately erase even cities with deep histories. In the context of the Anthropocene, such political allegories acquire literal meanings by staging the ways in which global ecological change reinforces existing structures of social and environmental injustice. As built urban structures become unrecognizable, diffuse, or disappear, the structures of environmental injustice that have shaped them emerge all the more clearly.

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