



***GREENING THE MEDICAL HUMANITIES: THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE
BODY IN CONVERSATION***

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EDITORIAL

The theme for this volume of the *Postgraduate Journal for Medical Humanities*, entitled 'Greening the Medical Humanities: The Environment and the Body in Conversation', was first decided in 2022 and now feels a more relevant choice than ever. In an era defined by the growing climate crisis, this volume's focus on our relationship to the environment and the impact on health is as pertinent as it is vital. We are delighted to feature a selection of articles that explore literary and filmic representations of the relationship between environmental studies and medical humanities. In bringing these two academic fields together, we hope this volume's interdisciplinarity will begin important conversations in the trans-national medical humanities community and beyond.

Across the interpretations of this theme, you will find a broad range of not only topics and sub-disciplines but also forms of academic work; we begin with our more conventional essays, moving from the urban landscape to the Nez Perce County to the seascape. From analyses of the figure of the zombie in twentieth- and twenty-first-century horror films and that of the pirate in nineteenth-century maritime literature to an exploration of indigenous ecology and language, this collection considers various angles to study the body and its environments. We are pleased to also showcase the growing interdisciplinary nature of our journal with an interview with Carol Barrett and a selection of her poetry. To consolidate this thought-provoking volume, we end with two book reviews that highlight the breadth of this theme: a review of Anne Whitehead's *Relating Suicide* (2023) and Andy Brown's *The Tree Climbing Cure* (2023).

Not only is this journal growing in its interdisciplinarity, but also in its scope as an international journal. Once again, we were honoured to receive submissions from more local postgraduate researchers at the University of Exeter to further afield. From institutions within the UK – Bristol, Durham, and UCL – to those overseas in California, we are thrilled to present such a range of innovative research across disciplines.

We could not have produced this volume without the support and hard work of all those involved; our thanks go out to our editorial boards of the past two years who have been so dedicated to the success of this volume. We also thank our contributors and peer reviewers for their patience, commitment, and enthusiasm throughout this process. We would also like to thank the Exeter HASS PGR team for their ongoing administrative help, especially Jane Tanner and the CaMS Digital Team, for making the digital publication of this volume possible.

We hope you find this volume and its range of articles inspiring, thoughtful, and helpful.

Iris Gioti and Caitlin Sturrock

Editors-in-Chief of the 2024 volume of *The Postgraduate Journal of Medical Humanities*

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

CAROL BARRETT began writing poetry when counseling widowed women, as a support to their bereavement process. She has since earned a second Ph.D. in Creative Writing; the first was in Clinical Psychology. Carol has published three volumes of poetry, most recently *READING WIND* – poems inspired by her father, a country doctor, farmer, and musician. She has also published a book of creative nonfiction, *PANSIES*, the first book in English about the Apostolic Lutheran community – a group of primarily Finnish descent – for those outside the fold. Carol's poems have appeared in magazines in nine countries and in over fifty anthologies. *JAMA* has published several poems about her father, and her grandfather – also a country doctor. Carol has taught poetry to students ranging from kindergarten through doctoral candidates.

DOMINIC GILANI is a PhD student at the University of Bristol. His research centres on ecology and class dynamics in Shakespearean drama.

ARVIAN HESKETH is a third year PhD researcher in English Literature at the University of Exeter. He commenced his BA at the University of Exeter in 2015 and subsequently MA in 2018. His research focuses on the cultural dimensions of race and gender in the Victorian era. His AHRC SWWDTP-funded thesis examines how the idea of mixed-race motherhood found fictional form across a range of literary genres from the mid to late-Victorian era.

OLIVIA HO is pursuing a PhD in English at UCL, where she is examining the interstitial city in urban speculative fiction from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* onwards. She has a BA in English from UCL, where she was awarded the 2013 John Morley Prize and two John Oliver Hobbes Memorial Prizes, and an MSc in Literature and Modernity from the University of Edinburgh. Before returning to academia, she spent eight years in journalism, most recently as arts editor and chief book reviewer of *The Straits Times*.

LAURA WILDGOOSE completed her MA with Distinction at Durham University in 2022, and is currently working at Barrow-in-Furness Public Library. Her research interests include North American Indigenous Literature, the body, Disability Studies and the Medical Humanities, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory.

YIWEI (GISELLE) ZHANG is an MA student majoring in Comparative Literatures and Cultures at the School of Modern Languages, University of Bristol. She is also completing an MA in

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The Undecidable Undead: Zombies as a Deconstruction of Humanity

Olivia Ho

'In a world where the dead are returning to life', remarks a character in the George A. Romero zombie film *Land of the Dead* (2005), 'the word "trouble" loses much of its meaning'.¹ Neither living nor dead, the zombie challenges and collapses the ultimate binary of life and death. In this paper I will trace how two seminal films — Romero's American horror classic, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), and British pandemic thriller *28 Days Later* (2002) — deconstruct notions of humanity through the undecidable figure of the zombie.² Undecidability is an attempt by French philosopher Jacques Derrida to reveal how dualisms are always already troubled, and how their opposing meanings are generated by this very indeterminacy.³ Through a deconstructionist approach, this paper will examine how the paradox generated by the undecidable undead troubles viewers' relationships with their bodies, drastically undermines the system of order within society, and translates the anxieties of their environment into apocalyptic horror.

The zombie is popularly defined as an ambulatory corpse that has been converted from the living or resurrected from the dead without regaining consciousness or its former personality. Jamie Russell observes in his history of zombie cinema, *Book of the Dead*, that the zombie is unique in the catalogue of popular culture's major monsters in that it has almost no literary antecedents, unlike its fellow undead, the vampire and Frankenstein's monster, who may cite as their heritage the Gothic novels of Bram Stoker and Mary Shelley.⁴ The fear of the dead eating the living has been present in literature as early as the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in which the goddess Ishtar seeks to get her way by threatening to knock down the Gates of the Netherworld and 'let the dead go up to eat the living! And the dead will outnumber the living!'⁵ But the closest that the zombie, as we know it today, has to originary literature in the Western canon is American writer William Seabrook's travelogue *The Magic*

¹ *Land of the Dead*, dir. by George A. Romero (Universal Pictures, 2005).

² *Night of the Living Dead*, dir. by George A. Romero (Continental Distributing, 1968); *28 Days Later*, dir. by Danny Boyle (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2002). Subsequent footnotes will refer to the former as *Night*.

³ Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 220–22.

⁴ Jamie Russell, *Book of the Dead: The Complete History of Zombie Cinema* (Surrey: FAB Press, 2007), p. 7.

⁵ *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. by Maureen Gallery Kovacs (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 54.

Island (1929), which explores Haitian voodoo lore. In it, Seabrook describes meeting what he claims were three zombies enslaved as labourers on a cane field. He recounts the ‘sickening, almost panicky lapse’ he experienced on looking them in the eye:

...I thought, or rather felt, “Great God, maybe this stuff is really true and, if it is true, it is rather awful, for it upsets everything.” By “everything” I meant the natural fixed laws and processes on which all modern human thought and actions are based.⁶

Though Seabrook later rationalises what he saw – the figures had not been soulless corpses resurrected by black magic, merely drugged sleepwalkers – his instinctive reaction of ‘sickening’ remains the classic human response to the subversive threat of the zombie, which forms the core of our simultaneous fascination and repulsion for this creature that ‘upsets everything’ we know.

Seabrook’s travelogue grafted the zombie onto the American imagination, inspiring early voodoo-centric horror films such as *White Zombie* (1932) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943).⁷ *White Zombie*, directed by Victor Halperin and starring Bela Lugosi as the white Haitian voodoo master Murder Legendre, is considered the first feature-length zombie film. Both *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie*, which was directed by Jacques Tourneur, appropriate Haitian voodoo beliefs to centre white women as the victims of zombification. Gwenda Young notes that this is ‘highly ironic’, given that the fear of the living dead has been inextricably linked by cultural anthropologists with slavery and colonial exploitation. Young observes: ‘To be reduced to a physically living, yet emotionally dead slave, was what the colonised feared most’. In *White Zombie* and *I Walked with a Zombie*, however, this fear is enacted instead upon the white female body, rendering it powerless by forces associated with the Other.⁸ This eclipses how Seabrook’s travelogue was enabled by the occupation of Haiti by American forces between 1915 and 1934. Roger Luckhurst notes that when the Haitian American Sugar Company plantation Cul-de-Sac struggled to find local labour for its large-scale harvesting, they had gang bosses bring in outsiders under duress: these workers were referred to as *zombis*.⁹ The post-Romero zombie’s roots in colonial horror may seem invisible in today’s cultural imagination, though it has never truly receded far from the surface. It receives a brief nod in Romero’s second zombie film *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), when police officer Peter

⁶ William B. Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (London: George Harrap & Co., 1929), p. 101.

⁷ *White Zombie*, dir. by Victor Halperin (United Artists, 1932); *I Walked With a Zombie*, dir. by Jacques Tourneur (RKO Pictures, 1943).

⁸ Gwenda Young, ‘The Cinema of Difference: Jacques Tourneur, Race and “I Walked with a Zombie” (1943)’, *Irish Journal of American Studies*, 7 (1998), pp. 101–19 (p. 115).

⁹ Roger Luckhurst, *Zombies: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), pp. 33–36.

Washington (Ken Foree) quotes his grandfather, a voodoo priest in Trinidad: 'When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth'.¹⁰

Night of the Living Dead (hereafter *Night*) launched the zombie genre as we know it today.¹¹ Distancing it from its voodoo origins, Romero introduces two aspects to the zombie that have since become established in popular canon: infection and cannibalism. No longer the slaves of voodoo practitioners, Romero's zombies enslave others instead, feeding on the living and forcing the dead into their ranks. Yet they continue to represent what Peter Dendle calls the fear of 'human reductionism': reducing a person to no more than a body and social utility to raw labour.¹² Steven Shaviro considers zombies the 'human face of capitalist monstrosity' in a network economy where living labour is transformed into objectified labour, or 'dead labour', towards an ever-dwindling rate of return.¹³ For Luckhurst, they epitomise contemporary global problems such as overpopulation and unsustainable development, but are also 'simply us reflected back, depersonalized, flat-lined by the alienating tedium of modern existence'.¹⁴

Before the cinematic zombie reached its present gory heights, however, it got its dark, subtle start with *Night*. The film opens with Barbra (Judith O'Dea) and her brother Johnny (Russell Streiner) driving to visit their father's grave. Barbra is attacked by a 'ghoul'; Johnny is killed while struggling with it. Barbra escapes to a farmhouse and meets Ben (Duane Jones), who barricades the house against the gathering undead. Hiding in the house's cellar are young sweethearts Tom (Keith Wayne) and Judy (Judith Ridley), obnoxious businessman Harry Cooper (Karl Hardman), his wife Helen (Marilyn Eastman), and their daughter Karen (Kyra Schon). Nobody survives, not just because of the zombies but also misfortune, pettiness and stupidity. Tom and Judy die when the gas pump they are attempting to refuel Ben's truck with causes an explosion. Harry attempts to take Ben's gun and is shot in the ensuing struggle, retreating to the cellar to die from his wound; his wife Helen is killed by their infected daughter. A helpless Barbra is dragged away by her reanimated brother. Ben, the only one to survive the night, is mistaken for a zombie and killed by an armed posse. 'The living people are

¹⁰ *Dawn of the Dead*, dir. by George A. Romero (United Film Distribution, 1978).

¹¹ Kyle William Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2010), p. 61.

¹² Peter Dendle, 'The Zombie as Barometer of Cultural Anxiety', in *Monsters and the Monstrous: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. by Niall Scott (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 45–57 (p. 47).

¹³ Steven Shaviro, 'Capitalist Monsters', *Historical Materialism*, 10.4 (2002), pp. 281–90 (p. 288, p. 282).

¹⁴ Luckhurst, *Zombies*, pp. 10–11.

dangerous to each other', writes R. H. W. Dillard, 'both because they are potentially living dead should they die and because they are human with all of the ordinary human failings'.¹⁵

Greg Pollock identifies the source of the zombie's horror as the 'uncanny temporality' with which it 'cuts across the concepts of life and death and reveals them to be heuristic or contextual'.¹⁶ Where time ceases for the subject in death, it is instead infinitely deferred for the undead, who navigate that deferred space between the end of life and the beginning of death with an interminable motion. To develop Pollock's thinking in a deconstructionist vein, the zombie occupies the realm of the undecidable. It cannot conform to either polarity of a dichotomy; its meaning is predicated on an absence of presence, the presence of either life or death. It cannot be defined by reference to an existing presence, only by what is absent within it. The zombie embodies the Derridean 'trace', which is 'not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself'.¹⁷ It may be the simulacrum of the presence of humanity, but no meaning can be found within it; instead, through constantly dislocating meaning, it breaks down the humanity it refers to, both literally by dismembering and devouring it, and figuratively by undermining its systems. It is the *différance*, the element that blends difference and deferral, underlining the inescapable permeability of opposites we might wish to hold apart: life/death, absence/presence, civilisation/savagery, self/Other, Black/white, inside/outside and so forth. These structural oppositions, necessary for society to construct itself, are revealed to be far from absolute; the invasion of the zombie engenders their collapse.

Romero's zombies epitomise the paradox of Sigmund Freud's *unheimlich*, or 'uncanny', 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar'.¹⁸ In early depictions, the zombie arose from an African diasporic belief system that was wholly Other, encroaching on the *heimlich* of the white protagonists. However, Romero sets *Night* in a nondescript American landscape and fills it with ordinary characters. Even his zombies are ordinary; newscasters find themselves at a loss to describe them. 'They are ordinary-looking people', manages one. 'There is no really authentic way for us to say who or

¹⁵ R. H. W. Dillard, 'Night of the Living Dead: It's Not Just Like a Wind that's Passing Through', in *American Horror: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film*, ed. by Gregory A. Waller (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 15–29 (p. 22).

¹⁶ Greg Pollock, 'Undead is the New Green: Zombies and Political Ecology' in *Zombies Are Us: Essays on the Humanity of the Walking Dead*, ed. by Christopher M. Moreman and Cory James Rushton (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011), pp. 169–82 (p. 176).

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. by David B. Allison and Newton Garver (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 156.

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 124.

what [...] to guard yourself against'.¹⁹ If *heimlich/unheimlich* represents the most terrifying combination – a monster familiar in body but in every other way horribly unfamiliar – then the zombie is, as Kyle William Bishop puts it, the 'ideal manifestation of Freud's configuration'.²⁰ The farmhouse of *Night* is introduced as a *heimlich* setting; as Freud points out, a definition of the German *heimlich* is 'homely' or 'of the home'.²¹ Yet, recalling the Gothic haunted house, there are already elements of *unheimlich* within the farmhouse: strangers hiding in the cellar, sinister animal heads mounted on the wall, and the decomposing body of the home's owner upstairs. The house's *unheimlich* increases as the film progresses: Ben takes it apart for wood to barricade the entrances and breaks off table legs to use as firebrands. The house regains some *heimlich* in the form of security, but visually its interior has been utterly scrambled into an unfamiliar configuration of war. Psychologically, it deepens in *unheimlich*, as is evident in Barbra's catatonia. Bishop observes that she grasps at the last vestiges of *heimlich* in domestic items like a lace doily, but continues to regress into a child-like incoherence from which she never emerges.²²

The zombies themselves represent the return of the familiar because of the original humanity they share with the living. To be confronted by the undead is to be confronted by bodies similar to one's own, only ravaged by absence. This is most horrifying when the undead body is not just familiar but familial, which occurs twice in *Night*. Johnny returns as a zombie, grabbing his sister with the same driving gloves he wore while alive. Paralysed by his reappearance, Barbra is dragged off to be devoured by the horde outside.²³ The second instance is the destruction of the Cooper family: Harry is shot by Ben in a struggle and retreats to the cellar to die; later, Helen rushes down to find that Karen has succumbed to infection and is gnawing on Harry's arm, gruesomely literalising Steven Bruhm's claim that 'Gothic children threaten the role of the parent by consuming or incorporating that parent's power'.²⁴ As her undead daughter advances, chin smeared with her father's blood, Helen is unable to do anything besides repeat 'Poor baby...' as Karen stabs her with a sharp trowel fourteen times.²⁵ Barbra and Helen's inability to assimilate the rupture of *heimlich/unheimlich* leads to their deaths, as the family unit devours itself.

¹⁹ *Night*, 32:48-33:11. All *Night* time-stamps are taken from the 2007 Metrodome DVD release.

²⁰ Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, p. 111.

²¹ Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 126.

²² Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, pp. 116–17.

²³ *Night*, 1:25:45-26:06.

²⁴ Steven Bruhm, 'The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 259–76 (p. 267).

²⁵ *Night*, 1:24:44.



Fig. 1 Karen eats her father (*Night*, 1:24:29)

Romero was offered a budget to shoot in colour but opted instead for black and white.²⁶ This stark visual style reflects the racial politics that undercut the film, although race is never foregrounded in the dialogue. Dillard remarks that the one extraordinary thing about this otherwise ordinary group of Americans is that they never once comment on the Black man assuming natural leadership of the group.²⁷ Richard Dyer notes that Jones' casting sets Ben visibly apart from the undead, who are entirely white and at times indistinguishable from the living. Dyer argues that the fear of losing control of one's body, as well as one's ability to control other bodies in terms of the capitalist economy, are fundamental to the heart of whiteness; the boundaries of the white body are then spectacularly transgressed and undermined in the course of the film.²⁸ Romero has maintained in interviews that the character of Ben was not written to be of a particular race; Jones was cast simply because he auditioned well.²⁹ The film's finale, however, is replete with the imagery of racial politics. Ben, the only member of the group to survive the night, emerges from the cellar only to be killed by law enforcement. 'Good shot', says the sheriff, 'that's another one for the fire'.³⁰ It is unclear if Ben was simply mistaken for a zombie, or if the visible aspect of his alterity – that of his race – was sufficient for the white sniper to class him as Other from afar and mark him for execution. The

²⁶ Elliott Stein, *The Night of the Living Dead*, *Sight and Sound*, 39.2 (1970), p. 105.

²⁷ Dillard, *Night of the Living Dead*, p. 19.

²⁸ Richard Dyer, 'White', *Screen*, 29.4 (1988), pp. 44–65 (pp. 59–63).

²⁹ Alan Jones, *Rough Guide to Horror Movies* (London & New York: Rough Guides, 2005), p. 118.

³⁰ *Night*, 1:33:33.

final shots of the film are close-up stills in which Ben's corpse is dragged out of the house with meat hooks and dumped on a bonfire. With *Night's* release three years after the Watts Riots of 1965 and in the same year as Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, the indiscriminate shooting and burning of a Black man onscreen can only be read as Romero's scathing rebuke of the state of racial politics in America.

In the violence of *Night* are also echoes of the Vietnam War. A television newscaster reports that a 'search and destroy operation' will be carried out against the zombies.³¹ Sumiko Higashi sees this as a reference to search and destroy missions in Vietnam; one such mission instigated the My Lai massacre of hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians, also in 1968.³² 'We killed nineteen of them in this area', says an official interviewed on television proudly in *Night*, echoing the obsessive body counts of Vietnam war reportage.³³ Romero plays upon the viewers' horror at the zombie, encouraging the celebration of their destruction, then calls into question that same indiscriminate destruction of the Other being committed in the real world.

In a film that pushes for uncompromising realism, what is most real in *Night* is the corporeal. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy underscores the identification of self with body, writing that 'our body isn't just ours, but *us, ourselves*, even unto death, meaning its death and decomposition, in which we can be, and are, identically decomposed'.³⁴ Bodies are violently decomposed in *Night*: first figuratively, as disembodied hands seem to burst repeatedly through the walls of the house; then literally, as Tom and Judy's attempt to escape by refuelling the truck results in them being blown up and the zombies devouring their charred remains. For effect, Romero brought in actual animal entrails for extras to gnaw on. The camera lingers on two zombies fighting over a small intestine, then another nibbling on a hand almost indistinguishable from its own pair.³⁵ Insides are violently exposed to the outside, and only regain their interiority by entering another set of insides. Nancy argues that 'the body's exteriority and alterity include the unbearable', that it must put outside and separate from itself the excess of its own life, concerning which the soul 'enjoins itself to silence'.³⁶ Scenes of dismemberment and cannibalism viscerally muddle such distinctions, taking the

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1:18:32.

³² Sumiko Higashi, 'Night of the Living Dead: A Horror Film about the Horrors of the Vietnam Era', in *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*, ed. by Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 175–88 (p. 182).

³³ *Night*, 1:19:29.

³⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. by Richard A. Rand (New York City, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 157. Emphasis original.

³⁵ *Night*, 1:14:58-15:18.

³⁶ Nancy, *Corpus*, p. 157.

decomposition of the viewers' identity to unbearable extremes. Nancy's figurative expression, 'A body's an explosion', becomes horrifyingly literalised here.³⁷ To see the boundaries of the body burst and its contents be digested by the contents of another body is to encroach upon the wholeness of the soul.

Cannibalism features less prominently in British director Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*; instead, infection emerges as the dominant theme. A zoonotic disease ravages London's population after animal liberation activists free a chimpanzee from a research laboratory, unaware that the primate, strapped down and forced to watch looped television footage of real-world violence, has developed a highly contagious virus called Rage that spreads through bodily fluids. Twenty-eight days later, bicycle courier Jim (Cillian Murphy) awakens from a coma to discover a London in ruins. Along with hardened survivalist Selena (Naomie Harris), cab driver Frank (Brendan Gleeson) and Frank's teenage daughter Hannah (Megan Burns), Jim leaves London following a radio broadcast promising a cure. They find its source in a country mansion that Major West (Christopher Eccleston) and his soldiers have turned into a military barracks, but the promise of salvation soon turns sinister.

28 Days Later catalysed what critics have since termed the 'Zombie Renaissance'.³⁸ It was released in 2002 – the same year as the first film in the highly tenacious *Resident Evil* series – and was soon followed by the likes of British 'zom-com' *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Land of the Dead*, Romero's own return to the genre after a twenty-year hiatus.³⁹ *28 Days Later* is significant for the way it reconfigured zombification — the loss of personality and rationality, replaced by unstoppable bloodlust — as a viral epidemic. The Rage virus literalises French philosopher René Girard's concept of contagious violence. Girard, alert to the polysemic nature of the plague, finds it can be a 'transparent metaphor for a certain reciprocal violence that spreads, literally, like the plague';⁴⁰ in this environment, any counterviolence turns out to be the same as violence and, 'in cases of massive contamination, the victims are helpless, not necessarily because they remain passive but because whatever they do proves ineffective or makes the situation worse'.⁴¹ Selena tells Jim: 'If somebody's got infected, you've got between ten and twenty seconds to kill them. It might be your brother or your sister or your oldest friend, it makes no difference. If it happens to you, I'll do it in a heartbeat'.⁴² She has

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic*, p. 16.

³⁹ *Shaun of the Dead*, dir. by Edgar Wright (Universal Pictures, 2004).

⁴⁰ René Girard, 'The Plague in Literature and Myth', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 15.5 (1974), pp. 833–850 (p. 836).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *28 Days Later*, 30:16-27. All timestamps are taken from the 2003 Twentieth Century Fox DVD release.

demonstrated this earlier on her infected companion Mark (Noah Huntley); Mark barely manages a plea of 'Wait' before Selena hacks him to pieces with the kind of instinctive pragmatism that Helen Cooper conspicuously failed in *Night* to exercise on her zombie daughter.⁴³ Rationality and sentiment are the two elements of humanity that the infected represent an absence of. Where sentiment leads to the destruction of many characters in *Night*, in *28 Days Later* rationality devours sentiment, and must do so in seconds. 'In a heartbeat' carries both literal and figurative significance: the infection is carried through blood, so it would literally take a heartbeat for it to spread through the body; the heart is also regarded as the figurative seat of sentiment, thus it is ironic that it would take a beat of that same heart to extinguish such sentiment.

It is this speed that most distinguishes Boyle's apocalypse from the shuffling pace of Romero's. *28 Days Later's* infected are incredibly fast, which has caused many genre purists to disqualify them as zombies. 'ZOMBIES DON'T RUN!' declares *Shaun of the Dead* star Simon Pegg in an article for *The Guardian*.⁴⁴ The quick undead may be 'bereft of poetic subtlety', as Pegg puts it, but speed is an appropriate trait for 21st-century terror; the hyperconnectivity and mobility of the globalised world is reflected in the rate at which infection conquers it, taking just the titular twenty-eight days to devastate the United Kingdom. Julia Echeverría-Domingo considers contemporary zombies 'symptomatic indexes of the invisible and spontaneous threats that, like emerging diseases, jeopardize our present condition'.⁴⁵ *28 Days Later* was released in the UK in November 2002 – around the same time that SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), also of zoonotic origin, broke out in Guangdong, China. In a contemporary review, scientist Harold Varmus in *The New York Times* notes the film's 'disturbing significance' with regards to current events.⁴⁶ Though *28 Days Later* began production long before SARS surfaced, it draws on a long-held fear of viral outbreak that spreads too fast for government containment strategies or public awareness to catch up with. Jordan S. Carroll finds resonances between the Rage virus and real-world diseases such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy or AIDS.⁴⁷ HIV, like Rage, originated in chimpanzees. Luckhurst makes a grim link between Rage and the zombie's historical origins: due to a high

⁴³ Ibid., 29:00-10.

⁴⁴ Simon Pegg, 'The Dead and the Quick', *The Guardian*, 4 November 2008, section Film <<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/nov/04/television-simon-pegg-dead-set>> [accessed 18 November 2023].

⁴⁵ Julia Echeverría-Domingo, 'The Rise of the Outbreak Genre: 28 Days Later and the Digital Epidemic', *ESC*, 44.3 (2018), pp. 49–66 (p. 51), doi:10.1353/esc.2018.0008.

⁴⁶ Harold Varmus, 'FILM; Virus as Metaphor: Microbiology and "28 Days Later"', *The New York Times*, 6 July 2003, section Movies <<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/movies/film-virus-as-metaphor-microbiology-and-28-days-later.html>> [accessed 28 January 2023].

⁴⁷ Jordan S. Carroll, 'The Aesthetics of Risk in Dawn of the Dead and 28 Days Later', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 23.1 (2012), pp. 40–59 (p. 49).

prevalence of AIDS in New York's immigrant Haitian population in the early years of the crisis, it was dubbed 'an epidemic Haitian virus', with the *Journal of the American Medical Association* speculating in an article headlined 'Night of the Living Dead' that the virus was spread by voodoo rituals using human blood.⁴⁸ The demonisation of the foreign Other, now refigured as the carrier of viral disease, continues to find new forms in an irrevocably sped-up world marked by mass migration and xenophobia.

In *28 Days Later*, a single drop of bodily fluid can infect you, reminiscent of the paranoia around contagion in the AIDS crisis. Frank is infected when a crow pecking at a Rage victim's corpse drips blood into his eye. The infected increase the rate of contagion by vomiting blood copiously onto their victims while trying to eviscerate them. This action epitomises what philosopher Julia Kristeva calls the effect of 'abjection', the 'abject' being the blurred condition between life and death, as well as other polarities that all human subjects try to overlook or avoid – to ab-ject – in an attempt to defy their object-ness. Being brought into contact with such base fluids as a torrent of bloody vomit challenges the human subject's understanding of self by disturbing 'identity, system, [and] order'.⁴⁹ *28 Days Later* embodies abjection onscreen by having the subject's sense of self literally effaced by contact with bodily fluids and replaced by mindless rage; though the audience undergoes no physical infection, they must visually partake in the transformation and so their own sense of self comes under attack. The repulsive depiction of the infected places both characters and audience in a state of abjection they cannot evade.

28 Days Later begins by juxtaposing images of beauty with images of violence and ends by muddling both in the same visual. In contrast with *Night's* black-and-white cinematography, the use of colour in *28 Days Later* creates an arthouse apocalypse. *NYT* critic A. O. Scott commends its shots of 'ethereal, almost painterly beauty'; apocalyptic London 'takes on the faded, melancholy quality of a Turner watercolor; a field of flowers looks as if it were daubed and scraped directly onto the screen'.⁵⁰ Across almost five minutes of haunting shots, Jim wanders a London devoid of humanity, a jarring figure in his green hospital pyjamas. His desolate flânerie echoes, as Stacey Abbott points out, other post-apocalyptic Londons, such as John Wyndham's British cold-war novel *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) or

⁴⁸ Paul Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), qtd. in Luckhurst, p. 181.

⁴⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982).

⁵⁰ A. O. Scott, '28 Days Later', *The New York Times*, 27 June 2003 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/27/movies/film-review-spared-by-a-virus-but-not-by-mankind.html>> [accessed 23 January 2023].

the science-fiction film *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961).⁵¹ Even after Jim meets other humans, points of bright colour in the landscape continue to represent both the vibrancy of survivalism and its stark loneliness, such as Frank's rooftop water collection system, a spread of colourful empty buckets whose vivid shades contrast with the pale, rainless horizon.



Fig. 2 Buckets awaiting rain (*28 Days Later*, 39:21)

A more complicated dialogue between beauty and violence emerges when Jim, Selena and Hannah reach Major West's headquarters. At first the manor, with its stately grounds and opulent rooms, seems a haven of security; however, they soon discover West intends to let his men rape Hannah and Selena, having 'promised them women, because women mean a future'.⁵² When Jim tries to warn his friends, West orders his execution and forces Selena and Hannah to 'look a little more presentable' in lavish red gowns that belonged to the previous lady of the house.⁵³ The men dress the women up to dress up the sexual violence to come, substituting aesthetics for ethics to ease their consciences. The women's gleaming red gowns stand in contrast to the dark uniforms of the men guarding them. As in the shots of the depopulated city, beauty hints at the presence of inhumanity; however, the inhumanity here is to be perpetrated by men who are human but not humane.

⁵¹ Stacey Abbott, *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the 21st Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), pp. 74–75.

⁵² *28 Days Later*, 1:18:30-8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1:24:56.



Fig. 3 The women in red dresses (*28 Days Later*, 1:31:11)

The corruption of the military is one of the many facets of social collapse that a zombie narrative engenders. Science is another: it is implied that the Rage virus is the outcome of anthropocentric intervention gone awry, accidentally produced by well-intentioned scientists who meant to cure rage itself, not expecting their test subjects to be freed by equally well-intentioned activists. Religious institutions are shown, too, as nugatory: the newly-awakened Jim enters a church only to find the pews littered with its congregation's corpses, and the first Rage victim he encounters is a priest. 'What about the government?' Jim demands of Selena and Mark. 'There's always a government, they're in a plane or a bunker somewhere'. Mark replies: 'There is no government. No police, no army'.⁵⁴ Though there is a remnant of the army in the form of West's platoon, they forgo protecting civilians in favour of shooting the men and raping the women. West has rationalised the rape with utilitarian logic – if they are the only people left alive, it is their responsibility to continue the race – but his men's racist, demeaning banter undermines the clinical detachment of his reasoning. The threat of infection breaks down all ports of authority that define and delineate society, revealing it to be comprised of mere human individuals and their manifold weaknesses. Shaviro writes: 'The more rigidly boundaries are drawn between reason and desire, order and anarchy, purpose and randomness, the more they are prone to violent explosion'.⁵⁵ Society organises itself along such boundaries and creates institutions to police them; the heavier its dependence on these institutions, the more catastrophic their collapse.

⁵⁴ *28 Days Later*, 20:25-38.

⁵⁵ Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 94.

Escaping his executioners, Jim returns to rescue his companions by releasing Mailer (Marvin Campbell), an infected soldier whom West chained up in a courtyard for observation. Mailer immediately attacks his old comrades, creating chaos in the manor. Significantly, the house is filled with paintings, juxtaposing art with animalistic violence in a climactic sequence. In one shot, Jim runs into the manor's music room. As the light flickers, he disappears through a secret door in the painted wall. When the light returns, two infected soldiers have replaced Jim; the camera cuts to a close-up of Mailer's face, silhouetted against the mural, his bloodshot eyes glowing.



Fig. 4 Mailer in the music room (28 Days Later, 1:35:06)

This is one of many instances that set up a psychological parallel in the audience's mind between Jim and the infected. The scenes of Jim running around the manor are shot with the same slow-motion feature used for shots of Rage victims, essentially infecting the perception of the audience through camera tricks.⁵⁶ Though uninfected, Jim watches with clear delight as the soldiers slaughter each other, and kills three of them himself. There is nothing in *Rage*, inhuman though it may seem, that is not inherent to humanity. 'This is what I've seen in the four weeks since infection', says West. 'People killing people. Which is much what I saw in the four weeks before infection, and the four weeks before that [...] which to my mind puts us in a state of normality right now'.⁵⁷ West's brutal outlook stems from his experience conducting warfare in the name of national and international security. *28 Days Later's* release

⁵⁶ *Pure Rage: The Making of 28 Days Later*, dir. by Toby James (2002). DVD extra on the 2003 Twentieth Century Fox DVD release.

⁵⁷ *28 Days Later*, 1:13:30-50.

in 2002 was bracketed by the two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that UK prime minister Tony Blair sent British troops into. Just as *Night* evokes the violence of the Vietnam War, so may *28 Days Later* be seen as an indictment of the millennial Western military complex, which the major's last name unsubtly alludes to. West's norm of 'people killing people' may have been occluded in the past from a civilian population who prefer to remain oblivious to the foreign wars fought in their name. The violence of the Rage outbreak elides that distinction, revealing that however horrific the differences between the zombie and us, we may still essentially be the same.

The manor massacre demonstrates what Girard calls the 'dual nature of violence'.⁵⁸ One side of this theory is maleficent violence, which is derived from 'the violent impulses of society' and is contagious and self-perpetuating; the other is restorative violence, which takes the form of a ritual sacrifice made by a unanimous collective to purge maleficent violence. What Girard terms a 'sacrificial crisis' occurs when the distinctions between these impure and purifying types of violence is destroyed, whereupon 'impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community', rapidly eroding social values and jeopardising the cultural structure of society.⁵⁹ Gregory A. Waller, in his analysis of Girard's theory in relation to the undead, argues that the definitions of the two types of violence are perspectival.⁶⁰ This is certainly applicable to *28 Days Later*. From the outset, the Rage victims are clearly demarcated as vectors of maleficent violence. West sees himself as the organiser of restorative violence, with the civilians as necessary sacrifices for the regeneration of a fecund order. However, because the audience has been allied with Jim's perspective all along, they cannot view this violence as restorative, merely another variety of maleficence against characters they have become emotionally invested in. In retaliation, Jim initiates his own form of sacrificial crisis by releasing Mailer. His objective is restorative violence, which he is perspectivally empowered to deliver by the audience; however, his method is maleficent, resulting in contagion running rampant through the manor. This results in the 'violent abolition of distinctions' that marks the sacrificial crisis.⁶¹

To save his friends, Jim himself must enter a state of undecidability similar to the infected. He locates Selena in a bedroom with Corporal Mitchell (Ricci Hartnett), who means

⁵⁸ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ Gregory A. Waller, *The Living and the Undead* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010), pp. 349-51.

⁶¹ Girard, *Violence*, p. 98.

to kidnap her; what follows is a brutal hand-to-hand combat between the men which culminates in Jim sinking his thumbs into Mitchell's eyeballs. This is far from the most graphic eye violence committed in a zombie film; in *Zombi 2* (1979), a zombie drags a woman by her hair towards a sharp splinter, which slowly impales her eyeball.⁶² However, violence to the eye remains one of the most effective types of body horror in cinema, because the organ registering this violence is the same one being violated onscreen. As Carol J. Clover observes, horror privileges ocular trauma so heavily because it is the 'most self-reflexive of cinematic genres'; she notes, too, that though there is plenty of 'assaultive gazing' in horror films, it is often 'not just thwarted and punished, but actually reversed in such a way that those who thought to penetrate end up themselves penetrated'.⁶³ This is what happens to Mitchell, Selena's would-be rapist, at the peak of an ocular infection arc that spans the film, from the chimpanzee developing Rage, to Frank's infection, to Jim's putting out Mitchell's eyes. Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz note the 'undecidable status of the film's opening conceit in which screen violence is allegorized as infection'.⁶⁴ Here, as the boundary between reality and fiction is destabilised, the audience is made to feel susceptible to the contagion of violence via the cinematic gaze. As a vector of this violence, Jim takes on a similarly undecidable status in Selena's eyes; she experiences a rupture of meaning, unable to decide if Jim is still the man she loves or just another infected body to kill. She rushes towards him, machete raised, but stops short of striking him. 'That was longer than a heartbeat', says Jim.⁶⁵ Faced with the undecidable, Selena decides to stay her hand, ending the sacrificial crisis of violence. Previously a proponent of ruthlessness, she chooses to risk that heartbeat of hope in the face of overwhelming nihilism. It is this hope that can – and as *Night* shows, often does – get one turned into a zombie, but without it, one might as well be a zombie anyway.

Both *Night* and *28 Days Later* end with the zombie threat apparently contained. We know from the proliferation of sequels that this does not remain the case. Infection resurfaces in *28 Weeks Later* (2007) when an asymptomatic carrier of Rage unleashes the virus in a safe zone.⁶⁶ As of this article's publication, Boyle and writer Alex Garland have just announced their reunion in a third sequel, *28 Years Later*.⁶⁷ Romero's dead go on lurching onscreen

⁶² *Zombi 2*, dir. by Lucio Fulci (Variety, 1979).

⁶³ Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (London: British Film Institute, 1992), pp. 167–68, p. 192.

⁶⁴ Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz, 'Infection, Media and Capitalism: From Early Modern Plagues to Postmodern Zombies', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 10.2 (2010), pp. 126–47 (p. 141), doi:10.1353/jem.2011.0001.

⁶⁵ *28 Days Later*, 1:39:55.

⁶⁶ *28 Weeks Later*, dir. by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo (20th Century Fox, 2007).

⁶⁷ Michael Sun, '28 Years Later: Jodie Comer, Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Ralph Fiennes Cast in Sequel', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2024, section Film <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/apr/25/28-years-later-sequel-cast-announced-jodie-comer-aaron-taylor-johnson-ralph-fiennes>> [accessed 3 May 2024].

decades later until *Survival of the Dead* (2009), the last film he directed before his death in 2017. The legacies of these films endure into the present day in the likes of Robert Kirkman's graphic novel *The Walking Dead* (2003 to 2019) and video game *The Last of Us* (2013), both recently adapted into popular television series; the wave has also spread of late to South Korea, cresting with blockbuster action film *Train to Busan* (2016). Like their subject matter, zombie franchises are remarkably hard to kill. However, both the initial instalments in the *Night and 28 Days Later* franchises conclude by removing the threat of the zombie itself. In *Night* this serves to reinforce, not alleviate, the horror; the world is returned to normality, but one in which love, morals and value have been consumed overnight and all that is left is thoughtless violence. Kim Paffenroth argues that this is why *Night*, although the only one of Romero's six *Dead* films not to close in total apocalypse, still remains the most nihilistic.⁶⁸

Perhaps because of the utter darkness of this first night, *28 Days Later* is frequently criticised for its incongruously upbeat ending, in which Jim is shot while escaping the manor but survives. In the final scene, the infected starve to death while Selena, Hannah and Jim, recuperating in rustic idyll, signal a rescue plane by spreading strips of cloth on the grass to spell out HELLO. Film critic Roger Ebert admits he wished the plane had turned and opened fire.⁶⁹ Varmus deems it a 'superficially soothing' conclusion for an abrupt epidemic that avoids the long incubation times characteristic of more insidious real-world viruses, remarking ironically: 'Wouldn't it be better if we could confine AIDS and Ebola to Africa and SARS to Hong Kong, and then return to repair society once the microbial damage was done – done, of course, to others and not to us?'⁷⁰ The original theatrical ending had Jim dying in a hospital and Selena and Hannah, carrying guns and still in red gowns, walking through the doors towards an unknown future.⁷¹ This ending — abandoned because test audiences found it too bleak — would have been far more in keeping tonally with the rest of the film, and also achieve the apt if depressing circularity of having Jim awake in a hospital only to die in another one.

I would argue, however, that contrary to this ring structure, the theatrical ending creates a chiasmus where the film begins with an ending and ends with a beginning. In an early scene, Jim passes graffiti inside a church that reads: 'REPENT THE END IS EXTREMELY FUCKING NIGH'.⁷² The film then progresses in reverse temporality to the HELLO of the final scene, which in its pastoral verdancy appears prelapsarian. The film closes

⁶⁸ Kim Paffenroth, *Gospel of the Living Dead* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), p. 43.

⁶⁹ Roger Ebert, '28 Days Later', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 27 June 2003 <<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/28-days-later-2003>> [accessed 23 January 2023]

⁷⁰ Varmus, 'Virus as Metaphor'.

⁷¹ The alternate theatrical ending is available on the 2003 DVD release.

⁷² *28 Days Later*, 14:22.

as the world begins again, bidding farewell with a final hello. The paradox of endings in beginnings and vice versa makes the film itself an 'experience and experiment of the undecidable', to quote Derrida; yet it is this undecidability that generates any possibility for true decision, for 'there can be no moral or political responsibility without this trial and this passage by way of the undecidable'.⁷³ The deconstruction of our world through the fictional zombie apocalypse enables a more genuine generation of meaning in our understanding of our bodies, our humanity and our reality.

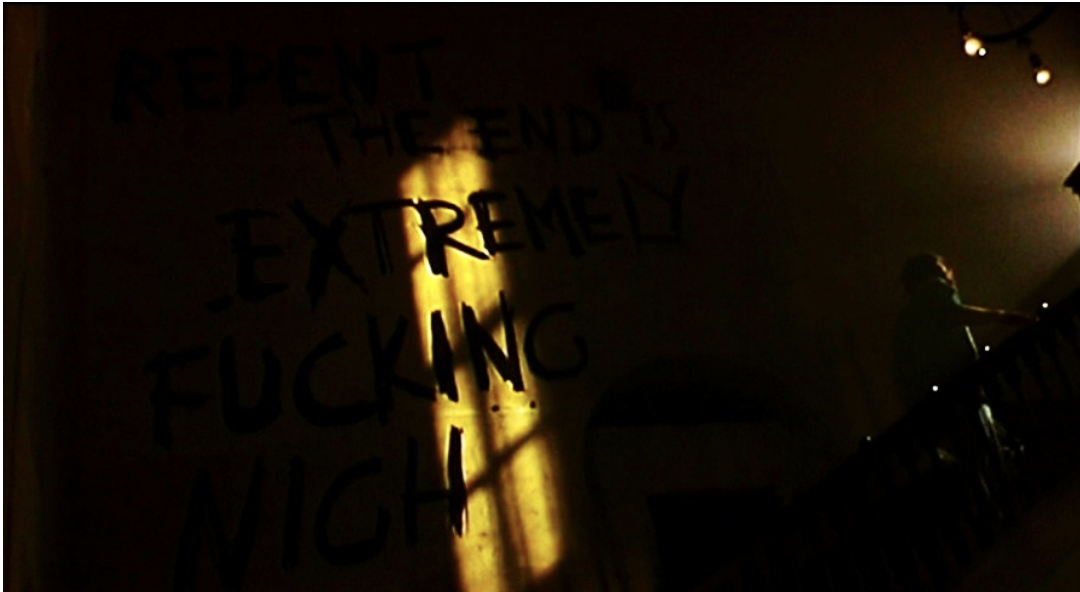


Fig. 5 Graffiti on a church wall (28 Days Later, 14:22)

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. by Samuel Weber (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1977), pp. 29–110 (p. 116).



Fig. 6 The survivors' HELLO sign (*28 Days Later*, 1:46:30)

The monstrous figure of the zombie represents the cultural anxiety of the times that shaped it. The word 'monster', after all, is etymologically traceable to the Latin *monstrare*, meaning 'to demonstrate'.⁷⁴ The zombie demonstrates the fears of the generations that raised it from the grave, whether the racial violence of the 1960s or the pandemics of the new millennium. It demonstrates our fear of alterity: the invasion of the Other, but also the inherence of the Other to ourselves, and how simple it is to become Other, whether that identification is forced upon one, like Ben, or too easily slipped into, like Jim. Above all, it demonstrates our fear of ourselves: of our own bodies, of our mortality, of every ugly aspect of humanity that the zombie exposes and the knowledge that it was always-already present within us. Our decisive understanding of our humanity is all the more meaningful for our experience with the undecidable zombie.

⁷⁴ Ken Gelder, 'Introduction to Part Three', *The Horror Reader*, ed. by Ken Gelder (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 81-83 (p. 81).

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Nez Perce Bodies, Language, and Ecology in Crisis: Beth Piatote's 'Falling Crows'

Laura Wildgoose

The short story 'Falling Crows', from Beth Piatote's (Nez Perce) wider work *The Beadworkers: Stories*, presents Indigenous language, bodies, and ecology as interconnected. Piatote's characters in this story often employ natural imagery (flora, fauna and landscape) to express physical, mental, and institutional injury. Thus, ecological objects become sites of expression and language the means. This expression is necessary because it places layers between the (institutionally racist and ableist) world and the Indigenous North American individual or group who is or are in pain.¹

Piatote's *Beadworkers* is a multi-faceted, multi-perspectival, multi-genre, and multi-form work that explores various Indigenous joys and concerns within Piatote's tribe. *Beadworkers* begins with poetry in a section entitled 'wé·tes wəx wəqí·swit / land and life' (with the pieces 'Feast I', 'Feast II' 'Feast III'). She then moves into prose in the middle sections, entitled 'Indian Wars' and 'ʔiná·txýaksa / I tell my story / I conjure my powers / I make a wish'. 'Falling Crows' occurs in this prose section and spans across the halfway point of the work as a whole, marking it as a central point of many of the collection's themes. The final section is called 'netí·telwit / human beings' and is a play retelling the myth of Antigone from a contemporary Indigenous perspective. A number of themes, techniques, and concerns from the collection appear in 'Falling Crows', revealing Piatote's central concerns within the work. For example, 'Feast I' and 'II' possess an intense ecological focus, and 'Antíkoni' explores the rights of Indigenous bodies within white institutions (as the central conflict surrounds the fate of an ancestor's remains entombed in a museum). Additionally, the prose sections contain testaments to the importance of Indigenous cultural preservation in 'Katydid', 'Beading Lesson' and 'Fish Wars'.

These broad concerns and themes of ecology, the body, and Indigenous cultural preservation are far from unique to Piatote. Well-known Indigenous North American authors

¹ Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2018), pp. 6-7. I am using the Cherokee critic Justice's definition of Indigenous as the term that I will be employing. He defines Indigenous peoples as 'the First Peoples of North America, the Aboriginal, American Indian, Native Inuit, Métis, and otherwise identified peoples who remain in the relation to the land, the ancestors, and the kinship networks, lifeways, and languages that originated in this hemisphere and continue in often besieged but always resilient forms'. He additionally uses the capital I to assert agency and 'a status of peoplehood, rather than describing an exploitable commodity'. Furthermore, Justice states that this is 'a broadly inclusive and internationally recognized term'.

such as Joy Harjo (Muscokee Creek), Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe), and Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) – to name just a few – explore similar themes, and, perhaps, as Piatote’s literary predecessors, from whom she took inspiration. Harjo and Hogan’s poetry has been deeply concerned with nature, from the 1970s and 80s until their present work,² and further established by scholars, J. Scott Bryson, Mishuana Goeman, and Stacy Alaimo.³ Harjo can be directly connected as an influence on Piatote. Piatote’s interview from 2021 shows their common views on the complexity and importance of a poet’s physical location.⁴ In the work of Harjo and Hogan, the body and nature are often as explicitly connected as they are in ‘Falling Crows’; medical trauma, death, healing, the roles of storytelling, and ecology (especially bird images) are all deeply explored throughout.

The other two potential prose influences are Erdrich and Silko. Erdrich explores similar concepts as Piatote in, for instance, *Love Medicine*, such as connections between the natural world, body, spirit, and Indigenous culture.⁵ Additionally, Piatote, Erdrich and Silko all explore the role of Indigenous American veterans. Al Carroll argues that *Love Medicine* is intensely political in its depiction of Lipsha’s attempt to join the military to gain the approval of his community, only to be turned away due to a genetic heart defect.⁶ Likewise, Carroll cites the first seventy pages of Silko’s *Ceremony* as the best depiction of Native veteran experience, and the ‘ironies of serving a nation that failed to acknowledge sacrifice’.⁷ He asks ‘[w]hat are the consequence of having so many survivors of war-time among Native people?’⁸ Then Carroll continues to explain that the best answers to this question are writers, giving Erdrich and Silko as examples of ‘poetic power’ and medical professionals.⁹

² Joy Harjo, ‘For Alva Benson, and for those who have learned to speak’, pp. 33-37; ‘Reconciliation, A Prayer’, pp. 89-90; ‘Transformations’, p. 84; ‘The Myth of Blackbirds’, pp. 106-07; ‘The Dawn Appears with the Butterflies’, pp. 120-22; ‘Songs From the House of Death’, pp. 138-40; ‘Returning From the Enemy’, pp. 149-51; ‘Protocol’, pp. 169-71; ‘I Am Not Ready to Die Yet’, pp. 179-80, in *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems: 1975-2001* (London: Norton, 2004); Linda Hogan, ‘When the Body’, pp. 5-6; ‘The Feet and Where They Travel’, p. 15; ‘We Have Walked Down Past’, p. 40; ‘Tulsa’, pp. 90-91; ‘Absences’, pp. 122-23; ‘The Red Part’, pp. 3-4, in *A History of Kindness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Torrey House Press, 2020); Linda Hogan, ‘The History of Red’, pp. 9-11; ‘Return: Buffalo’, pp. 20-21; ‘Skin’, pp.32-3; ‘Bamboo’, p. 36; ‘The Alchemists’, pp. 55-56; ‘Sickness’, p.63; ‘Glass’, p. 65-66, in *The Book of Medicines* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 1993).

³ J. Scott Bryson, ‘Finding the Way Back: Place and Space in the Ecological Poetry of Joy Harjo’, *MELUS*, 27 (2002), pp. 169-96; Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Stacy Alaimo, ‘Displacing Darwin and Descartes: The Bodily Transgressions of Fielding Burke, Octavia Butler, and Linda Hogan’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 3 (1996), pp. 47-66.

⁴ Joy Harjo, *Joy Harjo in Conversation with Beth Piatote*, online video recording, YouTube, 25 February 2021 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bCKjPYxn30&list=PL1X56BgtmAOQ2YfI8P4A8yR8UY8PYncnQ&index=1>> [accessed 12 July 2022].

⁵ Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004) p. 243. For instance, in Lipsha’s medicine of turkey hearts, in which he accidentally kills his grandfather.

⁶ Al Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags: American Indians From Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), p. 32.

⁷ Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 32; Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (London: Penguin, 2020).

⁸ Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 227.

⁹ Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 227.

Whereas these authors form part of Piatote's literary lineage, contemporary Indigenous authors such as Tommy Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho) and Tanya Tagaq (Inuit) help to understand the current trends in Indigenous literature within which Piatote is writing. Both Orange and Tagaq form part of the intersection of Indigeneity and healthcare. Orange's multi-perspectival *There there* features a young man called Tony Loneman who was born with fetal alcohol syndrome.¹⁰ Orange engages with the differences in a bodily perception of the self in Indigenous and white spaces. Loneman finds some kind of acceptance with his grandmother, who tells 'me I'm a medicine person. [...] people better know we look different because we are different. They respect that [...] we're Cheyenne people. That Indians go way back with the land'.¹¹ Loneman's character connects bodily trauma, nature, the land, and Indigenous culture at the end of *There there*. Shot through with bullet wounds, Loneman feels the wind moves right through him, hears the birds singing to him, and listens to his grandmother's voice telling him to dance. Thus, mental relief from injury is directly connected (as will also be explored in 'Falling Crows') to the land, animals, and community. Orange asserts that 'Tony isn't going anywhere'.¹²

Tagaq's *Split Tooth* presents a lack of accessible healthcare in Inuit communities, as the protagonist's uncle must be flown out to be seen in a hospital, only to find that his liver cancer is inoperable.¹³ Similarly, she watches her father get progressively sicker with a bad chest, without help.¹⁴ In this same text, the wind, wolves, and the Northern Lights are all characters in their own right. During events such as the birth of the protagonist's children, occurring in her mother-in-law's igloo, pain is mitigated by an escape into the natural world, as in this instance the Northern Lights come down and provide the protagonist with a miraculously pain-free birth.¹⁵ Thus, we can see that contemporary Indigenous literature often possesses an interrogation of healthcare systems in Indigenous communities, as well as using ecological motifs to aid in coping with bodily trauma.

Donna Haraway asserts of her work that she 'treats constructions of nature as a crucial cultural process for people who need and hope to live in a world less riddled by the domination of race, colonialism, class, gender, and sexuality'.¹⁶ I would propose the addition of disability,

¹⁰ Tommy Orange, *There There* (London: Penguin, 2018), p. 15, p. 286.

¹¹ Orange, *There There*, p. 290.

¹² Orange, *There There*, p. 290.

¹³ Tanya Tagaq, *Split Tooth* (Toronto: Penguin, 2019), p. 168.

¹⁴ Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, pp. 169-70.

¹⁵ Tagaq, *Split Tooth*, pp. 152-54.

¹⁶ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), p. 2.

and the dominant ableist hegemony, to Haraway's intersectional list; as, although it is not in the original text, disability theorist Rosemarie Garland Thompson likewise connects Haraway to her own work on disability.¹⁷ Thompson writes of Haraway that she 'offers us a model for self in a postmodern world. [...] transgressing the boundaries between animal and machine, organic and mechanical'.¹⁸ Stephanie K. Wheeler additionally emphasises the necessity for a dialogue between Indigenous and disability studies.¹⁹ Therefore, discussions of nature can be, and are often, effectively used as political tools; and Piatote's characters in 'Falling Crows' code themselves through natural imagery, potentially as a defensive, protective manoeuvre. On the other hand, it is important to note Julia R. Decook's critiques of Haraway in my use of her framework, notably that of her human, western bias and lack of the proposed neutrality.²⁰

Daniel Heath Justice additionally notes that much Indigenous literature contains commentary on the human relationship to landscape; '[w]hile the details differ across geographies and cultures, stories like this are common in every Indigenous story tradition I knows'.²¹ Rather than a naïve or Romantic notion, he advocates for this expression within storytelling or poetry as it 'helps to recognize that others beyond ourselves have identities, desires, loves, fears, and that our own behaviour can either enrich their lives or diminish them'.²² It 'connects us with one another, and with the other-than-human world'.²³ Both Mishuana Goeman and Amy De'Ath additionally emphasise that the land and Indigenous peoples are often connected, as land holds great significance in most Indigenous cultures.²⁴ Although Goeman attests to the decolonising nature of this land/community relationship, she also offers a warning about oversimplifying or, worse, romanticising this relationship.²⁵ Bryson asserts the difference between 'nature' poetry and 'ecological' poetry.²⁶ He explains that whereas nature poetry is more of a Romantic tradition, ecological poetry emerged in the latter half of the twentieth-century. Ecological poetry first creates place, then 'value space, recognizing the extent to which that very world is ultimately unknowable'.²⁷ He provides Harjo as a representative of the style, a poet who is a known influence on Piatote. Therefore,

¹⁷ Rosemarie Garland Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 114.

¹⁸ Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 114.

¹⁹ Stephanie K. Wheeler, 'Legacies of Colonialism: Toward a Borderland Dialogue between Indigenous and Disability Rhetorics, review', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 34.3 (2014), doi:10.18061/dsq.v34i3.4362.

²⁰ Julia R. Decook, 'A [White] Cyborg's Manifesto: the overwhelmingly Western ideology driving technofeminist theory', *Media, Culture & Society*, 43 (2021), pp. 1158-67.

²¹ Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 76

²² Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 77.

²³ Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 77.

²⁴ Goeman, *Mark My Words*, pp. 27-9. Amy De'Ath, 'Decolonise or Destroy: New Feminist Poetry in the United States and Canada', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 26 (2015), pp. 238-305 (pp. 267-8).

²⁵ Goeman, *Mark My Words*, p. 28.

²⁶ Bryson, 'Finding the Way Back', p. 169.

²⁷ Bryson, 'Finding the Way Back', p. 169.

although I will use the terms natural and ecological interchangeably, Piatote appears to be writing firmly in the more contemporary ecological poetic style.

Piatote connects the natural and the human in contrast to an increasingly mechanised life under contemporary America. Joy is the first one to her brother, Joseph's, side after he is brought to a hospital in Oregon after losing a 'leg, arm and cheek' in the service of the US military.²⁸ There are multiple intersectional layers to Joseph's loss, other than a lack of mobility and bodily trauma. Piatote writes that Joy 'wants to wrap her arms around him but has no idea how. So many tubes and wires!'²⁹ Perhaps this carries the idea that his injured body prevents physical intimacy, that there is isolation in the healing process if it is focused solely on the body and not the mind also. As Justice writes, '[r]elationship requires bodies; bodies connect; connections make good relationships possible and meaningful, but they're always complicated [...] So is birth, So is death'.³⁰ Further mirroring this vein, Piatote goes on,

[t]he sound of monitors is not the song of birds. The scent of disinfectant is not the aroma of skin. The blood of strangers delivered by gravity and a needle is not the blood that runs through your mother's heart when she carried you.³¹

The unromantic 'sound', 'scent', and 'delivered' of the hospital are placed in parallel to the ecological 'song', 'aroma', and 'running'. The former carries connotations of mechanisation and 'modernity' whereas the latter connotes a freer, more expressive, and natural force. Although these are neutral statements, Piatote's use of the negative implies contrast. She places the mechanical and natural worlds in contrast through shared objects. Joseph is alive due to the monitors, disinfectant, and blood transfusions; yet this physical healing is presented as sterile and contrasted with the equally necessary mental, social, and cultural healing associated with nature, his senses, other people, and his family. Therefore, although Joseph's physical injuries are treated in the hospital, Piatote emphasises the necessity of another kind of healing: the emotional or mental healing of trauma.

Joseph's injuries not only cause loss of mobility, general public perception of otherness, and his loss of the matching tattoo with his deceased father on his leg, but Lavonna Lovern and Carol Locust also note that on a cultural level '[a] spirit that takes a body has the responsibility to return it to the Creator as nearly complete as life on earth allows'.³² The central argument made in Lovern and Locust's *Native American Communities on Health and Disability*

²⁸ Beth Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2020), p. 81.

²⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 91.

³⁰ Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 111.

³¹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 91.

³² Lavonna Lovern and Carol Locust, *Native American Communities on Health and Disability: A Borderland Dialogue* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p 101; Piatote, *Beadworkers*, p. 95.

is broadly similar to Piatote, in that their research shows that (where possible) many Indigenous people prefer a blended approach to healthcare.³³ That is that they will certainly seek medical assistance to heal physical injury, but also that only treating the body ignores the trauma upon the mind and spirit.³⁴ They assert that '[o]ne of the most serious problems in the delivery of Western medical health care is that Western medical personnel tend to treat only the body'.³⁵ Traditional medical people (perhaps those such as Silas) may be called upon to help, as 'healing can occur if the afflicted one can be thought to cope with [their] illness on a physical, mental and spiritual level'.³⁶ Carroll additionally notes that 'Native veterans routinely turn to Native medicine and oral traditions [as we will see with Joseph later on] to cope with the trauma of war'.³⁷ The more ecological side of the quotation above from 'Falling Crows' additionally carries a feeling of autonomy in the word choices, as well as intimacy and an advocacy of expression. So, the natural world becomes the site of expression for the injured body and a site of mental healing. Although the physical healing that the hospital provides is extremely necessary, Piatote points to a wider neglect of Indigenous healing practices within Western medical institutions.

Justice explains that 'like the land, Indigenous bodies, whether living or dead, are ongoing sites of struggle and face constant threats'.³⁸ Not only can this statement be seen in Joseph's struggle, but it is also apparent in his uncle Silas' parallel narrative and within his knowledge of past apocalypse for Indigenous people:

In 1788 the winter was so cold that the crows froze to death and fell out of the sky mid-flight. Silas [...] saw the image repeated over and over [...]. He no longer takes it for granted that flying birds will continue on their aerial path. *What did people think, he would wonder, seeing the crows tumble [...] shiny wings flat and twisted like broken kites? Did it seem like the end of the world? [...]* Bright red paint, punctuated the winter counts: bodies covered in pustules, a gunshot wound pouring blood, an impudent flag on a military fort. Amid these scenes were images of the remarkable if not the apocalyptic [...]. It was never the end of the world. And it was always the end of the world. [...] Facts of nature that were known and safe – that flying birds would stay in the sky, or that songs would bring people home – suddenly became strange and unreliable.³⁹

In this extended quotation, from which Piatote takes the title of 'Falling Crows', events in the ecological sphere are presented as a reflection of events in the human sphere. The unnerving violence in the image of crows freezing and plummeting to their deaths is mirrored in Silas'

³³ Lovern and Locust, *Native American Communities*, pp. 90-1.

³⁴ Lovern and Locust, *Native American Communities*, pp. 102, 78.

³⁵ Lovern and Locust, *Native American Communities*, p. 82.

³⁶ Lovern and Locust, *Native American Communities*, p. 91.

³⁷ Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 10.

³⁸ Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 132.

³⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 97.

Emphasis original.

immediate, subsequent shift to the human violence of colonialization during the same period. The Indigenous body and the ecological realm are connected here through shared trauma; the crows can be interpreted as an externalisation, or projection, of Indigenous trauma.⁴⁰ The usual freedom flight affords becomes helplessness as they fall to their deaths; frozen and unable to move, but still internally present to witness their injury. This trauma continues into the lives of Piatote's protagonists: for example, Joseph is injured in warfare (likely in service to American imperialism in the Middle East) and so 'it was always the end of the world', but his survival shows that '[i]t was [also] never the end of the world'.⁴¹ He 'flies' overseas, and returns after crashing to the ground, after his injury.⁴²

The 'impudent military fort' and 'gunshot wound[s]' are likewise re-enacted in the twenty-first century as warfare continues abroad. Thompson writes on American anxiety regarding disability, comparing it with the colonisation of America and the roots of cultural perceptions of the self-sufficient, independent American self from the nineteenth century onwards. '[P]hysical difference yields a cultural icon signifying violated wholeness, unbounded incompleteness, [...] susceptibility to external forces. With the body's threat of betrayal thus compartmentalized, the mythical American self can unfold [...] according to its own manifest destiny'.⁴³ To be disabled is to be denied 'the mythical American self', to be denied autonomy, and also to deny the lack of connection this romanticised selfhood insists upon.⁴⁴ Elizabeth Grosz further explains that the concept of the body as a means for truth and justice is rare and that there is no 'pure body' as it is 'bound up in the order of desire, signification, and power'.⁴⁵ Finally, Goeman expands on the material reality of Indigenous bodies in her work as they are not just symbolic: '[w]hile I examine the *symbolic* meanings of blood, body, and scars, the

⁴⁰ For a discussion of crows as creatures of kinship, see Goeman, *Mark My Words*, p. 136.

⁴¹ Carroll writes extensively on Indigenous veterans. He notes that 'American Indians were part of the U.S. and Canadian militaries from the very beginning. Native servicemen often fought in wars that were frankly imperialist in nature or to maintain U.S. global dominance'. Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 1. Piatote herself writes on Indigenous military service historically as a condition of American citizenship, 'which never came for some' in Beth Piatote, 'The Indian/ Agent Aporia', *American Indian Quarterly*, 37 (2013), pp. 45-62 (p. 57).

⁴² Kathryn Yusoff's work on decolonising and diversifying Western perceptions of geographical eco-apocalypse: 'If the Anthropocene proclaims a sudden concern with the exposures of environmental harm to white liberal communities, it does so in the wake of histories in which these harms have been knowingly exported to black and brown communities under the rubric of civilization, progress, modernization, and capitalism. The Anthropocene might seem to offer a dystopic future that laments the end of the world, but imperialism and ongoing (settler) colonialisms have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence' in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), pp. xii-xiii. Pricilla Jolly then directly links Yusoff's work on non-white apocalypse to North American Indigenous literature (namely, that of Waubgeshig Rice's novel *Moon of the Crusted Snow*). Pricilla Jolly, 'Thinking About the End of the World with Kathryn Yusoff and Waubgeshig Rice', *The Goose*, 19.1 (2021), <<https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1718&context=thegoose>>.

⁴³ Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 44.

⁴⁴ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For example, as one of the quintessential American mythological selves, Gatsby strikes a lonely figure. He denies his parents, creating false narratives around his origins; he anonymises himself through warfare and comes out not only uninjured, but educated; and he is ultimately denied his only real social connection, to Daisy.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 4, pp. 18-9.

material reality of tortured, beaten, and murdered people should not be easily forgotten'.⁴⁶ Piatote does not forget the material reality of Indigenous bodies. She uses ecological symbol to explain the body, rather than using Indigenous bodies to explain what has happened to the land. To use the land rather than the body to explain colonisation trauma prevents what Wendy Brown and Lauren Berlant call wound culture 'which fetishizes the wound as proof of identity'.⁴⁷

Piatote's *Silas* and Justice's critical work are comparable in the shared perspectives on 'apocalypse'. Justice explains that '[w]hen apocalypse appears as an overt theme in Indigenous writing [as it does here in 'Falling Crows'], it's more than speculation – it's experiential, even in its most fantastical, because in a very real way it hasn't ended'.⁴⁸ The symptoms of Indigenous apocalypse put forward by Justice (children being taken from their families and communities, settler predation, substance abuse, poverty, loss of land, language extinction) are likewise noted and feared by *Silas*: '[t]ribal Council Declares State of Emergency Over Youth Suicide. *Silas* looks around the birdless expanse'.⁴⁹ This connects the present day's crises (both Joseph, metaphorically, and more generally the ecological crisis of mass extinction) back to the apocalyptic falling crows of 1788, and the initial colonisation of America. Here the natural and the human senses of wrongness are paralleled once more, as the impact of colonialism and the absence of birds are also connected in the present. In *Silas*' narrative the language used to express human and ecological injury are similar. Another example of this would be when he is entrusted with the tapes containing his grandmothers' voices speaking Nimipuutímt (the Nez Perce language), and he is therefore tasked with keeping his '*not dying, he thinks, only endangered*' language alive.⁵⁰ The domestic oral narratives like that of these grandmothers historically have been, according to Dian Million, policed out by Western narratives due to their subjectivity and 'inappropriate pain'.⁵¹ The words 'dying' and 'endangered' are often used to describe ecological destruction, but Piatote uses it here to express cultural destruction. Ecological and language work are connected in *Silas*. He is proud of his work in the Natural Resources department, comfortable there because it 'seem[s], on the whole, fixable'.⁵² But by accepting this job, Piatote writes that he had previously rejected the Language Program, preferring the more feasible (perhaps 'surface-

⁴⁶ Mishuana R. Goeman, 'Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation', in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. by Joanne Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 99-126 (p. 115).
Emphasis original.

⁴⁷ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 58.

⁴⁸ Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, p. 168.

⁴⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 96.

Emphasis original.

⁵⁰ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 89.

⁵¹ Dian Million, 'Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History', *Wicazo Sa review*, 24 (2009), pp. 53-76 (p. 73).

⁵² Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 96.

level' and empirical) ecological work over the work necessary in the cultural realm. However, this prioritisation is made arbitrary, as Piatote makes clear that the ecological and the human are intertwined. For instance, natural disasters are placed on equal footing with man-made apocalypse; Silas 'doesn't know which emergency is now an Emergency. Forest fires? Schools? Roads? Diabetes? *What to say?*'⁵³ An additional layer within this quotation is the invocation of language, the final question here is '*what to say*', as if these disasters create conditions in which it is necessary but difficult, or overwhelming, to speak, due to the scale of systemic injustice. The structure of ecological apocalypse allows Silas to think about human apocalypse, as the two are linked under American colonial hegemonies, and he begins to accept the need for human *and* for ecological preservation, as two sides of the same coin.

Melissa K. Nelson argues that she 'envision[s] an intellectual ecosystem in which these different species of knowledge – ecological, critical Indigenous, [...] metaphors – can inform and inspire one another for a[n] [...] understanding of the enmeshed relations humans have with one another and the more-than-human world'.⁵⁴ She notes that 'this multivocal dialogue is essential for decolonization, liberation, and even the very survival of our, and other, species'.⁵⁵ When Silas initially learns of Joseph's injuries at the beginning of 'Falling Crows', he uses ecological metaphor to process the image of his nephew lying in his hospital bed. '[H]e thinks about his nephew, [...] about the magpie outside, hopping off a low branch into the grass. He tries to imagine his nephew without a foot, a hand, a cheek. It is hard to do'.⁵⁶ Similar to how he had processed his tribe's historical wounds through reading the records from 1788 about the crows, Silas employs avian imagery to process contemporary familial injury. And, just as Piatote directly connects the Nimipuutímt tapes to Silas' uncertainty regarding his tribe's future and his role in it (as presented in the falling crows metaphor previously analysed), so the Nimipuutímt tapes are brought to and shared with Joseph (the other bird, a magpie) by Silas. Once the two are connected, Piatote implies that the healing has begun.

Joseph's healing, Silas' duty to his family and tribe, and the natural world interlink in many ways by the end of 'Falling Crows'. For both Joseph and Silas, Nimipuutímt acts as a potential method of cultural healing. Although it is Joseph who is marked – as Thompson phrases it – as a 'spectacl[e] of otherness' by his physical disability,⁵⁷ Joseph similarly

⁵³ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 84.

Emphasis original.

⁵⁴ Melissa K. Nelson, 'Getting Dirty: The Eco-Eroticism of Women in Indigenous Oral Literatures', in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. by Joanne Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 229-60 (p. 236).

⁵⁵ Nelson, 'Getting Dirty', p. 236.

⁵⁶ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, pp. 80-1.

⁵⁷ Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, p. 8.

recognises his Uncle Silas' need for a healing because of the intersectional nature of their wounding. Joseph's visual difference is consistently emphasised in Piatote's openings to paragraphs featuring him: '[t]he boy [...] without his arm, leg, and cheek', '[t]he one [...] without a shin, a wrist, or an earlobe'.⁵⁸ By the end of 'Falling Crows', however, Piatote writes 'Joseph sees his uncle's wounds'.⁵⁹ So, they listen to the taped Nimi puutímt conversations together, which Piatote sets out as a catalyst for history-learning, discussions of family, grief, the future, culture and love. The act of playing the tapes aloud and orally discussing them reflects Charles Bernstein's argument that sound is the physicality of language, as flesh, rather than symbol, and that sound can locate the body of the speaker.⁶⁰ Thus the body is worked through by the mind and is made personal through words, rather than treated as an abstract, something unfortunately common for disabled individuals.⁶¹ This learning and conversing, finding meaning, allows Joseph self-determination. As Brian Buckheart writes, Indigenous storytelling and philosophies prioritise the reader or listener finding meaning for themselves, and rarely does the work 'make or declare that meaning for them'.⁶² This conversation then leads to the concluding words of 'Falling Crows':

[t]he sound of the old language flows around [Joseph]; he feels he is floating or riding a great river. When he sleeps he can forget what he has lost, but then he wakes to his mismatched limbs and he remembers. This is what life is now.⁶³

Language begins the process of Joseph's acceptance of his newly disabled status. David Treuer (Ojibwe) explains that many Indigenous American works contain characters who cannot speak their Indigenous language, or if they can it is 'unavailable to them' due to traumas 'such as war experiences, witchery, physical injury, and guilt'.⁶⁴ Nimi puutímt is not spoken by Silas, despite his knowledge of it, and he chooses the more 'fixable' issues within his community (clean energy production and food) but feels guilt as he acknowledges the emotional crisis point his community has been at for many years.⁶⁵ Although Joseph does not speak Nimi puutímt before he is injured, he fits into Treuer's categorisation of an injured individual who has served in war. Treuer also directly connects language and healing here: '[t]he distance the characters are from their native languages signifies the distance they need

⁵⁸ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, pp. 81, 85.

⁵⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 102.

⁶⁰ Charles Bernstein, *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 21.

⁶¹ Thompson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, pp. 9-10. Thompson argues that disabled characters are often interpreted 'metaphorically or aesthetically, reading them without political awareness as convention elements of the sentimental, romantic, Gothic, or grotesque traditions'.

⁶² Brian Buckheart, *Indigenizing Philosophy through the Land: A Trickster methodology for Decolonizing Environmental Ethics and Indigenous Futures* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019), p. xxix.

⁶³ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 104.

⁶⁴ David Treuer, *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2006), p. 184.

⁶⁵ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 98.

to cover or recover in order to be healed'.⁶⁶ The sound of the past tapes places Joseph in his present: 'the mix of their voices and the ambient sounds, and the hospital room is filled with that time, which does not move forward or back, but rests in the lap of the present'.⁶⁷ Rather than a longing for his past self (which he has been agonising over, remembering the moments before the explosion) or an expectation for his future ('healed') self which Joanna pictures, the comforting, human familiarity of the present is enacted. Language is compared by Piatote to a 'great river', thus the water's movement mirrors a shifting or flowing into the future, and a connection from the past to the present to the future, perhaps symbolising a new beginning.

The first act Joseph makes is linguistic, but it is physically and mentally draining: '[i]t's painful for Joseph to speak at first'.⁶⁸ He jokes with his sister Joy about his missing hand, but in his next breath '[h]e's angry at his mangled body; he's tormented by his memories of the moment *just before*'.⁶⁹ Not remembering the moment of injury, Joseph only recalls the impact of war in regards to its effect on his ecological surroundings: '[t]he sun pressing down on him. The ground vibrating with explosions'.⁷⁰ Joseph perceives the land to be oppressive and violent, perhaps externalising the actual oppressive and violent factors which led to his disability, and this enables him to partially process his trauma by speaking about his experience. Language is a trauma-processing tool, but for language to act a subject must additionally be present; the subject of trauma being a wounding one, ecological imagery is employed in its stead. However, haunted by his injuries and his memories from just before his disability, Joseph grieves. He remains upset and angry until 'Joanna calls Silas and asks him to come'.⁷¹ She recognises the imperative for Joseph to express himself, through his community rather than attempting to speak of his singular trauma individually.

Silas' arrival at Joseph's side is mutually understood by the characters to be connected to the tapes he had received just prior, as Joseph 'knows' that Silas comes to visit wishing him to hear them.⁷² The Nimipuutímt word Joseph recognises from the tape is "Xáxa·c" [...] "Grizzly Bear."⁷³ Silas' explanation of the context of what Joseph highlights here presents the interlinking of nature and man; how the wound that their ancestor suffered in a bear attack became "a symbol of [...] bravery" and "a sign of respect".⁷⁴ This wound is culturally

⁶⁶ Treuer, *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*, p. 184.

⁶⁷ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 102.

⁶⁸ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 93.

⁶⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 93.

⁷⁰ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 93.

⁷¹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 100.

⁷² Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 102.

⁷³ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 102.

⁷⁴ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 102.

transcribed through beadwork and oral Nimipuutimt storytelling and passed on down to Silas and Joseph in the tapes. Beadwork then is linked in parallel to words as another form of cultural expression, and another means of creative processing. Beading and storytelling are connected here, in Joanna's work for her son, and elsewhere in *Beadworkers* as Piatote dedicates 'Beading Lesson' to this subject.⁷⁵ Here an aunt's beading lesson is also a means of teaching her niece about family history, gender expectations, education, racism, community, bureaucracy, capitalism, and more. The parallel of the Grizzly Bear story to Joseph's situation is apparent; even more so if we consider Melissa K. Nelson's analysis of bears in Indigenous storytelling. She argues most of them 'highlight how similar we truly are as mammals. We are omnivores; our skeletal structures are very similar [...]; we share a walking style [...]; we are very highly intelligent and family-orientated'.⁷⁶ As bears are similar to humans, the story of Grizzly Bear parallels Joseph's, because he is injured not by a bear but by other humans.

Not only are ecological symbols used to aid in Silas and Joseph's language expression, but also Joanna and Joy's. Both women are unnerved by the hospital's atmosphere and by Joseph's injuries. Joy is reminded of her deceased father and her memories of his cancer treatment. 'Not at this hospital, but no matter. To her, all hospitals smell the same: clean and anxious'.⁷⁷ Joseph's face, hidden under bandages, and body, covered by sheets, initially gives Joy a visceral reaction as she 'thinks she might vomit'.⁷⁸ When Joanna comes, '[s]he is so close to [Joseph] now, and for one moment she feels the chasm: he on one side, and she on the other. [...] She sees that he has been changed, and yet he is still exactly himself'.⁷⁹ This 'chasm' Joanna perceives is reminiscent of Dodie Bellamy's construction of 'the sick' and 'the well' in *When the Sick Rule the World*.⁸⁰ Disability, Bellamy explains, creates distance.⁸¹ Here this is between mother and son, but Joanna pushes through to focus on healing and a potentially positive future outcome. This is, like what Silas also offers, an Indigenous, personal, mental, familial process through beadwork – Joanna's language of cultural expression. As Joanna helps her son up for his physical therapy, 'a dear vision comes to her: Joseph at the Grand Entry, with new regalia. [...] Floral design. [...] New moccasins, fitted to the prosthesis'.⁸² Her expression, via beadwork, encourages an acceptance of Joseph's disability (which is mirrored in Silas' tapes and the wound created by

⁷⁵ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, pp. 45-9.

⁷⁶ Nelson, 'Getting Dirty', p. 244.

⁷⁷ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 91.

⁷⁸ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 91.

⁷⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 92.

⁸⁰ 'The sick and the well should never mingle' in Dodie Bellamy, *When the Sick Rule the World* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015), p. 32.

⁸¹ Bellamy, *When the Sick Rule the World*, p. 32.

⁸² Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 94.

the Grizzly Bear on their ancestor). Her work will fit to his prosthetic leg, rather than either ignoring it or ostracising him because of it. This acceptance then allows Joanna to hope for his eventual happiness. Carroll states from his experience that '[a]s a veteran from a long line of veterans, I see that acts of honouring are the greater part of what enables veterans to bear their own pains more easily'.⁸³

Honouring Joseph in the parade can be considered another form of healing. As beadwork is the means of expression, nature is the place of expression: the design for this creative process to take root within. Joanna makes Joseph a bandolier in Woodland design.⁸⁴ This floral motif is used, as Silas explains, because it reminds her of her husband.⁸⁵ As the impersonal, sterile space of the hospital reminds Joy of her father, in this same space ecological Indigenous symbology is decoded to reveal the actuality of this expression through beadwork. As my analysis has asserted thus far, trauma in 'Falling Crows' is often coded through ecological symbol and Indigenous language (be it Nimpuutímt or beadwork). Joanna's beadwork and Silas' tapes are explicitly connected by Piatote on the final page of 'Falling Crows': 'Joseph thinks about his mother and the flowers blooming under her fingertips. He thinks of her pulling each thread, drawing snug each bead to hide, one by one. He watches Silas write words and fragments'.⁸⁶ Remembering can be a painful process without this tool; Joy's remembrance is described by Piatote thus: 'instantly her body recalls times past, [...] praying for a recovery that never came'.⁸⁷ Memory is embodied here; and so her hopes for the future are likewise embodied in Joseph's 'new' body, which she is able to cover in her work and to display her connection to him.

Not only does the natural world act as a vehicle for hope for Joanna, but (as she explains to Joy) for other Indigenous women. She gives the example of her friend who struggled through isolation, abandonment and increased responsibility in the Arctic because she saw a small patch of grass peeking out of the thick snow and it gave her hope.⁸⁸ Joy responds "I think I need more than a patch of grass in the snow."⁸⁹ And her mother tells her "I know. We all want more than that. But sometimes that's all you get."⁹⁰ Although imperfect, ecological symbol offers hope.⁹¹ Rather than a solution, as these symbols are not cures for

⁸³ Carroll, *Medicine Bags & Dog Tags*, p. 229.

⁸⁴ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 103.

⁸⁵ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 103.

⁸⁶ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 104.

⁸⁷ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 91.

⁸⁸ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 99.

⁹⁰ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 100.

⁹¹ Jessica Bissett Perea, 'Audiovisualizing Inupiaq Men and Masculinities on the Ice', in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 127-68 (p.

social injustice, nor are they miracles, they do not prevent the suffering of Indigenous people, but instead are a coping mechanism for processing trauma and offers hope away from, but adjacent to, the human realm. It is not enough, as Joanna states, but “sometimes that’s all you get.” Similarly, on the very first page of ‘Falling Crows’, Silas’ feelings are initially connected by Piatote to the earth through a similar metaphor, in that a crocus is one of the first flowers to emerge after winter. He wants to ‘allow his feelings to muscle their way to the surface like a crocus. [...] But when he considers his emotional life he sees a bed of angry flowers. Better to keep those underground’.⁹² So, the land reflects human hurt; this is seen in Joseph’s felt kinship with the body of the land and his own body when injured, Silas’ feelings as flowers pushing up through the earth, and Joy’s embodiment of her love for her husband through Woodland design beadwork.

Social expression requires two sites of its speaker: a subject (in this instance, an ecological subject) and a body with which to express it. In ‘Falling Crows’, Piatote shows that both of these requirements are sites saturated with pain for her characters; and yet it is still necessary to speak, so that this same pain can begin to heal. The disabled body, language, and ecology are bound together by Piatote. The pain of the body, whether this is Joseph’s, or Indigenous pain more generally (either historically or presently), is expressed through language or motif by language’s reliance on ecological metaphor to express trauma. This serves to protect the self from the memory of this trauma and presents an outlet to express rather than internalise. Both the Indigenous land and body are sites of shared but separate trauma due to colonisation. Thus, ecology mirrors both bodily injury and healing from trauma, and is employed as a means of processing, accepting, and healing these hurts. In ‘Falling Crows’, the sky is a place of freedom and opportunity, but also injury (as seen in the falling crows of the title); water is the connection to the past and a move into the future (as seen in the image of the river); and the earth is a place of memory which cannot be expressed, but must be to enact the change of healing and acceptance (as seen in Silas’ crocus and Nimipuutímt tapes, and Joanna’s Woodland design). Most prominently, ecological frameworks help Joseph and his family begin the process of accepting and understanding his newly disabled status. It allows his uncle to comfort him and to restore a connection to the past, it allows his mother to plan for the future, and it allows Joseph to begin the difficult process of speaking, and then to begin the process of accepting himself and his future autonomously and communally by the final line of ‘Falling Crows’.⁹³

156). On the other hand, Jessica Bissett Perea notes that ‘suicide season’ for Indigenous Canadians is spring, when the frosts melt and the grass emerges. Nevertheless, this shows that nature’s impact on human emotion cannot be overstated and that seasonal change correlates to emotional change.

⁹² Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 80.

⁹³ Piatote, *The Beadworkers: Stories*, p. 104.

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Caste Adrift: Mixed-Race and Maritime Justice in Michel Maxwell Philip's Emmanuel Appadocca or, Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaneers (1854)

Arvian Hesketh

Introduction: The Victorian Novel and the Sea

The ocean and maritime spaces figured prominently throughout nineteenth-century literature from the naval romances of Jane Austen to the social problem novels of Elizabeth Gaskell. In particular, one corpus of adventure fiction which would come to embody and reinforce mercantile imperialism was one subset of adventure fiction, known as 'nautical novels',¹ which enjoyed wide popularity during the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Though largely intended as escapist literature, maritime fiction by William Clark Russell, R.M. Ballantyne and Frederick Marryat was heavily entrenched in the normalization of the expansion of space and remapping the ocean as a template of British modernity. Such narratives of seafaring adventure were fundamental in terms of the ways in which the sovereignty of European subjects was sustained through a narrative temporalization of ocean space and is emblematic of the predominance of Britain's maritime superiority.

As with all spaces depicted in literature, maritime realms serve as discursive geographies and *topoi* which function to advance narrative as well as convey theme. Recent scholarship has suggested that Victorian adventure fiction offered a crucial medium through which to configure Britain's place within the global imperial system. For Richard Phillips, the imagined topographies and locales of the genre were ideologically constructed, as 'cultural space[s] in which imperial geographies [...] were conceived'.² Equally, several foundational works of postcolonial criticism have identified the ways in which English literature symptomatizes nascent conceptions of colonial discourse and the attendant interdependencies between the metropole and its colonies. Edward Said underlines a process of geographical othering articulated throughout Victorian literature, arguing that there exists a 'hierarchy of spaces by which the metropolitan centre and, gradually, the metropolitan economy are seen as dependent upon an overseas system of territorial control, economic

¹ Andrew Nash, *William Clark Russell and the Victorian Nautical Novel: Gender, Genre and the Marketplace*, 1st edn (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), p. 8.

² Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*, 1st edn (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), p. 12.

exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision'.³ Said's 'hierarchy of spaces' is configured against an ontological dichotomy in which the domestic core is figured as purely English whilst the colonial periphery is racialized as Other.

Yet, for many nineteenth-century writers, the maritime world was a distinctly unstable geography; an autonomous space which existed beyond national sovereignty. Moreover, the ocean was often figured as a cultural contact zone. This attitude is most deftly articulated in Frederick Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (1836) which describes the 'waters at least are the property of all. No man claims his share of the sea – every one may there plough as he pleases, without being taken up for a trespasser'.⁴ Marryat further suggests that the legislative autonomy afforded by the sea help to facilitate a levelled democracy where it is 'only upon the ocean that [a person can] likely to find that equality and rights of man, which we are so anxious to establish on shore'.⁵ However, this egalitarian sentiment is belied by a distinctly nationalist hostility towards the multiracial composition of shipboard communities. Most notably, the protagonist of *Newton Forster* (1832) proclaims that '[i]f we only had all English seamen on board, instead of these Lascars and Chinamen who look so blank [...] I think we would show them [the French] some play'.⁶ Despite the diversity of these multinational seafaring communities, Marryat's fiction nonetheless maintains the spatial hierarchies of race and national boundaries firmly in place. As Siobhan Carroll crucially illustrates, maritime fiction was written 'not from the perspective of exploited colonial peoples but from the perspective of an alienated community of imperial labor formed in the blank space between imperial center and colonial periphery'.⁷ Yet, with its preoccupation with geographies, race and their attendant hierarchies, the nautical novel was also an equally important genre to black and mixed-race authors.

Trinidadian author Michel Maxwell Philip's first and only novel, *Emmanuel Appadocca or, Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers* (1854) offers a particularly striking counterpoint to such accounts of British exceptionalism. Philip deploys oceanic *topoi* to provides a counter-history which at once critiques the imperial project as well as cognitively remap the seas as an egalitarian space where national boundaries dissolve. Set on the high seas of the Gulf of Paria and around the coast of Venezuela, the novel follows the adventures of the titular mixed-

³ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Vintage, 1994), p. 58.

⁴ Frederick Marryat, *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, 2nd edn (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Frederick Marryat, *Newton Forster; Or, The Merchant Service*, 2nd edn (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), p. 289.

⁷ Siobhan Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water: Uncolonizable Space in the British Imagination, 1750-1850*, 1st edn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), p. 76.

race pirate captain as he seeks retribution against his father, an English sugar planter named James Willmington, for deserting both him and his mother. What makes Philip's novel such a significant narrative intervention is how it is from the perspective of a subaltern subject a conception of ocean space that is materially unmarked by Western influence. With its preoccupation with issues of race and slavery, some scholars such as Gesa Mackenthum have situated the novel within a corpus of nineteenth-century antebellum and abolitionist literature, identifying several thematic links with William Wells Brown's novel *Clotel, or the President's Daughter* (1853) 'with which it shares the crucial subject of disavowed white parentage and whose protagonist likewise passes as white'.⁸ Such readings are emblematic of a tendency in literary studies, according to Margaret Cohen to 'treat [...] even those novels with oceangoing themes as allegories of processes back on land'.⁹ Yet, whilst Philip's novel shares questions regarding abandonment and illegitimacy with Brown's *Clotel*, *Emmanuel Appadocca* follows a noticeably different thematic path in its oceanic setting, with the sea serving as the central locus of the novel's plot and much of the action taking place onboard ships.

Philip's conception of race cannot be uncoupled from the politics of ocean space. Throughout the text, Philip invokes both the ocean and Appadocca's ship, *The Black Schooner*, as crucial cultural chronotopes to conceptualise an ideological resistance to colonial discourse. Here, the very qualities of the ship and her crew are integral towards Philip's conception of a more egalitarian social order. Philip invokes the pirate ship as a mobile contact zone, marked by multi-ethnic solidarity where '[t]he jolly songs of all nations, as sung by the different denizens that formed the motley crew of the schooner' and which welcomes the addition 'of [a] mulatto [...] of Spanish extraction' and a black man named Jack Jimmy.¹⁰ This sense of social cohesion is bolstered by a shared incredulity for the 'false systems' of land, with Appadocca proclaiming that 'observation has made me acquainted with the universal laws which nature has imposed upon us in order to secure to us contentment and happiness' (122). This sentiment is equally reflected by Appadocca's crew who 'sought no other shelter than that which was afforded us by the high and wide seas' (160). In contrast to the nationalist antagonism which suffuses Marryat's fiction, Philip's vision of this cosmopolitan shipboard community dissolves the spatial hierarchy of the centre/periphery axis, highlighting the importance of mobility and cultural contact in the formation of identity.

⁸ Gesa Mackenthum, *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 157.

⁹ Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, 1st edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 14.

¹⁰ Michel Maxwell Philip, *Emmanuel Appadocca, Or, Blighted Life: A Tale of the Boucaniers*, ed. by William E. Cain and Selwyn R. Cudjoe, 1st edn (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 27, p. 12. All subsequent references to this text follow the quotation in parentheses.

As such, through an examination of the novel's use of oceanic *topoi*, coupled with its depiction of mixed-race pirates, this article highlights how Philip pits the disruptive energies of the ocean against the colonial racial hierarchy, drawing attention to the disparity between the moral integrity that the pirates personify and the amorality of the white planter class as embodied in Willmington. Reading this text against the backdrop of maritime space affords a productive insight into Philip's authorial strategy, revealing not only how the nautical novel configured Englishness through ocean space but also how *Emmanuel Appadocca* draws upon and subverts the tropes of the genre to challenge the homogeneous conception of English nationalism and the attendant claims of European superiority. This article begins with an analysis of the chronotope of pirates in Victorian culture and considers how Philip draws upon this archetype as a counter-hegemonic figure, who by virtue of his deterritorialized existence is able to traverse imperially sanctioned boundaries and, in turn, challenge Victorian essentialist conceptions of identity. Central to this argument is how the novel's characterisation of Appadocca and his philosophy of 'natural law' establish a moral compass against which the actions of the English planter class are tested. One of Philip's central aims for the text is to undermine English claims of superiority and, by extension, convey the mixed-race class of Trinidad, embodied by Appadocca, as both educated and better suited to govern themselves than the white plantocracy. Appadocca's very status as a ship's captain is a transposition of the contemporary colonial order of Trinidad, where instead of the white plantocracy, it is the mixed-race pirate who holds a position of power. Philip's characterisation of the protagonist often stresses his intellectual refinement as well as his more genteel qualities as a man who 'contents himself with robbing them [ships] in a very gentlemanly and polite manner' (190). By depicting Appadocca as a gentlemen scholar rather than a common freebooter, Philip disassociates the protagonist's actions from the melodramatic tradition of material gain, figuring his piracy as a philosophical act of self-realisation. In this regard, the novel participates in the same didactic *telos* of the Victorian nautical novel to 'promot[e]' as Fulford argues 'the chivalry of the ocean when the chivalry of the land was in doubt'.¹¹ Yet, Philip directs his vision of oceanic gallantry against the drives of English imperialism, demarcating discourses of natural law from the material realities of slavery and colonization and emphasising the natural right of resistance and just vengeance.

The Pirate Archetype

As the novel conceptualises Appadocca's piracy as a rejection of the 'false systems' of land, then his mission is supported by another key element of the representational mode in which

¹¹ Tim Fulford, 'Romanticizing the Empire: The Naval Heroes of Southey, Coleridge, Austen, and Marryat', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 60.2 (1999), pp. 161-96 (p. 162), doi: 10.1215/00267929-60-2-161.

Appadocca is depicted. During the early to mid-nineteenth century, legal and non-legal figurations of pirates often emphasised their status as social outcasts. In *Elements of International Law* (1836), legal historian, Henry Wheaton, defines ‘Piracy [... as] the offence of depredating on the seas without being authorized by any sovereign State, or with commissions from different sovereigns at war with each other’.¹² Equally, as Frederick Burwick and Manushag Powell observe, nineteenth-century depictions of pirates similarly accentuated their liminal status, often being characterised as ‘outsiders disregarding national loyalties, yet comprising a nation unto themselves’.¹³ Another important element of the Victorian pirate archetype was their dual characterisation as both hero and villain with Burwick and Powell noting that popular iterations of the pirate figure often characterise him as either a ‘ruthless, blood-thirsty villain; [... or as] the swashbuckling adventurer who sought a life of freedom at sea’.¹⁴ By the end of the 1830s however, the term ‘pirate’ would accrue several semantic and metonymic associations owing both to a combination of racial discourses and the abolition of the slave trade.

In 1807, British parliament enacted the ‘Slave Trade Abolition Bill’ prohibiting slavery in the British West Empire,¹⁵ whilst a subsequent 1824 statute, ‘An Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the African Slave Trade’, stipulated that any person engaging in the slave-trade ‘shall be deemed and adjudged to be guilty of Piracy’.¹⁶ The abolition of slavery would raise concerns about the place of black people in the broader hierarchy of the British nation with the attendant question of whether such individuals bore any cultural and legal claim to an English identity becoming an especially pressing matter of contention throughout the early to mid-nineteenth century. However, it was the rebellions aboard the slave ships *Amistad* (1839) and the *Creole* (1841) which would bring the instability of the intertwining discourses of race and piracy to wider public attention. Significantly, both rebellions were treated as acts of piracy by the media with the *New Orleans Courier* describing the *Creole* case as an example of ‘piratical proceedings of fanatics on both sides of the water’.¹⁷ Similarly, Carolyn Karcher remarks that ‘[c]harges of piracy were central to the [*Amistad*] trial. The press had repeatedly

¹² Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law: With a Sketch of the History of the Science*, 1st edn (Philadelphia, PA: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836), p. 113.

¹³ Frederick Burwick and Manushag N. Powell, *British Pirates in Print and Performance*, 1st edn (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 49.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁵ ‘Lords Sitting of 5 February 1807’ (VIII, c.657-72) (London: Hansard) [online] <<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1807/feb/05/slave-trade-abolition-bill>> [accessed 17 March 2023].

¹⁶ H.M. Statute, ‘An Act for the More Effectual Suppression of the African Slave Trade’, in *H.M. Statute*, 1st edn (London: George Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1824), IX, pp. 614-5 (p. 614), <https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Statutes_of_the_United_Kingdom_of_Gr.html?id=VpZFAAAAcAAJ&redir_esc=y> [accessed 23 April 2023].

¹⁷ *New Orleans Courier* cited in ‘The Domestic Slave Trade. Case of the Brig *Creole*’, *The Liberator* (1841), p. 206 (p. 206), <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/book_viewer/commonwealth:8k71pw136#?xywh=-8859%2C-446%2C23506%2C8908> [accessed 18 August 2023]

described the *Amistad* as a pirate ship [...] but the Africans' abolitionist defence team [...] succeeded in casting the onus of piracy on the ship's captain'.¹⁸ The appellation of 'pirates' onto the slave rebellions carried an especially pejorative weight. By seizing upon cultural associations of pirates as 'ruthless, blood-thirsty villain[s]',¹⁹ the label of piracy helped to decry the mutinies as acts of aggression rather than a struggle for freedom.

By comparison, other contemporary writing on the *Amistad* case, seized upon the characterisation of pirates as lovers 'of freedom at sea' to depict the mutineers in a more heroic light. Most notably, in the anthology, the *Book of Pirates* (1841), Henry K. Brooke places the *Amistad* case alongside the exploits of pirates of the Golden Age such as Blackbeard and Anne Bonny as well as the adventures of Walter Scott and Lord Byron, proclaiming in the preface that 'Pirates, robbers, and murderers, from the days of Robin Hood (1160) to the present time, have been heroes in the imaginations of the old and young'.²⁰ Brooke pointedly includes a quote from Byron's 'The Corsair' (1814), which defines the pirate as a figure who embodies the spirit of liberty and freedom: 'O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea. / Out thought as boundless and our souls as free'.²¹ In effect, the appellation of 'piracy' to the *Creole* and *Amistad* case would place these slave rebellions into a curious double position within the public imaginary, simultaneously embodying the amorality of buccaneering whilst concurrently exemplifying the spirit of freedom and liberty of literary figures like 'The Corsair'.

Pirates in the Victorian Age

Presciently, *Emmanuel Appadocca* addresses the semantic volatility of piracy through its titular protagonist, a mixed-race pirate captain who on the one hand embodies the ruthlessness of the archetype yet also embodies the spirit of freedom. Evidently, the *Amistad* ship supplied Philip with inspiration for the depiction of The Black Schooner with which it shares a black-painted hull.²² Yet, Philip's decision to cast his protagonist as a pirate carries an especially crucial discursive weight. Reflecting upon the liminality of pirate life, Michael Craton has argued that beyond the immediate threats of plunder and violence, 'pirates were a reproach to plantocratic notions of law and order'.²³ Maritime scholars such as Peter

¹⁸ Carolyn Karcher, 'Notes to Benito Cereno', in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, ed. by Paul Lauter, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1994), II, pp. 2497-2554 (p. 2498).

¹⁹ Burwick and Powell, *British Pirates*, p. 2.

²⁰ Henry K. Brooke, *Book of Pirates: Containing Narratives of the Most Remarkable Piracies and Murders, Committed on the High Seas; Together with an Account of the Capture of the Amistad; and a Full and Authentic Narrative of the Burning of the Caroline*, 1st edn (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Perry, 1841), p. x.

²¹ Byron cited in Brooke, *Book of Pirates*, p. x.

²² Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom*, 1st edn (London: Verso, 2013), p. 50.

²³ Michael Craton, *Empire, Enslavement, and Freedom in the Caribbean*, 1st edn (Oxford: James Curry, 1997), p. 53.

Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have similarly emphasised piracy as a sort of counter-hegemony, noting that pirate ships were key flash points which 'built an autonomous, democratic, egalitarian social order of their own, a subversive alternative to the prevailing ways of the merchant, naval, and privateering ship and a counterculture to the civilization of Atlantic capitalism'.²⁴ The novel's depiction of Appadocca follows the broad definition of a pirate both in his disassociation from the nation-state and in crafting his own nation on board his ship. Philip seizes upon cultural configurations as an extra-national figure to craft a counter-hegemony and alternate philosophy which challenges the colonial order.

Published in London at the height of debates surrounding race and Englishness, *Emmanuel Appadocca* is a novel with distinctly anti-colonial themes. The plot begins as Appadocca captures a British merchant vessel onboard which his father is a passenger. Exacting his revenge, Appadocca ties his father to a barrel and sets him adrift to drown in the Atlantic Ocean. However, surviving this ordeal, Willmington implicates his son in his abduction. Whilst onshore to trade his plunder, Appadocca is arrested and placed into custody onboard a British man-of-war to await trial on charges of piracy and kidnapping. During captivity, Appadocca encounters an old school friend who is now an officer in the ship's crew, Charles Hamilton, to whom the pirate relates his reason for abandoning academia. Appadocca tells the story of how he was born out of wedlock to the English planter and a 'mulatto' woman. He is sent to Paris where he becomes renowned for his intellect and refinement but is unable to either publish his research or find any work. Following the death of his mother, who was funding his education, Appadocca seeks aid from his estranged father. However, the wealthy planter refuses to either acknowledge or financially assist his illegitimate son. Destitute, Appadocca returns to the Caribbean rather than completing his education and turns to piracy to avenge his mother and himself against Willmington. Appadocca eventually escapes the man-of-war and swims to the Venezuelan coast, where he reunites with his crew. By the end of the novel, Appadocca has recaptured his father and chains him within the hold of his ship which subsequently goes down in a hurricane. Having exacted his revenge, Appadocca resolves to take his own life and '[w]ith a spring [...] jump[s] from the rock and threw himself headlong into the thundering waves below' (244). His body is later recovered and buried in Trinidad near his mother's burial place. Throughout the novel, Philip positions his protagonist as a social outcast, being the subject of a double exclusion by virtue of being both mixed-race and a pirate. Though critics such as Mackenthun have argued that *Emmanuel Appadocca*

²⁴ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002), p. 172.

'almost completely bypasses the topic of race',²⁵ the filial vengeance narrative is complicated by the protagonist's ethnicity.

In its opening pages, the novel foregrounds the action of the narrative as an indictment of slavery and the colonial system, proclaiming in the 'Preface' that the text was 'written at a moment when the feelings of the Author are roused up to a high pitch of indignant excitement, by a statement of the cruel manner in which the slave holders of America deal with their slave-children' (6). Equally significant is the novel's setting which Philip establishes takes place after 'the time of slavery' (218). Despite the omnipresence of the pirate within early to mid-Victorian fiction, their real-life counterparts were progressively being driven out of the Atlantic by the French and English navies. As such, pirate adventures tended to be set during the golden age of piracy 'which spanned the period from roughly 1650 to 1730'.²⁶ As Ian Duncan observes, '[t]he genealogy of imperial adventure [...] harked back to the heroic era of the Napoleonic wars through the revived medium of eighteenth-century picaresque'.²⁷ The tendency amongst Victorian adventure writers to set their novels during the Napoleonic wars has led to some confusion amongst some of Philip's scholars who have mistakenly claimed that *Emmanuel Appadocca's* 'setting is the seventeenth-century period of the buccaneers'.²⁸ Yet, by drawing upon the rhetoric of seventeenth-century buccaneerism, coupled with its use of the chronotopic elements of the nautical novel, Philip directs the critical thrust of the text towards the sociopolitical circumstances of race and colonialism in post-emancipation Caribbean, formulating a contiguity between the model of the lawless freebooter to the municipal 'piracy' of maritime expansion.

Whilst the novel's depiction of Appadocca owes much to the *Amistad* case, Philip's own struggles as a mixed-race man who suffered from the racial inequities of the post-Abolition Caribbean provides an important autobiographical context for the novel's preoccupation with the intertwining issues of race and Englishness. Despite the criminalisation of slave trading, abolition was an uneven process which failed to quell racist attitudes towards non-white Caribbeans. As Errol Hill notes, British colonies such as Trinidad continued to enact legislation based upon a strict colour classification, observing that '[t]he free coloreds, who under Spanish law, and irrespective of social standing, had enjoyed almost equal status with

²⁵ Mackenthun, *Fictions of the Black Atlantic*, p. 160.

²⁶ Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, 1st edn (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 12.

²⁷ Ian Duncan, 'The Victorian Novel Emerges, 1800-1840', in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by William Baker and Kenneth Womack, 1st edn (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 3-14 (p. 7).

²⁸ Faith Smith, 'Beautiful Indians, Troublesome Negroes, and Nice White Men: Caribbean Romances and the Invention of Trinidad', in *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation*, ed. by Belinda J. Edmonson, 1st edn (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999), pp. 163-82 (p. 170).

whites, were demoted to second-class citizenship by discriminatory legislation'.²⁹ In a further point, Leah Rosenberg remarks that such inequity extended to 'members of the brown elite [who] continued to be barred from opportunities in the sugar industry and commerce while they faced severe discrimination in the civil service'.³⁰ Indeed, as 'the illegitimate son of a white planter and a coloured woman of the Philip family',³¹ Philip himself was similarly subject to prejudice in the civil service. Though Philip became one of the first Creole members of Trinidad's legislative council, holding the positions of solicitor general and mayor of Port of Spain, he was never promoted to attorney general despite serving as acting attorney general.³² Concerning the position of the Solicitor General, C.L.R. James' remarks regarding William Conrad Reeves apply to Philip: 'The Solicitor General had certain privileges [...] and he got a salary as one of the law officers of the Crown. [...] The government had him nobled and yet as a coloured man he served as some sort of representative (token) of the coloured people'.³³ In effect, Trinidad was a paradoxical space for mixed-race authorship, allowing writers such as Philip access to political power in post-emancipation Caribbean but not complete participation within the larger European intelligentsia where his skill and intellect could be recognised. It is these figurations of race and inequality which inform much of Appadocca's characterisation and the intertwining discourses of legitimacy and justice.

The Gentlemen Pirate

In Appadocca's rejection of national affinities and the creation of an alternate society onboard his ship, Philip's pirate follows in the tradition of the Byronic hero, 'an outlaw and an outsider who defines his own moral code, often defying oppressive institutional authority, and is able to do so because of his superhuman or supernatural powers, his self-sufficiency and independence, and his egotistical sense of his own superiority'.³⁴ Much like the Byronic pirate, Appadocca's self-imposed exile demarcates him from the injustices of the world in favour of what Margaret Cohen describes as 'the existential pursuit of freedom' and the 'more elevated strivings of the modern spirit'.³⁵ In this spirit, Philip conceives Appadocca as a liminal figure

²⁹ Errol Hill, *The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre*, 1st edn (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1972), p. 9.

³⁰ Leah Reade Rosenberg, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*, 1st edn (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 20.

³¹ Bridget Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870-1900*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 87.

³² Bridget Brereton, 'Michel Maxwell Philip (1829-1888): Servant of the Centurion', in *Michel Maxwell Philip: A Trinidad Patriot of the 19th Century*, ed. by Selwyn R Cudjoe and Lauren Zykorie, 1st edn (Tacarigua: Calaloux Press, 1999), pp. 104-22 (p. 110).

³³ C. L. R. James, 'The West Indian Intellectual', in *Fraudacity: West Indian Fables Explained*, ed. by James Anthony Froude (London: New Beacon Books, 1969), pp. 23-50 (p. 35).

³⁴ Atara Stein, *The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television*, 2nd edn (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), p. 8.

³⁵ Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, p. 113.

who, on the one hand, is equipped with the appearance and societal knowledge which affords him social mobility onshore but whose racial background precludes him from acceptance within wider European society where he would be accepted amongst the European intelligentsia. The post-national and deterritorialised status of the novel's protagonist presages an ontological state Paul Gilroy describes in *Against Race* (2000) as being 'between camps'.³⁶ Gilroy observes that

[d]eliberately adopting a position between camps [...can] be a positive orientation against the patterns of authority, government, and conflict that characterize modernity's geometry of power. It can also promote a rich theoretical understanding of culture as a mutable and traveling phenomenon.³⁷

In a statement concordant with Gilroy's argument, Appadocca justifies his deterritorialised existence by proclaiming that 'if I had been inclined to be a deceiver, I should have remained in the society of mankind'.³⁸ Philip conceives piracy as a legitimate practice to maintain a position of critical distance from discourses of colonialism with the novel's oceanic setting providing a literary *topos* where, as Gilroy argues, 'neither political nor economic structures of dominion are [...] simply co-extensive with national borders'.³⁹ As such, Appadocca's self-imposed exile from land and his rejection of all national affinities is a means through which he can achieve legitimacy for his actions outside the confines of English law.

Throughout the novel, Philip illustrates the importance ascribed to biopolitical discourses of complexion and parental heritage in determining social categories. In his first appearance, Philip's description of the pirate identifies him as mixed-race, noting that '[h]is complexion was of a very light olive, it showed a mixture of blood, and proclaimed that the man was connected with some dark race, [...] he may have been said to be of that which is commonly designated Quadroon' (23). Philip emphasises Appadocca's light complexion throughout the novel, often setting him apart from his fellow seaman as well as the novel's few black characters. Moreover, the narrator illustrates that Appadocca recognizes and negotiates this racial difference by maintaining his pale complexion, noting that he 'so carefully kept himself below deck, that he neither presented the rough cast of men of rough usage, nor lost, under a tropical sun, the natural paleness of his complexion' (91-2). The significance and importance with which Appadocca can pass as white is laid bare in the scene where Appadocca is arrested on the shores of the Danish colony of St. Thomas.

³⁶ Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, 1st edn (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000), p. 84.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 1st edn. (London: Verso, 1993), p. 4.

Though much of the novel is set at sea, the few scenes set on land often depict shore life as a space of social exclusion where racialised boundaries are firmly established. When sailing into port, Philip's description of the seaboard draws a notable parallel between the multicultural pirate community and the other ships, where the shore is 'crowded with hundreds of vessels, as different in their appearance as the various parts the world from which they came' (86). Yet, as Philip illustrates, these ships are revealed to be 'slavers, or otherwise engaged in some nefarious traffic, in which extraordinarily great fleetness alone could secure them profit, or protect them from certain destruction' (87). Here, whilst the description of the numerous ships mirrors the multi-ethnic configuration of shipboard life on the schooner, the revelation of their true purpose as 'slavers' places the operations of imperialism at the very forefront of this setting, effectively precluding the possibility of a successful egalitarian society.

Significantly, his light complexion affords him easy mobility on the island of St. Thomas where he passes as white and can 'wander [...] carelessly about the beach' (87), as well as interact with various merchants unmolested by any naval authority. When he is captured, the arresting naval officer is surprised by Appadocca's appearance describing him as a 'young gentleman' and reflecting that 'he had expected to find some villainous, yellow-blooded sinister-looking cut-throat, deformed, hacked with wounds, and disfigured with gibbet marks' (91-92). It is telling that the naval officer's mistaken assumption regarding Appadocca's innocence is figured not just by his lack of mutilations but also by his light complexion. The metonymic association with which the naval officer readily draws between being 'yellow-blooded', and criminality is not only a tacit evocation of the popular associations made between the *Amistad* mutineers and pirates but is also emblematic of the extent to which the appellation of 'pirate' during the mid-1800s carried with it the implicit racial modifier, 'non-white'.

Indeed, Philip's depiction of Appadocca responds in part to the portrayal of pirates in the more conservative works of writers such as Marryat. In *Percival Keene* (1842), Marryat presents a highly racialised conception of piracy in the character of James Vincent, a former black slave who rebels against his master and turns to buccaneering. Vincent and his all-black crew seek to take over slave trading vessels, killing every white person on board. The titular Percival is the only white man whom he spares and keeps captive. Though Vincent bares many similarities to Appadocca, being both physically and intellectually adept, Marryat depicts the pirate's mission as ultimately self-defeating as he indiscriminately murders all white people regardless of their stance on slavery. When Percival remarks that Vincent may be killing 'those who are your friends and who have done all they can to put an end to slavery', the pirate

responds that 'It is impossible to make a distinction'.⁴⁰ Moreover, Marryat depoliticises Vincent's mission by formulating an essentialist link between piracy and blackness in which the buccaneer proclaims 'who should be pirates if the blacks are not? [...] Have they not the curse of Cain? [...] Ought not their hands to be against every one but their own race?'.⁴¹ Marryat's novel registers contemporary Victorian fears concerning a freed black population, depicting black men such as Vincent, as fundamentally incapable of virtue.

Whilst the arrest scene reflects contemporary prejudice in the post-abolition Caribbean, Philip suggests that being mixed-race was not an immediate disbarment from acceptance within wider English society. Rather, the novel intimates that solidarity between races can be facilitated through the invocation of cultural knowledge. Despite his status as a self-imposed outcast, Philip frequently highlights Appadocca's kinship with many of the novel's English characters, most notably white naval officers. When Appadocca is captured on the island of St. Thomas, the arresting naval officer is shown to be 'prejudice[d] in favor' (91) of Appadocca, lamenting that '[i]t appeared strange to him that one who seemed well educated, and who at the same time possessed such gracefulness of demeanour, and elegance of expression, could have freely chosen to herd with the wretched outcasts' (93). Similarly, another English officer and former classmate, Charles Hamilton, is also shown to be sympathetic to Appadocca's revenge scheme and expresses disgust at Willmington when the old planter refuses to take any responsibility for his son, proclaiming that 'he [is] justified his harshness to you precisely on the same grounds as you now do yours' (202). Philip, however, most ardently conveys the protagonist's association with England in a later chapter when Appadocca is acknowledged as a brother by Willmington's legitimate son. Challenged by young Willmington after his father's second abduction, Appadocca reveals 'a peculiar mark' (212) between his fingers, denoting his kinship with the Willmington family. After Appadocca explains his history, young Willmington subsequently refers to him as a 'brother' (234). The young planter's recognition of kinship with Appadocca not only serves to reinforce the protagonist's legitimacy to the Willmington family, but more broadly reinforces his wider kinship with the British nation. Equally notable, however, is the admiration he receives from the English officer class. English naval officers often served as the main protagonists in nautical novels. As Fulford argues, the 'fictionalized and idealized portraits of [... naval] officers' served to renew earlier conceptions of Englishness that were defined by the qualities of virtue and chivalry, noting that these 'showed them [readers] to be better gentlemen and fitter to govern than the landed classes, who currently held (and abused) power and

⁴⁰ Frederick Marryat, *Percival Keene*, 1st edn (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1842), p. 140.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

privilege'.⁴² In effect, the sympathy Appadocca receives from the officers serves to highlight how the pirate exemplifies the distinctly English 'gentlemen' qualities absent from characters such as Willmington. Moreover, the disgust that both Hamilton and young Willmington express over the elder Willmington's treatment of Appadocca establishes the moral superiority of the brown intellectual over the white planter class which his father represents. Yet, despite the respect Appadocca receives from the white English officer class, these scenes reveal the very porousness of English character. The solidarity between Appadocca and the English officers is predicated on a tenuous balance between his ability to racially pass in conjunction with his capacity to display the superficial qualities of 'gracefulness of demeanour, and elegance of expression' (93). In depicting the easy mobility with which Appadocca can move between both sea and land as well as assume an English identity, Philip conveys the porousness of such racial boundaries, at least for a mixed-race man such as Appadocca. In the scenes with the naval officers, the primacy of the body and race is replaced with cultural status and education as central social determinants. Against the background of Anglo-Trinidadian society, Appadocca's ability to attain and achieve solidarity amongst the officer class suggests the need to dissolve the spatialization of race to level social relations in the Caribbean.

In effect, the novel represents maritime expansion as an ontological crisis in which categories of difference are continually revised and applied very broadly. Philip demonstrates this epistemological diffidence on a metonymic level, where the label of piracy is applied to both Appadocca and, more broadly, to colonialism. During Appadocca's conversation with Charles, whilst imprisoned onboard an English man-of-war, Appadocca deconstructs the definitions of piracy proclaiming: 'If I am guilty of piracy, you, too—the whole of mankind is guilty of the very same sort of crime. [...T]he whole of the civilized world turns, exists, and grows enormous on the licensed system of robbing and thieving, which you seem to criminate so much' (113). Here, Philip formulates a contiguity between piracy and colonialism, describing maritime expansion as a 'licensed system of robbing', the only difference being that one is judicially sanctioned whilst the other is not. Philip contrasts Appadocca's adherence to the doctrine of natural law to transatlantic racial capitalism, proclaiming that '[c]ommerce makes steam engines and money it assists not the philosophical progress of the mind' (116). The piratical nature of English colonialism is contrasted with Appadocca's own brand of piracy which Philip conceives as 'adventures, in which men of spirit could engage with as much honour, as in fighting under the banners of stranger kings, for the purpose of conquering distant and unoffending peoples' (57). Significantly, although Appadocca articulates a distinctly anti-colonial attitude during his exchange with Charles, Philip does not develop this

⁴² Fulford, 'Romanticizing the Empire', p. 162.

sentiment into a nationalistic stance for Trinidad. When Charles proclaims himself 'an Englishman, and an English officer', Appadocca counters that 'I am an animal, sub-kingdom, *vertebrata*, genus *homo*, and species, 'tropical American'; naturalists lay my habitat all over the world, and declare me omnivorous' (122). Appadocca's assertion of his multivarious, oceanic identity reads as a parody of ethnological taxonomies, and in turn exemplifies the constructed nature of such categories. Ultimately, Appadocca's dissociation from Englishness is emblematic of his refusal to be situated in the broader hierarchy of the British nation. Here, the novel's commentary on racial categories is most deftly articulated where the very term 'pirate' becomes a free-floating signifier, revealing the very constructedness of such categories. By highlighting the semantic malleability of the term 'pirate', Philip intimates the extent to which such labels and the broader apparatus of racial hierarchisation serve as a strategy of ideological obfuscation which externalizes both illegitimacy and criminality, projecting it from colonisers onto, what the novel terms, 'unoffending peoples' (57).

Chronotope of the Sea

Whilst Philip allies Appadocca's manner and moral fortitude with a sense of Englishness, effectively transcending his status as an outcast, the protagonist himself never lays any claim to an English identity and by extension eschews any national affiliation. Disillusioned by the laws of land, it is understandable that Appadocca looks towards the freedom afforded by the ocean to craft an alternate social order. In this regard, the sea becomes an especially integral element of the novel with each character being defined by their relationship with the ocean. As a chronotope, the ocean is invoked in literature as a distinctly social space which, as Carroll remarks,

resist integration with the national domestic, [... but] can be overlaid with global space and, indeed, often served as geo-imaginary coordinates in Britons' conceptions of the globe. [...] they can enable the kinds of extra-national flows of goods, people, and information often portrayed as threatening to overwhelm the local.⁴³

Drawing upon Romantic conceptions of the sublime, Philip's depiction of the sea not only emphasises its majesty but also figures the ocean as a transcultural zone and a distinctly spiritual space unmolested by the guile and oppressions of land. Reflecting upon the beauty of the ocean, the narrator proclaims that 'nature is not cruel, nature deserts not its humblest offspring' (165) and further notes that

'[t]he bosom in which the snakes of envy or hatred have long nestled and brooded, may feel itself relieved of half its oppression and suffering whilst gazing at nature's beautiful works, as manifested among the islands of the tropics, and beholding in its embodiment of splendour the omnipotence of the Creator' (163).

⁴³ Carroll, *An Empire of Air and Water*, p. 7.

In this manner, Philip invokes the ocean as a moral touchstone, where a character's proximity to and appreciation for the sea denotes their kinship to the divine influence of natural law.

Of all the characters, Appadocca is depicted as the most in touch with the oceans and is frequently portrayed as displaying great admiration for nature and particularly the seas: 'Appadocca felt his sensibility deeply moved by the view which opened before him. The great Atlantic rolled heavily below [...] Appadocca could not refuse to his heart the pleasure of admiring such a scene' (185). During the climactic scene where the Black Schooner sails into the hurricane, Philip juxtaposes the 'the terrifying howls of the devastating hurricane' with the calm demeanour of the pirate captain:

far from evincing any anxiety, he [Appadocca] seemed to take pleasure in the terrible convulsions of nature [...] he was the same unimpassioned, collected, intrepid man, as when the schooner rode on the calmest sea, under the most smiling sky. He seemed to take pleasure if his nature could receive pleasure in the awestrking scene (98).

His knowledge of meteorology allows him to calculate the exact time of the oncoming hurricane which breaks out at the novel's climax (98). As Philip indicates, Appadocca's reverence for the natural world also endows him with a greater wisdom to lead others.

Appadocca's mixed-race heritage is doubled in his scholarly leanings which are derived from both European and African intellectual cultures. Throughout the novel, Philip frequently depicts Appadocca as a polymath who is knowledgeable about both philosophical discourses and nautical tactics as well as attaining knowledge of his surroundings through scientific study with the narrator emphasising that 'the many universities in which he had studied, [...] had declared him a man of extraordinary talent' (89). In his first appearance, Philip introduces Appadocca in his captain's quarters reading 'a richly ornamented volume of "Bacon's Novum Organum," with the books of "Aristotle's Philosophy" by its side' (24). In this early description, Philip initially appears to attenuate the protagonist's African lineage, with the references to Bacon and Aristotle linking the protagonist to a markedly Western intellectual background. However, Philip traces Appadocca's knowledge of the natural world, particularly astronomy, to his African roots 'a race, which is now despised and oppressed', but where 'speculation took wing, and the mind burst forth, and, scorning things of earth, scaled the heavens, read the stars, and elaborated systems of philosophy, religion, and government' (23). Appadocca's astronomical interests are equally reflected in the various depictions of the 'signs of the zodiac and the constellations finished in a perfect style, and scrupulously placed at the correct distances from each other' (23), which adorn the ceiling of his captain's quarters.

The novel's invocation of Africa as the antecedent of all knowledge was a common trope in abolitionist writing and shares a discursive parallel with Frederick Douglass' address, 'The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered' (1854). Much like Philip, Douglass sought to challenge the disavowal of the intelligence of black people by reminding his audience that 'Egypt was one of the earliest abodes of learning and civilization [...and] boasted mechanical and architectural skill of the nineteenth century'.⁴⁴ Philip's invocation of this abolitionist *topoi* not only marks Appadocca as a character of African descent but also denotes his ability to appreciate and turn the sea to his advantage as a distinctly African trait. Appadocca's adoption of both European and African philosophical traditions embodies Gilroy's conception of 'the rhizomorphic, fractal structure of the transcultural, international formation'.⁴⁵ Moreover, Appadocca's invocation of African knowledge systems brings forth what George Dei refers to as 'epistemological equity',⁴⁶ in which indigenous philosophies are placed on an equal level with Western knowledge institutions. In effect, as with his ship and the ocean, the character of Appadocca corporealizes both the geographical and temporal contact zone 'marking', as Carl Pederson asserts, 'the unruly space between the past memory of Africa and the present reality of slavery in terms of active resistance'.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Appadocca's transcultural intellect serves not only to legitimise his piratical action but also designates him as a suitable and ethical leader of men. Philip's invocation of natural law marks the novel's ultimate departure from the nautical genre. In contrast to the lawless and amoral model of piracy furthered by Marryat, Appadocca paradoxically serves as the outlaw defender of natural law.

By comparison, Appadocca's father, Willmington, is depicted as lacking the sensibility to appreciate the beauty of the seas, with Philip rhetorically asking who 'could such a man mingle the stirred sentiments of his soul with the sublime grandeur of nature, and send them forth with the voice of the mighty proclaimer, in mute veneration to the throne of God? No!' (165). Additionally, during Willmington's trial, Appadocca accuses the English planter of 'prostitut[ing] the law of nature to your own selfish gratification, perjured yourself, and given that life for which you neglected to provide and care' (66). Philip develops this sentiment into a broader indictment of the colonial system noting that whilst early African culture was occupied in contemplative endeavours, 'other parts of the world were either enveloped in

⁴⁴ Frederick Douglass, *The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address, Before the Literary Societies or Western Reserve College, At Commencement, July 12, 1854*, 1st edn (Rochester: Lee, Mann & Co., 1854), p. 17.

⁴⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ George J. Sefa Dei, 'Indigenous Knowledge Studies and the Next Generation: Pedagogical Possibilities for Anti-Colonial Education', *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 37 (2008), pp. 5-13 (p. 5), doi: 10.1375/S1326011100000326.

⁴⁷ Carl Pedersen, 'Sea Change: The Middle Passage and the Transatlantic Imagination', in *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*, ed. by Susan L. Roberson, 1st edn (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp. 258-66 (p. 262).

darkness, or following in eager and unreflective haste the luring genii of riches' (166). Here, Philip suggests that the abandonment of the law of nature is what directly leads to the greed underlying the capitalistic drives of imperial expansion. The novel translates Willmington's lack of appreciation for the sea into an inability to survive the elements as exemplified by his death by drowning at the end of the novel. Effectively, the characters' ability to make use of sea space not only serves to establish their moral state but becomes a more pointed measure of their legitimacy to lay claim to a place in the Caribbean.

Hydrarchy

Yet Appadocca's ship is not completely devoid of racial hierarchies either. The only black crew member of the crew, Jack Jimmy, is frequently described in distinctly racist terms and is often subject to mockery by other members of the shipboard community. Philip's description of this crewman draws upon mid-nineteenth century physiognomic beliefs noting that he has 'no brow' and the lack of a 'distinction between his face and forehead' (30), intimates his lack of intelligence. Equally, the character's diminutive, simianized stature – '[h]e was a little man of about four feet and a half, thickly set, and strong' (30) – suggests he has not fully evolved. Philip's depiction of Jack Jimmy is a problematic subject for many scholars, who have often circumvented the novel's racist depiction of the character to emphasise the multicultural quality of the community aboard the pirate ship. For example, whilst Sarah Ficke acknowledges the racist characterization of Jack Jimmy, she nonetheless invokes the Black Schooner as an egalitarian space where 'neither coercion nor ethnicity play a part in this confederacy'.⁴⁸ By comparison, other scholars such as Sarah Lennox have argued that the caricaturization of Jack Jimmy serves to endorse 'the brown elite at the expense of the black working class'.⁴⁹ Yet Rosenberg's assertion that 'Philip [...] direct[s] his mastery of European culture to establishing the inferiority of Trinidad's black subaltern classes' is problematic given the novel's overall indictment of racism.⁵⁰ In this manner, the pirate community is not an effective counterhegemony that could subjugate the state apparatus and instil itself in a hegemonic position as an alternative to English colonial governance.

Though Appadocca ultimately achieves his vengeance, the protagonist's suicide ostensibly belies both the efficacy and sustainability of this multi-ethnic pirate community.

⁴⁸ Sarah H. Ficke, 'Pirates and Patriots: Citizenship, Race and the Transatlantic Novel', in *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges, 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, ed. by Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), pp. 115-29 (p. 126).

⁴⁹ Sarah Lennox, "'Her English ensign tied upside down': Carnival as a means of anticolonial resistance in Emmanuel Appadocca', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 54.2 (2017), pp. 1-16 (p.13), doi: 10.1177/002198941769388.

⁵⁰ Rosenberg, *Nationalism*, p. 24.

Appadocca's death at the end of the novel reiterates a recurring trope within many 'tragic mulatto' narratives. As several critics such as Kimberly Manganelli have noted, the protagonists of these tales were typically women who 'conventionally committed suicide either because she had been raped or to avoid violence from the men who read her mixed-race blood as a sign of her sexual availability'.⁵¹ Some scholars such as Alexandra Ganser have interpreted Appadocca's suicide as an emancipatory act in which his 'death is narrated as a self-determined reunion with the ocean rather than as a suicide out of despair'.⁵² As the narrator highlights, '[i]t is not Emmanuel Appadocca alone that has been thus doomed to bury a high intellect in obscurity, or been impelled by circumstances to expend its force in guilt' (194). Philip foregrounds Appadocca's tragedy as emblematic of a much broader social injustice, affecting all humanity, proclaiming that 'the world seems scarcely as yet prepared for genius, a higher humanity is required and must exist, before the man who possesses it can find a congenial place of existence on this planet' (194). Philip's decision to end Appadocca's life at sea serves as a pointed reminder of the fact that a counter republic could not be actualised on land where such discourses of difference dominated both the intellectual and political currents of the era. Though his reconciliation is ultimately short-lived as his body is ultimately returned to Trinidad, it is nonetheless fitting that as Appadocca is rejected by white society, he chooses to end his life within a discursive space outside of any colonial sovereignty where both his knowledge and power could be exercised freely. Yet, despite the novel's tragic end, Philip's vision of the seas and the ship as an emancipatory space suggests that the creation of an egalitarian society was not impossible.

Conclusion

Effectively, in reformulating the definition of piracy, Philip endeavours to dismantle English claims of superiority by shifting the terms of the legality of piracy to the legitimacy of colonialism. Yet, the novel's true critical thrust is in how it reveals the porousness of English national identity and other socially defined categories of being. Appadocca's easy mobility between the novel's different discursive spaces from the atopic seas to the colony of St. Thomas, and coupled with his wider acceptance by the English officer class, reveals the arbitrary and performative nature of such ethnically defined boundaries, tacitly suggesting the need to revise such categories. In subverting the tropes of the Victorian nautical novel, Philip creates a counter-space to articulate an affront to the capitalistic logic of imperial expansion.

⁵¹ Kimberly Snyder Manganelli, 'The Tragic Mulatta Plays the Tragic Muse', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37.2 (2009), pp. 501-22 (p. 504), doi: 10.1017/S1060150309090317.

⁵² Alexandra Ganser, *Crisis and Legitimacy in Atlantic American Narratives of Piracy 1678–1865*, 1st edn (Vienna: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 191.

Yet, with its problematic depiction of Jack Jimmy, *Emmanuel Appadocca* is a novel which occupies a precarious double position as a work which challenges the systematic exclusion of mixed-race people from the teleological progress narratives of white, British modernity yet also invokes the very same colonial discourses of difference to undermine the black Caribbean class. This paradoxical conception of race coupled with the eventual suicide of the novel's protagonist highlight the difficulties inherent in attempting to conceptualise an egalitarian society in an era when racial inequality was still legally enforced and where the category of the nation was ideologically committed to preclude ideas of a levelled democracy. In effect, the 'blighted life' of the novel's title refers not only to Appadocca but to the narrative of genius and success for the many individuals whose potentials were quashed under colonialism.

For Philip, whilst ships might be agents of the colonial project, the oceans themselves are a space of alterity across which national discourse dissolves and the law of nature takes hold. As Philip illustrates throughout the novel, whilst the maritime world was a space of violent conquest, it equally has the potential to dissolve the rigid binaries that underlies imperial ideology. In this manner, Philip's novel participates in a broader discursive effort amongst other nineteenth-century mixed-race writers, such as Douglass, to configure a representational medium that might be adequate not only to comprehend the seas as a global space but also to conceptualise alternate social orders. From an examination of this novel, it is evident that transatlantic colonialism enacted a significant change in the conceptualisation of ocean space. As such, there is still much work to be done to highlight the link between British maritime expansion and the discursive construction of ocean space as a metacritical framework to understand the ways in which colonialism constructed the sea as history.

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Interview with Carol Barrett for The Postgraduate Journal of Medical Humanities

Sophie Smith

Abstract

The following is a discussion between the editors of the journal and poet Carol Barrett, who has taught Poetry and Healing courses at several universities and presented papers on nature poetry for international meetings. In addition to scholarly publications in psychology, gerontology, women's studies, education, religious studies, and dance and art therapy, she has published two volumes of poetry, and one of creative nonfiction. Carol has a third poetry collection released in February 2024 from The Poetry Box, titled *Reading Wind*.¹

What inspired you to start writing poetry?

I was counseling widowed women in the 1970s, looking for books which would be supportive of them in their circumstances. A search of the card catalogue at the library revealed very little under the heading 'Widows', other than the comic play *Arsenic and Old Lace*. I sought out Anita Skeen, a poet on the campus where I was teaching in Kansas, and asked if she would work with me on a collaborative project, since she knew poetry and I knew bereavement. Fortunately, she graciously agreed, and was a superb mentor. I fell in love with the craft.

Who are your most important literary influences?

A key influence has been my father, whose natural spoken language was filled with metaphor. Unlike poets who were raised on traditional notions of the canon, my formative training was in psychology, and in dance. The psychology background meant I was comfortable with unconscious imagery. From my experience as a choreographer, I was comfortable with revision, as playing with words is much like moving dancers around on a stage. Most of my early reading was of contemporary women poets with whom I felt an affinity for their subject; I have moved out from there. Every book of poetry I read offers a potential jumpstart to a new poem, or to a fresh approach to form.

¹ NB: This interview was conducted via email between March 2023 and July 2023; all information was correct at the time of interview.

Where do you find inspiration?

Everywhere. As I look at my last two poem drafts undertaken earlier this month, one was triggered by a garage sale I visited; the other by a poem about fire I admired in a book exchange with a sister poet. The two before that were inspired by hearing Ringo Starr's concert in my town from eight miles away, and the necessity of finally parting with a worn-out pair of shoes. Something grabs me, and I wrestle with it to see where it wants to go. Sometimes I have a 'project' focus that guides me, like writing about walks along the canal near my home (manuscript *Hugging the Shore: Canal Poems*); sometimes I simply trust what seems to carry the seed of something unusual that deserves exploration.

In what ways has your poetry changed since you started writing?

The thrill of being able to 'save' something experienced so that it would not be lost was an early draw. Poetry can definitely preserve significant moments and extend their life. While that function is one I still celebrate, I have come to appreciate many others. Poetry can educate, it can alarm and inform; it can worry us into action, unite us in community; it can lead us to discover things about ourselves we had forgotten, or that we never truly understood. It can extend our compassion and empathy, as we seek to embrace social justice. It can prepare us for difficult passages. It can help us maintain what deserves celebration and honor. It can sing a mighty song.

What place do you feel poetry has in contemporary society? Do you feel the nature of poetry is evolving in a digital age?

I believe more and more people are writing poetry; it is no longer a rare art practiced by a few. In this expansion, I think the western world is coming to resemble eastern cultures. The hundreds of literary magazines now operating – many of them published exclusively online – have enhanced opportunities to widen the reach of poetry. The shared poem is a means of listening to one another, allowing ourselves to be touched in some way perhaps unexpected. One of the poem's advantages is its brevity – we can dip into the stream it offers in just a few minutes.

How do both your research and your creative practice explore the healing potential of poetry?

I have undertaken a phenomenological inquiry into how writing about my father's life and death has enabled a healing platform for me. I actually wrote a poem several decades before his death, trying to grapple with what it would mean to lose him. I continued to use poetry to explore events in his life and their implied shift in our relationship. One of the realizations coming from this exercise is that we do not know enough about normative losses like the death of a parent, in our understanding of the healing nature of poetry. Psychologists exploring the subject have most often focused on trauma. While very important work has been done to document the healing potential of writing about trauma, including war and personal assault, we need to know more about the natural ebb and flow of life, and how poetry may assist us in weathering such movement. All the poems in my chapbook *Reading Wind*, due out from The Poetry Box [in] February [2024], were inspired by my father, a rural physician, musician and farmer.

What, specifically, do you feel nature poetry contributes to healing? What role might this play in tackling the physical and emotional ramifications of the climate crisis?

Nature poetry can encourage action on multiple levels. This includes the very necessary act of grieving for losses we have already experienced. It means becoming educated about the impact of climate change on our sometimes "in the clouds" minds. The muck of dealing with the earth's real and tangible struggles, the livelihood of multiple species, the impact on our lifestyles and the diminishing opportunities for our children and our children's children – all these are arenas where informed poetry can light a fire under us instead of under the pine needles clustered in the backyards of our psyches. Poetry may also invite a vicarious experience of nature, especially given the physical or geographic limitations that some readers may experience. We need science to guide our environmental planning. We need poetry to make the science compelling. We need to counter our sometimes arrogant or fanciful journeys with a handful of dirt, and the real life which depends on it.

As a professor of Creativity Studies, how do you incorporate these ideas into your teaching practice?

When I teach Poetry and Healing courses, I begin with common challenges – bereavement, cancer, alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, the Covid pandemic. There are strong anthologies available on each of these topics. Students are free to take the subject in whatever direction they wish, and then offer each other feedback designed to enhance their initial drafts. Like the poet Gregory Orr, I believe the healing potential in poetry is enhanced by perfecting the poem as a work of art, not just leaving it to the albeit powerful workings of catharsis.

Within these original works, we sometimes see how nature comes to our aid as a metaphor for the trials of human life. To discover a parallel with a creature in another vista, which perhaps was not in our awareness at the beginning, can be liberating. Time and time again, I have witnessed the relief that comes when students experience that their own 'unique' challenges are echoed by others, both fellow students, and creatures of the wild, big and small. We are one world, in so many ways.

Similarly, in my supervision of creative dissertations, I have been gifted with the insights and artful constructions of students who have pursued one trajectory and found it opening to a much wider vista. I credit a doctoral student with first introducing me to the field of medical humanities, Lawrence Spann. In the last year, the following students are among those who have completed creative dissertations at Union Institute & University which offer compelling poems and narratives about living on this tumultuous earth. I commend their work to you:

Ian Haight, *Inscription: Redressing Social Injustice Through Poetry*.

Julia Miller, *Speaking in Bipolar Tongues: A Personal Memoir and a Scholarly Analysis of Creativity and Madness*.

Nicholas Harris, *Little Flowers, A Collection of Prose Poems: Value Judgments, Emotions, and the Influence of Koans in Prosaic Poetry*.

Judy Pieper-Young, *Escaping the Madness that Surrounds Me: A Memoir*.

Gary Fry, *A Memoir of an Uncertain Mind's Quest for Transactional Honesty amid Linguistic Contingency and Redescription*.

An illuminating creative dissertation which I supervised recently at Saybrook University was developed by Tara Payne-Steele: *An Autoethnographic Examination of the Use of Creative Writing to Rediscover One's Voice and Overcome Adverse Childhood Experiences*.

How might we incorporate a stronger focus on the intersection between environmental and medical humanities into curricula? Are there any authors/critics you feel are pivotal?

First, our instruction should be as inclusive as possible in the perspectives we explore. The following works remind us to be conscious of the roles of spirituality, ethnicity, gender and class in shaping our concepts of ecology.

Armstrong, Karen, *Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2022)

Holthaus, Gary, *Learning Native Wisdom: What Traditional Cultures Teach Us about Subsistence, Sustainability and Spirituality* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008)

Kirk, Gwyn, 'Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice: Bridges across Gender, Race, and Class', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, 18.2 (1997), pp. 2-20

In support of this principle, our teaching examples can include nature poetry developed within an array of cultural settings. I have reviewed the following texts and commend them to you:

Chang, Tina, Natalie Handal and Ravi Shankar, *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia, and Beyond* (New York, NY: Norton, 2008)

Here: Poems for the Planet, ed. by Elizabeth J. Coleman (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2019)

Fire and Rain: Ecopoetry of California, ed. By Lucille Lang Day and Ruth Nolan (Oakland, CA: Scarlet Tanager Books, 2018)

New Poets of Native Nations, ed. by Heid Erdrich (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2018)

The Ecopoetry Anthology, ed. by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Steet (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2013)

Ghost Fishing: An Eco-Justice Poetry Anthology, ed. by Melissa Tuckey (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2018)

Secondly, we need to open ourselves to emerging paradigms for understanding the healing potential of creativity and the arts more generally. In this regard, I recommend the work of Dr. Ruth Richards and her colleagues: *Everyday Creativity and the Healthy Mind* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), and *Chaos and Nonlinear Psychology: Keys to Creativity in Mind and Life*, ed. by David Schuldbber and Shan Guisinger (Oxford University Press, 2022).

Third, we can encourage creative exploration of life-saving themes through individual work as well as workshops and retreats. For an individual primer, check out Thomas Smith's *Poetry on the Side of Nature: Writing the Nature Poem as an Act of Survival* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2022.) In my home state of Oregon, there are two organizations which actively encourage the integration of science and art in the exploration of nature: Playa, at Summer Lake in southeastern Oregon, and the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, on the coast. Such opportunities not only expand individual awareness and productivity, but promote the development of more conscious communities, which can foster some saving grace. Our world needs all of our artistic efforts to galvanize resources for the living earth.

Mud

Carol Barrett

Communing with a creek is natural enough –
our bodies, 60 per cent water. The canal

is just another body, learning to rise early
in the morning, settle down when doves come

cooing. The canal keeps the night moon company,
waning from full throttle to a slivered impulse,

quieting the soul. Clouds drift above its waters
like fairy dust, like steam from a locomotive.

Ladybugs eat their fill of aphids along wild rose
stems, old and tired. No longer young, I remember

the joy of mud, making pancakes from lumps
in the sand we later learned were cat deposits,

firm and plump, stretchable clay when soaked
on an artist's board. Along the creek that ran

the woods where I was raised: deer bones,
growing porous in the long years since the land

housed trees. Haven for fir and vine maple,
determined beaver, skunk cabbage decking

the lowlands with unparalleled glory before
trilliums and foxglove pitched their velvet

wares. I explored the banks, slipping into alder
leaves that bunched darkly. Some places you could

jump and make it to the far side. The creek
forgave such perilous moves, though shoes

would tell the muddsome tale. No way to leap
this canal. But the beauty in the basin, precision

art nonetheless, the thrill of being present
like riding a toboggan down a snow-packed

bank. Lean to the curves, duck when called for.

Lizard

Carol Barrett

I know you like to hide, *Western Fence Lizard*,
mere wrinkle upside down on the stalk of a nonchalant

sumac, basking in floating color, nimble flip of tail.

I know you can outlast my stare, win any bet we might

propose, except perhaps the hawk's swooping intent.

The canal provides for your thirst, offers a swarm

of gnats wafting from grass, clouds to dispel the sun's
fiercest smirk. What lures you out of hiding? What

mischievous compels you to risk discovery? Your darting
acrobatics, your tongue flicking from a crevice in the rock?

Or is it simply *heritage* that swells your pride, as if
lowly clover could boast bitterroot blooms, long-tongued

creamy petals, pink stamen inviting honeybees
to a hallowed room, April's boon? Your former self

as *Tyrannosaurus rex* trundles through history's myopic
mist. Try wriggling out of that long-patient code-hidden

stream. What future will the canal carry us toward,
short-sighted genes caught in self-serving conundrums?

Book Review of Relating Suicide: A Personal and Critical Perspective by Anne Whitehead (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

Dominic Gilani

Anne Whitehead's *Relating Suicide: A Personal and Critical Perspective* (2023) provides a powerful and necessary response to common approaches to suicide and suicidal behaviours. Instead of understanding suicide as aberrant, Whitehead focuses on the ways in which suicide works to interrupt everyday life and encourages (and requires) new forms of living. It is not simply an act performed by an individual, but part of a larger network of actions, impacting and being impacted by the people, places, and things surrounding it. In line with this approach, Whitehead interrogates a wide range of materials, including novels, biographies, films, and memorials (both physical and digital), intercutting such discussions with the personal: her sister's death by suicide. As a response to Angeliki Balayannis and Brian Robert Cooke's call for 'partial, indirect, and relational' understandings of suicide,¹ Whitehead draws on Sara Ahmed, Elizabeth Grosz, and Ann Cvetkovich to explore the gendered and bodily nature of suicide. It is this embodied feminist lens that moves her analysis beyond the all-too-common question of 'Why?'. Instead, Whitehead structures her book in chapters titled 'When?', 'How?', and 'Where?'. *Relating Suicide* has two core aims: firstly, it functions as a necessary corrective and response to the common perception of suicide as an entirely interior, psychological problem with little connection to the outside world. Secondly, it responds to the growing field of critical suicidology's focus on prevention to instead re-centre personal experience.

The first chapter, 'When?', argues that suicide affects temporalities, specifically in its tendency to make time stand still. Beginning with a phenomenological analysis of the wristwatch Whitehead's sister was wearing at the time of her suicide, Whitehead explores how we produce narratives around suicide, specifically ones which centre a frozen or static temporality. Whitehead moves on to examine the way time and the interruption of the everyday functions in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), arguing that the text, and especially its ending, works to integrate suicide into the fabric of everyday life, focusing on the stoppages and jolts which interrupt normal behaviour. This chapter, and the monograph as a whole, moves back and forth between these personal reflections and a form of literary analysis that

¹ Angeliki Balayannis and Brian Robert Cook, 'Suicide at a Distance', *Progress in Human Geography*, 40.4 (2016), pp. 530-45 (p. 531).

reflects on Tia DeNora and Rita Felski's exploration of the connection between the ordinary and extraordinary, arguing that suicide demonstrates that extraordinary moments can be incorporated into the everyday.² Despite such movement, it is never done in such a way that it confuses the analysis. The movement between different analytical modes is fluid and dynamic, with each topic building on the last. Just as Whitehead's approach to suicide requires seeing it as an 'orientation' rather than a teleological 'path', her arguments connect to and build on one another, but they do not present any particular form or understanding of suicide as 'correct' or even typical.

The second chapter, 'How?', moves between past and present, fiction and reality, but her central argument becomes muddled in comparisons across too broad a range of sources and themes. Beginning with an analysis of cliché in Yiyun Li's *Where Reasons End* (2019), Whitehead observes that cliché is an almost inevitable response to suicide and, while it may seem inadequate for comprehending the complex emotions of the situation, works to situate the event in a common social language. Although thought-provoking, Whitehead's analysis of cliché overlooks the ways in which it also functions as a means of ignoring the situation entirely, replacing 'raw emotion' with 'decorum' and 'niceties' in times of distress. Whitehead's analysis of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53) seems a sudden departure from this, arguing instead that the spaces in the novel are presented as suicidal in and of themselves to centre environmental and social influences rather than individual motives. While interesting, such analysis is disconnected from the chapter and would feel more at home in the third chapter, 'Where?'. Such boundary crossing demonstrates that the book's questions are inherently connected to a single, social world Whitehead works to explicate, but it also draws the very boundaries Whitehead has drawn into question: are these questions of 'When?', 'Where?', and 'How?' distinct enough to provide an adequate framing for this analysis? The chapter ends with Whitehead's personal experience of the colonial system's control over the narrative of her sister's suicide. This section is strongest in its discussion of the overlap of suicide and gender, a central argument of the text. As men are counted more often in official suicide statistics, because women are more likely to use methods which produce no visible damage to the body, such as overdosing and drowning, Whitehead criticises the system that led to her own sister's death not being deemed a suicide on her death certificate.

The third chapter, 'Where?', focuses on the ways social deprivation plays a part in suicide and the ways we commemorate it materially. Whitehead examines the importance of place in a variety of literary, artistic and social forms. Whitehead begins with an analysis of

² Tia DeNora, *Making Sense of Reality: Culture and Perception in Everyday Life* (London: Sage, 2014); Rita Felski, *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000).

two biographical texts on suicides in Derry-Londonderry, Kerri ní Dochartaigh's *Thin Places* (2021), and Darren Anderson's *Inventory* (2020) to explore how geography, class, and gender affect perceptions and experiences of suicide. She then discusses her own personal connection to Antony Gormley's sculpture, *Another Place*, in light of her sister's suicide at a similarly coastal location, before moving on to 'vernacular memorials' such as benches and Facebook pages dedicated to the deceased. In this comparison between Gormley's sculpture and 'vernacular memorials', Whitehead places suicide within specific and otherwise 'normal' locations in the material world, drawing on the first chapter's analysis of the relationship between the extraordinary and the ordinary. Such analysis is made more interesting by Whitehead's feminist approach, as female suicides are more likely to be considered a result of internal turmoil or emotional weakness, detached from the world outside the mind, while male suicides are often connected to economic loss or fall in prestige. Rather than simply acknowledging the ways social deprivation lead to suicide, Whitehead interrogates the collective tendency to ignore women's equal enmeshment in a social world, making clear her phenomenological approach which consistently sees gender as a lived experience rather than just a biological or social reality.

Relating Suicide ends with a coda rather than a conclusion, acknowledging that suicide is too messy and open-ended a topic to ever 'conclude'. Whitehead brings together the chapters' central questions of 'When?', 'Where?', and 'How?' with a focus on reform and social justice, specifically regarding coronial law, suicide prevention's focus on metropolitan centres, and the treatment of suicidal individuals as 'objects of care' rather than 'active agents' (p. 98). Whitehead's ending discussion on the words 'suicide' and 'suicidal' works to highlight the key takeaway from this enlightening and thought-provoking volume: it is necessary to see suicidal behaviours as the actions of active agents who exist in a large network of actors, not as objects to be acted upon, whose fate is a foregone conclusion. While her arguments are sometimes muddled and the organisation of the text is inconsistent, this core idea that the book explores makes it a worthwhile and necessary investigation into the complexities of suicide.

Book Review of The Tree Climbing Cure: Finding Wellbeing in Trees in European and North American Literature and Art by Andy Brown (London: Bloomsbury, 2023)

YIWEI ZHANG

In an era increasingly focused on personal health and our relationship with nature amid the global warming crisis, Andy Brown's *The Tree Climbing Cure* stands out as a vital and timely contribution. Brown masterfully blends advanced scientific research with literary insights to uncover the powerful therapeutic benefits of tree climbing. Whilst it is often stigmatized as a childish behavior or a sign of mental disorder, Brown presents tree climbing as both a physical exercise and a profound psychological and artistic journey reconnecting individuals with nature and their inner selves. To do so, Brown explores the motivations and mental states of individuals, including characters in European and North American literature and art, who find solace and escape in the branches of trees.

The Tree Climbing Cure delves into tree climbing as a form of ecotherapy and serves as a symbolic practice connecting individuals with nature, their inner selves, and the rich tapestry of cultural and artistic interpretations of human experience. Positioned within the fields of ecotherapy and ecological literature, this work stands out by combining rigorous scientific inquiry organically intertwined with a diverse range of literary and artistic sources. Andy Brown not only contrasts with but extends the perspectives offered by Richard Louv in his *Last Child in the Woods*,¹ by providing a deeper understanding of nature's therapeutic potential and its relevance to contemporary environmental and psychological studies with literary analysis. While Louv emphasizes the psychological and social ramifications of human detachment from nature through qualitative narratives, Brown bridges empirical analysis with

¹ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010).

cultural reflection. It is this literary focus that enhances our understanding of nature's therapeutic potential and substantiates these benefits with ecological data and psychological research studies.

Through the novelty of his methodology, Andy Brown offers a meticulously crafted exploration of the scientific underpinnings of human-nature interactions, providing insights that surpass the anecdotal evidence often encountered in ecological literature. This enables a sophisticated analysis of trees' ecological attributes as well as their multisensory influence on climbers. Here, Brown achieves a thoughtful equilibrium between nuanced literary interpretation and grounded scientific analysis. Despite the potential complexity posed by Brown's dense literary references and deep ecological insights, he weaves scientific and literary threads into a seamless narrative that flows logically and smoothly from one point to the next. This blend of scientific and literary discourse is comprehensive and deeply insightful, offering a new lens through which to view both the text and the act of tree-climbing itself.

To enrich our understanding of its benefits on wellbeing, Andy Brown establishes tree climbing as a multifaceted metaphor intersected with broader themes including personal crises, family dynamics, religious zeal, feminist activism, and ecological awareness. Beginning with Cody Lee Miller's publicized tree-climbing incident in 2016, Brown probes societal perceptions and the psychological distress of adult tree climbers to substantiate the benefits of tree climbing on mental health. This scientific foundation supports a comprehensive analysis of the parallel between trees and the mind in Chapter Three, where climbing trees is posited as a metaphor for psychological transformation during periods of mental vulnerability. In the subsequent chapter, Brown provides detailed literary analyses of works like *The Baron in the Trees* and *Pollard*,² illustrating how tree climbing allows characters to engage with such healing powers of tree-climbing, serving both as an escape from and a response to familial crises. Transitioning smoothly into the symbol of the 'family tree' as an embodiment of lineage

² Italo Calvino, *The Baron in the Trees*, trans. by Archibald Colquhoun (London: Penguin Books, 1977); Laura Beatty, *Pollard* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2008).

and ancestral wisdom, Brown's analysis in William Golding's *The Inheritors*³ further enriches the narrative. Trees, in this context, symbolize stability and connectivity, which deepens the metaphorical relationship between the mind, the tree and family ties. This enhances our understanding of wellbeing from the perspective of interconnectedness, preparing to broaden the discussion of tree climbing from individual experiences to its implications on a communal level. However, contrary to what might be expected, Brown delves into a discussion on the developmental impact of tree climbing on children in fostering independence and growth through examples such as Francisco de Goya's paintings in Chapter Six. Brown suggests that the act of ascending trees can be seen as a rite of passage—an experience that mirrors key psychological developments in childhood that nurture a deep-rooted sense of identity and autonomy. In Chapter Seven, as implied before, Brown shifts his focus from the personal to the collective, expanding on the idea of the family tree previously presented in Chapter Five. He broadens the metaphor from individual upbringing to explore the shared ancestral roots that connect all of humanity with the environment. By delving into the symbolic dimensions of metamorphosis from humans to trees portrayed in mythology, Brown extends the analysis to encompass universal ecological concerns. Ultimately, Brown expands the discussion to address the social dimensions of tree climbing, particularly focusing on its role in empowering marginalized groups in the last two chapters. By analyzing photographs by Cecylia Malik, he underscores how tree climbing acts as a form of empowerment for women, offering them a metaphorical platform to reclaim their agency and voice. His discussion about female eco-activist Julia Butterfly Hill segues into a broader discussion of environmental activism, illustrated through Richard Powers's *The Overstory*.⁴ This integration shows that tree climbing is more than a recreational activity for individuals; it's a potent symbol and tool for social change and environmental stewardship, aligning closely with the book's central argument on the profound impacts of tree climbing as a symbol of resistance, healing, and unity.

However, Brown's narrative style and structural choices, while imbuing the text with richness, also pose certain challenges. His inclination towards richly detailed and engaging

³ William Golding, *The Inheritors* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955).

⁴ Richard Powers, *The Overstory* (London: Vintage, 2019).

content significantly enhances the narrative, yet it occasionally challenges the structural coherence of the chapters. For instance, early in Chapter Five, Brown introduces an elaborate depiction of hurricanes in the UK and Jamaica—a segment that seems tangential at first. He attempts to tie it into a British-Jamaican artist's representation of the family tree as a reflection of heritage; however, this transition feels somewhat forced and disrupts the flow of the main theme. Further complicating the chapter's structure, Brown employs Thom Gunn's poem as a tool to end the chapter rather than providing a succinct summary. This stylistic choice not only overshadows the more critical analysis of William Golding's *The Inheritors* in the same chapter, which holds greater significance throughout the book for its thematic resonance but also diverges from traditional academic norms which may confuse readers who prefer succinct conclusions typically found in scholarly discourse.

In conclusion, *The Tree Climbing Cure* by Andy Brown offers a compelling examination of tree climbing, skilfully connecting it to broader themes in ecology, psychotherapy, and literature. Brown's interdisciplinary approach enriches our understanding of nature's impact on our well-being and challenges traditional academic narratives by weaving together ecological data and literary analysis. Despite some potential frustrations due to occasional structural inconsistencies, Brown's work shines in its ability to foster a profound connection between readers and the natural world. By advocating for tree climbing as a therapeutic and spiritually enriching practice to "internalize" nature, Brown reconnects us to our natural roots, offering a fresh, interdisciplinary lens through which to view both literature and science.