Chapter 1
South to North Multispecies Co-Migrations in the Wake of Rachel Carson and Donna Haraway (Jane Urquhart and Barbara Kingsolver)

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Abstract

Rachel Carson is one of the most prominent voices in the field of environmental blue humanities. Her trilogy on Ocean studies is a milestone in Ecology. The aim of this contribution is to follow Haraway's suggestion — "it matters what thoughts think other thoughts" (2021: 63) — and thus demonstrate how Carson's Ocean imagery informs contemporary narratives which connect the South to the North. In particular this is true for Amitav Ghosh's novel, *Gun Island* (2019), as an answer to his own *The Great Derangement* (2016), which stages an intertextual revisitation of *Heart of Darkness*. Right in the middle of the Mediterranean, on the migration route from Africa to Italy, the *sympoiesis* of humans and more-than-humans (Haraway 2016) — migrants, cetaceans and birds — is described and celebrated in terms that are reminiscent of Rachel Carson's Oceans (Carson [1955] 2021). All this foregrounds Jane Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line* (2010), which also explores multispecies migration narratives from Mexico to Canada of both people and butterflies. While anticipating Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012) and thus exploring the Monarch butterfly migratory habits — as Haraway does in "The Camille Stories" (Haraway 2016) — , Urquhart's novel meets the novel by Kingsolver insofar as they both delve into multispecies co-migration from South to North thanks to the NAFTA/USMCA Treaty; they tackle human rights, in particular the right to migrate, and environmental justice, so as to grant the on-going migration of Monarch butterflies from Mexico, respectively, to Canada and to the US.

Keywords

Jane Urquhart; Barbara Kingsolver; Monarch butterflies; Mexican migrant workers; multispecies South-North migration; sympoiesis; Anglophone post-colonial environmental literature.

Introduction: Multispecies Co-Migrations with Rachel Carson and Amitav Ghosh

Famously, Amitav Ghosh provides one of the most crowded examples of multispecies co-migration. In his novel *Gun Island* (2019) the crucial moment of the arrival of migrants to Sicily is a long narrative passage built up through an accumulation of miraculous events and coincidences, one after the other. Not content with positioning a black queen reminiscent of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in the middle of the Mediterranean on a floating blue boat crammed with migrants, — as follows —

> The woman lifted her arms now, raising them until they were level with her shoulders, palms facing upwards. And almost instantly a funnel-like extrusion appeared in the storm that was spinning above us. It began to extend downwards, forming a whirling halo above her head.
>
> She stood absolutely still for what was perhaps only a moment, with a halo of birds spinning above her, while down in the water a chakra of dolphins and whales whirled around the boat. (Ghosh 2019: 307)

Ghosh adds first a flock of migratory birds fanning overhead in spirals and then a pod of dolphins and cetaceans noisily splashing in the waters. This «miraculous spectacle» (*ibidem*) is certainly less frequent in the Mediterranean than it is in the wider oceans, as Rachel Carson illustrates:

> Unmarked and trackless though it may seem to us, the surface of the ocean is divided into definite zones, and the pattern of the surface water controls the distribution of its life. Fishes and plankton, whales and squids, birds and sea turtles, all are linked by unbreakable ties to certain kinds of water – to warm water or cold water, to clear or turbid water, to water rich in phosphates or in silicates. For the animals higher in the food chains the ties are less direct; they are bound to water where their food is plentiful, and the food animals are there because the water conditions are right. […] So Charles Darwin on H.M.S. *Beagle* one dark night off the coast of South America crossed from tropical water into that of the cool south. Instantly the vessel was surrounded by numerous seals and penguins, which made such a bedlam of strange noises that the officer on watch was deceived into thinking the ship […] had run close inshore. (Carson 2021: 217)

The similarity between Rachel Carson's scientific and historical report on the multispecies crossings of oceanic zones, or 'ecotones'[1], and Ghosh's description of a similar 'bedlam' and upwelling in the Mediterranean is the result of a long wave of thinking with the ocean that Carson initiated, as she initiated blue ecology («an ocean-centric planetary ethic and philosophy of life», Steingraber 2021: xiii) with her *Sea Trilogy* (*Under the Sea Wind*, 1941; *The Sea Around Us*, 1950; *The Edge of the Sea*, 1955). But it is also a way to explore, and acknowledge South/North currents, flows, interdependencies and co-operative existences and animacies.

After all, it is perhaps well known the case of "The Unaccompanied Minor's Tale as told to Inua Ellams", in the first of the by now five volumes of *Refugee Tales* (Herd and Pincus 2016: 17-24), where one of the junior protagonists of 'the journey of hope' across the Mediterranean, Dani, first spots a pod of dolphins and then corpses, floating on the waves, from a previous boat that had capsized:

> When the boat began to sink, when the weak engine started struggling, dolphins appeared on either side and in front, keeping pace with the boat, leaping in and out of the water, playing as they chugged towards Lampedusa, Dani would remember them for the rest of her life; he thought of them as water angels, a sign things would be alright […].
>
> At first they thought they were items of clothing, cast-offs from others who crossed, but the closer they got, the clearer they saw that caged among the fabric, some stiff, some swollen, were the water-drenched flesh of refugees like them. […] The dolphins had vanished now. (Herd and Pincus 2016: 23)

This first-hand, eye-witnessed, sad and grim narrative counterbalances the narration by Ghosh, which is festive and optimistic. In this case the death and life of humans co-exist within the same frame, and the struggle for survival of the refugees strongly clashes against the vitality of migratory non-human species, "happily" inhabiting the Mediterranean waters and currents.

South to North Multispecies Sympoiesis and Co-Migration with Donna Haraway

Donna Haraway begins her essay *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) by using the metaphor of the string figures: games that are popular in all cultures. They consist in weaving multispecies stories and they have a representational power, such

1 «The term derived from the Greek words 'oikos' (household) and 'tonos' (tension), was introduced by botanist Frederic E. Clements to define 'the tension line between two zones,' or habitats. Clements noted that 'this stress line' (277) or 'the ecotone between two formations is never a sharp line, but it is an area of varying width (281)». See Frederic E. Clements (1905); quoted in Markus Arnold, Corinne Duboin, and Judith Misrahi-Barak (2020: 12).

as the one she illustrates, which belongs to the Navajo, and is named «Coyotes running in opposite directions» (Haraway 2016: 29).

When I first read the novels I will shortly introduce here, that is, Jane Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line* (2010) and Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour* (2012), immediately the string figures came to mind, since three interconnected geographies and ecosystems are involved in those narratives — Mexico, the US, and Canada —; multispecies migration flows — of both human beings and non-human animals, i.e., Mexicans and butterflies — are also featuring, and all this happens within NAFTA — or lately modified, USMCA commercial Treaty. Thus, various string figures might represent these interwoven and interpolated phenomena.

The NAFTA agreement between Mexico, Canada, and the United States is a commercial treaty that came into being in 1994 in order to grant free circulation of goods and products, whereas it limits the regulations regarding people's mobility. Or, better, it regulates the free circulation of business men and women and entrepreneurs and investors in and among all three confederations. Ironically, 1994 is the year when the Clinton administration, as part of the so-called Operation Gatekeeper, erected a barrier — an actual fence — along the border between Mexico and the United States. Indian-American investigative journalist and writer Suketu Mehta denounces how Friendship Park — «a small patch of land adjoining the Pacific Ocean, between San Diego and Tijuan» — was inaugurated in the far 1971 by Lady Pat Nixon, on the Californian tip of that border, and now «Families on both sides could meet across the barrier of twelve-foot-high steel bollards and pass food back and forth» (Mehta 2019: 14).

Although it allows free trade and increased market profits, what is interesting is what NAFTA does not cover or does not allow, as far as Canada is concerned: for instance, it does not assist permanent admission; it does not apply to permanent residents of the three countries; it does not replace the general provisions dealing with foreign workers; it does not extend special privileges to spouse and members of the family of temporary workers. The entry of foreign workers is governed by the provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Regulations. Temporary entry to workers is granted only to a selected category of business persons, because «in order for trade to expand, individuals must have access to each other's country to sell»[2]. Moreover, temporary entry for a worker must occur without intent to establish permanent residence, consistently with Canadian immigration laws. Workers authorized to enter Canada under the NAFTA are allowed to work temporarily either in a temporary or permanent position. The NAFTA cannot be used however as a means to remain in Canada indefinitely.

2 See Government of Canada, "International Mobility Program: Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)" (Cusma 2024).

The NAFTA was substituted by USMCA, the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement in 2020. NAFTA managed to increase commerce between the three partners and contributed to the integration of their economies, but in the United States it was criticized for causing outsourcing and losses of job positions.

Thus, Suketu Mehta describes his own investigative experience:

> The fence is a heavily rusted mesh structure, ugly, industrial, foreboding. It snakes down the hillsides and all the way into the sea. [...] Friendship Park is at once a monument to bureaucratic stupidity and the absurd rules that lawyers make, as well as to the power of love and family to surpass them. It is the cruellest and the most hopeful place I have ever seen. (Mehta 2019: 14, 17)

In the meanwhile, various artists have provided answers that call into being 'artivism', for instance the thousand-kilometer-long mural by Enrique Chiu on the Tijuana side, or the swings across the wall by architect Ronald Rael in New Mexico. Both challenge the idea of utter separation, partitioning, human obstacles and inhuman policies. Along the Mexican border photographer Teju Cole takes pictures of two white crosses, one bigger one smaller, a bit crooked, and of an inscription saying «*mujeres*»: «a code made of injuries», he writes as a sort of caption (2016: 147)[3].

The NAFTA agreement or the USMCA agreement are already string figures that imbricate three populations and three federations: Mexico, Canada, and the US in free trade and free exchange of goods, but blocking the so-called «illegal» migrants:

> The response of peasants and workers thus displaced has been clear and consistent: they have headed north in ever greater absolute numbers. Before NAFTA, undocumented Mexican immigration came mainly from four or five Mexican states and a limited number of mostly rural municipalities. Since NAFTA, migrants have originated in all Mexican states, practically all municipalities, and cities as well as towns and villages. A number of formerly vibrant places are now ghost towns, all their able adults having gone abroad; about one-third of all Mexican municipalities have lost population during the last decade, some by half or more. (Portes 2006)

The Mexico, US and Canada agreement is one way to look at South-to-North relational reciprocity, or lack of it:

> the number of Mexican tourists to Canada has dropped significantly since the 2009 imposition of a visa requirement for Mexicans to stem a surge in false refugee claims. Since then, the number of false claimants has indeed dropped significantly (fewer than 1000 applicants in 2012, down from almost 10 000 in 2008) along with

3 See Enrique Chiu's "Mural of Brotherhood" (Chiu 2023), Ronald Rael's "Teeter-totter wall" (Rael 2021), and Teju Cole's "Sasabe" (2011).

> business and tourist visits, which dropped 50 percent. The requirement remains in place, leaving Mexico, the United States' NAFTA partner, in the company of countries such as Algeria and Iraq. (*The Economist*, 2014; quoted in Verea 2014)

It is with this background in mind, that one must approach the two novels discussed here: *Sanctuary Line* by Canadian author Jane Urquhart published in 2010 and *Flight Behaviour* by US author Barbara Kingsolver published two years later in 2012. The two novels share a common double-bind topic, or they create a special, complex «string figure» after Donna Haraway's words, that is to say, multispecies co-migration of Mexican people and of Monarch butterflies, across opposite routes, or circular routes, between Mexico and Ontario and between Mexico and the Appalachians, and back again. More than unidirectional, these migratory phenomena become circular. In both novels, the Mexican Monarch butterflies are threatened by climate change, therefore they might modify their intercontinental South-North migration routes to the point of risking extinction, and deserving close scientific scrutiny and protection. Meanwhile, the destiny of Mexican migrants, following the same South-North direction, mostly temporary and seasonal workers, specifically fruit pickers, is even less certain and stable in both Northern countries, and in both novels Mexicans are marginal and umbratile figures.

Set in the so-called Ontario fruit belt, a strip of land along Lake Erie, very fruitful and blessed with a mild climate, *Sanctuary Line* tells the story of a once prosperous fruit farm, now in ruin, «in Kingsville, in the deep south of this northern province» (Urquhart 2010: 15)[4].

The narrator, Liz Crane, is a forty-year-old woman, a scientist, the lonely inheritor of what remains of the farmland, who lives alone and works as an entomologist at a close-by research center. All the narrative pivots around the dead cousin, Mandy, a soldier, a senior officer, who died in Afghanistan and went through the repatriation ceremony which includes a last and final parade along «the highway renamed to honor the heroes of the current war. […] As we moved […], we passed beneath dozens of overpasses filled with onlookers respectfully holding flags and yellow ribbons» (Urquhart 2010: 14). The Highway is the so-called Sanctuary Line that gives the title to the novel, and the people on the overpasses are Canadian citizens who spontaneously and massively used to gather there, to honor and give a last tribute to dead soldiers: «I had read that crowds always lined the route when a soldier was brought home. Still my mother and I, and the boys too, were surprised and moved by the sheer size of the turnout» (*ibidem*).

4 From a geographical perspective, Kingsville is a town in Essex County in southwestern Ontario, Canada. It is Canada's southernmost municipality with town status (42°06'00"N 82°43'00"W).

The protagonist studies the Monarch butterflies at the (fictional) Sanctuary Research Centre. Each year butterflies come back to the same fields of milkweeds and the same tree, although biocides must have drastically reduced their numbers («the sprays that I had come to detest because of what they had done to the butterflies» (Urquhart 2010: 19):

> As for the monarchs, in those early summers we didn't even know where they went or where they came from, depending on your point of view. We simply accepted them as something summer always brought to us, like our own fruit […] or, for that matter, like the Mexicans. It would be years before the sanctuary on the Point began to tag the butterflies in order to follow the course of their migration, and several years more before the place where the specimens from our region "wintered over" would come to my attention. Still, each summer we were stunned anew by what we came to call the butterfly tree. (Urquhart 2010: 19-20)

Borders are porous and both butterflies and seasonal workers arrive from Mexico and then go back there, the latter under the temporary foreign worker permit, the former across five generations.

> There was also a butterfly tree on that farm so that some summers my mother and her brothers saw that burning bush on the north side of the lake and other summers witnessed the same miracle to the south. My mother told me that until she was about fourteen she believed that every farm had such a tree and experienced such an event. (Urquhart 2010: 70)

> Every bough glowed with an orange blaze. […] Trees turned to fire, a burning bush. […] The flame now appeared to lift from individual treetops in showers of orange sparks, exploding the way a pine log does in a campfire when it's poked. The sparks spiraled upward in swirls like funnel clouds. Twisters of brightness against a gray sky. […] From the tops of the funnels the sparks lifted high and sailed out undirected above the dark forest. (Kingsolver 2012: 19)

Monarch butterflies come from the State of Michoacán, in Mexico. From there, in a natural reserve area between November and March, thousands of butterflies migrate. Since 1937, Canadian zoologist Frederick Urquhart and his wife Norah Patterson have studied Monarch butterflies, tagging them with the help of volunteers, and trying to follow their flight. They discovered that not all monarchs are migrants, they do not fly at night, and can cover up to 130 kilometers per day. In spite of the fact that the Urquharts had detected a directional path from northeast to southwest, they were not able to find the overwintering site in Mexico. Ken and Cathy Brugger, two American scientists, continued the exploration till 1975, when the precise site was spotted in the Mexican mountains. Now a dozen such places are known and are protected areas. Moreover, it is now known that several generations are involved in the journey northward,

while one special generation takes the flight from North to South, overwintering in Mexico, and giving life to a new generation that would start the migration process again.

For this unique phenomenon and its biodiversity the Mexican forest has been proclaimed Unesco World Heritage in 2008. It is ever since 1997 that the *Danaus plexippus*, commonly known as Monarch butterfly, has been also attributed 'Special Concern' by the COSEWIC, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada, and it has been simultaneously put under special protection in Mexico and in the US. Mexico started already in the 1980s to protect the Monarch colonies and to hinder deforestation. After all Monarch butterflies are a fragile species:

> Thrown off course by a sudden shift of the wind, a butterfly will never reach its intended destination. It will die in flight, without mating, and the exquisite possibilities it carries in its cells and in the thrall of its migration will simply never come to pass. (Urquhart 2010: 81)

Therefore, nowadays the same protection protocols and requirements are necessary in North America and Canada, where Monarchs are also threatened by human exploitation of the montane aromatic oyamel fir forests.

Moreover, as a further instance of this phenomenon, Aimee Nezhukumatathil in a chapter dedicated to *Danaus plexippus*, writes about a place not far away from Lake Erie, Lake Superior, where Monarch butterflies are noticed to swirl suddenly while flowing over the body of water. Only geologists could uncover the reason for that sudden change of direction: millennia ago, in that place a mountain was present; thus, the butterflies and their descendants remember that massive presence, although they had not seen it. They perceive a change in the sound waves and they immediately change direction. It is amazing how the memory of that lost mountain in the middle of Lake Superior still makes its voice heard and how the Monarchs are ready to recognize and acknowledge it (Nezhukumatathil 2020: 172). This is another example of *sympoiesis* and string figure between Canada and Mexico, including the (invisible) mountain, the lake, and the butterflies.

Butterflies might move freely across the continents from North to South and back (or, vice versa, «depending on your point of view» (Urquhart 2010: 18), although nowadays, pesticides, biocides, and climate change strongly endanger this species, among others. Similarly Mexican migrants never had an easy life. To Urquhart they are dehumanized to the point of being equated to cargo, that is to say to material things and goods connected to profits:

> My uncle […] had the bunkhouses built and the Mexicans flown to the cargo terminal at the Toronto airport and the governments of both countries convinced before anyone could question his purpose. […] The same men came willingly

> back year after year, the same men and a couple of women returned and worked steadily from dawn to dusk. (Urquhart 2010: 29)

The routine of seasonal fruit pickers coming all the way from Mexico, probably through the NAFTA agreement, was unquestioned and went unnoticed by the family, till doomsday, when everything changed, and the protagonist finds herself in need to retrieve and face the past:

> I once tried to find the cargo terminal at the city airport in an effort to understand what it must have been like for Teo to arrive and depart from there, being human and not, therefore, technically cargo; what it would be like to be picked up and delivered like office supplies, or mufflers for cars, or, I suppose, more accurately, farm equipment, then transported from the shipper to the receiver. (Urquhart 2010: 37)

In a similar way, Barbara Kingsolver mentions Mexican seasonal workers, who work under the same circumstances allowed by the NAFTA agreement, in Tennessee:

> She knew some farmers were planting Christmas trees again, hiring Mexican workers for the winter labor. Presumably the same men who showed up in summer to work tobacco. They used to go home in winter and now stayed year-round, like the geese at Great Lick that somehow quit flying south. (Kingsolver 2012: 70)

The comparison between humans and non-humans becomes even more evident in a further passage by Urquhart:

> All the tough evolutions, the shedding of various skins, followed by those difficult migrations, over great stretches of open water, and across vast tracts of land, to and from Mexico, or America, or Kandahar. […] Remember, unlike their predecessors, who live only six weeks, mating and dying en route to the north, the fourth generation of monarchs is the strongest, lasting a full nine months so that they can return to the place where they started, overwinter, and mate, and begin the whole process again. (Urquhart 2010: 253)

In this case, Kandahar alludes to the place of origin of Mandy's lover, who is a first-generation immigrant to Canada: Vahil, to whom the novel is destined as a sort of open letter; while the comparison is between the hardships of the journey compared to that of the butterflies who only live for six weeks (Rustin 2012).

Although technically speaking the Monarch butterflies and the Mexican laborers are not coterminous and they do not represent coevolutionary migration patterns, in both novels they are matched as somehow part of the same phenomenon of interdependence of South and North. In Kingsolver's novel, the narrator and protagonist is a young red-haired mother of three children, named Dellarobia — after an Italian sculptor — Della Robbia. She inadvertently makes

an association between the persistence of the presence and permanence of the Mexican laborers, of the geese, as well as of the Monarch butterflies that for the first time are indulging in the fir forests nearby over the winter season.

Not differently, Jane Urquhart also associates the presence of Mexicans with that of other non-human species:

> At the end of summer, when the final bushels of harvested apples had been shipped and the last of the Mexicans had been bussed to the cargo terminal at the airport, my uncle would simply disappear. […] It was always a disturbing and transitional time. The birds from the sanctuary were beginning to migrate; chevron after chevron appeared over the lake, heading south. […] Teo was gone. His mother and the other Mexicans were gone. (Urquhart 2010: 106-107)

Yet Mexicans manifest themselves in a totally new form in Kingsolver's novel, when a family of three rings Dellarobia's bell: «The man and woman both about her own height, possibly even shorter. They looked Mexican, or very dark-skinned at any rate, especially the man» (Kingsolver 2012: 132). The couple has a small daughter who turns out to be a schoolmate of Dellarobia's little son, Preston. Immediately the two children cheerily greet each other and are ready to entertain themselves, but the girl has to translate English into Spanish for her parents, to make them comfortably come in and sit in the dining room. And through the child's English, Dellarobia understands that they want to visit the site where the butterflies have come to repose. Now the place has thriven into a tourist and local attraction, a scientific hub and lab, and a site for environmental activism against a plan for felling the forest that is now the refuge and sanctuary for the butterflies:

> «We know about them a lot, […] they are mariposas monarcas. They come from Mexico. The monarcas are from Michoacán, and we are from Michoacán.»
>
> Are you saying that they used to be down there, and now they are all coming up here to live? Dellarobia recognized a familiar ring to those words, which people often said about immigrants themselves, and again she worried about causing accidental offence. But the girl was focused on the butterfly issue. (Kingsolver 2012: 136)

In this passage, the relation between migrants and butterflies is explicit. Dellarobia is well-aware of the formulaic acknowledgment of the migrants' presence on this side of the world, the Global North: «They used to be down there, and now they are coming up here» (*ibidem*). But the conversation adds another element to the story of the Mexican family moving to Tennessee:

> «In Michoacán my father is a *guía* for the *mariposas monarcas*. He takes the people on horses in the forest to see the *monarcas*. He is explaining the people, and

> counting the mariposas and other things for the *cientificos*. And my mother makes *tamales* for the *lot* of peoples.»
> «Do you have these butterflies all the time in Mexico? Or do they just show up sometimes?»
> «Winter times, […] In summer days the *monarcas* flies around everywhere […] and in winter she all comes home to Angangueo. My Town.»
> «If you don't mind my asking, why didn't you stay there?» Dellarobia asked.
> «No more. It's gone.»
> «Do you mean the butterflies stopped coming?» she asked. «Or just the tourists stopped coming?»
> «Everything is gone!» the girl cried, in obvious distress. «The water was coming and the mud was coming on everything…. *Un diluvio*.»
> «A flood?» Dellarobia asked gently. She thought of a landslide in Great Lick that had taken out a section of Highway 60 in September. […] Josephina nodded soberly […] «*Corrimiento de tierras*.» (135-140)

While answering all the questions, the little girl relives a trauma that befell her family: her house, her own home town and the whole ecosystem around there were swept away by a landslide due to torrential rainfalls. Thus, the family is an example of climate refugees, another type of today's migrants. They expect to recreate and reestablish kinship with those butterflies that they know from back home, moved by a feeling of compassion. The few words in Spanish — such as, «*Un diluvio*» — clearly evoke the Biblical Great Flood, and this family of Mexican refugees with the(ir) butterflies are like Noah's family and ark reaching out of the flood. The climatic event, as a result of a combination of climate change effects and deforestation, has split time into before and after, as Dellarobia noticed, there is a dichotomy between *then* and *now*, *there* and *here*. Where once was a paradise for the repose of *mariposas*, now there is nothing left, and they all have to migrate.

What the little girl does not say, at least not explicitly, is that to Mexicans, the butterflies represent the souls of the dead, particularly the dead soldiers (Powell 2022).

> To the ancient Mexicans, the butterfly symbolizes flames for reasons not clearly understood. […] Myths concerning butterflies are widespread among aboriginal cultures and frequently show the insects in a positive light. For example, butterflies were particularly associated with great God, Quetzalcoatl in ancient Mexico. In the city of the gods, Teotihuacan, Mexico there is a place which contains a frieze showing the god's first entry into the world in the shape of a chrysalis, out of which he breaks painfully to emerge into the full light of perfection symbolized by the butterfly (Nicholson 1983). (Kritsky and Cherry 2020: 9)

Flight Behaviour is built on scientific evidence, both regarding the landslides and the risks of deforestation, and particularly regarding the biology and behavior of the butterflies. Dellarobia explains to the African-American scientist,

named Ovid — quite emblematically — who has come all the way from New Mexico to study this unique phenomenon that «Year in year out, they've been going to the same place I guess forever. Since God made them. And now for whatever reason, instead of going to Mexico it looks like they decided to come here. Here» (Kingsolver 2012: 161). To this the scientist sadly and worriedly answers:

> This roosting colony is a significant proportion of the entire North American monarch butterfly population. […] We are seeing a bizarre alteration of a previously stable pattern. A continental ecosystem breaking down. Most likely, this is due to climate change. Really, I can tell you I'm sure of that. Climate change has disrupted this system. (Kingsolver 2012: 315)

The presence of those butterfly colonies which bring beauty to the forest also adds value to it, to the point that Dellarobia starts understanding that deforestation is a mistake, it could provoke landslides like the one occurred in Mexico and she starts joining some activists' protest about the necessity to preserve the forest as it is. The more she talks to the scientist the more she becomes aware of the value of trees, which is not the logger's profit-oriented idea. The fact is that the butterflies need an ecosystem, and the forest with its canopy provides it, felling the trees not only endangers the butterflies but also the soil which might slide downhill with heavy rains. This domino effect is typical of the net of entangled relations that constitute our world of nature, that the string figures clearly metaphorize and represent: «if we log the mountain, then the trees are gone» — wisely says Dellarobia, though the family's debts will continue to exist (Kingsolver 2012, 171).

The two novels — after building up on the entanglement of human migrants and non-human insects — at a certain point diverge, for one novel ends with a catastrophe and the other novel has a happy ending. Urquhart depicts the ruin of the farm, which is abandoned by the family and what little remains becomes unproductive after a big devastating fire. Moreover, the interracial relationships between the protagonist, Liz and Teo, the young Mexican boy, and her cousin Mandy's affair, her mysterious love affair with a Canadian-Muslim soldier, both miserably fail, leaving the reader, as well as the protagonist, with a feeling and mood of mourning. Kingsolver's novel, instead, has a positive conclusion, since Dellarobia, though divorcing her husband, will start going to College again, to pursue her interrupted career as a student, thanks to a donation by the scientist she helped and hosted over the winter. Although in this case a (black wealthy) male, and mature mentor is sponsoring the career of a young (white) woman, who thus gains access to research in the field of hard science, the final note is one of women's empowerment: «She hated walking on them, but that's what the others did. […] With their tape measures, plastic sheeting, boxes of waxed-paper envelopes and smaller instruments she couldn't name» (Kingsolver 2012,

139). Urquhart, on her side, presents a woman entomologist working in a scientific lab: «she would never have examined such a wing carefully enough to know it resembled a map» (Urquhart 2010: 55) had she not become a scientist.

Moreover, Dellarobia also manages to convince her community to renounce felling the trees and selling the plot of forest to private companies. While butterflies will modify and adapt their migratory patterns under the condition that human beings pro-actively take care of the ecosystem for and with them, Mexican migrants in one novel are rejected, while in the other one they find integration, particularly through the schooling facilities for the younger generations. Climate change looms large in the background of both novels with its side and domino effects.

Thus, Kingsolver's novel has been read as an example of eco-feminism, (Gaard 2016; Fargione 2018), while Amitav Ghosh encouraged a reading of the novel among the few seriously committed to climate change (2016, 73, 124, 185n7). In this contribution the two strictly entangled novels by Urquhart and Kingsolver have been chosen for their double discourse on multispecies co-migration from South to North, on human rights, in particular the right to migrate, and on environmental justice, so as to grant the on-going migration of Monarch butterflies from Mexico, respectively, to Canada and to the US.

To conclude, what Donna Haraway adds to this picture is a scenario of future extinction and speculative fiction. She creates the figure of the Camille, daughter of the Compost, a future being who might cross five generations. These hybrid creatures are creatures of *sym fiction*, of *sympoiesis*. In a landscape of future catastrophes, humans and non-humans will cooperate to restore Planet Earth. Under the principle of «making kin, not babies», the repopulation of the Earth might happen thanks to a symbiont matching of humans with non-human fragile species that are bound to disappear.

Starting exactly from the same premises as the two novels here analyzed, the pretext for this fantasy is exactly the fact that in 2008 the Sanctuary for the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere has been included in the Unesco Heritage for protection[5]. The reserve was created to protect the species in its winter habitat, along the ecosystem of the volcanic Trans-Mexican belt, thanks to the surviving patches of forest. In North America the use of herbicides, particularly glyphosate, is drastically reducing the nectar-producing vegetation that allows the butterflies to fly (Asclepias or milkweeds), in Mexico the forests might be under threat as well. The result would be the loss of those beautiful butterflies and the fact that they are not strong enough to fly long distances (Haraway 2016: 229). The Camille stories are an extreme act of imagination to help us prevent the otherwise inevitable catastrophe.

5 Cf. Unesco (2020).

> They have nothing to do with migration, of course, but I couldn't help but think of the weaker monarchs that, exhausted by the effort of crossing the lake, are drawn down from the sky and into the waves. And I couldn't help but think of Mandy either. (Urquhart 2010: 83)

Thus, in Urquhart's novel the «friendly fire» of an American war plane in Afghanistan killed by mistake Canadian soldiers among whom her cousin Mandy. Butterflies are similarly fragile. Thus, quite symbolically, Urquhart's novel is a tribute to a dead soldier, Liz's cousin Mandy, paid by taking care of Monarch butterflies, as an echo of ancient myths, as confirmed by archaeologists (Powell 2022).

Recently, in Milan, at the Piccolo Teatro, the first public national theater in Italy, founded in 1947 by Giorgio Strehler, the Camille stories have found a new mode for expressing this extinction anxiety and possible reparation. Italian actress Marta Cuscunà (2023) proposed a sci-fi show for actress and animatronic creatures, inspired by Donna Haraway's eco-feminist stories of the Camille. In order to obtain climate justice, the new hybrid species, here called Earthbound, are humans who had been transplanted or transfused with the DNA of species under extinction, in order to a) preserve their genetic patrimony, b) close the gap between humans and Nature, c) cure and take care of a renewed Earth.

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