Writing Ecological Revolution from Millennial South Africa: History, Nature, and the Post-Apartheid Present
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Abstract: This article does two key things. Firstly, it offers a perspective on histories of South African political economy refracted through the lens of "world-ecological" thinking (Moore, *Capitalism* 2–5). It maps the organisations of institutionalised apartheid and the liberal democracy that has succeeded it in terms of capital's cyclical regimentations of nature. This approach sheds new light on the entanglements of politics, economics, and environments, which, in specific ways over the course of the twentieth century and into the millennial present, have shaped and characterised unevenness in South Africa. Secondly, in light of these ideas, the article considers Zinaid Meeran's *Tanuki Ichiban* (2012), Henrietta Rose-Innes' *Nineveh* (2011), and Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* (2008), twenty-first-century texts exemplary of an increasingly prominent "speculative" impulse in contemporary South African literary production. I situate the extraordinary human and extra-human vocabularies of these fictions as responsive to shifting historical constructions of "Nature" in neoliberalising South Africa. I further argue that the narratives are sensitive to the structures of these historical and ongoing regimentations—to how they concatenate and overlay one another in the millennial present. Finally, I suggest that with recourse to speculative poetics, the texts seek to offer alternative conceptual vocabularies to those from which systematic violences continue to proceed.

Keywords: South African literature, post-transitional literature, world-ecology, ecocriticism, Lauren Beukes, Henrietta Rose-Innes, Zinaid Meeran, speculative fiction

I. Introduction

A coterie of global hipsters tuck into polar-bear *bredie* (stew) as icebergs drift towards Africa's southernmost coastline; a luxury housing estate transmogrifies into a plague of insects amidst the slumscape of a Cape Town wetland; and a corporati post-apartheid government is colonising cool-kid DNA in a world of artificial forests and vacant factories while genetically modified dogs patrol the borders of the city. What is to be made of these scenarios, taken from Zinaid Meeran's *Tanuki Ichiban* (2012), Henrietta Rose-Innes' *Nineveh* (2011), and Lauren Beukes' *Moxyland* (2008)? What conditions have prompted the post-millennial proliferation of such extraordinary vocabularies in South African literature, and how might critics conceptualise the ways they are being deployed specifically to invoke historical and contemporary inequalities—to stage scenes of the technologized transnational alongside those of long-cultivated local desperation? And further, significantly, what have all of the above developments to do with the dramatic imaginings of biophysical and atmospheric transformation consistently discernible in this corpus? To what ends do "irrealist" (Deckard et al. 83) poetics and political and historical sensitivities participate—in a repeated triangulation—with visions of corporate organisms, insectal architectures, and contagious nanotechnologies?

Critics have pursued answers to these questions along several distinct trajectories, which, to give a sample, invoke "post-transitional"[1] generic experimentation (Frenkel and MacKenzie 2), a post-apartheid "mood slump" (Stobie 370), contemporary "impact[s] on the environment" (Roos 52), post-industrial "hyperreality" (E. Smith 178), anxiety around "late capitalism" (Graham 67), and "the Anthropocene" (Samuelson 1; B. Smith 346). Thus far, however, little has been said that either binds together the specific concerns of the narratives under scrutiny here, or that situates them and their vivid ecological imaginaries comprehensively in relation to the historical and contemporary forces shaping present materialities in South Africa. In what follows, I probe the connections between these determining vectors and the creative human and extra-human vocabularies emergent in South African fictions after the turn of the millennium. I offer readings related to, but

distinct from, interventions made via Anthropocene thinking in particular. The Anthropocene designates the age in which "human activity" constitutes the major force shaping "biological, chemical and geological processes on Earth" (Crutzen and Stoermer 17), and while, as Jason W. Moore notes, its popularity as a critical concept has—at a moment of climate emergency—"opened some measure of public space for dialogue around humanity's place in the web of life," its helpfulness as an analytical category is limited ("Cheap Nature" 80). From the perspective of Anthropocene thinking, Vishwas Satgar writes, contemporary climate crisis "has to be explained as a human problem for which we are all equally responsible" ("The Anthropocene" 48), and this understanding has taken hold in the face of a reality in which "climate debt" accrues overwhelmingly to the developed (imperial) nations of the Global North ("The Climate Crisis" 5) and the diverse effects of biospheric change are felt disproportionately by largely postcolonial nations across the Global South (4).[2] The concept of the Anthropocene thus cannot account for the extent to which the emergencies of the present have unfolded not through the actions of a collective "humanity" but through racialised and uneven world-systemic processes.

This article attempts to account for how literary production from millennial South Africa is sensitive to these systemic drivers of planetary crises in the present by situating post-apartheid eco-speculative imaginaries within the patterning of racist ideology, economic unevenness, and geographical organisation that has shaped both South African and modern world history.[3] The readings that follow refine the reach of "world-ecological" cultural studies—which draws into focus "the connections between environment-making[,] . . . inequality, power, wealth, and work" (Moore "Cheap Nature" 78)—and bring this paradigm to bear on South Africa's historical present. This intervention takes its cue from and further pursues new critical directions in "world-literature" (Deckard et al.) and postcolonial eco-materialism. It also intends to both forge new perspectives on contemporary South African literary production and bring together existing but disparate critical contributions. Refracted through the lens of world-ecological thinking, recent texts exemplary of a broadly framed post-apartheid "speculative"

impulse might be seen to apprehend—and imaginatively contest—how, over its histories and into its present, South Africa has been configured through particular organisations of nature—a point on which I elaborate in detail below. This mode of address situates the post-apartheid speculative concretely within the historical nexus of local and transnational relationships of power, and it underlines the entanglements of politics, economics, and environments through which these have always been co-constituted. In these ways, the approach I outline here might help to clear ground, beyond the corpus discussed, for new conceptual routes into the country's textual cultures across a wider historical spread.

II. The Production and Plunder of Cheap Nature: Apartheid as an "Ecological Regime"

In their analysis of South Africa's "present as history," John S. Saul and Patrick Bond situate cheap labour at the centre of the successive formations of "racial capitalism" (36)—corresponding to colonial, Union, and apartheid periods—that have organised human populations and environments in the country since the advent of industrialisation with the fin-de-siècle mineral revolution. From this perspective, the raft of legislations passed by the National Party (NP) after its election in 1948 becomes legible as a sustained attempt to retain a racialised workforce, operable at a price and on a scale sufficient to meet the demands of South Africa's twentieth-century economy. Working from a racist taxonomy passed into legislation under the Population Registration Act of 1950, the apartheid state refined mechanisms of coercion and compulsion established as a migrant system of labour on South Africa's nineteenth-century gold mines: it restricted the rights of the South African majority to settle and work in designated whites-only cities and implemented programmes of forced removal from these zones to peripheral "group areas." In these ways, the apartheid administration—like its colonial and Union predecessors—sought to canalize people into a directable, mobile, and racialised workforce by drastically limiting alternative means of survival. At the same time, the state worked to keep the cost of this labour as low as possible through, among other measures, racialised job reservation and a prohibition on industrial action. These coercive

mechanisms are testament, as Harold Wolpe formatively argues, to a realisation on the part of apartheid South Africa's "capitalist class" that "African labour power could be maintained as cheap labour power by repression" (446).

Saul and Bond's argument—and Wolpe's—traces a violent history, in which race was produced and deployed as the criterion for identifying a labour resource that, in Wolpe's words, was made accessible to capital "at a wage below the cost of reproduction" (425). This situation is not exclusive to South Africa: similar mobilisations of race have taken place, in locally specific ways, across imperial histories. In such circumstances, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley write, race implies "a hierarchy of human species," which is used in turn "to justify the practice of slavery and the denial of . . . subjectivity to non-Europeans" (12). Significant, in the context of this article, is how such hierarchies derive from a more fundamental polarity, consolidated in the long eighteenth century by the philosophical and scientific revolutions of Europe's "Enlightenment" (Gandhi 29). Enlightenment logic, as Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue, situates rational humanity over and against "disenchanted nature" (2). In the context of colonial encounters, imperialist thought recasts this dualism in racial terms and brings it to bear on colonised peoples. "From the perspective of imperial administrations," Moore writes, "these humans were not Human at all. They were regarded as part of Nature, along with trees and soils and rivers—and treated accordingly" ("Cheap Nature" 79).

For Moore, the manipulation of supposedly biological hierarchies of race for profit speaks to what he conceives of in *Capitalism in the Web of Life* as capital's fundamental reliance on the dualism of Humanity (or Society) and Nature. "Capitalism's governing conceit is that it may do with Nature as it pleases," he writes, "that Nature is external and may be coded, quantified and rationalized to serve economic growth, social development or some other higher good" (2). This externalised Nature is distinguished, in Moore's vocabulary, from "*nature* with an emphatically lowercase *n*" (2; emphasis in original), which designates not a territory that lies beyond the bounds of Society—like Nature—but the wider, indeed all-encompassing matrix of relationships between human

and extra-human agents that makes up what he thinks of as the *oikeios* or "web of life." This, he writes, is nature "as a whole" (2), and from it no single monolith (Nature or Society) can be extracted alone or intact; rather, each "unfolds as bundles of human and extra-human natures, interweaving biophysical and symbolic natures at every scale" (9). Cast in terms of *oikeios*, "capitalist civilization" is a "co-produced world-ecology of capital, power and nature," and yet the specific action of capital, which Moore terms "capitalism as project" (2), cuts these relationalities symbolically through programmes of "productivity and plunder" (124). Marshalling to its aid dominant discourses of empire and science, capital constructs—or produces—historically specific territories of external "Cheap Nature" (14), which, because they ostensibly lie beyond the domain of Society, might be plundered or "appropriated" (Moore, "Cheap Nature" 90). As these strategies cohere in given conditions and at a given time, they crystallise into "ecological regimes": those "relatively durable patterns of governance" (Moore, *Capitalism* 158) through the coercive action of which capital gains access to the "work/energy" ("Cheap Nature" 89) of particular historical Natures "for as close to free as it can get" (*Capitalism* 153). Saul and Bond's analysis of colonial and apartheid legislations draws into sharper focus one permutation of such stabilized duress-mechanisms. Cheap Nature as "Cheap Labor" (Moore, *Capitalism* 236–40) lies at the centre of this capitalist project in South Africa from the late nineteenth century onwards.[4] In particular, the apartheid administration's fastidious segregations, cultivated impoverishments, and selective restrictions together sought to produce labouring demographics defined in terms of race and to plunder their work/energy over the course of the twentieth century by seizing it at as low a cost as possible.

III. Ecological Revolutions: Falling Apartheid, Rising Neoliberalism

The coming to power of the African National Congress (ANC) as a result of South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 marked the formal end of apartheid if not the end of its power formations. It heralded the dissolution, at least on an official level, of those segregating

and legislated coercions through which this regime produced and gained access to human Natures in the ways I outline above. While this shift, in the first instance, might represent a victory for non-racialism and social democracy, it also signals South Africa's incorporation into the processes of a "world-ecological revolution" (Moore, *Capitalism* 113)—and so into another organisation of nature. If ecological regimes name the patterning of compulsions and coercions through which Cheap Nature is defined and appropriated at a certain place and time, then ecological revolutions are those historical moments in which the *oikeios*-effects of these patterns build up to the degree that the system is no longer effective and must be reformulated in respect to newly identified territories of appropriation. "Organizational revolutions achieve their qualitative shifts in response to—and on the basis of—the accumulating contradictions of the previous era," Moore writes (161), a point demonstrated in the late twentieth century by the rise of neoliberalism as a dramatic restructuring of the world economy designed to overcome pervasive stagnation after the post-war boom. Viewed in Moore's terms, these circumstances dramatize the co-action of enclosed Natures in the *oikeios*: the catalysing of contradictory responses across human and extra-human agents that eventually undermine appropriative relations.

The neoliberal agenda solves these problems by revamping Keynesian policies in British and American economic cores[5] and mobilising uniquely aggressive and totalising strategies of what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession" (*New Imperialism* 149). These "release a set of assets (including labour power) at very low (and in some instances zero) cost. . . . [C]apital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use" (149). Infamous hallmarks of neoliberal accumulation by dispossession include the privatisation of state infrastructure, the environmental commons, and public amenities; the deindustrialisation and financialisation of core states—the shift away from material production and towards market manipulation; and the concomitant rise of the multinational corporation, which relocates industry to optimally deregulated localities across the globe (67). For Moore, all of this restores capital's access to Cheap Natures and thus heralds the dawn of a new ecological regime (*Capitalism* 164). Through

diverse applications of accumulation by dispossession, the limits of a previously existing and no longer efficacious set of Society-Nature relations are renegotiated, and a new configuration is implemented out of the *oikeios*-conditions of the old.

IV. South Africa and the End of the Capitalocene

While this process can be mapped cyclically across capital's longue durée, Moore argues that the rapidly multiplying transformations in the web of life that have accompanied (and hindered) the neoliberal programme mark our current moment off from familiar historical patterning. The contemporary "proliferation of crisis language (energy, finance, unemployment, austerity, climate, food, etc.)" indexes a mosaic of obstacles to accumulation that have built up through successive reorganisations of nature over the history of capital so that, as Moore puts it, "[t]oday it is increasingly difficult to get nature—including human nature—to yield its 'free gifts' on the cheap" (*Capitalism* 1). The advent of the neoliberal world-ecology thus forecasts "the breakdown of the strategies and relationships that have sustained capitalist accumulation over the last five centuries" (1). It heralds a "terminal crisis" (1) for what Moore terms the "Capitalocene" (77)—the age during which capital (and not the *anthropos* writ large) has dominated the organising of world natures. Under these conditions, the unprecedented breadth and depth of neoliberal productivity and plunder signals a frantic and violent last gasp, a response to ever less "free" Natures with ever more aggressive and globally extensive mechanisms of coercion.

The dawn of democracy, and the dissolution of apartheid's Cheap Labour regime, coincides with South Africa's insertion into these end-stage planetary relations. Under the auspices of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution plan (GEAR), the new leadership sought to invite multinational corporations into the country, a manoeuvre most acutely felt by those already dispossessed under apartheid. For South Africa's post-apartheid poor, GEAR's effects have frustrated access to healthcare, education, and basic amenities and have frequently also displaced people from (informal) settlements cleared to make way for private development. The deindustrialisation and financialisation of the

South African economy (Saul and Bond 151–52) has further catalysed mass and apparently increasingly irremediable unemployment (154)—exceeding twenty-seven percent in South Africa in 2017 (Marais 72)—which overlays and aggravates historical destitutions. Saul and Bond summarise:

> Against the undeniable drama of the transition from the formal structures of white minority rule that has occurred must be set the fact that South Africa today is a much more unequal society than during apartheid, one deeply stratified . . . in racial terms ('class' still remaining so substantially 'raced' in the country). Moreover, it is facing the prospect of genuine economic and ecological calamities. (3)

It is important to note that, even as this renewed violence may be experienced as a kind of historical continuity, South Africa's present speaks nonetheless to a shift in its ecological organisation: if, throughout the history of apartheid, a racist taxonomy and the restrictions that proceeded from it produced and plundered Cheap Nature as Cheap Labour, then in the twenty-first century, these selective impoverishments have been retained but repurposed, made to participate in globally trenchant neoliberal strategies of coercion. As Harvey notes, financialisation and deindustrialisation are dispossessive strategies: they "release" workers from the workforce (*New Imperialism* 149), bolstering what Karl Marx thinks of as the "reserve army of labour" (Marx 438). In a multinational present characterised by the "geographical mobility of production," these demographics of the unemployed "put downward pressure upon wage rates and labour conditions everywhere" (Harvey, *New Imperialism* 63–64). "The . . . [contemporary] glut of labour supply [has] dramatically depressed . . . the lowest wage that workers are willing to accept for any given job" (75), Hein Marais confirms; in this way the swollen global reserve army has also facilitated capital's access to Cheap Nature as Cheap Labour on a planetary scale. If the transition out of apartheid unravels one regimentation of the Society-Nature binary, then it also ties South Africa to mechanisms that coercively construct another socio-ecological dualism. It ushers those populations who served as Cheap

Labour under apartheid into the transnational ranks of what Mike Davis terms "surplus humanity" (199): a reserve army "warehous[ed]" (201) in the mega-slums of the so-called developing world. While the reserve army functions coercively in respect of global Cheap Labour, this demographic has also been produced through neoliberal dispossessions on such a scale that its "reincorporation into the world-economy appears increasingly impossible" (199).[6]

Thus, surplus humanity, in this sense, speaks to the dying Capitalocene. It tells of the Cheap Nature strategy's failing capacity to deliver appropriable territories without massive, corrosive effects. As Rob Nixon notes, these effects—"climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation" (2), all co-produced in the *oikeios*—"disproportionately jeopardize the livelihoods . . . of the global poor" (5). And thus, while racist framings of the Society-Nature binary have been erased from official discourse in the post-apartheid nation, this increasingly catastrophic and buckling dualism continues to exert an organising force in contemporary South Africa—as elsewhere across the Global South—extending, reactivating, and compounding unevenness cultivated through previous ecological regimes.

V. The Reorganisation of "Nature," Post-Apartheid Precarity, and South African Speculative Fiction

In the millennial South African context, these successive capitalist organisations of nature overlap and coincide. To a great extent, the conditions of apartheid have outlived the very publicly celebrated demise of the coercive legislations that produced them, but they have also been overlaid by new obstacles developed from the structures of an emerging regime. In these circumstances, inertia couples with real and anticipated change and pasts and presents accumulate uneasily, hampering survival in both new and historically redolent ways. Franco Barchiesi identifies in these conditions a climate of "precarity," which derives from "occupational insecurity and labor market uncertainty" and "is shaped by the mismatch between the official imagination . . . and . . . ordinary material experiences" (24). Similarly, anthropologists Jean and John L. Comaroff discern a sense of ontological instability that emerges in the wake of

apartheid's end. They identify an upsurge in occult beliefs and practices during this period, which they interpret as responding to a profound disorientation attendant on financialisation and the employment exoduses of deindustrialisation (284). For example, the post-millennial ascendency of a market in magical remedies (*muti*)—the ingredients for which, at their darkest, are harvested from human bodies and entail ritual murder—speaks, on the Comaroffs' account, to an increasingly opaque and spectralised economy in which it seems mysteriously possible to "yield wealth *sans* perceptible production, value *sans* visible effort" (281). At the same time, the violence of the trade in (human) organs registers an experience of these conditions as themselves deeply and pervasively violent, belying a sense that this ostensibly liberated, post-apartheid world of immaterial money is also one structured by a "confusion of people with things" (286).

Starting with threatening magic, and with the climate of disorientation and unease in which anxiety around it has emerged, we might begin to track a connection between the post-apartheid reconstruction of Nature and the rise in South Africa of "speculative" cultural imaginaries. Indeed, the post-apartheid occult has directly provided the terms for certain South African texts' speculative lexica. *Muti* is at the centre of Beukes' *Zoo City* (2010), for example, and also features prominently in Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* (2009). In both texts *muti* participates in the production of a locally specific brand of horror,[7] but—as I suggest in what follows—the relation between violent neoliberal shifts and fictional imaginaries is also visible in other generic linkages. This article uses the critically loose term "speculative" strategically, in part to negotiate the lexical diversity of the narratives that I consider, and in part to shift emphasis away from the politics of genre and towards a materialist conception of the contemporary South African literary imagination.

The speculative, as R. B. Gill notes, is frequently connected with—but not reducible to—a set of readily identifiable generic conventions. Among these, Gill lists "science fiction," "dystopian fiction" and "the Gothic" (72), each of which, significantly, has become increasingly visible in South African literary production after the millennium. For example, we might look to Beukes', Meeran's, and Rose-Innes'

writing—which I examine in greater detail below—and to the fiction of Mohale Mashigo, Sarah Lotz, Masande Ntshanga, and Louis Greenberg, among others. The influences of science fiction, dystopian fiction, the Gothic, and horror are, to varying degrees and in varying combinations, discernible throughout the corpus this brief survey outlines. At the same time, however, as the designation "speculative" pertains to these specific generic modalities, my use of it here is both broader and more flexible. For Gill, "speculative fiction" is an open and heterogeneous field of literary production, inhabited by texts that share "woolly group resemblances" (77), which emerge, in different ways, as an impulse to explore "what would happen had . . . the matrix of reality-conditions been replaced with other conditions" (73). As they imagine these conditions, speculative fictions can also be interpreted as what the Warwick Research Collective (WReC),[8] in their re-theorisation of world-literature, call "irrealist" narratives, using Michael Löwy's term (83). Irrealism, in WReC's assessment, engages with the material conditions of existence: narratives deploy it to conceptualise circumstances in which the coordinates of a recognisable reality have become unstable, have shifted and reconfigured into a new formation. WReC suggests (in line with the Comaroffs) that, since the late twentieth century, this instability is an effect of neoliberal financialisation, which dematerialises and obfuscates the existing mechanics of capital in ways that are nonetheless experienced very materially as aggressive precarity. "The in-mixing of the imaginary and the factual that characterises 'irrealist' writing is," WReC proposes, "arguably . . . sensitive to this simultaneity, to the seemingly incongruous conjction of 'abstract' and 'scarring' modes of capitalisation" (Deckard et al. 70).

It is from this perspective on irrealist writing, then, that the relationship between the post-apartheid ecological revolution and the millennial rise in South Africa of estranging, quasi-fantastical, and frequently anxious literary forms comes into focus. "World-literature," writes Michael Niblett, "is also the literature of the capitalist world-ecology. . . . [It] will necessarily register ecological regimes and revolutions . . . since these organize in fundamental ways the material conditions, social modalities, and areas of experience upon which literary form works" (20).

Given that the neoliberal programme, as seen from Moore's perspective, constructs a socio-ecological binary, contemporary irrealist fiction thus indexes the rise of an ecological regime that produces new Natures via strategies of accumulation by dispossession and, more specifically, through processes of financialisation and deindustrialisation. WReC affirms this point: writing of gothic irrealism in particular, they argue that "supernatural tropes . . . register the conjuncture of fading and emergent [ecological] regimes, prognosticating a revolution in nature-society relations ever more pervasive and traumatic than the last" (Deckard et al. 96).[9] Viewed in these terms, the increasing prominence in post-apartheid imaginaries of speculative forms—which, following Gill, deal precisely with the restructuring of established realities—mediates the fluidity and disorientation attendant on the reorganisation of Nature as apartheid's long-implemented construction of Cheap Labour gives way to but partially overlaps with the neoliberal production of surplus humanity.

To read the speculative impulses animating contemporary South African literary production from this perspective is to take seriously Neil Lazarus' assertion, expanded by WReC,[10] that fiction registers the local "sensorium corresponding to capitalist *modernization*" (Lazarus 122; emphasis in original). Lazarus argues that texts (and especially postcolonial fiction) should not be considered primarily as "expressions or variants of a (putatively) globally dispersed aesthetic mode" (132). Rather, we might more productively attend to how generic and indigenous forms "show us how a certain *local* socio-natural order . . . is encountered, experienced, lived" (133; emphasis in original). I pursue these ideas in respect to three contemporary South African novels in the discussion that follows, taking my cue from WReC's point that (capaciously defined) speculative proclivities index the disorientating sensoria of particular ecological revolutions. I show that each of these narratives maps—or mediates—the unravelling and coercive reconstitution of old and new Natures from the post-apartheid locality at the end of the Capitalocene. Further, I explore the interrogative potentials of the speculative South African fiction under consideration, examining how irrealist aesthetics might "articulate powerful critiques of actually

existing reality" (Deckard et al. 83). I show that across these texts, ir-realist vocabularies not only register a distinct world-ecological moment from the historical perspective of millennial South Africa but are also mobilised to capitalise on the critical possibilities inherent in this moment's fluidity. These texts deploy speculative forms, I argue, to contest and at times wholly refigure the dualism of Society and Nature, which undergirds the production of both Cheap Labour and surplus humanity in South Africa and elsewhere.[11]

VI. *Tanuki Ichiban*: Multinational South Africa as Regime in the *Oikeios*

In her reading of Meeran's *Tanuki Ichiban*, Meg Samuelson begins by describing this widely neglected novel as "bizarre" (89). It is not difficult to see what she means: the narrative follows a collection of extravagantly transnational characters in the context of a near-future Cape Town, the environmental ecology of which augments ongoing processes of climate change. In the novel, icebergs threaten to drift into the southern Cape coastline, and the (ordinarily semi-arid) northern provinces of South Africa have morphed into tropical rainforest. Geronimo Chanboon, of Vanuatan-Kamchatkan-Seychellese-Afrikaner descent, and his flatmate, Darius Coochoomber III, a local both of Stellenbosch and Shanghai, entertain themselves and their social circle of fashion-model financiers, corporate vegans, "NGO-ho's" (Meeran 161), and an anachronistic activist named "Relick" by throwing dinner parties designed around cooking and eating endangered animals.

All of this unfolds within a narrative that maps the reconfiguration of apartheid's Cheap Labour regime on the advent of neoliberal governance. As I show in detail in what follows, Meeran clearly apprehends this shift as a reorganisation of existing Society-Nature relations and mobilises the multinational corporation and major player in the world economy, "Global Flavour," as an avatar for the new ecological regime. Darius is heir to this capitalist dynasty, which retains offices in China but has recently relocated to the small municipality of Stellenbosch, just north of Cape Town. As such, Global Flavour implicitly points to the post-apartheid South African economy opening up under the

auspices of GEAR, and indeed, along with earlier world-historical in-vocations of capital, GEAR partially undergirds the complex nationali-ties of Meeran's cast of characters. For example, Dragana Blijlewens is the daughter of a Romanian engineer turned energy warlord—now in control of the "South Africa petroleum giant Duduza Diesel" (3)—and Corsicana Malva, described as "just shipped in from the Barbary Coast" (21), conjures preceding histories of transnational productivity and plunder, evoking imperial slave trades both in that region and in South Africa. Global Flavour joins these historical and contemporary chartings of capitalist expansion and is framed, in part, in terms of the core-zone deindustrialisation that Harvey locates as central to neoliberal dispos-sessions: the corporation originally manufactured in "plants throughout the Midwest" (Meeran 87), only moving to South Africa in search of cheaper, less regulated conditions.

As Global Flavour gestures to the post-apartheid dawn of neoliberal governance, it also presents this development specifically as the produc-tion of enclosed Natures. As its name suggests, the corporation spe-cialises in "nature-identical flavour" (144), the manufacture of which entails "extracting the chemical compounds that determine the flavour of say a naartjie" and then "replicating them in the lab . . . from binbags or whatever" (353–54). While Jason D. Price reads Meeran's novel as interrogating "the hypercommodification of others" under conditions of late capitalism (147), Global Flavour's project overtly dramatizes not only the reification of the extra-human into commodity but also the artificial construction of Nature. At the same time, this process frames the neoliberal present as an organisational end-phase: Meeran's imag-ining of a world-dominant industry that synthesises food from literal refuse speaks scathingly of drastically reducing routes into appropriable territories. The novel highlights this shortage when Darius and his cro-nies feast on a stew made from one of only ten remaining polar bears (Meeran 316). Global Flavour's key competitor further underscores the contemporary scarcity of Cheap Nature: "Rip Roaring Good" is an elite global supermarket chain selling organic produce at crippling prices. Like the Coochoomber dynasty—and despite its very public "green" credentials—this corporation is connected to logics of productivity and

plunder:[12] it propagates the dualist doctrine of Nature without Society through its CEO and mouthpiece, Minke Sable, who preaches an exclusive (and expensive) Natural diet of "raw fruit and vegetable matter" not tampered with by human hands (83).

As it deploys multinational avatars of neoliberal governance to signal the post-apartheid arrival of a new organisation of Nature, the novel also demonstrates this regime's violent local ramifications in South Africa. At one point Geronimo —who, unlike Darius, has no money of his own—joins a crowd scavenging among litter for food; at the same time, "[n]ot a kilometre away at Rip Roaring Good a shinier, happier breed of people were slipping organic Kenyan tenderstem and KwaZulu watercress into their space-age designed shopping baskets" (110). This juxtaposition suggests the persistence of dramatic inequality in the country, which is here connected to Rip Roaring Good as one emblem of capital's construction of Nature. It is significant, too, that while Global Flavour has put down roots in Stellenbosch, its arrival appears in no way to have led to the production of jobs. There are no workers in its sprawling jungle-cum-factory complex apart from BMW-driving scientists, a receptionist, and Darius himself, and indeed, the novel represents labour as only skilled and immaterial service provision,[13] except for a single reference to the "sweatshops spreading in a great arc along the South African border" (78). This absence of material wage-labour in a nevertheless uneven social geography thus strategically reflects an absence of jobs in contemporary South Africa, and these conditions—evocative of those under which Cheap Labour cedes to surplus humanity—are connected explicitly to apartheid's legacy when, at the polar-bear dinner party, Relick launches into a political tirade: "At a level of decibels he demanded that we blacks . . . seize the wealth of South Africa that still lies in the hands of the fucking whities" (303). Relick's discourse, while the narrative frames it satirically and critically, nonetheless refers, for the first time in the novel, to the preservation of racialised economic inequalities in the post-apartheid period; up until this point, the narrative presents only an uneven distribution of wealth. As Meeran draws attention to the neoliberal compounding and extrapolation of apartheid's strategic impoverishments in this way, he also interrogates the terms

of Relick's call-to-arms. He implicitly suggests that without a revision of capital's Cheap Nature strategy—which, as I note above, underpins both apartheid and neoliberal degradations in South Africa—attempts to redress structural unevenness are destined to remain superficial: the narrative self-consciously renders Relick's politics ridiculous as he makes his comments while wolfing down a plate of Darius' polar bear "*bredie*" (315). Considering this scene, and commenting on Relick's failure to understand the discursive entanglement of speciesism and racism (Price 153), Price writes that the character clearly "doesn't . . . seek to undo or challenge the current organisation of society: its separations, hierarchies, [and] categories" (154). The novel affirms Price's point when, even as he decries lingering inequalities, Relick participates with gusto, via his consumption, in an activity that emblematises the Nature-pursuing projects that have driven unevenness throughout South Africa's history and into its present.

While Meeran's novel reiterates Moore's argument that a Society-Nature binary informs the violent operations of capital both in apartheid and contemporary South Africa, it also gestures, however, towards alternatives to this dualist logic. The novel's speculative impulses are discernible not only in the quasi-science-fictional descriptions of futuristic food technologies but also in its development of idioms that capture the organic-inorganic—both human and extra-human—relationalities of the *oikeios*. Meeran presents characters and geographies in terms that refuse capital's fundamental dualism. In one passage, for example, Corsicana and Minke Sable become a shoal-meal-motorcade assemblage: "The Minke whale floated back from the gloom. . . . [I]t was like having a slab of solid meat chunk tuna as dense as a Toyota Quantum drive into your side" (Meeran 97). In a similar moment, Geronimo eyes Cape Town's "great copses of skyscrapers among the savannah of low buildings" (89). Such hallucinatory instances recur over the course of the novel, and repeatedly, as Price notes, the narrative more specifically "blurs . . . boundar[ies] between human and animal" (148): Darius becomes a "Gila Monster" (137), complete with visible "Scale Rot" (146), Dragana is described as a sea otter, whose rage has the sonic quality of "a factory smokestack" (133), and Relick is a "slab of polony" (303),

whom Corsicana relieves of "one half pound of pork belly" after he attempts to attack her (320). For Samuelson, who notes that "Meeran explodes metaphors into potent proximities . . . while the narrative flows around . . . acts of feeding and fucking, intra- and interspecies" (1), these dimensions of the novel underscore "the interconnection . . . rather than the separation between nature and society" (2). And we might interpret this web-of-life aesthetic in the terms Lazarus suggests: its permeation and concatenation of human and extra-human semantic fields reflect the disorientation of ecological revolution, in which cumulative *oikeios* responses build up to render the borders of one historical Nature fluid as it cedes to another. We might also, however—and especially given Meeran's clear apprehension of capital as a means of organising nature—consider the text's speculative proclivities as a bid to forge an alternative conceptual vocabulary to the one that gives us external Nature and, as the history of South Africa shows especially clearly, "drips with blood and dirt" (Moore, *Capitalism* 4).

VII. Privatisation and Post-Apartheid Displacement in the Web of Life: Henrietta Rose-Innes' *Nineveh*

Meeran's *Tanuki Ichiban* presents a fantastical vision of South Africa's multinational takeover and its post-apartheid incorporation into the neoliberal world-ecology. These circumstances also appear in Rose-Innes' *Nineveh*, although the novel considers them from a different perspective—as privatisation-led displacement. Like Meeran, Rose-Innes imagines capital in terms of a symbolic Society-Nature binary and points to the historical reactivations and degradations that unfold from this logic in contemporary South Africa. The narrative follows the construction of a luxury housing estate on a present-day Cape Town wetland, a zone that has also been home to informal settlements now kettled by the development. Nineveh, the estate, thus stands in for those neoliberal dispossessions that Harvey mentions: in this case the pervasive and displacing privatisation of the environmental commons. In a way that echoes how Meeran registers the demise of the Capitalocene, Rose-Innes points to the increasing narrowness of corridors into Cheap Nature in the contemporary age, focusing on the appropriation of marsh territory

for development—land that might, in the past, have been considered too unstable for habitation. Significantly, this domain is inhabited by shack-dwellers with no formal employment; as Davis writes, "the frontier of safe squattable land is everywhere disappearing" (201) within the neoliberal nexus of Society-Nature relations so that, with the onward march of intensifying privatisation, surplus humanity is relocated within ever more precarious ecologies.

Rose-Innes imagines these situations through competing visions of regime and *oikeios*. In the first instance, the novel casts Nineveh in dramatically dualist terms, erecting a sharp and robust barrier between the Society of its future inhabitants and the Nature of the wetland settlement that fringes its walls. These are high, "topped by the parallel lines of electric fencing" (61), and significantly white—characteristics which invoke both apartheid-era segregations and popular images of post-apartheid South Africa as a still-racialised grid landscape of enclaves, private citadels of wealth amidst mass destitution. The legacy of the wall is also situated on a longer imperial trajectory, as Samuelson (2) and Filippo Menozzi (199) note: the protagonist, Katya, pauses at one point over a wild almond seed, "the same species that Jan van Riebeeck used in his famous hedge, meant to keep the Khoisan out" (Rose-Innes 22). From within the perimeter of Nineveh's historically freighted rendition of neoliberal Society, the terrain beyond the development appears to Katya as an unpopulated, picturesque landscape: "Heaped against and outside of the wall is a mass of green and silver: low bushes and stretches of pale grass, threaded and patched with water" (62). Katya characterises the estate, in this moment, as a fantasy of the capitalist dualism, which presents "Society without Nature, Nature without Humans" (Moore, *Capitalism* 2) and thus licenses each of the imperial, apartheid, and post-apartheid appropriations Rose-Innes tacitly references.

At the same time, however, the novel also offers a more complex rendition of the post-apartheid ecological regime. This vision first appears when signs of human habitation break Katya's pastoral reverie while out on the wetland: "a rust-holed cooking pot has been hung on a branch. She sits up quickly. . . . A small chill has entered the air"

(Rose-Innes 75). The protagonist's realisation that her apprehension of Nature includes not only "[t]ree roof, soil floor and the beasties buzzing all around" (75) but also the people forced by the encroaching development to occupy increasingly slender slivers of land intimates the violence of the Society-Nature binary. This passage recalls "biological" discourses of colonial (and apartheid) productivity and plunder and begins to contest their logic. From here, further, Nature literally exceeds its allotted "box": Katya has been called to Nineveh by the property developer, Mr. Brand, and charged with capturing and relocating a plague of mysterious insects. These have swarmed periodically from an unknown origin, ultimately bringing the construction of the estate to a halt. Katya, who owns the "humane" (17) environmental service company "Painless Pest Relocations," thus parallels Nineveh's identification and enclosure of external Nature in her occupation. The failure of her ostensibly "green" but misguided project against a "seething tide" of uncountable creatures (173) on the estate points to the increasing inefficacy of the Cheap Nature programme, which, as the hemmed-in inhabitants of the informal settlement show, has overlaid the cultivated impoverishments of apartheid's ecological regime with new degradations, producing compound circumstances that Davis calls "marginality within marginality" (201).

Rose-Innes most fully develops an alternative to this corrosive logic towards the end of the novel, and she does so with recourse to speculative modalities. The irrealist image of the swarming plague ultimately, in Samuelson's words, "render[s] . . . the interconnection between organisms" visible (2) and also serves, in Menozzi's reading, as a deterritorialising mechanism, "which . . . opposes projects of ecological sterilisation" (198) by ensuring the "territory of the estate is joined to a wider ecological . . . flow of circulation, transmission and exchange" (196).[14] Menozzi underscores how the swarm-image—"the text's vision of a zone of exchange"—undermines "the [capitalist] partition of space and society that has characterised the history of South Africa" (198). Making a related point, Shane Graham sees this critical movement in the narrative as figuring both the "entrenched inequality" cultivated under capital (67) and the extent to which capital's "entropic" nature inevitably dissolves the

very spatial structures it produces (71). However, and especially in light of this last comment, it is also possible to read *Nineveh*'s swarm-vision as rearticulating historical and contemporary South African codings of capital's Society-Nature binary. From this perspective, the narrative of insect invasion not only critiques loaded segregations of all kinds but also more specifically reimagines South Africa's ecological regime to account for the extent to which this organisation is itself a process within the *oikeios*.

Upon her arrival at Nineveh, Katya notices an unofficial entrance into the estate tunnelled underneath its walls from the wetlands: through it, Len, her estranged vagrant father—shunned, significantly, by Nineveh's developers after his own dealings with the swarm—has brought insect larvae in from the wetland, transforming one of the empty flats into an egg-chamber. The plague, then, is not, as Len describes it, strictly a "*gogga invasion*" (80; emphasis in original) but rather emerges *from inside the walled city*. This plot detail clearly speaks to Nature's action within nature: it triggers shifts in the *oikeios*—emblematised both by Len's human response to Mr. Brand's dismissiveness and by the extra-human beetles themselves—which eventually undermine the conditions of accumulation. As the seat of the swarm, Nineveh thus transforms from regime-icon to *oikeios*: from Capitalism-and-Nature to nature-in-capitalism and capitalism-in-nature. The novel dramatizes this conceptual shift as the previously stable contours of the estate's shored-up image of Society fragment and multiply into a heaving insect-architecture assemblage during the swarming: "Nineveh is breathing, flexing in a complex new rhythm. . . . Between her [Katya] and the walls, the mud is alive. It whispers and clicks. . . . [I]t is like the inching progress of some huge, multifaceted organism" (173–74).

From this conception of capital as a "multifaceted organism," Rose-Innes, in her conclusion, extrapolates a vision of post-apartheid South Africa that redresses the displacing action of privatisation. Following the cataclysmic swarming of the beetles, construction on the estate is arrested indefinitely. The Nineveh project is undermined by co-actions in the web-of-life, and to the extent that the plague also invokes quasi-biblical visions of apocalypse, the arrested development of the estate

might be read, in the first instance, as a localised forecast for the neoliberal future. In the second, it also opens the way, significantly, for a redistributive narrative: after the development is abandoned, the displaced inhabitants of the informal settlement move into the vacant apartments, reiterating the transformation of Nineveh's dualist topography as they do so. "[T]hings have changed here," Katya remarks on returning to the wetlands: "the wall is not the ice-white she recalls. It's smudged black and brown, as if by fire. The plaster is cracked in places. . . . Half the gate is gone" (199). This passage suggests a permeation of the Society-Nature opposition that has been crystallised—recalling the operations of capital throughout apartheid and post-apartheid regimes—in the image of Nineveh's previously formidable perimeter fortifications. The novel thus ties the metaphorical disabling of capital's fundamental binary to the micro-amelioration of South African inequality. As a result, Rose-Innes' speculative imagining of the web of life—which, like Meeran's, indexes a fluid revolutionary sensorium—might be viewed as capitalising on a transitional ecological climate to think beyond the violent regimentation of nature. The narrative avails itself of shifting circumstances in which "the old structures of knowledge come unravelled" to generate from this instability "a fresh conceptual language" (Moore, *Capitalism* 2), one that looks tentatively to modes of apprehension for realising a less uneven future.

VIII. Financialisation, Deindustrialisation, and the Superweed Effect in Beukes' *Moxyland*

Like Rose-Innes' novel, Beukes' *Moxyland* engages with the rise of privatisation in South Africa after GEAR. However, whereas *Nineveh* focuses on this scenario through the lens of displacements, *Moxyland* draws on speculative, science-fiction-inflected vocabularies to present the deindustrialisation of the post-apartheid economy in terms of the world-ecology. *Moxyland*, like Meeran's text, is set in a futuristic Cape Town run by an elite conglomeration of corporations. In this world, production seems to have disappeared entirely. Beukes' cast of characters circulates through an apparently immaterial, technology-driven economy: Kendra is an art-school-dropout turned human-marketing-strategy;

Toby, the son of wealthy corporate parents, is a professional blog broad-caster and serial gamer; Lerato is a bored corporati programmer for advertising giant Communique; and Tendeka is an anti-government activist who spends most of his time liaising with other "revolutionar-ies" in the online world of *PlusLife*. The novel's emphasis on the vir-tual operations of communication, and on marketing as a generator of value, indexes what Harvey identifies as a neoliberal "bias in the path of technological change away from production and infrastructure forma-tion into lines required by . . . market-driven financialisation" (*Brief History* 157). Thus, the primacy of virtual technology, which Beukes overtly yokes to advertising (*Moxyland*'s Cape Town is a mirage of hi-tech "adboards" and "consumer mini-movies" projected in public spaces [Beukes, *Moxyland* 93]), speaks to a contemporary South Africa in the grip of a financialising shift.[15]

Harvey points out that this kind of turn towards the market occurs in tandem with a turn away from material production, and as *Moxyland* registers financialisation in the post-apartheid nation, it also reflects the deindustrialisation of contemporary South Africa. One especially salient passage shows Toby negotiating a gaming reality set in an empty factory, the dereliction of which points clearly to the withdrawal of industry after the advent of democracy. Significantly, however, this relegated space is less uninhabited than it looks: in the factory, there is a giant mural of an Nguni cow—a metric of wealth—which gives way as Toby approaches it to "six wilted layers of hands, tearing out of the wall" (Beukes, *Moxyland* 139). The crowding undead force their way out of the mural and into the vacant factory, a scenario that both anxiously recalls the unemploy-ment crisis in deindustrialised South Africa and is echoed elsewhere in the text in the figures of immigrants from "the Rural" pressing up against the perimeters of the corporate city. The Rural is a decimated biosphere without infrastructure or employment that lies beyond the virtual networks of the corporate urban enclave. Unable to survive in these unlivable spaces, the people there, "Rurals," flock to the cities, which in turn fail to incorporate them into their financialised technoc-racies: there is a "backlog" of some 119,000 applicants seeking access to Cape Town alone (110).

This situation localises and reiterates Davis' description of the plight of surplus humanity, for whom neoliberal dispossessions have instantiated "a grim world cut off from the subsistence solidarities of the countryside as well as disconnected from the cultural and political life of the traditional city" (Davis 201). In South Africa, as I argue above, these circumstances overlay and compound the uneven materialities cultivated over the course of apartheid's Cheap Labour regime, and Beukes' novel points to this complex concatenation as it reframes in legal terms the multiple exclusions affecting its Rural dispossessed. In the novel, entry into South Africa's cities is conditional on the possession of a mobile-phone pass that enables access to infrastructure and commodity markets. As it concretises contemporary inequalities, this situation also replays South Africa's history of racialised labour coercions, which, under apartheid, canalized workers into separate labour markets in part by prohibiting the occupation of urban centres without a pass-book validated for city employment. Through its conjuring of these contemporary and historical resonances, the novel thus registers the succession and overlapping of apartheid and neoliberal organisations, mapping financialisation and deindustrialisation as the mechanisms that produce a reserve army out of historical Cheap Labour and engorge it to the point of surplus humanity.

These strategies, as Moore argues, facilitate capital's access to Cheap Nature in the neoliberal age: swollen reserve demographics released from deindustrialised workforces and displaced from subsistence territories drive down the cost of labour on a global scale. Beukes traces these operations from the local perspective of South Africa while pointing out, in line with Moore, their coherence as an ecological regime. In *Moxyland*, Cape Town's corporate government—much like Meeran's Global Flavour—relies on the artificial production and appropriation of Natures: in the corporati headquarters, Kendra tells us, a plantation of "filter trees" is busy "sucking up sunlight and the buffeting wind to power the building" (Beukes, *Moxyland* 3). What drives South Africa's corporate organisation, these lines suggest, is an appropriation of the "unpaid work/energy" (Moore, *Capitalism* 241) derived from imposed Natural enclosures. These enclosures are not limited, furthermore, to

pocketed "filter forests" (Beukes, *Moxyland* 3) but have also been identified within the human body. Kendra remarks on the plantation on her way to Inatec Biologica, the biotech firm where she is to be injected with "three million designer robotic microbes" (7), which will leave her branded with the trademark of a soft drink, "Ghost." As they turn her into a human billboard in this way, they will also ensure that "everything's running better" (25), protecting her from disease and degeneration. "It's a riff on the standard dark marketing shit," Toby explains: "Hand out free stuff to the cool kids and hope everyone else is paying attention so they'll run out and buy it" (17).

Brady Smith notes that in *Moxyland* "'nature' in the space of the city is so thoroughly saturated by human technology as to be entirely within its control," and these circumstances are made visible as "bodies . . . become part of the mediatized biosphere" (348)—a point exemplified by Kendra's biotechnical transformation into a human marketing strategy. Smith sees these scenarios as evidence for the narrative's engagement with the notion of the Anthropocene, which the novel figures as "the human manipulation of nature on both macro and micro scales" (B. Smith 248). Smith's argument is pertinent, yet *Moxyland* also apprehends a more complex and systemically attuned sense of unfolding crises than the concept of the Anthropocene and its defining category of "human activity" is able to convey. Technology's pervasive reach in the narrative is, after all, bound up with post-apartheid financialisation and the concomitant production of surplus humanity in the construction of Cheap Labour on a planetary scale. While the narrative is concerned with the "manipulation of nature," its agent is capital and its socio-ecological binary, not humanity generally. Registering financialisation and deindustrialisation, *Moxyland* mediates the production of Nature from post-apartheid South Africa in the neoliberal age, mapping out the intensifying mechanisms of appropriation deployed under these conditions: while multinational corporations seek to identify ever freer labour and resources across the globe, capital in its contemporary iteration also concomitantly seeks out what Moore calls "commodity frontiers" (*Capitalism* 63) on an increasingly minute and intimate scale. Productivity and plunder at a microbial level within the biosphere

parallels advancing Cheap Labour coercions as testament to the all-encompassing drive of the neoliberal organisation of nature. Indeed, as Moore notes, the appropriation and modification of plant DNA over the last twenty years has given rise to the agro-industrial plantation of genetically modified crops—recalled by Beukes' filter forest—across the Global South (*Capitalism* 270). These crops are themselves intimately connected to Cheap Labour, which can only be sustained as such on condition of Cheap Food (241). Thus, in Beukes' novel, the colonisation of Kendra's "cool kid" genome joins with the text's registering of financialising and deindustrialising coercions to emblematise the Cheap Nature strategy at capital's end-phase. It crystallises the pervasiveness of contemporary Society-Nature relations and their devastating ramifications, which *Moxyland* examines in its representation of local surplus humanity.

At the same time, however, as the appropriation of Kendra's DNA as Cheap Nature points to the totalising structures of the neoliberal ecological regime, it—and its cognates within the novel—also begin to gesture beyond the logic of this organisation. As Brady Smith writes, a "blending of 'natural' and 'artificial' substances" (348), discernible throughout *Moxyland*, insists that "human agency is enmeshed in and in fact constituted by the agency of nonhuman entities as well" (353). Considered in the framework of world-ecology, this implication emerges as an *oikeios* sensibility. Kendra, as a "sponsorbaby" (Beukes, *Moxyland* 20), both testifies to capital's identification of Nature in the biochemical processes of organic life and begins to contest this dualist framing. The brand on her arm is, as Toby puts it, "no rinkadink glowshow" (19). It has "[n]one of the signature goosebumps of an LED implant blinking through the ink. . . . Cos this isn't sub-dermal. This *is* her skin[,] . . . cells designer-spliced by the nanotech" (19; emphasis in original). If Kendra encodes the ever-intensifying production and plunder of Nature, then, as this passage shows, she also situates these processes within a human and extra-human matrix. The Nature crystallised in her body is emphatically co-produced; as "Ghost girl" she is a human-tech-biochemical assemblage that is reducible neither to Society nor to that which ostensibly lies beyond it. The novel reiterates and expands

this sense of interconnection to encompass the operation of capital as a whole: *Moxyland*'s corporate government polices Cape Town's perimeters with dogs genetically modified using the same processes that shape Kendra's body (6), thus literalising the production and preservation of Rural conditions of surplus humanity. It is not only, in Brady Smith's terms, "human agency" (353) that is co-constituted in the narrative; the organisational structures of the regime itself unfold within the organic and inorganic relationalities of the web of life.

Furthermore, through Kendra's bundle-body as an icon of capital-in-nature, Beukes, like Rose-Innes, points to how these enclosures of Nature catalyse shuttlings in the *oikeios*, which, in the neoliberal age, build up to signal the terminal crisis facing capitalist accumulation. In his analysis of biotechnical Natures, Moore identifies the "superweed effect" to designate "the wildly proliferating and increasingly unpredictable response of extra-human nature to the disciplines of capital today" (*Capitalism* 274). Superweeds arise out of the enclosure of Natures at a microbial level; from the genetic modification of cultivated plant species, "herbicide resistant weeds" have "co-evolved" and "spread like wildfire" strangling the yields of these same industrially produced crops (273). Beukes' narrative re-stages these circumstances in human territory: in the novel's climax the government demonstrates further appropriations of a molecular kind by weaponising the grisly M7N1 virus, which causes fatal internal haemorrhaging in the afflicted. While the events surrounding this act lead to Kendra's euthanasia, she has also inadvertently sexually transmitted her nanotech to Toby, who makes a miraculous recovery from M7N1 as a result. The enclosure of genetic Natures thus triggers precisely the unpredictable *oikeios* shifts that Moore describes. The narrative concludes with Toby as a kind of superweed proxy. His resistance to corporate controls emerges from the Society-Nature relations of the neoliberal regime—and, more specifically, from their unforeseen rhizomatic operation in the web of life. Toby's recovery highlights the limited efficacy of the Cheap Nature strategy, since he is now immune to its aggressive coercions. The last passages of the novel remain ambivalent despite this. Intending that his death should expose the extent of state violence, Tendeka demands that Toby film his gruesome final moments,

and Toby, having obliged, exits the narrative in possession of footage that he may or may not use in the way his friend desired. This suggests that while, at the twilight of the Capitalocene, the structures of productivity and plunder are buckling under the weight of the contradictions they have cumulatively generated, the possibility for an alternative configuration of nature, in South Africa and beyond, rests on courses of action sensitive to these developments.

IX. Conclusion

Tanuki Ichiban, *Nineveh*, and *Moxyland* thus engage a speculative mode to capture the fluid and violent sensorium of post-apartheid South Africa at the end of the Capitalocene, registering these conditions, via an *oikeios* aesthetics, as a shift in Society-Nature relations. These texts demonstrate the connection WReC identifies between irrealist fictional lexica and the real states of precarity attendant on ecological revolution, but they also forge a literary vocabulary that disrupts and exceeds the deleterious dualism sustaining productivity and plunder across capital's cyclical renewals in South Africa and elsewhere. In these ways, the speculative imaginaries I examine above offer a means of conceptualising the transnational turn that Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie note is taking place more widely in South African letters since the turn of the millennium (4): emerging at the concrete nexus of the planetary and particular, of world-history and local politics and environments, Meeran's, Rose-Innes', and Beukes' novels provide a situated perspective on trans- or multi-national processes from the post-apartheid vantage point. There is much to be gained from addressing these texts in this way. As I have shown throughout this discussion, ecological speculative imaginaries from contemporary South Africa apprehend the "converging crises" of the global present (Moore, *Capitalism* 1) as the historical effects of a systemic alliance between colonial power, post-enlightenment epistemology, and capitalist accumulation. As these fictions register the production of historical Natures, and the uneven ramifications of these enclosures across human and extra-human domains, they also, importantly, make visible modes of redress. While crisis-discourses of the present tend to turn towards dualist concepts of human "impacts" and

"footprints," or towards the notion of the Anthropocene as a broadly human-centric age, these narratives suggest that from the South African postcolony—and perhaps from across the Global South more widely—it is capital, along with its imperial histories and enabling conceptual apparatuses, that appears most forcefully as the systemic driver of unfolding catastrophe. And as the novels offer this perspective, they also map routes out of these conditions, foregrounding and imaginatively participating in the conceptual re-figuration of Nature into nature.

Notes

1 The term "post-transitional," developed by Frenkel and MacKenzie, refers to South African fiction from the post-millennial period that marks a shift away from "the hallmarks of apartheid-era literature"—including from "'protest style writing', literary realism, [and] moral earnestness" (2). This "new wave" is often characterised by "politically incorrect humour and incisive satire, and the mixing of genres with zest and freedom" (2). In this latter sense, in particular, recent speculative fictions from South Africa can be considered within the post-transitional purview.

2 See also Moore (editor), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*; Demos; and Vergès.

3 Graham takes a related perspective on the representation of urban spaces in post-millennial South African speculative fiction. While his essay does not focus on the ecological impulses in these texts, he stresses their engagement with systemic, late-capitalist processes, which organise space and experience in post-apartheid cities. Writes Graham: "the narratives strip away the surface layers of Cape Town and Johannesburg to show us layers of infrastructure, mechanization, and human labor that constitute the city itself" (67). See also Deckard et al., pp. 143–67.

4 For a discussion that focuses on the legacy of the mineral revolution as an ecological regime, see my essay "From Cheap Labour to Surplus Humanity," especially pp. 41–53. For a wider world-ecological analysis of race and labour, see Vergès.

5 The vocabulary of core and periphery is developed by Immanuel Wallerstein to describe the uneven distribution of power and wealth within the capitalist world-economy. Core zones are economically strong regions and have a high degree of geopolitical sovereignty as a result. They exist in relation to peripheries, which are those regions over which cores exert their hegemony and from which they extract surplus value in processes of "unequal exchange" (28).

6 See my *South African Gothic*, pp. 142–45 and "From Cheap Labour to Surplus Humanity," pp. 49–53.

7 See my *South African Gothic*, pp. 146–49 and 166–74 and "From Cheap Labour to Surplus Humanity," especially pp. 67–70.

8 *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* is authored by Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Neil Lazarus, Graeme Macdonald, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry, and Stephen Shapiro, who write collectively as the Warwick Research Collective (WReC).

9 Niblett makes this point in broader terms, writing that "confronted by situations of ecological revolution, irrealism might be expected to flourish" (21). See also Oloff's "Greening the Zombie" and Deckard's "Uncanny States."

10 WReC theorises "world-literature" in the context of "combined and uneven development" (10). World-literature, from this perspective, is "the literature of the modern capitalist world-system": "[Capitalist] modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is 'about' and what gives world-literature its distinguishing formal characteristics" (15). These formal characteristics register the coexistence of different stages of development—the collision of "core and periphery" experiences (51)—within the unevenly configured world-system.

11 For a discussion that explores this point with respect to the use of body-horror in Blomkamp's *District 9*, see my "From Cheap Labour to Surplus Humanity" pp. 64–70.

12 Samuelson makes a related point, gesturing to the hollowness of capitalist environmentalisms, when she notes that both "green corporations and oil-guzzlers" (2) have deleterious human and ecological effects in *Tanuki Ichiban*.

13 Global Flavour thus invokes both neoliberal deindustrialisation in the United States and financialisation in post-apartheid South Africa, yoking this latter also, via its foothold in Shanghai, to the emergence of China as a global economic power with links to Africa. In this way, the novel envisions a relationship between the cores and peripheries of the world-system that complicates any assumption of a straightforward North-South divide. It registers what WReC calls the "multi-scalar" character of combined and uneven capitalist development: the sense in which "processes of 'centralisation' (becoming 'core') and 'peripheralisation' are . . . playing themselves out at multiple levels" and in relative and relational terms (55).

14 On *Nineveh*'s human-animal border crossings, see also Woodward.

15 Without connecting this to the specific conditions of post-apartheid financialization, Eric D. Smith makes a related point in his reading of *Moxyland*. He writes that the novel represents "a world already fully subsumed into vertiginous hyperreality," in which every dimension of life is thus vulnerable to capitalist penetration—and, concomitantly, to risk (178).

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