

**“NOWHERE DEFINITE”: MEDIATION AND THE CONTROL OF NATURE IN
MARGARET ATWOOD’S “DEATH BY LANDSCAPE”**

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ABSTRACT: The overall goal of this article is to identify in which sense the wilderness, and its contrast with more metropolitan settings, has offered Canada a unique story and source of imagery. Inasmuch as “Atwood’s fascination with the distinction between the two alternatives (urban/wilderness) is pervasive” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 41) throughout her work, our specific purpose is to analyse how, in Margaret Atwood’s short story “Death by Landscape” (1977), the character Lucy incorporates such debate and conflict between these “two alternatives”. The dichotomy nature/landscape upon which the story is based provides a reflection on not only the process of creation and Canadian national identity, but also on what it is to be a woman, or to become a woman in the patriarchal world – Lucy chooses not to become a woman in the terms of patriarchal society. As a representative of the transformation from girl into woman – that is divided by the confusing frontier wherein adolescence is positioned – Lucy decides not to appropriate the discourse that surrounds her existence but to problematise it through her inner and outer actions: desiring that which should not be desired and contemptuous of that which should be commended. Lucy’s characterisation in “Death by Landscape” (ATWOOD, 1977) gives readers a chance to reconsider their own epistemes on the wilderness vs. landscape binarism vis-à-vis how hegemonic society has manufactured and idealised nature and any similar binarisms materialising due to its objectified axioms.

KEYWORDS: Margaret Atwood; Canada; Wilderness; Landscape.

RESUMO: O objetivo geral deste artigo é identificar em que sentido a selva, e o contraste entre ela e cenários mais metropolitanos, ofereceu ao Canadá uma estória e fonte de imagens singular. Já que a fascinação de Atwood com relação à distinção entre as duas alternativas (urbano/selvagem) permeia todo seu legado literário (AYRYLAITE, 2004, p. 41), nosso objetivo específico é analisar de que forma, no conto “Death by Landscape” (1977), de Margaret Atwood, a personagem Lucy incorpora tal debate e conflito entre essas duas alternativas. A dicotomia “natureza/paisagem” a partir da qual a estória se embasa proporciona uma reflexão não só sobre o processo de criação da identidade nacional canadense, mas também sobre o que seria “ser” uma mulher, ou o que seria “se tornar” uma mulher no mundo patriarcal – Lucy opta por não se tornar uma mulher nos termos dessa sociedade patriarcal. Como uma representante da noção de menina se transformando em mulher – a qual é dividida pela fronteira confusa na qual a adolescência se posiciona – Lucy decide não se apropriar do discurso que cerca sua existência mas sim problematizá-lo através de suas ações internas e externas: desejando aquilo que não devia ser desejado e desprezando aquilo que devia ser cobiçado. A caracterização de Lucy em “Death by Landscape” (ATWOOD, 1977) dá aos leitores a oportunidade de reconsiderar seus próprios epistemas com relação ao binarismo selva versus paisagem vis-à-vis a maneira através da qual a sociedade hegemônica tem manufacturado e idealizado a natureza e outros binarismos similares que se materializam em função de seus axiomas objetificados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Margaret Atwood; Canadá; Selva; Paisagem.

“I’ve been traveling through the dirt and the grime, from the past to the future through the space and the time – traveling deep beneath the waves in watery grottoes and mountainous caves. But we’ve got to fight with the thoughts in the head, with the dark and the light. No use to stop and stare: if you don’t know where you’re going any road will take you there.”

George Harrison

INTRODUCTION: “A FORM OF IMPOSED ORDER”

Even though the wilderness has often been concocted as an epistemic glimpse supposedly into humans past, in the XXI century, as most subjects would probably agree, it is the urban setting that has most plausibly illustrated the landscape of modern society anxieties, ideals, and prospects – and it would perhaps be naïve to assume otherwise. In the words of Kristina Aurylaite, in her article “Margaret Atwood’s Alternative Spaces: ‘Wilderness Tips’ and ‘Death by Landscape’” (2004), it is nonetheless also true that “[w]hile the homogeneous, regular, and abstract North American urban grid, a result of the colonial mastery of space, repeats its pattern almost all over the continent, it is the wilderness that has offered Canada a unique story and source of imagery” (AURYLAITE, p. 40). In this sense, if indeed the “result of the colonial mastery of space” by those subjects who stand for the representatives of such approach to nature can be thought of as symbolizing a “homogeneous” and “regular” North American urban portrayal, the importance that must be given to the presence of wilderness in such context cannot be taken for granted, since, as well perceived by Aurylaite, it surfaces the narrative of spatial rearrangement as “a unique story and source of imagery”.

That taken into account, the overall goal of this article is to identify in which sense such image of the wilderness, and its contrast with more metropolitan ones, have both offered Canada a unique story and source of imagery. As for the pertinence and applicability of such statement to be scrutinized and later harnessed the positioning of Canada within this abstract North American urban grid, mentioned by Aurylaite, needs to be analysed as for the myth consisting of the contact and quarrel between the urban and wilder spheres to be consistently evoked. Inasmuch as “Atwood’s fascination with the distinction between the two alternatives (urban/wilderness) is pervasive” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 41) throughout her work, our specific purpose is to analyse how, in her short story “Death by Landscape” (1977), the character Lucy incorporates such debate and conflict between these “two alternatives”. As

mentioned, during her career as a very successful Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has often addressed such issue, (dis)placing the subject before “natural” settings as not only to problematise the transformation of nature into landscape but the transformation of the subject him/herself into something that, so far, had been unknown for both characters and readers. Moreover, within this structure of the outer and inner identity metamorphic processes lived by both space and subjects, the female body emerges as a consequential and evocative piece, whose meaning for our discussion shall be disclosed when the analogical (de)construction of both character and her setting becomes crucial in Atwood’s short story.

The general context of our investigation concerns, therefore, the contemporary atmosphere of nature control, and/or its consequent and effective creation of not only an attempt at controlling nature per se (as restrained to the external setting), but actually humans’ nature itself. The transformation of nature into landscape is symptomatic of current approaches to such issue; and Margaret Atwood’s problematisation of it gives us the opportunity to force our way in the obscure kernel of the mistaken separation between the external and internal setting – that is, of the questionable ideal that results in the notion that the only valuable realms are those ones one is capable of bringing under control (and such realms can be both those surrounding ourselves – and that consequently play a role for our construction as subjects – and those residing within our own development of consciousness. Since, in “Death by Landscape” (ATWOOD, 1977), readers are given the opportunity to experience and share this omniscient (although mistaken) feeling that “instead of an awesome and overpowering space, the wilderness basically becomes a site of regression. This is marked, for instance, by the characters’ relapse to inurbane unindustrial pseudo natural activities” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 42), that framework is the one which shall guide our research. Our specific context, thus, is composed by the specific atmosphere brought forward in Atwood’s short story, as for this notion of the wilderness as “a site of regression” to be

delineated taking into account how it is configured and deconstructed during that narrative. Likewise our main analytical field shall be the one developed during the story as told by the short story's narrator, who expose rather well how the "inurbane unindustrial pseudo natural activities" so commonly associated to the wilderness are nothing but extensions of the urban epistemes and systems of knowledge.

In the end anyone would be forced to ultimately acknowledge the (problematic) omniscience of the misguided and biased ideal that detaches landscape – human made – from wilderness – naturally conceived. To this logic, the process of getting what is supposedly pristine and readapting it into a more comforting structure is, more than possible, necessary – this derives from a Christian basic reasoning of fighting the "chaotic", or better, fighting what we understand as chaotic. As well observed by Aurylaite, "familiarised, tamed, made habitable, in short, appropriated by the white settler-intruder, the wild and unpredictable – live – elements are transformed into an ordinary place that becomes precisely a form of imposed order" (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 42). Nevertheless, if the permeating conceptualisation of the wilderness is one that needs it to be "familiarised, tamed" and "appropriated" in order for it to be understood as amenable to be as meaningful as other, more organised settings, our hypothesis is that Margaret Atwood's short story is successful in doing otherwise. That is, the premise to be examined herein is based on the assumption that the "elements" which are generally "transformed into an ordinary place" are, in "Death by Landscape" (ATWOOD, 1977), taken from the darkness imposed on them as for them to re-signify the hegemonic landscape versus wilderness dichotomy. How the contemporary "form of imposed order" – which seems to have started during colonial enterprises but still provides the foundations for most subjects' approach to natural settings, consequently accompanying the institutionalisation of such settings into and due to the social capitalist world functioning – is put into question through Atwood's treatments of hegemonic discourses concerning

environmental and even subject's natural outlines through her narrative shall be identified and discussed in the following section.

DISCUSSION: "THE QUINTESSENTIAL CANADIAN LANDSCAPE"

Margaret Atwood's "Death By Landscape" (1977) tells a story about Lois, a widowed woman who has just moved to a new apartment, where she arranges her collection of paintings. After introducing Lois and presenting her situation as a woman living alone after her husband died and her children have grown up, the narrator proceeds to tell an event that happened when Lois was an adolescent: while spending her summer vacations at Camp Manitou, a camp for girls, her friend Lucy mysteriously disappeared. Lucy's disappearance marked Lois for all her life, and those marks seem to emerge in the conflicted relationship Lois (and, in a broader sense, the way women are constructed) has with nature. This relationship is developed in the tension that resides in the dichotomy nature/landscape. Landscape is nature represented, that is, mediated by controlling elements, such as the camp institution or the artists' process of creation. Landscape is controlled, framed, frozen in time. Nature, on the other hand, is free, virile, unmediated.

In the article "Death by Landscape: Race, Nature, and Gender in Canadian Nationalist Mythology" (2000), Eva Mackey affirms that the artists of Group of Seven, who aimed at defining a "true" Canadian identity (that is, independent and different from the culture of the colonizer), believed that it was necessary to construct "Canada as a *virile* nature" (MACKEY, p. 126). In her words:

The term "virile" as an ideal term for a nation—in opposition to "subservient and dependent"—indicates the belief that a nation, to be a proper nation, must have the male-gendered characteristic of virility, and not the stereotypical female characteristics of dependency and subservience. (MACKEY, 2000, p. 126-127)

It is the art of those painters who believed that a nation should bear the characteristics of the male gender that Lois puts on her walls. Those paintings are central to Lois's life and they form a safe barrier between her and the outside world/nature. It is the barrier of representation, of nature "under control", a nature that cannot scare or threaten her with its virility and power. As she moves to the new apartment, which is smaller than the house where she used to live, the paintings on the walls form an even closer and tighter barrier to separate her from uncontrolled nature. Ironically, the narrator points out that "this arrangement gives the walls a European look" (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 79): even though those paintings were created by nationalist artists who used art as means to reiterate national identity, they serve as a protection for Lois in a Europeanish disposition.

Lois' relationship with the paintings is complicated further when the narrator, who knows what goes on in Lois's mind, tells that the reason why Lois needs the paintings is because there is something in them that she longs for. This is the cue that leads to the narration of the central events in the story, which occurred at Camp Manitou when Lois was thirteen. Camping is an outdoor activity that puts the participants in contact with nature; the paintings Lois owns are representations of that nature with which she had contact from the time she was nine years old to the time she reaches thirteen. The contact Lois has with nature is characterized as mediated from the beginning, as the narrator uses the words of the camp leader, known as Cappie, to describe the place they are going to in their canoe trip: "This was to be a long one, into the trackless wilderness, as Cappie put it" (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 80). That the narrator does not use Lois' words to describe the canoeing adventure tells more about Lois if we go back in the text to what has been said about the apartment to which Lois has just moved.

The description of the apartment, given in the first paragraph of the story, highlights the artificiality of the place and how securely it is isolated from the outside world. Lois is, according to the narrator, relieved not to have to worry about the lawn, or about the ivy pushing its muscular little suckers into the brickwork, or the squirrels gnawing their way into the attic and earing the insulation off the wiring, or about strange noises. The security system mentioned in the last sentence acquires another meaning: apart from protecting Lois from the usual concerns with criminality, also seems symbolic of the protection against any attempt of nature to invade her space, as the only plant life is in pots in the solarium. But if nature itself is not allowed in, landscape is. As mentioned before, the paintings on her walls form a barrier against unmediated nature. The manner she arranges them in the new apartment contrasts with the way she arranged the paintings in her former house, “in the old acceptable manner of sprinkling art around so it does not get too intrusive” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 79). In her new apartment, landscape/art must get intrusive; although they represent the nature she fears, that nature is under control. Beyond that, there is that feeling mentioned before which is still unexplained: what is there in the paintings that Lois desires?

The secret lies on the canoeing trip she took at Camp Manitou. The centrality of the canoe trip is reinforced as it is the point of entrance to the longer part of the story, which contextualizes the canoeing trip, reveals its significance and connects it to the paintings. The only canoeing trip of Lois’ life happened four years after she started spending her summers at Camp Manitou. There the girls got in touch with nature and practiced sports like swimming and sailing, and could also take part on handicraft classes. The girls are supposed to be cheerful all the time, but their cheerfulness does not need to be sincere: “Cheerfulness was required at all times, even at breakfast” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 80). The “required” cheerfulness is artificial, revealing that even the girls’ feelings while in at the camp are mediated and controlled. This is only one of the things Lois does not like at Camp Manitou;

she also did not like the noise, or to have her privacy invaded by the closeness to the other girls in the dormitories. However, all the unpleasant moments at camp slowly become pleasurable as time passes and Lois gets more involved in – and more molded by – the supposedly natural activities.

The camp has the function of molding the girls, in a sense, appropriating and controlling them as they grow up. The results are, for Lois, clearly recognizable when she meets women who were once sent to camps, like her. Those girls developed “a hardness to their handshakes [...], a way of standing, legs planted firmly and farther apart than usual; a way of sizing you up, to see if you’d be any good in a canoe” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 81). The camp seems to confer to the girls the characteristics that the artists of the Group of Seven wanted to confer to Canadian identity. In the article “Framed Identity: Finding Lucy in Atwood’s ‘Death by Landscape’” (2012), Debrah Raschke poses that “[w]hat the Manitou girls learn, however, are the boy rules—an initiation into male puberty in which the culminating ritual is a canoe trip into the wilderness” (2012, p. 75). For the author, “the gendered camp rituals function as an odd inverted puberty rite in which the Manitou girls learn to be ‘braves’ [...]; the artwork thus frames a memory of a transformative camp experience that privileges the masculine” (RASCHKE, 2012, p. 66).

The importance of mediating the experience of the girls with nature serves to protect them from the uncontrollable power of the Canadian wilderness, especially in a time of major changes when the girls are transforming from children into adult women. It is in Lois’s second year at the camp, when she was ten, that Lucy appears. Lois and Lucy get very attached, although the two girls are very different. Lucy is richer and comes from Chicago; so she is American, daughter of a Canadian woman who used to go to Camp Manitou as a girl. Lucy also has a more interesting life: “But Lucy always had a surprise to reveal” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 85). Every year she arrived at the camp with a new story to tell, such as the ballet or

the horse riding classes or her parents' divorce; "however, there were things Lois knew that Lucy did not" (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 84). Lucy did not know about how to survive in the camp environment, lacking the experience Lois already has. Lucy, in turn, is more daring and more experienced in terms of life and feelings, as Lois's life "[was] placid and satisfactory" (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 86). Lois accepts the changes the camp causes on her, whereas Lucy resists the regulations, both at the camp and at her house, as she has an older boyfriend, of a different social status, whom she is forbidden to see.

Lucy also resists the forced cheerfulness about the canoe trip, to what Lois responds by hiding her enthusiasm about it. Lois is tempted to follow Lucy's behavior, and both start transgressing the camp rules, although they are never caught. Lucy grows up and changes rapidly, she is different every year. In this sense, for Lois, Lucy represents the coming of adolescence and all the changes of such period of life. The contrast between Lois and Lucy can be read as representing the emerging sexuality of the girls, something they have to learn how to control. And it is right after Lucy has her first period that the girl disappears. As a matter of fact,

That Lucy disappears shortly after having her first period suggests that whatever transformation occurs is connected to a kind of puberty initiation, one signaling entry into a prescribed sexuality that proclaims a fundamental distinction between male and female, with boys learning boy rules and girls learning girl rules. (RASCHKE, 2012, p. 75)

In the context of the camp, in which the girls are learning "boy's rules", things get complicated as they have to face the differences between the reality of the camp, in which nature, although controlled and mediated, still give them the opportunity to experience the physical, the strength of their bodies, the beauty of the wilderness and the freedom of being outdoors, and the reality they are going to encounter in the "real world", where their relationship with the environment will be even more mediated by the gender rules that put

women under the regulations of men. Lucy's disappearance happens during the girls' canoeing trip, what justifies the centrality of the event to the story and to Lois's life. The group has set off and spends their first night in tents. Lois and Lucy choose to spend the night out of the tents, as an effort to get in more direct contact with nature; as the girls try to sleep on the uncomfortable ground, Lucy confesses she does not want to get back to Chicago (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 90). Going back to Chicago, to her family and the rules she has to follow, represents leaving childhood freedom behind, letting go of the opportunity to enjoy nature—even though mediated and under control.

“Lookout point” is the name of the next campsite the group reaches. There is a high cliff with a trail that can be climbed, and one can have a good view of the area from the top. What exactly the girls could see from the top is a mystery: “The top was the lookout, although what you were supposed to see from there was not clear. Kip [the adult leader] said it was just a view” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 90). It is a bit ironic that Kip does not give much importance to the view from the top of Lookout Point. Are they not a group of people who share the interest in nature? Should not the adults guide the girls and support them if they show interest in seeing the view? I believe Kip's assertion reinforces the idea that the girls are there to experience nature, but only to a certain extent. Also, as Mackey writes, “[i]n Atwood's description, nature and wilderness are certainly not inviting or comfortable to humans. This wilderness—the quintessential Canadian landscape—is overpowering; it is a place in which one can become lost, even die” (MACKEY, 2000, p. 127). When Lucy and Lois decide to go up the trail and see the view from Lookout Point, it is a view of such dangerous wilderness that they are going to find. Again, Kip's position is intriguing: does she herself know of the dangers the girls can find once they climb up Lookout Point? The fact that she considers Lois and Lucy “old hands” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 90) can be understood as thinking that Lois and Lucy have enough training to know how to deal with the trail and not to put themselves in

danger, but it can also mean that Kip naively believes the girls are not going to be overwhelmed by the view of the wilderness, because they have been well-trained by their mediation.

Lois and Lucy walk up the path; after reaching the top and glancing at the view, Lucy tells Lois she has to urinate. Lois walks away as not to invade Lucy's privacy. Lois hears a shout, looks back and Lucy is gone. She tells the other members of their group, who look for Lucy everywhere; after they go back to Camp Manitou, the police also comes to search, but they cannot find anything. There are no clues left behind to enlighten Lucy's disappearance. In order to get some kind of closure, Cappie tries to impose the guilt for Lucy's disappearance on Lois, who understands what Cappie needs: she needs an explanation she can understand, even if she cannot tell the others. Lucy's disappearance ruins the business she runs, which she inherited from her family. After twenty years, Lois finds herself in her new apartment, watching the landscape paintings she collected throughout her life and used to build a barrier that separates her from the natural world. Her apartment, the artificial bubble she found to protect herself, as commented before, bears a certain similarity to Lookout Point:

Lois sits in the living room of her apartment, drinking a cup of tea. Through the knee-to-ceiling window she has a wide view of Lake Ontario, with its skin of wrinkled blue-gray light, and of the willows of Centre Island shaken by a wind, which is silent at this distance, and on this side of the glass. When there isn't too much pollution, she can see the far shore, the foreign shore; though today it is obscured. (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 95)

The window provides a view of Lake Ontario at the same time that the glass protects Lois from having a direct contact with the nature the lake represents. It is possible to see far away, just like at Lookout Point; however, the view is mediated by the artificial mechanism of protection that is the glass. Pollution, that is a result of human intervention on nature, also protects Lois from what is natural.

What Lois longs for in the pictures is the life she could have had if she had not been prevented from direct contact with nature by the mediation and appropriation of the wilderness. Things could get out of control, as it happened with Lucy, who got lost in the wilderness without a trace. The paintings give her the opportunity to “liv[e] not one life but two: her own, and another, shadowy life that hovered around her and would not let itself be realized—the life of what would have happened if Lucy had not stepped sideways, and disappeared from time” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 95-96). It is the ghost of Lucy, of living an unconstrained life, in direct contact with herself and nature, that Lois sees watching her from inside the paintings. As Raschke writes, “Lois longs not only for Lucy, but also for what Lucy represents in herself: the possibilities of rebellion, of wildness, of a connection to nature that is not part of patriarchal myth” (RASCHKE, 2012, p. 77).

The dichotomy nature/landscape upon which the story is based provides a reflection on not only the process of creation and Canadian national identity (being the latter an issue too broad to be addressed in this paper), but also on what it is to be a woman, or to become a woman in the patriarchal world. Lucy chooses not to become a woman in the terms of patriarchal society. Her death can be read as a kind of transformation, an epistemic change similar to what happens to the protagonist of another work by Atwood, *Surfacing* (1972). This protagonist leaves civilization, going into nature and giving up language and all other aspects of civilization. Lucy is assumed dead by civilization, but there is no body, no trace of blood or of any injury that could prove that she is actually dead: “But Lucy is not in a box, or in the ground; because she is nowhere definite, she could be anywhere” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 96). Sitting in her apartment, Lois reflects on the contents of the paintings, seeing Lucy on different places in each one of them. In the end, she concludes that Lucy is alive in her apartment, “in the holes that open inwards on the wall, not like windows but like doors” (ATWOOD, 1977, p. 97). Lucy is alive in the tension between nature and landscape, in the

transformations caused by mediation and control, at the same time that she would ultimately resurrect in the possibility of not letting herself be transformed.

FINAL REMARKS: “AN INCESSANT SOURCE OF NATIONAL IMAGERY”

One could conclude that the friendship established between the characters Lucy and Lois in Atwood’s short story is one that results in a partnership whose main feature is that of challenging the notion of space as it had been constructed and maintained by the hegemonic narratives. That happens consciously and unconsciously, since the former’s unwillingness to follow the rules imposed in that supposedly pristine setting and the latter’s consecutive emulation of such behaviour ultimately inform readers about how the dominant approach to space – on whose separation of landscape and wilderness seems rather obvious, even though it is not – establishes itself through choking and overlooking deviant, less predictable, attempts at experiencing nature. Actually, one could say that, “in ‘Death by Landscape’, it is indeed as if the only space that poses no threat to the dominant white settler is on ‘under’ an invisible glass jar, the place which is mastered and appropriated” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 46). In this sense everything that the “dominant white settler” is unable to restrain within this “invisible glass jar” is understood to pose some sort of threat to the systematic functioning of a given social (dis)organisation. Nature can only be comprehended if apprehended; that is, it is only that place “which is mastered and appropriated” – only when the wilderness is shaped well enough for it to be transformed into the landscape – that subjects might feel comfortable and see meaning therein. Escaping from that logic, Lucy is a token of resistance surfacing that controllable interactive structure that seems to permeate the atmosphere of the short story. In this sense the development and denouement of such characters are ones whose features tells

us much not only about the control of the subjects' bodies themselves but also about the control of nature as necessary for it to be effectively experienced.

As a representative of the transformation from girl into women – that is divided by the confusing frontier wherein adolescence is positioned – Lucy decides not to appropriate the discourse that surrounds her existence but to problematise it through her inner and outer actions: desiring that which should not be desired and contemptuous of that which should be commended. Adolescence, in a way, very often associated with instability and nonsensical rebelliousness, can also be thought of as a moment of transgression; that moment when the passage from child into adult does not seem to be as graspable as it should because, unquestionably, those boundaries dividing what we are and must become are today much more social than biological – “growing up”, in this sense, does not mean becoming more knowledgeable and responsive about and within the world surrounding one's existence, but becoming closer to what the world seems to require from a grown up subject, to accept certain sets of rules and to hinder any possibility of personal actions (that might easily deviate from such rules – given their narrowness) to emerge throughout our construction as a person who ultimately accepted the advent of maturity. The division between nature and subjects, in the end, seems to be much more problematic than one would acknowledge; as an extension of our selves, what is done to it is a symbol of hegemonic control towards spatial divergences such as the processes occurring in people's lives are also symbolic of such control. However, and notwithstanding such attempt at managing both nature and landscape, what “Death by Landscape” (ATWOOD, 1977) shows us is that “the wilderness is an untamed and live space with its own spatial practices and set of rules, totally irreverent of pseudo-adaptive masks and strategies; this is a space that escapes the newcomer's grasp and as such cannot be labelled in familiar terms” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 46).

It is in this sense due to the trained limitation of “the newcomer’s grasp” that the supposedly experienced space needs to be “labelled in familiar terms” – the history of civilisation has already given us cyclic evidences that generally that which is not understood ends up being feared and transformed into the enemy by those who deem themselves “rational” even though rationality is something rather distant from the main characteristics of hegemonic society. As an “untamed and live” space – and with its “own spatial practices and set of rules” – the wilderness is understood as if it had always been asking to be occupied and adapted – it requires its conversion from wild into civilised, from pristine into organised, from rural into urban or, ultimately, from nature into landscape. These might seem to be only words, but they are not: these are words that demonstrate how the observer sees him/herself as amenable to inform the observed even though the contrary might not be considered appropriate. The second nature reasoning is one whose simplicity and straightforwardness are mesmerising in what concerns the hegemonic approach towards nature; Ultimately, “to make sense of it, one has to subjugate it with a new spatial order as to impose another set of rules; this allows the wilderness to become an extension of the settler’s spatial order, in the very same way that the colony emerges as an extension of the Empire” (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 46). Aurylaite’s insight cannot be taken for granted since the idea that the common subjugation of the wilderness as for the imposition of “another set of rules” to effectively take place is, indeed, nothing but a symptom of an – among the several – “extension of the settler’s spatial order”. In the end, we keep dealing with space as when the coloniser and colonised epistemes first emerged; to “make sense” of the unknown it needs to be institutionalised – we enter the wilderness and transform it into the landscape in the same fashion as the settlers entered the colonised space to impose a supposedly more plausible “set of rules” therein.

The discussions that might be conceived and elaborated from subjects’ experiencing and experimenting nature are, it seems, numberless. To reflect upon the wilderness as

landscape would be nonetheless quixotic and inappropriate, inasmuch as this is not something that might give us any opportunity to attempt less humdrum judgments concerning not only the nature of the wild per se, but the nature of our selves. Lucy's characterisation in "Death by Landscape" (ATWOOD, 1977) gives readers a chance to position themselves and reconsider their own epistemes on the wilderness vs. landscape binarism vis-à-vis how hegemonic society has manufactured and idealised nature and any similar binarisms materialising due to its objectified axioms. The externalising of the unknown only takes place because, apparently, everything must fit in a preconceived mould which is taken as all-embracing, credited by the logic of the omniscient and hegemonic Christian God. However, and as Atwood's narrator demonstrates, "this representation of the wilderness as alien, ungraspable, and incomprehensible allows for further 'exoticising' of it, and as such continues to perform the whole of both an exciting alternative to the everyday's safe urbanity and as an incessant source of national imagery" (AURYLAITE, 2004, p. 46).

To regard nature as "alien, ungraspable, and incomprehensible" generally results in an endeavour to force some meaning into it – even though the observer could, if he/she wanted, alter the glasses he/she is wearing instead of the images he/she gazes. The idea and experience of the "exotic" has accompanied Western civilisation for a long time now; due to our dull and traumatic daily lives (which we are incredibly proud of) in the capitalist world order this "exoticising" is still welcomed since it is one of the few things capable of providing us with "an exciting alternative to the everyday's safe urbanity". Wilderness could indeed be thought of as "an incessant source of national imagery", but only if such imagery gave us tools to fight the exoticising of it instead of providing us with another set of values to alienate peoples' ideologies – which, unfortunately, has generally been the case. The "death by landscape" is the death of nature, the death of the deviant and unknown, of that which was transformed into something it is not; our ultimate achievement would be to understand how, in this hunting

game, we are not the villains or the victims: we have actually gained the status of being both. If there is a crime we are not shooter and we not that who is shot – ultimately one has to finally identify how, in the history of civilisation and of landscape elaboration, actually we have often been shooting ourselves.

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