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**Women Reclaiming Landscapes. Space and Affect in Short Stories
about the South¹**

Mulheres reivindicando paisagens. Espaço e afeto em contos sobre o sul

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“The landscape too is a simultaneity of stories-so-far. ...of course, this discovery of stories, and what they tell us, allows us to build a political argument.”

Doreen Massey (Landscape/space/politics: an essay)

Abstract:

Historically, travel narratives served colonial expansion by feminizing and exploiting territories. This paper explores the interaction between landscape and affect in "Sur" (1982), by Ursula K. Le Guin, and "Camino al sur" (2000), by Angélica Gorodischer. The objective is to analyze how female protagonists reclaim landscapes through practices deviating from patriarchal systems of knowledge and economy. The theoretical framework integrates Marc Angenot's concept of Social Discourse with Affect Theory and Critical Feminist Geography. By means of a literary comparative approach, the study examines the stories as "co-intelligible antagonisms" that challenge the boundaries of the "thinkable". The results indicate that the protagonists enact strategic resistance through cooperation, desire, and an ethics of care. By prioritizing domesticity and symmetrical relationships, the stories dismantle the traditional opposition between public and private spheres. Ultimately, the analysis suggests that these stories propose sustainable, alternative modes of interconnected existence, debunking heroic masculinist accounts of exploration.

Keywords: speculative fiction; landscape; affect theory; feminist geography; Social Discourse.

Resumo:

As narrativas de viagem serviram à expansão colonial ao feminizar paisagens. Este artigo explora a interseção entre espaço e afeto em "Sur" (1982), de Ursula K. Le Guin, e "Camino al sur" (2000), de Angélica Gorodischer. O objetivo é analisar como as protagonistas reclamam as paisagens por meio de práticas que se desviam dos sistemas patriarcais de conhecimento e economia. O referencial teórico integra o Discurso Social, de Marc Angenot, com a Teoria dos Afetos e a Geografia Feminista Crítica. Utilizando um método comparativo literário, o estudo examina esses contos como "antagonismos co-inteligíveis" que desafiam as fronteiras do "pensável". Os resultados indicam que as protagonistas operam uma resistência estratégica através de cooperação, desejo e ética do cuidado. Ao priorizar a domesticidade e as relações simétricas, os contos desmantelam o binário entre as esferas pública e privada, e propõem modos alternativos de existência interconectada, desmistificando relatos masculinistas heroicos de exploração.

Palavras-chave: ficção especulativa; paisagem; teoria dos afetos; geografia feminista; Discurso Social.

Introduction

Literature is a privileged phenomenon within Social Discourse because language—which Marc Angenot notes is “always saturated with tropes and idioms, phraseologies and bombastic structures of feeling” (1995, p. 4)—is deployed in all its potentiality,

allowing for the creation of alternative realities, realities which can reclaim the right of existing, even if it is beyond the hegemonic discourse. This article presents an analysis of the short stories “Sur. A Summary Report of the Yelcho Expedition to the Antarctic, 1909-10” (1982), by American author Ursula K Le Guin, and “Camino al sur” (2000), by Argentinian author Angélica Gorodischer. Both texts present speculative worlds where the unnamed female protagonists, by confronting masculinist power exercise or epistemologies, relate to landscapes in ways that deviate from the norms established by patriarchal systems of knowledge and economy, thus challenging “the boundaries of the ‘thinkable’” (Angenot, 1995, p. 4), and critically engage in a dialog with hegemonic discourse.

Literary imagination offers, as was hinted above, alternatives for constructing our knowledge about the world. In Mary Louise Pratt’s words, “people act in the world as they imagine the world ... It’s due to imagination that one can form the idea of what is possible in the world. There is no action without imagination, without anticipation of what is to come, what has not come yet, but will” (2023, p. 104, author’s translation)². Speculative fiction, because it takes past and present trends as its source material and then projects those tendencies onto the future or alternative realities, is a very fertile ground from which to imagine possible (not here yet) modes of interconnected existence within the world. The stories chosen here attest to this assertion.

There are a number of reasons why these authors and their works are brought here to shed light on the issue of alternative forms of coexistence with the landscape. Perhaps the most obvious ones are that they navigated this world simultaneously—Ursula Le Guin’s life spanned from 1928 to 2018 and Angélica Gorodischer’s from 1929 to 2022—, in contexts quite hostile to women writers, and that both were enlightened by a very personal form of feminism. It is also relevant that Le Guin and Gorodischer, together with their long and prolific careers as writers, both had solid family lives in which mothering and literature coexisted not without effort. In fact, both evaluated their experiences through the testimonies of other women writers, critically exposing the unequal social expectations over men and women authors (Le Guin; Gorodischer, 1992). In terms of

² “la gente actúa en el mundo según imagina el mundo... Es por la imaginación que uno forma la idea de lo que es posible en el mundo. No hay actuación sin función del imaginario, sin anticipación de lo que está por venir, que no ha venido, pero que está por venir” (Pratt, 2023, p. 104).

style and themes, even though they crafted their literature from extreme points in the American continent, in very different contexts of production, and apparently answering back to different literary traditions and canons, these authors and their works come into dialog in the same constellation of fiction— one that links Jorge Luis Borges, Liliana Bodoc, the English and Spanish languages (Romero, 2018). Moreover, they also partake of the same affective constellation, one which wittily links imagination and keen observation, to critique of the state of affairs.

It must also be noted that within their home countries neither developed her career in the publishing centers (O'Connor, 2005). Born in Buenos Aires on July 28, 1928, Angélica Gorodischer's family moved to Rosario when she was a little girl, where she would settle for the rest of her life (Cremona; Luque, 2022, p. 3-4). Likewise, Ursula Le Guin never moved to the East coast, even though it was suggested to her that living in New York could bring her an easier access to other professional networks and celebrity life, none of which she actually wanted (Clark, 2015).

Bringing these two authors into dialog in this study is also an act of recognition of their affinities. Le Guin's translation into English of Gorodischer's novel *Kalpa Imperial* meant the materialization of their mutual respect and enabled Gorodischer's international reach (Romero, 2018). Furthermore, their pioneering writings in science fiction and fantasy show frequent coincidences in their systematic disinclination for complying with imposed social norms and questioning the uses of power and the status quo, which they do while at the same time celebrating traditionally feminine practices and attributions, rather than renouncing them. These are marks that can be pinpointed in the stories here under study.

Stories at the Margins of History and Cartography

Travel narratives and stories of discovery up to the beginning of the 20th century had, among others, the function of creating geographical imaginations which enabled the expansion and setting of national boundaries, and the appropriation of territories and resources. In these traditional narratives, distant lands and their inhabitants have mostly been feminized, exoticized, made passive, and subjected, within this logic, to domination by the metropolis. In Ursula Le Guin's "Sur. A Summary Report of the Yelcho Expedition to the Antarctic, 1909-10," on the other hand, expansionist and patriarchal thought and

practice are brought into question. “Sur” is a feminist answer to speculative fiction’s underlying central question: What if...?, in this case: What would history be like if a group of women had been the first to have reached the South Pole? What if they were Latin American?

This speculative history tale, contrary to hegemonic historiography, is from the start conceived as a diary, or maybe a long letter – genres traditionally acceptable for women – to an ideal and abstract reader, a piece of writing that is going to be secretly kept in the attic, together with discarded odds and ends. Interestingly, and consistent with the point being made by Le Guin in answering back to male-dominated History, the protagonist and first-person narrator remains unnamed, and she uses fake names to refer to her companions, which is presented here as a gesture not of invisibilization but of care and responsibility, and thus as a challenge to masculinist and individualistic values. The text presents an unpublished account of how a group of women from different countries in Latin America carry out the feat of reaching the South Pole in 1910, months before Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian whose name appears in the historical records as the first man to have led a successful expedition there. (Luján, [s.d.])

The women embarking on their own expedition acquired their curiosity and inspiration from their reading of the travel accounts of early twentieth-century explorers to Antarctica. Travel literature has been, since its origins and due to its association with the expansion of European empires, a mechanism that has constituted subjectivities that are not only othered but also asymmetrically hierarchized (Martínez, 2016). Disciplines such as anthropology, natural history, linguistics, geography, and literature have fed off one another in a drive to facilitate and catalog, on a planetary scale, the resources available for exploitation—including human beings—constructing, imposing, and legitimizing a Eurocentric epistemology that also fulfills functions directed inward, toward the metropolis. As Mary Louise Pratt posits, “empires create in the imperial center of power an obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself. It becomes dependent on its others to know itself. Travel writing, among other institutions, is heavily organized in the service of that need.” (2008, p. 4) Colonies in the past, and the peripheral countries that constitute their contemporary counterparts today, function as the constitutive other to the norm, a binary and marginalizing conception

which has been resisted by epistemologies and activisms from the South, as well as other emancipatory currents.

It is extremely interesting, and also a political statement, that travel writing, which is a canonical genre with a central role in disseminating imperial culture, both outward and inward, is presented here vis a vis – and made to dialog with – speculative fiction written as epistolary literature, both of which are minor, marginal genres. In the same vein Angélica Gorodischer, a competent writer of a wide variety of genres and styles, has always embraced marginal genre literature as she finds it enabling and productive to make her points (Cremona;Luque, 2022, p.5).

Going back to the content of the short stories, if Le Guin's account talks back to colonization and the annexation of territories, Gorodischer's denounces the consecutive phase of the same process of appropriation of territories for exploitation, which is usually referred to as post-colonialism. This is because what the alleged independence of the colonies from the imperial powers actually meant has proved to be a merely formal independence, as the economic and political dominance, in varying degrees and formats, and in naturalized practices such as the extraction of raw materials in asymmetrical power relationships, still continues. Angélica Gordischer's story attests to the tension between extractivism, resistance and local complicity. In "Camino al sur", a stranger arrives at a region of lush vegetation and freshwater expanding along an unnamed river, which could be any area in the tropical or semi tropical ecosystems of the Americas. In terms of style, unlike "Sur", which is a detailed record of a journey written in the first person, much goes unsaid in Gorodischer's story. There is a frequent shift from third- to first-person narrator, suggesting a certain playfulness and an invitation to walk in the protagonist's shoes, while at the same time showing the impossibility of such action. The made-up toponymy and names of plants and animals do not allow us to pinpoint an exact location despite the suggested associations with the semitropical regions of Argentina. This seems to be a parallel world. Yet, to fill in the gaps in one's knowledge, as is required of an engaged reader, one can easily extrapolate the themes into our ontological level regardless of the lack of a realistic geographical location– sexism, capitalist exploitation, extractivism, anthropocentrism, use of the soil for (elite) human settlements. All this makes the tale quite universal and relatable.

In this region, there seem to be some small communities, which trade with the city and form a sort of network. The stranger, Beltrán Tereze, meets the protagonist, a woman – unnamed, just as the river –, and they embark on a sexual-erotic relationship. The woman lives detached from but communicated with the nearby town and carries out her daily practices in a harmonic relationship with nature, while at the same time enjoying some of the comforts that twentieth-century technology can afford, such as a telephone and a refrigerator. When Beltrán exposes his plans for developing the area, she has to make a choice and stands up for the land that she inhabits against the extractivist drive of the foreigner and the complicit ambition of the local men.

It is my contention that female subjects strategically contest the mores and conventions by which they are historically enclosed in depoliticized, and hence devalued, places. This is something that they carry out through inhabiting landscapes in ways which entail affects (friendship, desire, care) and practices that are presented as sustainable and alternative to the male counterparts of heroic exploration and colonial extractivism. I thus intend to analyze the stories as co-intelligible rumours within Social Discourse in the light of the relationship between the landscape and affect theory.

Charting Unmapped Speculative Landscapes

A brief review of the literature is necessary to complete the rationale behind the decision of comparing the works that make up the corpus in this study. Both Gorodischer and Le Guin have been very much anthologized in collections of science fiction, feminist or speculative fiction, and in fact, they have been put together in some of them. Notably, it is worth mentioning *Sisters of the Revolution: A Feminist Speculative Fiction Anthology* (2015), compiled by Ann and Jeff Vandermeer, which republishes Le Guin's "Sur", whereas Gorodischer's contribution here is "*La perfecta casada*", "The Perfect Married Woman". What is interesting in this volume is that there seems to be an attempt at intersecting the mainstream and the marginal, thus somehow showing quite a comprehensive panorama of the field – and one could say of the governing rules of the Social Discourse – at the time.

Frequently, in academic literature, Gorodischer's and Le Guin's works have been studied in connection with the questioning of gender inequality and the subversion of genres, to show how marginalized genres are politicized, using socio-historical contexts

and diverse theories to challenge power structures (Suárez Hernán, 2019; Cremona, 2022; O'Connor, 2005). Within this group we can find those studies of political utopia and its emancipatory potentiality (Soriano, 2015; Drage, 2019), while other studies focus on Le Guin's and Gorodischer's representations of the body from queer perspectives though not in the stories here presented and not from a comparative perspective (Donawerth, 2004; Shafer, 2017; Slot, 2023).

Gorodischer's short story "Camino al Sur" has not been frequently analyzed, although it is worth mentioning that Kördel (2017) analyses the water metaphor as a form of fluid ecocritical counter-discourse. Le Guin's text "Sur" has been more often approached from the perspective of rewriting history and myth (Kaler, 1996; Glasberg, 2002; Brown, 1990). Thus an impulse to place these stories in dialog with hegemonic, mainstream discourses can be observed in the scientific review. The two short stories present a shared interest in the landscape and feminine ways of inhabiting it but they have not been put into contact with each other so far, or approached from affect theory and critical feminist geography. Therefore, it can safely be claimed that the analysis proposed here will contribute both to the dissemination of knowledge on these authors through a comparative method to highlight the connections in their work, and to probe landscape theorization in terms of its political potentiality and affective evocations.

Mapping Social Discourse, Gendered Landscape and Affect

Marc Angenot's often-cited concept of Social Discourse serves here as a broad framework in which to insert the corpus and analytical tools with which to read it, by means of a literary comparative approach. Angenot proposes a succinct definition of Social Discourse which nonetheless presents the main lines which will be followed here: the unveiling of underlying rules and how the texts answer back to them within a system of intelligibility:

Everything that is said or written in a given state of society, everything that is printed, or talked about and represented today through electronic media. Everything that narrates or argues, if one contends that narration and argumentation are the two basic kinds of discursiveness. Social discourse cannot be approached as this empirical "everything," but rather as a constructed object, that is, the extrapolation of those discursive rules and topics that *underlie* the endless rumor of social discourses without ever being themselves objectified. These underlying rules ... comprise a thematic repertory, an implicit cognitive system (or perhaps several cognitive systems in competition), and a regulated topology, a division of

labor in the discursive realm. These are the basic components of what engenders the sayable, the writable, institutionalized discourses of all kinds, the discursive acceptability at a given historical moment in a given society. (Angenot, 1995, p. 3)

In this particular study, the notion of Social Discourse allows one to contextualize the production of speculative literature in dialog with the hegemonic discourse – “[a] global concept that pretends to account for a moment of symbolic production as displaying some sort of ‘organic unity’ or at least regulated and co-intelligible antagonisms” (p. 7). In this discursive interaction one could identify ruptures in thematic, stylistic, and genre repertoires that respond to what Angenot terms transdiscursive rules in tension, antagonism, or divergence with the components of the discursive system (p. 4).

Informed by the affective turn, this study aims to get beyond some of the extreme positions within post-structuralism which seem to lose sight of the material dimensions and favor a reification of language (Macón, 2013, p. 3-4) and, instead, emphasize the relevance of the body, body practices and their generic specificities.

Following Jon Beasley-Murray (2010), I understand affect as the capacity which subjects have of affecting and being affected by others in the encounter of bodies (x-xi). Affects are privileged phenomena that can articulate the intimate and the public, since they are enacted in individual practices, but at the same time they have a strong social and political component. They are structured in systems and ruled by conventions which make them intelligible and are therefore tightly knitted with the circulation of power. Affect, thus understood, is not merely a subjective and nontransferable psychic state, but the result of complex political networks. The conventions which rule the circulation of affect establish differential repertoires of possibility assigned according to how a subject is made intelligible to the rest of society, or to any given group (Luque et al. 2024, p. 18-19). Of interest to this article is how affects are available to subjects read in terms of their gender:

[T]he (un)acceptability and (un)desirability of affects depend largely on whether the subjects involved are socially read as masculine or feminine, as affects are differentially distributed among the sets of attributes that define **femininity** and **masculinity** in a specific society and era. Thus, when an individual affects somebody or is affected by them, they put into action that set of attributes and performatively produce the effect of sexual difference in bodies, behaviors, and social relations (Luque et al., 2024, p. 18, author’s translation, bold in the original)³.

³ “[L]a (in)aceptabilidad y la (in)deseabilidad de los afectos dependen en gran medida de que los sujetos involucrados sean leídos socialmente como masculinos o femeninos, pues los afectos están

But affect does not only circulate among subjects; as we shall see later it can also be directed towards and be caused by landscapes.

The fact that space is not a mere backdrop has been pointed out by human geography for at least fifty years. Landscapes, being selected fragments of space, also acquire a political dimension, since the questions of who establishes what is to be considered landscape-worthy, why, and what is left out, to name a few, are implicit. “What qualifies as landscape is a question that involves political and economic interests, as well as expectations disseminated and naturalized throughout space and time” (Der-Ohannesian, 2018, [s.pag.]).

Geographic studies since the mid-20th century have shown, for example, that certain representations of landscape have served to reproduce elite values which naturalize hierarchies and patterns of land ownership. Later, in the 1990s, a decade in which gender theories began to permeate the geographical disciplines more intensely, feminist geographer Gillian Rose brought the presence of the masculinist gaze of the academia to attention, and introduced a critique of patriarchal and apparently disembodied ways of seeing, exposing the dualism of an active male gaze versus a passivity that is female and associated with nature (Gregory et al., 2009, p. 409-410). Landscape, in addition to its physical dimension, is recognized as such according to the affective responses of an observer (Hunziker et al., 2007, p. 49). What is to be read as a landscape results from the “exercise of sight or vision as the primary means of association between that space and human concerns” (Cosgrove, 2002, p. 64). Most of this seems to happen in a veiled way. The notion of landscape is thus quite political as it traffics in affects. And it certainly does so in a differential way if the bodies enacting the affects are read as women’s bodies.

Another interesting point to consider in relation to landscape in its political –and affective– dimension is Doreen Massey’s materialist critique of the apparently innocent act of landscape contemplation. Her essay “Landscape/space/politics,” (2011) highlights the political and economic power entailed in the concept of landscape. One of the

distribuidos diferencialmente en los conjuntos de atributos que definen la **femineidad** y la **masculinidad** en una sociedad y en una época determinadas. Entonces, cuando un individuo afecta o es afectado, pone en acto ese conjunto de atributos y produce performativamente el efecto de la diferencia sexual en los cuerpos, los comportamientos y las relaciones sociales. (Luque et al., 2024, p. 18)

geographer's provocative proposals is of interest to this particular analysis: the reversal of the question of belonging as a mark of identity. Even if Massey is here mostly concerned with class and migration when she refers to the long-standing notion of belonging to a certain place, the notion she proposes of "displacement effected by class" (p. 12) can be easily transposed to gender and colonial power: "Rather than that dwelling-saturated question of our belonging to a place, we should be asking the question of to whom this place belongs. Who owns it? (Massey, 2022, p. 12)." She thus strips the notion of landscape of yet another layer which hides the fact that it has been trafficking inadvertently hidden power relations that have a significant material impact on minorities.

Last but not least, it is relevant to develop the notion – already suggested by Rose – by which the female body has traditionally been conceived as an extension of the territory, and as such made part of the landscape that is to be gazed at and exploited.

The concept of colonialism, as Chandra Mohanty (1984) points out, is key in that it targets the mechanisms of economic and cultural exploitation underlying domination, since it "almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and a suppression – often violent – of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 333). In other words, hierarchies are established and discourses (scientific, artistic, legal) are produced that legitimize this superiority over what is called the "third world." Colonialism, traditionally framed in terms of disputes over history, actually masks disputes over geography and it is evident that, following Rita Segato (2014), "women's bodies are particularly affected by this territorial paradigm that dominates contemporary thought today" (Segato, 2014, [s.pag.] author's translation).⁴

This study follows the thesis proposed by Bidaseca in "Post-heroic Feminist Ethnographies," regarding how imperialisms inscribe their economic, epistemic, and political fundamentalisms on "the racialized bodies of women from the Global South"⁵ (2018, p. 52). Bodies and territories are feminized to legitimize their possession and exploitation, although it is important to note that not all women's bodies extend to the territory in the same way. Needless to say, disputed territories experiencing conflicts of varying nature and intensity leave the bodies of the women who inhabit them more

⁴ "El cuerpo de las mujeres es particularmente afectado por este paradigma territorial que domina hoy el pensamiento contemporáneo" (Segato, 2014, [s/pag]).

⁵ "[L]os cuerpos racializados de las mujeres del Sur Global" (Bidaseca, 2018, p.52).

vulnerable than those in less conflict-ridden territories or centers of power. In this sense, the body spills over into the materiality of the territory, but in the case of exile, where the territory is disassociated from the community, women's bodies symbolically constitute territories with devalued differential marks that legitimize their exploitation. Thus arises the extractivism applied to female bodies (production and reproduction) and territories (resources). And the contiguity extends even further when we consider that "the body is our last space of sovereignty, the last thing we control when all our possessions are lost"⁶ (Segato, 2014, [s. pag.]).

By means of the analytical tools here proposed, this study of “Sur” and “Camino al sur” purports to expose how, through the respectful inhabitation of landscapes, and the fulfillment of their desire and an ethics of care and solidarity, female subjects strategically resist the imposed mores and conventions of hegemonic discourses on femininity by which they have been historically sequestered in devalued places.

Friendship and an Ethics of Care at the End of the Earth

The first decade of the twentieth century was a period marked by an interest in reaching the geographic South Pole. A race between men backed up by strong nationalistic prides took place. The Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, whose voyage was partly funded by Argentine capital, was the one who claimed victory in January 1911 and managed to return alive. (Luján, [s.d.], p.2). The second man to reach the South Pole was the English explorer Robert Falcon Scott, who reached the pole 34 days after Amundsen, but extremely harsh weather, and probably despair, prevented him from returning alive. Nonetheless, he is considered a hero by some accounts (Cf. Alexander 2011).

As pointed out earlier, Le Guin's story presents stark contrasts to these masculinist and hegemonic stories of exploration by questioning the very notion of what heroism entails.

Unlike the competitive drive that motivated the historical personages just mentioned, the distinctive mark in Le Guin's story is cooperation, both in the tasks of exploration and care, and in mutual respect and respect for the environment. It could be

⁶ “El cuerpo es nuestro último espacio de soberanía, lo último que controlamos cuando todas nuestras posesiones están perdidas” (Segato, 2014, [s. pag.]).

argued that some of the points which will be exposed here deviate significantly from the historiographic accounts.

The first and foremost aspect to consider is the questioning of male heroism and the symmetrical relationship established with the landscape. Once on Antarctic soil, as soon as she sees the overwhelming landscape, the narrator falls prey to contradictory feelings and bitterly questions received notions of heroism and leadership, and states: "But then, the backside of heroism is often rather sad; women and servants know that. They know also that the heroism may not be less real for that. But achievement is smaller than men think. What is large is the sky, the earth, the sea, the soul" (Le Guin, 1982, p. 237). The ineffable quality of nature is thus valued, and so is the material reality of everyday chores and caring to the detriment of the heroic and grandiloquent discourse of historiography and geography.

As for the type of leadership that prevails in the story, even if the women argue and complain, a relationship of symmetry and sorority is observed among them. As the narrator clarifies:

To be sure, we argued a good deal. But then we had time to argue. And one way or another the arguments always ended up in a decision, upon which action could be taken. Usually at least one person grumbled about the decision, sometimes bitterly. But what is life without grumbling, and the occasional opportunity to say, 'I told you so'? How could one bear housework, or looking after babies, let alone the rigors of sledge-hauling in Antarctica, without grumbling? Officers - as we came to understand aboard the *Yelcho* - are forbidden to grumble; but we were nine, and are, by birth and upbringing, unequivocally and irrevocably, all crew (Le Guin, 1982, p.234).

The juxtaposition of devalued chores commonly associated with (early twentieth century) women's duties and the masculine and valued activity of exploring Antarctica on dog-pulled sledges contributes to equating both practices in terms of the effort and moral strength involved. Also, the fragment reveals the symmetry in power relations enabled by the friendship that binds the women.

Adverse situations, such as the breaking of two women's protective glasses, or another one's ignored pregnancy and delivery in Antarctica, prompt all to help those who are suffering or in distress. The affects of care and friendship are exalted in response to a landscape that is hostile. In short, there is a replacement of hierarchies by heterarchies, which is also observed in the relationship with the landscape.

This relationship also reflects an ethics of care, and a disdain for appropriation and domination. It can be seen, for example, in the base that the women explorers set up on the Ross Ice Shelf, whose characteristics make it functional for communal life and organic with the environment. Instead of setting up tents or shelters, the women dig rooms in the ice: a large den and private rooms, insulated by the ice itself and protected from the strong winds. They gradually add comfort, including a space where they spend time painting and ice sculpting.

Berta went a little farther. When she had done all she could to make South America livable, she dug out one more cell just under the ice surface, leaving a nearly transparent sheet of ice like a greenhouse roof; and there, alone, she worked at sculptures. They were beautiful forms, some like a blending of the reclining human figure with the subtle curves and volumes of the Weddell seal, others like the fantastic shapes of ice cornices and ice caves. Perhaps they are there still, under the snow, in the bubble in the Great Barrier. There where she made them they might last as long as stone. But she could not bring them north. That is the penalty for carving in water. (Le Guin, 1982, p. 239)

The women's base establishes a significant counterpoint with the abandoned hut from an earlier expedition of Captain Scott.

It was dirty and had about it a mean disorder. A pound tin of tea was standing open. Empty meat tins lay about; biscuits were spilled on the floor, a lot of dog turds were underfoot—frozen, of course, but not a great deal improved by that. No doubt the last occupants had had to leave in a hurry, perhaps even in a blizzard. All the same, they could have closed the tea tin. But housekeeping, the art of the infinite, is no game for amateurs. (Le Guin, 1982, p. 236)

Finally, in respect for the environment and refusal of the colonial impulse, the women decide to leave no mark—such as a flag or sign—when they arrive at the geographic South Pole. Exhausted after the effort and the adversities of the weather, they simply have a cup of tea and return home.

Extractivism and Resistance on the Way to the South

One of the affects that mostly drives the protagonist and antagonist of Gorodischer's story, "Camino al sur" is desire, which includes but is not limited to a sexual drive. Sara Ahmed characterizes desire as a force that pulls us towards other bodies and objects (Ahmed, 2004, p. 84). In fact it takes on different guises, and the characters' desires come inevitably into conflict.

Going back to Massey's question of landscape ownership, the prodigal river-dominated landscape portrayed in "Camino al sur" does not seem to belong to anyone, and the protagonist ensures that it continues to be that way, in the face of the threat posed by the stranger. Beltrán Tereze's desire is to possess the territory to develop it, apparently for tourism. There is, in western culture, an identification, a semantic continuity between the body of women and territory, as was established before. The location where the story takes place appears to be a prodigal southern landscape which showcases the abundance and innocence ready for extractivism from the civilized north. The protagonist is read by Tereze as part of the landscape and thus made passive, subjected to exploitation, the same as the land. However, the woman is not a passive object of his desire. Her own desire connects her to the landscape and eventually makes her confront the trespasser. Both the woman and the landscape have agency and are capable of empowerment, with varying degrees of subtlety.

The river is somehow personified, and one night they apparently plot to get rid of the man in a sensual, rhythmic interaction, not unlike love-making:

I stood beside him and he drew near and touched my feet. I stepped into his water dressed just as I was. I stepped in and he embraced me and I let him carry me. He cradled me, lifted me, let me fall, rocked me. He sang to me, entwined me in the Espuela channel—so narrow, so fragile that with every sway it seemed I would breach the banks and get trapped in the backwater, but no, he's so wise, I floated on and on, held and caressed, and I laughed and played and twirled and floated and rubbed against him and sank and came back to the surface. He held me and there, facing the sky, I gazed at the enormous moon. Everything sang: the rains will come, summer will come, we will eat *tilpez*, *hichilos*, *rojarines*, we will drink wine, we will make bread. Slowly, the river drew me out of the Espuela channel and swayed me to the shore where we embraced and intertwined with one another, perfect as time, humming songs from childhood, with the taste of *lurva* honey in our mouths. He took me by the shoulders and hips and, smiling from the depths, he gently pulled me out⁷. (Gorodischer, 2000, p. 49, author's translation)

⁷ Me paré junto a él y él se acercó y me tocó los pies. Me metí en su agua así vestida, me metí y él me abrazó y yo dejé que me llevara. Me acunó, me levantó, me dejó caer, me meció, Me cantó, me enlazó en el canal Espuela, tan estrecho, tan frágil que a cada oscilación parecía que iba a salirme de cauce y que iba a quedar atrapada en la rebalsa, pero no, tan sabio, seguí y seguí sostenida y acariciada y me reí y jugué y me di vueltas y floté y me froté contra él y me hundi y volví a salir. Me sostuvo y yo ahí de cara al cielo miré la luna enorme. Todo cantaba: vendrán las lluvias, vendrá el verano, comeremos *tilpez*, *hichilos*, *rojarines*, beberemos vino, haremos pan. Despacio el río me sacó del canal Espuela y me hamacó hasta la orilla en donde nos abrazamos y nos enroscamos uno en el otro, perfectos como el tiempo, tarareando las canciones de la infancia, con gusto a miel de *lurva* en las bocas. Me agarró de los hombros y de las caderas y sonriendo desde lo hondo me fue llevando hacia afuera (Gorodischer, 2000, p. 49).

After this intercourse with the river, the woman goes into the house, gets rid of the man's belongings by throwing them into the depth of the river and looks for the shotgun.

The protagonist's desire challenges capitalist, patriarchal and anthropocentric mores in at least two ways. To start with, her desire is not oriented to the satisfaction of a male desire, but her own life-supporting needs, such as food, leisure, non-reproductive sexuality, all of which depend on the river she lives by. The protagonist establishes a symmetrical relationship with non-human entities and eventually resists the colonialist intrusion which threatens her life source.

Second, her desire is not related to capitalist productivity. The patronizing voice of one of the local men on the telephone lets us know that she does not lead a productive/reproductive life, as he suggests she is lazy. She abides by her desire and drives, and does as she pleases, which seems to be unacceptable to the hegemonic patriarchal discourse represented by the man on the phone. She is described as enjoying her home, spending the day swimming, rowing, fishing and sleeping on the beach. She even takes Terezef as her lover until she realizes that he is not going to change his plans, for which she apparently ends up killing him.

Conclusions: Converging Souths

Interestingly, both tales have as a common characteristic the presence of southern women who interact with and respect the landscapes which they inhabit, and they do so through practices that are typically associated with the intimate and private sphere – care, the satisfaction of bodily urges, leisure activities, housekeeping. This challenges heroic masculinist accounts of leadership and patriarchal extractivism.

As it was shown, the political stances of “Sur” and “Camino al sur” do not flee from the domestic realm and the serious and often unacknowledged responsibilities that it entails. Quite on the contrary, the stories question the established boundaries that limit female subjects to private life by giving political preeminence to domestic space and its practices. The binary pair which has rigidly structured capitalism's sexual division of labor since the nineteenth century – exterior-public-political/interior-private-depoliticized – is thus questioned too.

The fact that both narratives are set in the south and their titles also make reference to this cardinal point is quite stirring and needs to be accounted for. Le Guin's Spanish

title, “Sur”, can be both a homage and a playful intertext of “*South*”, Shackleton's 1919 account of his expeditions, indicating both her indebtedness to normative history and her intention to rewrite that history or, better, to reroute its focus on first-world centers of culture and on European agents to a consideration of history from the perspective of its southern hemispheric other.” (Glasberg, 2002, p. 99). Certainly, in their marginality, the speculative and epistolary genres accompany the rewriting and debunking of hegemonic northern history.

The title “Camino al sur”, which can be translated as “The Way to the South”, entails a reference to the protagonist’s explanation to the foreigner of how the river flows – it goes south – and circulates as one with the earth’s bodies of water. Her interpretation seems to be unscientific and is dismissed by him; however, it does show her understanding of interconnectedness of life in the planetary system.

The conceptual metaphor of the compass rose, in which the north means orientation, order and purpose, produces an othering of its opposite: the south becomes a devalued cardinal point. The south, in its identification with the feminine principle, deploys the negative element in binary western thought: the weak, the modest and docile, the passive landscape, the backwards, in other words, the heteronomous discourses that circulate as rumors in the Social Discourse.

Finally, this article embodies the expression of an emotion tightly linked with desire, which is hope. The hope is that this analysis will be at least a humble contribution to a much longer conversation between these magnificent women writers in the constellation of Social Discourse.

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