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COUNTER/INSURGENT GUERRILLA ECOPOETICS

ECOPOÉTICAS GUERRILLERAS CONTRA/INSURGENTES

ÉCOPOÉTIQUES GUÉRILLERES CONTRE/INSURRECTIONNELLES

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Abstract: Drawing on examples of Latin American guerrilla poetry by Mario Payeras, Javier Heraud and Rita Valdivia translated in Anglophone small-press editions, this article explores fissures between material environments of struggle and the theoretical concerns of a transcultural ecopoetics. The article proposes that the resulting "guerrilla ecopoetics" mirrors both the networks of international solidarity in which these poems were published and the rhetoric of counterinsurgency, through the shared ecological figure of entangled relationality. In Ernesto Cardenal's poem "Ecology," political struggle is imbricated with a more-than-human ecology of relations. But this claim, common to other guerrilla lyric, is complicated by the ambivalent translation between language and matter via insurgent metaphors that figure guerrilla strategy in terms of natural cycles and processes, such as swarming and pollination. In turn, these figures are made available for capture by counterinsurgent discourse that naturalizes agrarian struggle, and by environmental theory that uses the language of swarms and assemblages. This argument on the naturalization of social reproduction through figurative language, en-

compassing the militant practicality of supply, infrastructure and subsistence (and their obverse, sabotage and counter-strike), leads to tensions between New Materialist theory and historical materialism, negotiated through what the Guatemalan militant intellectual Mario Payeras calls the "environmental dialectic."

Keywords: Guerrilla poetry; Ecopoetics; Counterinsurgency; New Materialism; Translation

Resumen: Basándonos en ejemplos de la poesía guerrillera latinoamericana de Mario Payeras, Javier Heraud y Rita Valdivia traducidos en pequeñas editoriales anglófonas, este artículo explora las fisuras entre los entornos materiales de la lucha y las preocupaciones teóricas de una ecopoética transcultural. El artículo propone que la "ecopoética guerrillera" resultante refleja tanto las redes de solidaridad internacional en las que se publicaron estos poemas como la retórica de la contrainsurgencia, a través de la figura ecológica compartida de la relacionalidad entrelazada. En el poema "Ecología" de Ernesto Cardenal, la lucha política se imbrica con una ecología relacional más allá de lo humano. Sin embargo, esta afirmación, común a otras líricas guerrilleras, se complica por la traducción ambivalente entre lenguaje y materia mediante metáforas insurgentes que representan la estrategia guerrillera en términos de ciclos y procesos naturales, como el enjambre y la polinización. A su vez, estas figuras son susceptibles de ser capturadas por el discurso contrainsurgente, que naturaliza la lucha agraria, y por la teoría ambiental, que emplea el lenguaje de enjambres y ensamblajes. Este argumento sobre la naturalización de la reproducción social a través del lenguaje figurativo, que abarca la practicidad militante del suministro, infraestructura y subsistencia (y su reverso, el sabotaje y la contrainsurgencia), conduce a tensiones entre la teoría del Nuevo Materialismo y el materialismo histórico, negociadas a través de lo que el intelectual militante guatemalteco Mario Payeras denomina la "dialéctica ambiental".

Palabras clave: poesía guerrillera; ecopoética; contrainsurgencia; Nuevo Materialismo; traducción.

Résumé: En nous appuyant sur des exemples de poésie guérillera latino-américaine de Mario Payeras, Javier Heraud et Rita Valdivia traduits dans des petites presses anglophones, cet article explore les fissures entre les environnements matériels de la lutte et les préoccupations théoriques d'une écopoétique transculturelle. L'article propose que l'« écopoétique guérillera » qui en résulte reflète à la fois les réseaux de solidarité internationale dans lesquels ces poèmes ont été publiés et la rhétorique

de la contre-insurrection, à travers la figure écologique partagée de la relationalité enchevêtrée. Dans le poème « Écologie » d'Ernesto Cardenal, la lutte politique est imbriquée dans une écologie relationnelle qui dépasse l'humain. Mais cette affirmation, commune à d'autres poésies lyriques guérilleras, est compliquée par la traduction ambivalente entre le langage et la matière via des métaphores insurgées qui figurent la stratégie guérillera en termes de cycles et processus naturels, tels que l'essaimage et la pollinisation. À leur tour, ces figures sont susceptibles d'être capturées par le discours contre-insurrectionnel, qui naturalise la lutte agraire, et par la théorie environnementale, qui utilise le langage des essaims et des assemblages. Cet argument sur la naturalisation de la reproduction sociale par le langage figuré, englobant la praticité militante de l'approvisionnement, de l'infrastructure et de la subsistance (et leur envers, le sabotage et la contre-attaque), mène à des tensions entre la théorie du Nouveau Matérialisme et le matérialisme historique, négociées à travers ce que l'intellectuel militant guatémaltèque Mario Payeras appelle la « dialectique environnementale ».

Mots-clés : poésie guérillera ; écopoétique ; contre-insurrection ; Nouveau Matérialisme ; traduction.

1. Introduction

The early decades of the present century are often described in terms of a "turn" away from discourse, culture, and history (as epistemological modes of representation that screen or shield reality), and towards ontology as such, in the form of matter that had, goes the argument, ceased to matter (Barad 801). While the first deployments of the term "new materialism" "can be traced back to the work of philosophers like DeLanda and Braidotti during the 1990s", Ejsing observes, it only accrued "formal coherence and began circulating more widely" in the early 2000s (Ejsing 2). Since 2010 especially, thinkers such as Donna Haraway and Jane Bennett have been interested in "(re-) theorizing the active and emergent agentive capacities of the material world, including but not restricted to, human beings" (Ejsing 1-2). This material turn is grounded in a diverse body of thought with roots in posthumanist and neovitalist theory, and a shared concern with demonstrating the irreducible entanglement of the material world with itself, thereby de-centering the liberal human subject from its exceptionalist grounding in political and ethical thought. In one way the "new" materialism is, therefore, a corrective variant of older currents of materialist thought: one which concentrates on matter *per se*, rather

than the socio-economic relations between humans constituted by and through historical change.

Ejsing's recent work mounts a defence of new materialism against a wave of critique over the last decade. Since 2016, a cluster of such arguments have sought to check the environmental humanities' enthusiasm for object-orientated ontologies and vibrating matter. This turn against the material turn was preceded by Sara Ahmed's outlier critique, however, which charged that

> the new materialism does not take as its point of entry a critique or engagement with historical materialism, which does not haunt this emergent field even in its absence. Rather the point of entry for the construction of this field is the critique of past feminism for not engaging with matter, as such (Ahmed 32).

New materialist critique of feminism's supposed anti-biologist eschewal of matter, Ahmed argues, was itself an over-correction to feminism's overriding social constructivism, embedded in culture and discursive practices (32). This account was met a year later by Davis's counter that Ahmed's engagement with notions of the biological is limited because it doesn't allow for the ways that biological matter exists with/in forms of sociality and exchange.

Ahmed and Davis' argument within feminist theory was succeeded by a series of critiques and explorations that sought to hold new materialism's feet to the historical fire in the second half of the 2010s by Cotter, Lettow, Boyson, and finally Giraud's sensitive full-length treatment of the pertinent question, *What Comes After Entanglement?* Hostilities were resumed by Ejsing's defence of why matter matters from post-Marxist critique. Lettow contends that the tradition of historical materialism is itself engaged with an ontology of matter, and so the distinction between old and new cannot be maintained. "The re-emergence of ontology […] that many neo-materialist positions embrace", she writes, "leads to an epistemic ignorance of the situatedness of knowledge production, and thus undermines the connection between epistemological and social critique that lies at the heart of critical theory in a broad sense" (Lettow 107). Giraud, on the other hand, develops Cotter's earlier critique by suggesting that new materialist analyses fail to move from the discursive displacement of the liberal human subject to concrete forms of action, resistance, and refusal to being brought into relation. "The paradox of relationality", she argues, is "that it struggles to accommodate things that are resistant to being in relation, including forms of politics that actively oppose particular relations" (Giraud 7).

It is not my intention to intervene directly into these theoretical debates, or indeed to engage other than glancingly with new materialist thought *per se*. Rather, I am inter-

ested in re-staging some arguments around matter and militancy within the literary-political context of what I call *guerrilla ecopoetics*: that is, a poetry of liberation struggle that engages questions of more-than-human matter from the conceptual standpoint of historical, or *old* materialism. Doing so responds to my editorial framing of *militant ecologies*, a term that seeks to corral the rhetorics and practices of insurgency within an expanded notion of ecopoetics, in a co-edited special issue of *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* (Eltringham and Carter). Concluding with the presentation of the environmental thought of the Guatemalan militant, poet and thinker Mario Payeras—including substantial translations of his late prose work into English for the first time—I am concerned to delineate the rift that historical materialist critique opens with the newer modes of materialism that might seem sympathetic to the liberation of the more-than-human world, but which in practice tend to reinstantiate "the ideology of exchange in a time of biocapitalism" (Cotter 172). Drawing on examples of Latin American guerrilla poetry translated in Anglophone small-press editions, the method of this article begins, where possible, with poetics, working outwards from the poem to an uncertain theoretical position, rather than applying a series of theories to the poems selected for analysis.

The rhetorical category of poetics gives permission to concentrate on figurative language from the point of view of the theoretical debate outlined above. Metaphor enables dialectical switching between what is and what is not: the non-identical is bound to its analogue by a similitude that is not sameness. I focus on insurgent metaphors that figure guerrilla strategy in terms of natural cycles and processes, such as swarming and pollination. In turn, I argue, these figures are too-readily recuperated by counter-insurgent discourse. Natural analogies are doubly inflected as sites where the reproduction of struggle might be sustained or foreclosed. "Counter/insurgency" therefore contains both the guerrilla force itself and state and paramilitary efforts to eliminate it, each thinkable with and through the other.

2. Guerrilla Ecopoetics

The phrase *guerrilla ecopoetics* takes cues from twenty-first century debates around the suturing of "formally resistant poetry" with attention to ecological crisis, as Jonathan Skinner answered the question "Why Ecopoetics?" in the first number of his field-shaping journal (Skinner 105). *Ecopoetics* can be provisionally summed up as the theory and practice of poetry in the expanded modernist tradition concerned with unfolding crises of climate breakdown, biodiversity decline and extinction (Walton 392-398). The term has served to demarcate ecologically inclined late-modernist or neo-avant-garde

strands in US poetry, Hume and Osborne observe, from the formal monocultures of unadventurous 1990s ecocriticism and from the "preservationist triumvirate" of Snyder, Berry, and Jeffers (3-4). Rather, the proleptic ecopoetics practised under the tags of Objectivism, Black Mountain, and the New American Poetry intersected with the new ecological politics of the 1970s, registering "poetry's evolved sense of the material interconnection of all life, anxieties about annihilation and extinction, and humanity's impact on and place in geologic time and history" (4).

While imperfectly translated into practice, the influence of Charles Olson's poetic theory of "Projective Verse", with its call to reduce "the lyric interference of the individual as ego" to "an object" that acts "in the larger field of objects", seems especially to anticipate the "flat" ontology advanced by new materialism (Olson 47-48). By cutting the exception of expression down to size, the human—once shorn of privileged phenomenal perception, knowledge, or agency—becomes just another "object" undifferentiated from the rest of the object-world. Yet Olson's theoretical anti-humanism is paired with a notoriously outsized ambition, across his poetic project, to excavate and expand what now seems a culturally insensitive version of the historical geography of the Americas. Emerging not from Olson's horizontal, east-west conception of the continent but from the global south, the guerrilla lyric in the postwar era of national liberation struggles—my subject here—contests the Olsonian lineage of ecopoetics with an emphasis on political urgency and the rhetorical intersections of language with a militant conception of the natural environment.

Indeed, this unlikely connection is made by one of the key texts in the Anglophone reception of guerrilla lyric, which was co-translated by Olson's student and close poetic ally, Ed Dorn. Translated by Dorn in conjunction with the British Latin Americanist Gordon Brotherston, *Our Word: Guerrilla Poems from Latin America / Palabra de guerrillero: Poesía guerrillera de Latinoamerica* (1968), disseminated guerrilla lyric amongst the transatlantic neo-avant-garde poetry communities with which both were engaged at the time. Transplanted from the mountains and jungles of Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, the guerrilla lyric sits at the conjunction of anticolonial politics, an emergent ecological sensibility, and the transnational circulation of insurgent poetries. When translated into Anglophone bibliographic environments, it occupies an impasse between the open-form environmental poetics of the postwar avant-gardes, and deployments of voice, address, image, and other features of lyric discourse that seem more ripe for descriptive ecocritical recuperation.

Perhaps such a mismatch is simply an effect of the trans-historical and -cultural misprisions raised by textual circulation within translation and publishing networks,

which yoke together parallel but ordinarily separate, or separated, genealogies. The origins of *eco-poetics* are usually ascribed to Jack Collom's course of that name, first taught at Naropa in 1989, and continued in the US context by Skinner's *ecopoetics* (2001-2009). But a Latin American genealogy of the term *ecopoem* may be traced at least to the Chilean *antipoet* Nicanor Parra's *Ecopoemas*, published clandestinely in 1982 to evade the attentions of the Pinochet regime. The *Ecopoemas* ironically adopt the "apocalyptic discourse" now familiar in ecocritical analysis, while satirically ventriloquizing the misanthropic tone of Deep Ecology (Casals 105; Araya Grandón). Parra was present at the first Earth Day in New York in 1970, chalking messages onto the pavement reading "Be kind to me, I am a river". But the *Ecopoemas* also recuperate Chilean ecological thought going back to the 1950s, as Sofía Rosa has shown, inflecting a Latin American critique of extractive models of development and growth with the polysemic ironies of Parra's avant-garde redeployments of political discourse[1].

From the perspective of contemporary Latinx environmentalisms, moreover—historically wary of an ecology often coded white and associated with neo-colonial conservation practices—the environmental and decolonial movements are inextricable, "grounded in larger materialist processes, and […] connected to the transformation of nature" (Wald et al 2; xi). The gaps and misalignments that characterize a translational account of ecopoetics would suggest, for my purposes here, that "the mountain" in guerrilla discourse must index a social-ecological space of struggle distinct from, yet not unconnected to, its postromantic connotations in English-speaking ecocritical traditions[2].

The transcultural notion of guerrilla ecopoetics essays, therefore, belated, uneven movements from terrains of struggle to translational bibliographic spaces expressive of a more ambivalent solidarity. We might think of these circulations in terms of "eco-translation" (Cronin), which is not bound to translation's narrow focus on fidelity to a source text, but rather provides a way of visualizing and mapping counter-currents in transcultural literary history and theory, pointing to something latent in Anglophone ecopo-

1 Parra was aware of the domestic ecological tradition expressed in Luis Oyarzún's posthumously published 1973 essay, "Defensa de la tierra"—itself influenced by Rafael Elizalde Mac-Clure's *La sobvivencia de Chile*, a publication undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1958 in dialogue with Carson's *Silent Spring*—and the manifesto of Chile's first Conference on Natural Spaces, held in 1978.

2 The guerrilla myth of the mountain was developed extensively in the prose testimonial literature from Guevara's tactical insistence on rural insurrection in *Guerrilla Warfare*. See for example Mario Payeras' *Los días de la selva* [*Jungle Days*] (1981), which covers the efforts of Guatemala's Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP) to establish a social base among the Maya-Ixil peasants of El Quiché between 1972-1976; and the Sandinista Omar Cabeza's *La montaña es algo más que una inmensa estepa verde* [*The Mountain is more than just a Great Green Steppe*] (1982).

etic traditions that is made manifest in decolonial environments of struggle. At once, a guerrilla ecopoetics exposes fissures between material environments and the theoretical concerns of ecocriticism by putting translation's connective, relational energies into conversation with the analogous ecological paradigm of interconnectedness. But in a global *oikos*, those connections can be depletive and extractive, as well as generous and nourishing. Indeed, a world-systems account of the perils of connection warns that translation between sites of production and consumption creates new vulnerabilities, enacting a kind of material and symbolic *translatio* that favours production over process, extracting resources and using energy and labour in a linear, directed, instrumental way that is anathema to a poetics of multiplicity, relation and indirection (Cronin 1-7).

Bearing this caveat in mind, we might attend, nevertheless, to a translingual militant ecopoetics that encompasses the poetry of the Tricontinental liberation struggles, as in the Filipino poet and communist militant José María Sison's 1968 lyric "The Guerrilla is Like a Poet". Beyond an indicative claim for similitude—that the guerrilla is like a poet—Sison's guerrilla-poet is "Enrhymed with nature / The subtle rhythm of the greenery" (Sison 24). These "subtle rhythm[s]" "enrhyme" guerrilla, poet, and nature in a series of material and discursive entanglements. The guerrilla-poet is alive to micro-disturbances of movement and concealment—"Keen to the rustle of leaves / The break of twigs"—a practice of proprioceptive attention that allows them to "merge" with the objects (trees, bushes, rocks) through which they negotiate a path (24). Movement includes consciousness of its own registration (being keen, sharp and ardent; the break and the rustle), which leads to an object-logic of camouflage and stillness blended with the materials of the environment (bushes and rocks) that make up the social-ecological terrain of struggle.

Rather than see this temporary porosity between guerrilla and environment as indicative of an irrevocably intermeshed, posthuman surrender of self to the object-world with which the human body shares basic commonalties (carbon, water), Sison's logic is fundamentally *poetic*, which is to say that it inhabits language as much as the world beyond the semiotic. This is to counter new materialist "embarrassment" about culture as a sign-making practice, an awkwardness that stems from its "*semiophobia*", defined by Boyson as "unease and malaise with the idea of human reality as being semiotic" (Boyson 225). In contrast, thinking about the matter of the world from the point of view of poetics addresses language head-on, albeit usually evasively. Sison's foregrounding of *rhyme* and *rhythm*, two rhetorical categories basic to poetry, indexes ecological relation in terms of echo (return) and iterative difference within repetition, respectively. The mediations of form separate as well as suture language from the world it points towards.

This original mode of translation (world–language) offers the flawed paradigm of gap or loss, but could just as well be understood in terms of recreation. Indeed, the reordering of the relations linking us to the world and to one another was precisely the role ascribed to poetry within the broader project of national liberation in many of the Latin American revolutions[3].

Sison's account of proprioceptive movement is analogous to the "rhythm" of poetic language for the ways in which the poet and the militant are "enrhymed" by their parallel activities. Reading these texts in the twenty-first century, a further recalibration can be made to the deliberated movements of Sison's guerrilla-poet, in the qualified assertion that *the guerrilla is like an (eco)poet*. They are makers working with the materials of the living world in order to bring about a revolution in the relations of capitalist extractivism, consumption, and domination that the rural guerrilla understands to be the driving forces of settler- and neo-colonial violence. This poet lives the intensity of life "in the thick of nature", as the Salvadoran poet-militant Roque Dalton wrote in 1963, bearing "witness to the nakedness of insects and the catastrophes of orography" (Dalton 17).

Dalton's Central American sensitivity to orographical activity—volcanic eruptions or sudden shifts in the earth's crust—lends a regionally precise nuance to this topographical figure for revolutionary upheaval. In the 1970s and early 80s, Central America's volatile lands, mountains and jungles were the environment of guerrilla action in the post-Guevarist phase of the Latin American liberation struggles. In his poem "Ecology", the Nicaraguan poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal asks us to see the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution as a victory not only for the social alliance of insurgent workers with a militant bourgeoise under the Frente de Liberación Sandinista (FLS). As well as this cross-class coalition, the poem tells us rather didactically, the revolution was both achieved by and will benefit the more-than-human world: "the saw-fish can now breathe / along with the fresh water shark", Lake Tisma is full once more of "regal herons / reflected in its mirrors", the flowers are thriving and, not least, the "armadillos are very happy with this government" (Cardenal, "Ecología / Ecology" 148).

This translation from Cardenal's "Ecología" by Alejandro Murguía was included in the anthology *Volcán: Poems from Central America*, published by the San Francisco press City Lights in 1983. In the early 80s, Central America was "a contact bomb, a volcano ready to erupt", as the book's back-cover blurb puts it, eliding, for the US reader, the unstable telluric energies of the Central American isthmus with the urgency of the

3 See Beverley and Zimmerman.

guerrilla insurgencies that spread across Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador in the 1970s and 80s. Just four years after the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979, *Volcán* was one of the publications of the Roque Dalton Cultural Brigade, a grouping of radical Chicano and fellow-traveller poets, translators and editors in the Bay Area who adopted the name of the Salvadorean poet-militant following his assassination by his own guerrilla organization, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), in 1975. Dalton and other Central American poets were especially important for the San Francisco scene, as Murguía later recalled, encouraging Californian poets to practise international solidarity with what they perceived as the utopian energies and artistic possibilities of Latin America convulsed by social conflict (Murguía 6-7). In the case of the Roque Dalton Cultural Brigade, the translation of poetry affiliated with national liberation struggles was conceived as an explicitly activist activity.

A second translation of this poem by Jonathan Cohen was published three years later under the title "New Ecology" (Cardenal, "New Ecology" 78-79). As Romero observes, Cardenal's work weaves the Guevarist New Man with the New Ecology movement of the 1970s to proleptically signal the emergence of what would later be called the environmentalism of the poor (Guha and Martínez Alier). Through an extended conceit that takes in water pollution, a catalogue of ducks, and the cute anthropomorphic self-awareness of the armadillos' approval of the new administration, Cardenal's proposal aligns the manifold relations of ecology with the revolutionary project. Above all, "Not only humans desired revolution. / The whole ecology wanted it. The revolution / is also of lakes, rivers, trees, animals" (Cardenal, "Ecología / Ecology" 148). At once, the poem draws a parallel connection between ecocidal and polluting capital and the techniques of counterinsurgent violence. Working from this base claim, that *lucha política* [political struggle] and *lucha ambiental* [environmental struggle] might share aims and coordinates for how to achieve them, in what follows I interrogate some of the too-easy naturalizations that such an alignment suggests at the level of figure and discourse. Within a transcultural *guerrilla ecopoetics*, the classic ecological figure of entangled relationality mirrors the networks of international solidarity in which poems such as these were published. But it also, I argue, echoes counter/insurgency's strategic concern with reproduction and relation.

I want to think about what an insurgent, translational ecopoetics looks like in concert with the uprising of the broader biosphere described in Cardenal's poem. Texts and translations from the guerrilla struggle often circulated under conditions of fugitivity, in small-press pamphlets and magazines, some of which can now only be read in archives. The problem of unavailability is characteristic of counter-institutional "resistance

literature" (Harlow 35). In this clandestine environment, rhythms and relations between fight and flight, insurgency and fugitivity are not so much dualistic alternatives, and more part of a repertoire in which modes of militancy are elaborated from the broader, often gendered, ground of socio-ecological reproduction.

This textual ephemerality is appropriate to the kinds of poems discussed. Poetry itself is "the literary mode most practically suited to revolution", Jasper Bernes observes, because its formal concentration "not only allows for concentrated activity fit to the militant's busy calendar of bombings and interminable meetings, but generates a literary object easily circulated and reproduced within revolutionary milieus" (Bernes 240). Responsive to the rhythms of expediency, the poem's relative ease of material circulation is met at a historical scale by the way it can mediate the compression and acceleration of time and change through non-linear form, both in terms of the kinds of figurative leaps and the situations of speaking it affords (241). Moreover, its minimalism and constraint enact a practical environmental ethics of scarcity that highlights privation and supply, in response to which poet-militants improvise based on the demands of the moment.

We might hear such an on-the-move theorization of guerrilla modernism in Ernesto "Che" Guevara's 1960 letter to the Argentinean writer Ernesto Sábato. For Guevara, "using a new language" is cognate with and necessary for struggle because "we continue to advance at a much faster pace than our thinking and our ability to structure our thoughts. We are in continuous motion and theory trails far behind" (Guevara, "Letter to Ernesto Sábato" 218). A guerrilla ecopoetics on-the-go leaves theory in its wake, or it theorizes as it moves, responsive to the continually shifting demands of combat and concealment, sabotage and supply, while locating political struggle within a more-than-human ecology of relations.

But this claim, I now suggest, is complicated by the ambivalent translation between language and matter via insurgent metaphors that figure guerrilla strategy in terms of natural cycles and processes, such as swarming and pollination. These figures are made available for capture, I argue, by counterinsurgent discourse that naturalizes agrarian struggle, and by environmental theory that uses the language of swarms and assemblages.

3. Figuring Counter/Insurgency

In the Guatemalan thinker, poet, ecologist and guerrilla Mario Payeras' poem "Tamborillo", the jungle shapes literary form and tactical necessity. The poem was written while leading Guatemala's Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) in the 1970s, included in

Payeras' collection *Poemas de la zona reina*, *1972–1974*, and translated for *Volcán* in 1983. Whoever undertakes to wage war in the jungle, it begins, must imitate the tamborillo flower. "No general besieges his adversary / with the mastery of that yellow blossom", which "takes February by attack" each year. Embedded in cycles of flourishing and decay, however, "the complete flowering of spring" is counterpointed, year after year, by the Tamborillo's subsequent "retreat[s]" along the "routes of March" (Payeras, "Tamborillo" 57). Payeras' seasonal figure marks out the rhythms of struggle in agrarian terms: like the flower itself, militants must be attentive to the alternations of rainy and dry months in Guatemala's tropical rainforest.

Payeras here extends the logic of Guevara's metaphors, in his classic 1960 manual *Guerrilla Warfare*, into poetic conceit. For Guevara, sabotage is a tactic of selective paralysis that undermines enemy morale until "the fruit ripens for plucking at a precise moment", in the *Monthly Review* translation that appeared just one year after the Spanish text (Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare* 17). The urgency of such activist translation drives it to reproduce and circulate tenets of guerrilla strategy. But the "precise moment", when the situation is "ripe", is an overly literal interpretation of the Spanish phrase "momento preciso", which here also conveys the sense of what is necessary, in the ecopoetic rhythm of Guevara's figure: it is *preciso*, needful, to pick the fruit in its moment of ripeness as a measure of readiness within the flow of time (Guevara, *La guerra de guerrillas* 43). Too soon and the strike will fail; too late and the enemy will have regrouped.

In the same section on "Guerrilla Strategy", a column splitting off from the main cell to occupy a new front is similar, in another such agrarian metaphor, to a "beehive when at a given moment it releases a new queen, who goes to another region with a part of the swarm" (17). Guevara's metaphors naturalize guerrilla tactics within their environment, envisioning the rhythms of warfare and the division of guerrilla cells as embedded within ecological processes best explained by the ripening fruit or the swarming hive. The latter is a moment of maximum danger for the apiculturist, but vital for the cycles of pollination and agrarian reproduction—or the social processes of struggle—to continue. An unspoken transference between the realm of metaphor and material processes is at once deployed rhetorically and implicitly relied upon for the reproduction of struggle. The guerrillas need to eat and drink, and indeed rely on the agrarian surplus produced by rural communities.

I will return to this vital matter of reproduction, following consideration of the question of form raised by these insurgent metaphors. For Hardt and Negri in *Multitude*, the "polycentric forms" of the natural world afford the guerrilla force its tactical advantage over the territorialized state (Hardt and Negri 56). In response, the new theory of coun-

terinsurgency sought to mimic guerrilla form. So threatening was the epistemology of the "little war", reborn from its prior instantiation in Spain's nineteenth-century resistance to Napoleon, that in the early days of the Kennedy administration Guevara's manual was countered by the counterinsurgency field manual *Operations Against Irregular Forces* (May 1961). Texts such as these offered a way of "reading" an enemy whose form, Hardt and Negri say, seemed "entirely obscure", bound as it was to "no sovereign territory and no secure zones", afforded cover by "organizational form itself" and directed by "polycentric forms of command and horizontal forms of communication" (Hardt and Negri 56).

Caygill demonstrates how this metaphorical tradition can be traced back to Clausewitz's theorization of the French Revolutionary People's War as liquid—an irresistible tide—that swept away the solid blocks of conventional warfare; in turn, this new Napoleonic logic of total war could be resisted only by the Iberian guerrillas' further state change, to gas, via a logic of "condensation" and "vaporization" (Caygill 24). The guerrilla force is nebulous, avoiding solid form and condensing at specific points (strike, sabotage). It refuses the enemy's territorial grammar, instead adopting an articulatory syntax of infrastructure, moving the "point of condensation" to target systems of communication such as bridges and roads (26). While each point amounts to a lightning strike, the overall form is durational, seeking to extend resistance across time, as in Mao's protracted war of resistance (27). Mao's reading of Clausewitz, in "On Protracted War" (1938), was in turn inflected by Classical Chinese landscape painting, and by Sun Tzu's Taoist emphasis on the potential and contingency of a situation and landscape amounting, in Caygill's description, to "an intuition of mobile shapes in the landscape, an *ecology* of war and resistance expressed in terms of meteorological metaphors absent from Western discourse" (64). The Taoist virtues of flexibility and attention to shape, form and deceit (paper tigers) meant that the contending blocks and forces of the Newtonian universe could be replaced, in the Asian decolonial context, by ebbs and flows of *chi* (66). Guerrilla tactics combine deferral and avoidance with the pre-emptive strike that takes time away from the colonizer, actualizing resistance through unexpected violence.

In this view, guerrilla poetics transforms weakness into strength: as a networked, decentralized entity, its advantage is its illegibility, becoming what Hardt and Negri describe as a "pack of wolves, or numerous wolfpacks that counterinsurgency forces have to hunt down" (Hardt and Negri 56). Alongside the ecological metaphors used by Guevara and Payeras, Hardt and Negri's shape-shifting, trans-species figure suggests that guerrilla tactics lend themselves to the language of ecological form. But care is

needed when such elisions seem too "natural". Contemporaneous with the publication of *Volcán*'s dirty-war-era declaration of solidarity with Central American guerrilla resistance, Ranajit Guha cautioned that metaphors such as Hardt and Negri's wolfpack assimilate "peasant revolts to natural phenomena: they break out like thunder storms, heave like earthquakes, spread like wildfires, infect like epidemics" (Guha 46). Sison's "The Guerrilla is Like a Poet" turns the dehumanizing counterinsurgent clichés described by Guha against their authors, as the guerrilla "moves with the green brown multitude […] swarming the terrain as a flood" (Sison 24-26). All the same, Guha's revisionary critique of counterinsurgent historiographical discourse in the Indian subcontinent took this sort of figuration to task, and it might be applied equally to guerrilla ecopoetics as to what he pointedly calls the *prose* of counterinsurgency. Instead of discourse, Guha foregrounds the peasant's collective agency. "The praxis called rebellion" recognizes that taking up arms is not a "natural" or spontaneous decision aligned with so-called "natural" events such as volcanic eruptions, but rather a deliberated expression of desperation, after other avenues have been exhausted, and in full awareness of the existential risks of failure (Guha 45).

Unlike Guha's "Prose of Counter-Insurgency", however, Guevara and Payeras' metaphors for insurgency are strategic and pedagogical: their quotidian nature compares key aspects of guerrilla tactics to agrarian processes, such as the cycles of pollination and ripening, and the swarming hive. Their framing in terms of form and reproduction assumes a tactical power derived from the very natural analogy that equates rural resistance with the phenomena of the material world. In this way, the metaphorical language of insurgency asserts a tactical agency for the forms of swarm and pack, while mapping a plural and relational ecopoetic episteme.

4. Counter/Insurgent Reproduction

Guevara's metaphor of the ripening fruit instructs militants when to strike following the tactical sabotage of national infrastructures of production, transportation or communication. The moment might be ripe for plucking because of the destruction of a bridge or road, the cutting-off of energy or food supplies, or the interception of radio signal. This emphasis illustrates what Hardt and Negri identify as the agentic primacy of guerrilla resistance "*with respect to power*" (Hardt and Negri 64). The surprise strategies of guerrilla struggle forced counterinsurgency to reformulate its way of knowing the world, by mirroring and responding to the decentralized, networked structure of rural insurgency. While themselves suffering privations and attacks on their encampments,

food stores and networks with agrarian society, guerrillas disrupt relations of production and consumption by stressing and isolating the conditions of labour and logistics under which food is produced and distributed, cutting off supply: "We are the usurpers of the easiness / of buying food", the Guatemalan poet-militant Marco Antonio Flores asserts, a rhythm of engagement learned from Guevara's figurative naturalization of sabotage in *Guerrilla Warfare* (Flores n. p.).

It is strange, however, suggests Brian Whitener, that social reproduction is rarely theorized in the literature of liberation itself, despite counterinsurgency's strategic focus on undermining the reproducibility of struggle[4]. Laleh Khalili has argued that counter-insurgency manuals gender the sources of reproduction they target, mapping populations "to particular gender grids", so that "men and women are 'read' and interpellated according to the constructed notion of 'civilian'", which draws on quotidian, domestic knowledge, premised on a "conquered and gendered space, in which an indigenous population is controlled, surveilled, monitored, and made to acquiesce" (Khalili 1474). As Whitener and Khalili both demonstrate, assaults on reproduction and infrastructures of supply have been central concerns of counterinsurgency theory and practice up to contemporary strategies of police violence against the self-sustaining resources of protest movements. Whitener discusses Asheville PD puncturing water bottles and destroying medical stations during the BLM uprisings in response to the murder of George Floyd, as a literal demonstration of counterinsurgency's focus on the environmental conditions of reproduction. By spilling water, police ensured that it could not sustain the demonstrators, limiting their capacity to resist. Contemporary liberation, anti-extraction and abolition movements must re-learn the defence of the sources of reproduction, Whitener proposes, in environments where an agrarian surplus cannot be depended upon for sustenance, being replaced by provisional infrastructures of mutual aid and situated knowledges of struggle.

We might think, then, of reproduction as such an infra-structure—a structure from below, from the *inframundo* of struggle. Doing so recognizes gendered practices of care as central to a feminist and overwhelmingly non-white account of insurgency. The Bolivian poet-militant Rita Valdivia's experimental poetry of the 1960s, written before she was killed in an ambush in July 1969, barely 23 years old, centres reproduction not only

4 Despite their dependence on rural social bases for subsistence, the testimonial literature frequently justifies maintaining distance between the guerrilla and its social-ecological surroundings in order to protect peasant communities from subsequent repression; perhaps the worst of all Latin American counterinsurgent reprisals occurred in the Mayan villages of highland Guatemala that were successfully mobilized by the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres [Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP] in alliance with the Comité de Unidad Campesina [Committee of Peasant Unity, CUC], where leftist insurgency fused with five-hundred-year anticolonial resistance.

as a practical matter of sustenance and supply, but in and through violence, the body and its limits. Valdivia's poetry asks us to return to the historical specificity of struggle sited in the body and the "natural" processes of reproduction and care unevenly borne by feminized labour.

These themes are worked through in her enigmatic poem, "Defensa a la calle" / "Defending the Street," published in Barcelona, Venezuela, in 1964, and only translated by the poet, editor and translator Margaret Randall in 2017[5]. The poem begins and ends at a river whose anaemic surface is scattered with fireflies and algae that resemble the skirts of drowned prostitutes. Blood, sap and excrement mingle and run through the speaker's hand, which is at first closed, sustaining other worlds in its fist, before opening suddenly out of weariness of having to hold them. Once released, "the children and the blood and the sap / are covered in mud", and "mix with time's / excrement, / with gobs of spit of the yankee god, / the European god" (Valdivia 30-31). Having relinquished the work of reproduction, the poem's speaker is unable to protect her charges from the residues of European, colonizing history. But these figures return to her, opening her entrails and inhabiting her nerves and her soul. "They run and once again take refuge in my hands, / like pores, like skin, like blood…" (30-31). For the woman committed to struggle against the gods and histories of the colonizers, the poem seems to conclude, there is no way to escape the work of care, which inhabits the body and runs through its veins. In the final lines, the river's screams mingle with the claws of the sky, an image of cosmic suffering in which the poem's violence is diffused across the landscape.

In another of Valdivia's poems translated by Randall, "Conclusiones" / "Conclusions," published in the Caracas magazine *Trópico Uno* in 1965, measuring the humans against the microscopic world of viruses induces radical scale effects that expose the vain moralism of human society when compared with molecular reality (32-35). It is perhaps unexpected for guerrilla poetry to traffic in the molecular matter of the world, well below the scale of the political action that environs the poem. But it is not uncommon for such a guerrilla ecopoetics to broker relationships between reproduction, the material

5 It has taken half a century for five poems by Valdivia to be translated into English for the first time in 2017, thanks to the tireless labours of the poet, translator and activist Margaret Randall. Her translations of Valdivia represent one instance among many of Randall's use of translation as activist advocacy and feminist recuperation within the masculine arenas of militant poetics and the poetic avant-garde. Valdivia, or "La Comandante Maya" as she was known by her *nom de guerre*, was killed in the same Bolivian guerrilla as Guevara, two years later in 1969. The hermetic style of her poetry is inflected by the Caracas avant-garde circles in which she moved as a student in Venezuela in the early 1960s. She then studied Art History at the Karl Marx University of Leipzig for two-and-a-half years in the mid-60s, where she experienced an awakening of radical consciousness and was recruited by Bolivia's Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN); she travelled to Cuba in 1967 for training, and was subsequently appointed head of the ELN's clandestine cell in Cochabamba, Bolivia, the country of her birth (Randall 8; 11). Leipzig's Karl Marx University welcomed Latin American militant intellectuals studying in the GDR in the 1960s; as well as Valdivia, the Guatemalans Mario Payeras and Otto René Castillo also studied at Leipzig, the former thanks to a scholarship from the Guatemalan Workers Party.

world that it depends upon, and the efforts of insurgents to realign the relations of domination that frame their writing. The effect of poetics is not to clarify but to thicken this nexus. Organicist metaphors of fluid yet formal assemblage (the swarm, the wolfpack) set up an uneasy relationship between guerrilla ecopoetics and contemporary theories of flows, swarms and object-agency.

In particular, the guerrilla lyric's commitment to enunciation within the specific historical moment of liberation struggle stages a conflict with the new materialist language of "assemblage" drawn in part from Deleuze and Guattari's neovitalism[6]. Unexpectedly, these questions come together in the Peruvian guerrilla poet Javier Heraud's poem "Flies" ("Las moscas"), written while living in the Peruvian Amazon during the short-lived Ejército de Liberación Nacional insurgency in the early 1960s. Heraud, an idealistic student and promising young poet, was killed age 21 in 1963. In the poem, translated by the US poet Ed Dorn and British scholar Gordon Brotherston in 1968, Heraud's fly is the subject of a grimly comic conceit for relations between insurgency and counter-insurgency, swarming insect-being, and the necropolitics of reproduction. Reflected in Heraud's humorous poetic voice, the encampment's most constant and unwanted companion, whose relations with the human are marked by the poles of distraction and disease, is nevertheless addressed convivially at first:

> OK fly,
> you fly OK
> you draw yourself in the air
> tight banks quick turns
> graph the walls
> with your shadow
> and you're laughing at me
> and I don't even look at you
> settle on my nose
> take a trip on my head
> settle on my shoulder
> and I suppose it amuses you fly
> when I try to flatten you
> with my slow hand,

6 Hardt and Negri's example of the wolfpack draws on Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [*Mille plateaux*, 1980]: "A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a population, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity […] What would a lone wolf be? Or a whale, a louse, a rat, a fly? […] The wolf is not fundamentally a characteristic or a certain number of characteristics; it is a wolfing […] We do not wish to say that certain animals live in packs […] every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack. That it has pack modes, rather than characteristics, even if further distinctions within these modes are called for. It is at this point that the human being encounters the animal. We do not become animal without a fascination for the pack, for multiplicity" (Deleuze and Guattari 239-240).

> sure, settle on my bread
> my toast, my books
> they're just there for you.
> You know,
> they tell me you push
> some heavy diseases
> but I don't believe it (Heraud n. p.).

Dorn and Brotherston's translation renders Heraud's humorously formal address to the fly ("Claro, señorita mosca, / Ud.") in the register of 1960s countercultural cool, a domesticating tonal switch between modes of comic apostrophe that positions the encampment irritant as a miniature dealer whose reputation for pushing some heavy diseases has been overstated. Steven Connor notes that the fly is often thought of as a "threshold creature", traditionally conceived of as the smallest reducible element with creaturely autonomy, whose "meaninglessness, their meanness, insignificance, their negligible not-mattering" is precisely what makes them so maddening (Connor 1). The poem pauses to chronicle the fly's miniature, alien world, producing a disjunction of scale that is exploited for its slapstick elements in Dorn and Brotherston's translation. The agile fly mocks the cumbersome human form seeking to squash it, but the affectionate tone suggests, too, the fly as the Shandean object of sentimental identification, against which force is withheld in order to demonstrate excessive, superlative gentleness.

But fraternal solidarity with the fly is ruptured by the final part of Heraud's poem, which issues the insect with a warning:

> But I want you to get this:
> If someday I could
> I'd call in all the experts
> in the world
> I'd order them to put together
> a flying machine your size
> to finish you and all your girl friends
> for ever—
> Because I have this recurrent hope
> not to feed you
> I don't want to see you
> in my entrails
> the day they cut me open
> in the countryside
> and leave my body under the sun (Heraud n. p.).

Heraud's speaker inverts the trope of the slain *guerrillero* into a fantastical image of living death, in which the imagined martyrdom of the poet occupies another literary-historical trope, the decay of the flesh. It is to deny the fly its sacrilegious last meal, and to resist the human body's reincorporation back into the cycle of organic matter, that the poem elaborates the comically extinctive fantasy of gathering all the wise people ("sabios") of the world in order to construct a tiny flying machine capable of extinguishing the species. Here the question of reproduction is reprised in its most grisly formulation: why should my corpse sustain you? The body's transcorporeal boundary is imaginatively reinforced by resistance to the discursive naturalization of struggle as part of the material world, which might seem to constitute a limit to Heruad's guerrilla ecopoetics.

In turn, the weird techno-futurism implied by the "flying machine" invokes counterinsurgent violence towards the social and environmental reproducibility of struggle, in this case pointedly gendered by Dorn and Brotherston's choice of "girl friends" for "amigas", targeting the flies within a "gender grid" in Khalili's terms (the Spanish is gendered in agreement with the feminine noun "moscas", but the English "friends" does not imply gender). At once, the "flying machine" anticipates the lethal logic of dis-placed drone poetics deployed in twenty-first century counterinsurgency operations (Brady). The fantasy of extinguishing flies from the planet, meanwhile, reads very differently today, when the threat of insect apocalypse is one of the many ways extinction is framed and the interrelations of ecological interdependence explained.

Indeed, Heraud's necropolitical apprehension of the fly as Deleuzean war-machine evokes contemporary posthumanist theory; Collignon might understand this passage in terms of the "war vision machines" inherent to the development of Cold War "insect technics", while Parikka offers a framework for understanding the fly's aleatory movements in terms of mediatized networks of communication and distributed intelligence that disrupt the conceit of a unitary human subjectivity. In Elizabeth Grosz's Deleuzean terms, on the other hand, the fly is a principle of evasion and buzzing contingency, which forms a "milieu" in "contrapuntal" relation with the spider. The spider-as-state "constructs a territory whose emblem or placard is its web", in a dance of lethal consequence with the fly's milieu that "is not yet a territory", but rather an "indeterminable but limited space" (Grosz 46). In these theories of insect species-being, an "identificatory focus on the fly as singular entity" gives way to "the indistinctness of the multiplicity—from the form to the swarm" (Connor 14). That swarming form is mimetic of the ecological, informational and logistical networks of postwar globalization, tracked by the flies that "are in one sense the opposite or negative of human beings, literally living in and off our deaths", but also "for that very reason our familiars and

fellow-travellers, their wide dispersal across the world shadowing that of their human hosts and partners" (2).

Heraud's flying machine takes on a counterinsurgent role in seeking to eliminate the flies' buzzing contingency. It is, after all, in order "not to feed you" that the poem ironically invokes the guerrilla force whose reproduction is denied by counterinsurgent assaults on its sustaining sources—in this case the body of the fallen *guerrillero*, at another scale of struggle. Such a reading approaches a "militant-particularist materialism", in Sophie Lewis' succinct description of Donna Haraway's early writing, which, she writes, "analyzed the swarming web of earthly life at the cellular level and pursued a revolutionary's desire for liberation in the same breath" (Lewis n. p.). The Harawayian cyborg is an avatar of the counter-revolutionary post-68 world, whose queering of militaristic technology, like Heraud's playful minimization of the military helicopter down to the scale of the fly-world, opens lines of flight from within and against the violence of counterinsurgency, but without disavowing the necropolitical power that inheres in such natural-cultural assemblages.

In this view the fly, along with the figures of swarm, pack and vector whose distributed smallness undercuts monolithic state apparatus, may be seen as a deterritorializing figure of insurgency, an uncanny companion-species that shadows human life and death, formally comparable with the guerrilla army's networked multiplicity. The fly's unlikely creaturely insurgence ascribes a more-than-human materiality to guerrilla struggle, in a transhistorical way that connects it with contemporary ecological theory, while injecting the latter with militant urgency. But how far this analysis is really compatible with emancipatory politics hinges on the way post-Deleuzian modes of assemblage navigate their relation to history, which is the unavoidable ground of guerrilla ecopoetics. Cotter's view is that new materialism is just the ideological articulation of bourgeois liberal capitalism's logic of universalising exchange (175). If this is accepted, the seemingly democratic figure of "flat" ontology actually extends the formal equality of the market to the objects and beings whose distributed agency cycles through material transformations of matter—while demurring to mention the historical nature of the forms and forces that produce value at each juncture (174). In other words, Cotter argues, new materialism deploys the forms of the assemblage as cover for *not* analysing the relations of production that drive the extraction and exploitation of the earth's living materials (173).

Literary-theoretical questions around language, figure, representation and form both index and conceal the nature of this relation to the material world, which I conclude this essay by reading in terms of what Mario Payeras called "the environmental

dialectic". The grounding of history must be the main way we understand struggles for national liberation on their own terms, within the context of decolonial insurgency. My final contention, then is that a guerrilla ecopoetics that flirts proleptically with the swarms and assemblages of distributed agency also asks us to return to a *historical* materialism, from and through the matter of the more-than-human world.

5. The Environmental Dialectic

Influenced by Friedrich Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* (1883), Payeras proposed such an "environmental dialectic" in his late work, *Latitud de la flor y el granizo* [Latitude of Flower and Hail, 1988], a lyrical yet scientifically informed text that reads Central American ecology and environmental history through the long-view lens of Maya anticolonial struggle and the brutally eco- and genocidal actions of successive waves of counterinsurgency in the Guatemalan jungles and highlands.

Oddly, Engels himself might today appear as a new materialist *avant la lettre*. He describes the dialectic of nature as "a cycle in which every finite mode of existence of matter […] is equally transient, and wherein nothing is eternal but eternally changing", marking a shift from thinking about nature as a fixed, immutable store to a series of dialectical relations and internal contradictions (Engels 335). For Engels, in Lettow's view,

> the modern natural sciences of physics, chemistry and biology had overcome a static understanding of matter and recognized the "eternal circle in which matter moves" […] Matter itself, beyond all concrete forms, not only appears here as a scientific object but also becomes a meta-subject that absorbs all human actions […] As in the cosmological narratives of the new materialism, matter here designates a primordial dynamics that is primarily revealed by the sciences and that surpasses all concrete forms of society, subjectivity and agency (Lettow 112).

Engels' investigation of the science of matter from the point of view of historical materialism recognizes, however, that the concrete forms of society, subjectivity and agency are precisely what drive and determine relations between people and with the material world. Not to do so would be, argues Cotter, to elevate the logic of circulation and exchange into a market cosmology that constitutes a "new metaphysics", naturalizing class antagonism (Cotter 176). At this level of abstraction, life itself "liquifies all objects, all matter, into one protean, indeterminate, acausal ontological field of free flows of exchange" (176). In this world, things appear to have agency because matter and objects have become individuals (177).

In the context of the Highland Maya's long anticolonial insurgency with which Payeras is concerned, Cotter's analysis suggests an instructive contrast with the tale of the

Wood People found in the holy book of the K'iche' Maya, the *Popol Vuh*. In one of that foundational text's failed trial runs at creating humanity, the wood people are destroyed by the domestic implements and animals that they had insensibly and unjustly used. The Mayan tradition allows for this alternative version of object-agency, in which the life of things takes on an explicitly political cast through the inversion of domination. For Payeras, such a long-view perspective on Mayan struggle means that while the environmental dialectic operates at the level of ecological relation in the material world, it is simultaneously transhistorical and recursive in human time. At times of intense contestation, "the environmental dialectic transcends its own sphere and deploys its figures in social life", he writes (Payeras, *Latitud de la flor y el granizo* 77; my translation). Around 1980, one such acute conjuncture for the Maya of Guatemala, "the paths once more bristled with traps and the brief lightning of ambushes thundered at the crossroads" (77). In turn, the play of insurgency and counterinsurgency in the Mayan highlands in the 1980s was an "echo", a reverberation or return, of ecocidal processes continuous since the sixteenth-century colonial emergency (77).

Dialectical switching between the time frames of human resistance and more-than-human relational processes recalls what the anthropologist and translator Dennis Tedlock called Mayan "mythistory", a corkscrew time of parallels and co-incidences that braids historical and mythological time into one another (Tedlock 64). Payeras' environmental dialectic parallels this line of interpretation in Mayan studies, one continued by Edgar García's collection of essays, *Emergency: Reading the Popol Vuh in Times of Crisis* (2022). García proposes such a way of reading the *Popol Vuh* today by suggesting that Seven Macaw, the vainglorious, avian-saurian false idol of the Wood People (who are destroyed by the rebellion of their domestic animals and implements),

> is the spiritual wing of the wealth extraction schemes that handsomely stud his wings. This correlation has not been lost on the Maya revolutionary movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The 1980 denunciation of the massacres in Guatemala—the "Declaration of Iximché"—draws a straight line from the theft and massacres of the warlord Pedro de Alvarado to contemporary theft and massacres of Maya people in Guatemala under an economically exploitative regime, even citing the Popol Vuh as it does so (García 19-20).

Seven Macaw is an extractivist, counterinsurgent parrot, whom the narrative's hero-twins—here implicitly figured as guerrillas armed with makeshift slingshots and the poetic tools of cunning and guile—must defeat. Their resistance anticipates that of the Mayan communities against their attempted eradication in the 1980s.

Such counterinsurgent violence, Payeras writes in *Latitud de la flor*, targets both the environment itself and the sources of reproduction the guerrilla force must rely upon. This violence is a calculated strategy to burn the forests, raze seeds, and *in doing so* exterminate the villages that had risen in arms (Payeras, *Latitud de la flor y el granizo* 78). This way of thinking about sustenance and struggle reveals the social character of the material environment and the material fabric of social reproduction, within relations and cycles of making and remaking that new materialism neglects to understand in terms of labour, wealth and accumulation, blunting its political critique (Cotter 175). "In the material process of reproducing life, the environment is our own work, which comes into contradiction with nature when its laws are ignored", Payeras writes. "Remaking nature, moreover, implies firstly the transformation of the social relations that caused it harm" (Payeras, *Latitud de la flor y el granizo* 81; my translation).

Accordingly, in situations of struggle, conservation takes on a militant urgency driven by the need to halt extractivist and counterinsurgent assaults on intertwined political, social and ecological relations. It is therefore essential to

> halt the work of the chainsaw that fells the blossoming cedar in the silence of the jungle, lit by orchids and peopled by the spring-like sounds of the parrots; in Lake Atitlán, it is necessary to preserve the dozens of remaining examples of the zambullidor duck that remain on Earth from the trap and the pistol; is it vital to prevent petrol spills in the northern forests from soaking the plumage of the royal toucan with geological resin, and, any day now, stop the disorientated bird from flying in the opposite direction to abundance [of its food] (Payeras, *Latitud de la flor y el granizo* 82; my translation).

But it would be impossibly utopian to seek to restore such a degraded environment to its original form, Payeras continues. The only thing to do is to remake reality beginning with what exists, using the technologies available (83). This requires a dialectical manoeuvre that recognizes both the capacity for human invention and the planetary degradation caused by that technological culture, together with the awareness that nature is also technological (83). The navigation system internal to migratory birds, for example, is a "marvellous machine" that combines "a solar compass, a sextant, an astrological compass, an extremely exact internal clock, a kind of map for navigation and even sensitivity to variations in the Earth's magnetic field" (87; my translation).

Payeras' version of what we might call a Harawayian cyborg agroecology (see Out of the Woods Collective) is paradoxically arrived at through a deeply-rooted traditional society—the Maya—which generates material abundance alongside that of other species (89-90). Only such a culture can

> truly propose that its old dwelling will flower again; only in a society where the producers are in charge will it be unnecessary for humans to compete with the other species for food and habitat; only social individuals, owners of their free time, will be capable of exploring the full range of life and valuing its infinite interrelations (90; my translation).

These social individuals who practise "infinite interrelations" with life are the agroecological subsistence producers Stefania Barca calls "earthcare subjects". Finally quoting directly from Engels at the conclusion of *Latitud de la flor*, Payeras underlines that we (humans) are in-and-of nature (the given), both historically and ontologically, not set apart by the false colonial dualism: "our domain over nature does not resemble in any way the domain of a colonizer over a conquered people", because that dominated territory is not outside ourselves but internal. It is "our flesh, our blood and our brain" (90; my translation). As the poetry of Rita Valdivia demonstrates, a militant ecology must begin with our most proximate and intimate nature, at the boundary of the body as it is breached by reproduction and care, connecting us to others, but also by the violence of production and extraction, estranging us from our natures.

Payeras' environmental dialectic supplies what is missing from a poetics of assemblage's "singularity without determination" which, shorn of the uneven historical relations of cause and effect, sabotages efforts to analyse, explain and effect changes to the structure of those relations (Cotter 176-177). An anticipatory, tentative guerrilla ecopoetics negotiates the shifting boundary between rhetoric and the real, differently mapped by old and new materialisms in terms of relations of production and class antagonism, and the leaky, transgressive vibrancy of the matter that constitutes the object-world of which humans are a minor part. Insurgent ecological metaphors make an unspoken transference between literary figure and the material processes that are deployed rhetorically yet implicitly relied upon for the reproduction of struggle. While alive to the constant possibility of their subscription into counterinsurgent discursive naturalization, vocabularies of peasant insurgency might inject theories of more-than-human becoming with a militant urgency that is attuned to bio-systemic collapse, yet locked in a dance of death with capital accumulation and resource extraction.

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