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AGAINST MORALIZING NATURE : LATIN AMERICAN ROMANTICISM AND THE APORIAS OF THE ECOCRITICAL TURN

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Abstract: This article argues that the ecocritical turn in literary criticism reproduces the dualisms it seeks to avoid, especially the contradiction between nature and culture. At the same time, ecocriticism risks the veneration of Nature already practiced and promoted within the Romantic tradition in the global epoch of primitive accumulation during the 19th century. To sustain this argument, this article follows three main steps. In the first place, it establishes a characterization of Romanticism' attitude towards Nature, defining it as literaturization of Nature, following Abrams' notion of supernatural naturalism and Jean Luc-Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's definition of Romanticism as literaturization of theory. Second, this article delves into the main figures of new materialism and their influence in contemporary literary criticism, including both the field of Latin American and English literature. Finally, it shows how the "foundational fictions" from the 19th century represented Nature as a melancholic shelter against decomposition of the hacienda regime, representation of divine justice against the empire of money, and universal expression of racialized harmony against the emergence of the urban multitude. The new veneration of Nature constitutes a late form of Romantic epistemology, producing also new forms of humanism and moralizing narratives.

Key Words: Romanticism, Literaturization of Nature, Human and Nonhuman, pre-capitalist Nature, apokatastasis

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Introduction

Hegel said once that "the sickness of our time is the belief in the agreement between thought and things." This statement is readable as a direct attack on Romanticism, as the ideology of the vitality and propensity of things and objects, but mainly as the narrative about the unity and harmony of Nature and humanity.[1] One of the most prevalent commitments of the Romantic mentality was the confidence about Nature's ability to speak and express itself through many voices, artifacts, things, presentiments, and feelings (Ferber 47).[2] According to Hegel's *Logik*, there was no immediate coincidence or equivalence between knowledge and the inner life of the objects. Hegel states that knowledge about the Spirit was possible only through this transit from the Logic to the Philosophy of Mind through the Philosophy of Nature: "The Idea, in positing itself as absolute unity of the pure Notion and its reality and thus contracting itself into the immediacy of being, is the totality in this form—Nature" (§1817). Romanticism, in contrast, supposes that Nature, in its immediacy and vitality, contains the elements of truth to improve life on the earth. It is an ideology of propensity of things based on the primacy of feelings.[3]

As Isaiah Berlin indicates, "The literature on Romanticism is larger than Romanticism itself […] It is a dangerous and confused subject, in which many have lost, I will not say their senses, but at any rate their sense of direction" (1). Berlin reminds us that both reactionaries such as Hyppolite Taine and enlightened thinkers such as Heine pertained to the Romantic movement (15). In turn, Michael Löwy argues that capitalism and Romanticism are seemingly contradictory but interconnected movements. For Löwy, Romanticism represents a *Weltanschauung* or collective mental structure that shines the "painful and melancholic conviction that in modern reality something precious has been lost" (21). Löwy correctly asserts that Romanticism is, above all, committed to recovering values that the capitalist reality tends to vanish and dissolve. However, even with its inner anti-rationalist tendencies, it is not sure that Romanticism and capitalism are intrinsically antithetical, as Löwy sustains (46). The Latin American Romantic movement shows the paradoxical possibility of a *romantic way* to capitalist development. This paradox was particularly emphasized by Lenin in his 1897 essay on Sismondi, where he sustains that far from being antithetic, capitalism and Romanticism are complementary: "The utopian point of view transforms his criticism of capitalism […] into a *sentimental one*" (Lenin, 202).

In a different tradition, in their monumental study on the subject, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy in 1978, define Romanticism as "theory itself as literature or, in other words, literature producing itself as it produces its own theory" (12). This admirable formula helps to grasp better the paradoxical character of Romanticism, showing its commitment to overcoming the contradiction between reason and feelings, rationality and sentiments, and brain and heart, unfolded by modernity, by vindicating the spontaneity of reason as art. Primarily, Romanticism constitutes the vision of being spontaneously free from the constricted structure of reason but also of reforming reason by submitting it to the nonrule (the absolute as *ab solute*, detached from everything, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy remind us) of the Work of art and the "necessary auto-production in which all individualities and all works are annihilated" (56).

Another important tool to understand Romanticism was provided by M.H. Abrams in 1978: the concept of "supernatural naturalism," which he develops by following a famous section of Thomas Carlyle's novel *Sartor Resartus*. For the Romantic movement, a miracle is not an interruptive, redemptive action made directly by God in the sense of an event, but Nature itself in its permanent activity. Abrams defines supernatural naturalism as the tendency to "naturalize the supernatural

1. In this essay, the word nature is employed with capital N to indicate the conception of nature as totality, and nature with lower case to signal nature devoid of that romantic reconversion.

2. See, for example, Ferber's account of Felicité de Lammenais' philosophy and his religion of nature (*Romanticism*, 54).

3. That is the reason, in other regards, romantic interpretations of Spinoza's immanentism and purported pantheism were so prevalent and popular among the romantics. See: "Rethinking Romanticism with Spinoza: Encounter and Individuation in Novalis, Ritter, and Baader" (2019). We can also trace Spinozist influences in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Nature" from 1837 and the Latin American literary canon through José Mármol's *Amalia*.

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and to humanize the divine" (68). In the Latin American literary traditions, especially during the 19th Century, natural supernaturalism takes shape as a quasi-religious, pantheistic veneration of nature. Romanticism in Latin America was very much committed to natural supernaturalism in a way that is not distant from today's ecocritical reappraisal of human subjects regarding "nonhuman" nature. Even if their projects differ so distinctively, the object-oriented literary ecocriticism imbued by new materialisms from today and the Romanticism from the 19th century shares a similar concept of Nature. Romanticism in Latin America proceeds through the *literaturization of Nature* or, in other terms, the becoming literature of natural phenomena, landscapes, and naturalized otherness—including the Indigenous inhabitants of the continent.[4]

New materialisms and their influence in literary criticism

Despite its claims of being a radical form of materialism, the environmentalist theoretical trend branded as new materialism has all the traits of Romantic ideologies, including the supernatural ones observed by Abrams. For example, in his contribution to the book *Natura: Environmental Aesthetics after Landscape*, Emmanuele Coccia defines the world as a "kingdom of universal interiority" dominated by flora and "celestial" agriculture (27). This assertion evidences the profound solidarity between a certain language of the cosmological unity of Nature and the theological notion of the garden belonging to the Christian tradition. The cosmological, natural experience of the garden proposed by Coccia acquires eschatological tonalities, tending to the cosmological theologization of ordinary human activities such as gardening or having sex. In his previous book, published in 2018, *The Life of Plants*, Coccia proposes that sexuality is a "movement of the cosmos in its totality" and that through sex, "living beings make themselves agents of cosmic brewing" (121). Sexuality is then deprived of all the horrors that the psychoanalytic culture inaugurated by Freud had invoked in it, becoming a pure, ethical, cosmogonic activity, "no longer the morbid sphere of the irrational, the site of murky and nebulous effects" (120). This is humanity's (masculine) desire since the times of courtly love: sexuality without trauma or, to put it differently, the fantasy of "sexual relation" as a cosmical encounter.[5] Coccia shows one of the most insidious inclinations of new materialism, its inscription in the Romantic mentality that forecloses the constitutive fractures and traumas of modern subjectivity through a sexually harmonic pseudo-totality.

There is a recognizable familiarity between this language of sexual cosmology and Jane Bennett's concept of "vibrant matter," understood as the agency of things. Sexual cosmology, cosmological dance, assemblage, composition, and hybridization are metaphors to indicate a new ethical attitude towards matter and human relation with the nonhuman:

> Humanity and nonhumanity have always performed an intricate dance with each other. There was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity; today, this mingling has become harder to ignore (31).

This rephrases Bruno Latour's suggestion that modernity works as a divorce that constitutes the binomials of nature and society, nature and culture, and more importantly, nature and politics. Hoping to produce assemblages between humans and non-humans[6] Latour explicitly states that "We want to gain access to things themselves, not only to their phenomena" (*We Have* 90). This anticipates a distinctive collapse of epistemology and ethics. The ability to escape modernity and its "Constitution," i.e., the division between nature and culture, human and nonhuman, etc., is assured through moral posture towards matter,

4. This is independent of whether the literaturization of Nature recurred or not to sciences (or Science with a capital S, conceding Latour's distinction) to enhance its arguments. As Ferber reminds (31), Romanticism must reconcile with sciences at some point to advance in its vindication of sentiments, feelings, and vitality against rationalization, disenchantment, and what Henry David Thoreau called "the curse of trade" (113).

5. Sexual relation is a fantasy precisely since it depends on preconceptions of feminine enjoyment framed within masculine discourse, or as Jacqueline Rose puts it, it arises from the symbolic consequences of sexual difference: "As negative to the man, woman becomes a total object of fantasy, elevated into the place of the Other and made to stand for its truth" (50)

6. Latour's critique of the so-called "modern Constitution," consists in producing a "political philosophy of assemblage of human and nonhumans" (*Politics of Nature* 52).

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materiality, and quasi-objectuality: "As such, it behooves us to pursue them [the quasi-objects], while we simply become once more what we have never ceased to be: nonmoderns" (*We Have* 90). As in any moral statement, the "We" hereby written by Latour is taken in a moral sense of epistemic superiority: "nous," "nosotros," "we," that have never been modern.[7] Bennett even talks about the "sexual appeal of the inorganic life" as another way to "give voice to what I think is shimmering, potentially violent vitality intrinsic to matter" (61). Inevitably Bennett ends up writing a psalm to matter: "I believe in one matter energy, the maker of things seen and unseen. I believe this pluriverse is traversed by heterogeneities that are continually doing things" (112). Like any Romanticism, moral predicament takes the form of a creed.[8]

Within the more restricted field of literary studies, ecocritical discussion has been fundamentally subsidiary to the ethical approaches of Latourian languages. The most striking point of such theoretical subsidiarity is the uncanny new-age familiarity of the ontologies it promotes. One of the first relevant materials of this "green" literary criticism constitutes Cherryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's book *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Following their first basic and problematic definition of ecocriticism as the "study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment," Glotfelty and Fromm point out that:

> Just as feminism criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxism criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (xix).

This not only presents ecocriticism as just another option for literary criticism and analysis, as if the critic could choose from various reified approaches with different reading modalities, but also reinscribes literature in the cosmological whole that was crucial for deep-ecological philosophies and transcendentalist views on Nature, making it impossible to distinguish the practice of literary criticism, of reading texts and literary works critically, and the ethical-subjective position of the critic himself. This is a form of what Pierre Macherey called normative fallacy (21).[9] In Glotfelty and Fromm's definition, ecocriticism expands the notion of the world "to include the entire ecosphere," following the post-Thoreauvian motto: "Everything is connected to everything else" (xix).[10] But if we strip away the complex language about non-humans, hybrids, and earthbound epistemologies, we are all left with a deep concern for the environment. This concern is legitimate, but becomes an aesthetic of moral compromise, making it incapable of historicizing the concept of nature within literary production.

The consequence of the so-called ecocriticism approach to literature is the tautological constatation, in the textual surface of the text, of the previously assumed normative and moral position of the critic-reader. Within the Latin American field of discussions, despite declaring its willingness to disrupt Cartesian binomial, ecocriticism reproduces dichotomic ways of thought: ecocentric thinking versus anthropocentric thinking, hostile human versus "more than human" nature (84), humanity versus nature, etc. Concerning anti-scientific types of ecocriticism, for example, Jennifer French and Gisella Heffes claim that "genealogy is an antiscience" and that eco-centered criticism should recur to "marginalized traditions" and "local knowledges", going beyond "Western thought bynomical epistemologies" and European science (18). Of course, it is not about denying the potentiality of the local and marginalized but carefully avoiding the Orientalist fantasy that turns the non-Western into a naturalistic fetish.[11] Emerging from the very dualism that it seeks to avoid, this fantasy sinks into the languages of denunciation and indignation with the human and the moral superiority of the "awakening of the love for nature" to confront the

7. Latour's book, originally in French, is entitled *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*.

8. With some distances, Donna Haraway takes the same path in her recent theoretical production. Haraway's language shares the tendency to transform the environmentalist perspective into out to be about "how to become less deadly, more response-able, more attuned, more capable of surprise, more able to practice the acts of living and dying well in multispecies symbiosis, sympoiesis, and symanimagenesis" (93). By taking on Latour's concept of "earth-bound", Haraway moves towards ethical reductionism through a pluralistic language full of scientific references. The moral solution to ecological rift resides in being as multiplicative, compositive, hybrid, and symbiotic as Nature: or in other words, to become natural.

9. The object and its "real complexity," the historical and contextual deficiencies of the world, and the aesthetical judgment of the reader. Macherey uses the concept of "normative fallacy" to indicate a sublimation, only apparently a more complex version, of the empiricist reading that "asks only how to *receive* a given object" previously normativized (21)

10. See, particularly, the beautiful but typically romantic depiction of the Walden pound as a cosmological whole, based on the "stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvati Geeta" which indicates, for Thoreau, the cosmological image of the Walden pound being a circular product together with the water of the Ganges and the whole of nature (346).

11. See, regarding this point, Rumahandra Guha "Radical American Environmentalism" (1989)

anthropocentric humans (Barbas-Rhoden, 88). This love imagines itself embracing Nature that "reclaims its own territory," just like Romantic ideologies (86).

When critical of the "white Orientalist" ecocriticism, the environmental compromise in literature seems unable to avoid a tendency towards moralizing super-ego injunctions. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley correctly point out that there is an

> Increasing tendency to naturalize a dominant American origin for ecological thought, and by extension a displacement of postcolonial, feminist, ecosocialist, and environmental justice concerns as outside the primary body of ecocritical work […] As we know, the discourse of nature is a universalizing one, and thus ecocriticism is particularly vulnerable to naturalizing dominant forms of environmental discourse (14).

The authors correctly distinguish between the green Orientalist ecocritics and the subalternist, indigenist, anti-extractivist postcolonial studies concerned with the environment. However, the deconstruction of the imperial character of the ecocritical discourse needs more than a denunciation of the first-worldism implicit in literary ecocriticism. Ecocriticism with a postcolonial perspective could function in the same way as the Orientalist fantasy that animates the "imperial character of ecocritical discourse," for example, in Thoreau's obsession with the *Bhagavad Gita*, but now enacting a compromise with pre-colonial and Indigenous knowledges. Consequently, it becomes an internal Orientalism that takes shelter in the language of the earth, promoting the re-emergence of "telluric" ethics (DeLoughrey & Handley, 31). It calls for an "aesthetics of the earth" that requires putting more "faith" in the "performance of imprecise sciences like listening, interpretation, reading, and ethics" (34).

Given the libidinal component in the representation of what ecocriticism calls the "nonhuman," one could say that much of it consists of the search for a way to contact nature as libido without the mediation of language. Far from stopping the epistemological reproduction of the ecological rift between nature and culture that remarkably emerged from capitalism, this fantasy of insight into nature without symbolic mediation is another way to deepen the ideational side of this rift through an ethos of matter. Quasi-mystical appeals to "compost," to "assemble," to become "hybrids," then result in an ethical command to attain a pre-symbolic relationship in the Lacanian sense, with what is interpellated as nonhuman in these narratives. Scientific discussion (if desirable for the scientific community)[12] could advance more regarding the pertinence of these hypotheses about the agential vitality of matter. Still, for literary criticism, these claims have the consequence of prioritizing the relation with non-discursive matter over what literature does all the time, namely, to inscribe materiality and nature in the "structure of feelings" of its time (Williams), including class relations, commodity abstractions, and cultural representations—or to put it more polemically, to historicize Nature.

Literaturization of Nature and primitive accumulation

One of the ideological trends that literary criticism must consider in understanding the literaturization of Nature is the persistence of pre-capitalist relations at the core of modernization in 19th-century Latin America. The predominant trait of this non-synchronicity, to use Ernst Bloch's concept (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*), is the patriarchal relations of subordination within the hacienda system in which the relations between the "patrón" or landowner and the peasants are mediated through a specific ideological subjection related to Catholic standards. In his exhaustive historiographical works on rural labor, the Chilean historian José Bengoa characterized this patriarchal relationship as

12. See, for example, Maximo Pugliucci's piece "The So-called Gaia Hypothesis": "Let Greek gods and goddesses rest in peace on Mount Olympus and let us get back to developing a much-needed real science of planetary ecology" (26). Also, "The Gaia Hypothesis: Fact, Theory, and Wishful Thinking" by James W. Kirchner.

"ascetic subordination." Romantic writers such as José Mármol, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Jorge Isaacs, Clorinda Matto de Turner, and Alberto Blest Gana held different attitudes regarding this ascetic subordination, but all of them transmitted critical views on the empire of money and the emergence of circulatory capital, encouraging a relative veneration of a damaged, ruinous Nature.[13] Much of these critical views grasped the dissolution of the hacienda system in the context of the ideological contraposition between Nature and the artificiality of exchange value.

Evidently, the non-synchronicity of Latin American modernization during the 19th Century is insufficient to explain the Romantic veneration of Nature. Still, non-synchronicity conceptually encompasses the emergence of Romanticism—as much as the consolidation and development of the cities and their lumpenproletariat encompasses the emergence of the naturalist novel and its racist undertones.[14] As Marx indicates, with the numerical and geographical predominance of agricultural and rural populations, the concentration of capital is "confined to narrow limits," and capitalist fragmentation socially prevails (941). Precisely, it is around these reflections that Marx uses Liebig's concept of metabolism to indicate an increasing divorce between nature and society. In other terms, the veneration of Nature in primitive accumulation literature and modernization belongs to this very metabolic divorce, defined in Marx's *Capital* as "an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism" (949). Non-synchronicity is an ideological phenomenon that produces the expansion and ejection of ideologies belonging to and dealing with the multiple temporalities of combined, motley, primitive accumulation processes.[15]

Jorge Isaac's *María*: Nature as melancholy

Within the Romantic tradition, Jorge Isaacs' novel *María* is characterized by its melancholic depiction of the natural countryside landscape in Colombia and the Romantic nostalgia it transmits for socially drained structures. Isaacs' novel produces a synthesis between the Cauca Valley landscape and the tragic character of María, who embodies all the attributes of Romantic femininity, including weakness, adolescence (she is only fifteen years old when she falls in love with Efraín, the main character of the novel), and strength to face her own destiny marked by a young death.[16] But this feminine surplus ultra also works as a Lacanian suture: María metaphorically synthetizes the voluptuous landscape of the Colombian countryside and plugs into the broken totality of the hacienda system. The novel takes place in the idyllic hacienda *El Paraíso* and is smeared by the decomposition of the patriarchal world it represents. Following Efraín's own account: "he desviado mi mirada de esas escenas patriarcales, que me recordaban los últimos días de mi juventud" ("I diverted my gaze upon those patriarchal scenes, which reminded me of the last days of my youth"; 113, my trans.).[17] Efraín youth's "last days" are the last days of the patriarchal system of rural subordination as it was known in the 19th Century, before the advancement of agrarian capitalism in Colombia and the Cauca Valley, and its consequential ecological rift, to use Marx's terms.[18]

Beyond the Romantic and incestuous coupling with his cousin María,[19] Efraín's father represents a patriarchal authority who blocks the encounter between the lovers in an Oedipal fashion but also an excellent semi-feudal "patrón" who respects his subordinates: "mi

13. A paradoxical, difficult author in the Romanticist movement was, of course, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. He also propelled veneration of nature but alongside the aquatic utopia of capitalist penetration and civilizing the countryside. His place in the Romantic pantheon is unique, and his importance lies in this singularity for understanding the 19th century in Latin America.

14. See, for example: Eugenio Cambaceres' *En la sangre* and Joaquín Edwards Bello's *El roto*. For a comprehensive analysis of French naturalism, see Susana Barrows' book *Distorting Mirrors*.

15. Here I reccur to a terminology that, beyond being useful for my pruposes, I cannot delve into. See particularly Vitorio Morfino's *Plural Temporalities*.

16. This are typical motives of the depiction of femininity within the Romantic literature, as Donald McGrady reminds us (33). The originality of Isaacs' novel is far beyond his characters that mostly repeat romantic motives and *costumbrista* ideals.

17. All translations of Isaac's María are mine. The only available translation in English, *María: A South American Romance*, excises scenes and plot details and changes sentences and phrasing. I decided to include both the original Spanish edition from *Cátedra* and my translations.

18. See "La irrupción del capitalismo agrario en el Valle del Cauca" by Álvaro Acevedo and Néstor Valencia.

19. The focus of the critique on this aspect of the novel is overwhelming. After Doris Sommer's observations on the problem of Jewishness in *Foundational Fictions*, undoubtedly relevant for the novel, there is abundant literature regarding Jorge Isaacs' Jewishness and its allegorical presence in *María*, to indicate the aporias of Colombian miscegenation or mestizaje. See, for example, beyond Sommer's groundbreaking book, Erin Graff-Zivin's book *The Wandering Signifier*, and Stephan Leopold's article: "Die Zeit dere Nation als Aufschub—Jorge Isaacs' *María* und die Emergenz lateinamerikanischer Subjektivität."

padre, sin dejar de ser amo, daba un trato cariñoso a sus esclavos" ("my father, without ceasing to be a master, treated his slaves lovingly," Isaacs 61; my translation). However, the novel describes a fatal night in which Efraín witnesses a catastrophic failure in his father's business. This economic loss resembles the failures that Jorge Isaacs himself experienced as a landowner in 1864 (Rueda, 40) and has effects on the corporeity of Efrain's father himself, who begins suffering from fever and decay. Efraín affirms his sense of imaginary estrangement during this loss, realizing the impact it has had on his father's condition and turning to the beauty of nature in seeking diversion:

> Solamente el canto del titiribí y los de las guacharas de los bosques vecinos anunciaban la aurora: la naturaleza parecía desperezarse al despertar de su sueño […] Ya no volveré a admirar aquellos cantos, a respirar aquellos aromas, a contemplar aquellos paisajes llenos de luz, como en los días alegres de mi infancia y en los hermosos de mi adolescencia: ¡extraños habitan hoy la casa de mis padres!
>
> (Only the song of the titiribí and the guarachas from the neighboring forests announced the dawn: the nature seemed to stretch out while waking up from its sleep […] I will no longer admire those songs, breathe those aromas, contemplate those full-lighted landscapes, as in the happy days of my childhood and the beautiful days of my adolescence: strangers dwell in my parent's house nowadays! (178, my trans.))

This moment in the novel confirms a profound diffraction. Isaacs' narrative divides itself between a world of venerated Nature and a commercial, numerical failure that bastardizes Romantic love. At the same time, this diffraction internally differs between the retrocessive ideology of melancholic love attached to the idyllic hacienda in the Cauca Valley and the power of exchange value. It is precisely on this nonsynchronic rupture that María performs a suture in a Lacanian sense of the term, defined by Jacques Alain-Miller as an object "non-identical with itself to be subsequently rejected from the dimension of truth" (152).

Ericka Beckman's analysis of *María* proves crucial to displacing the criticism from the influence of Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities" and the allegories of miscegenation or mestizaje. She displaces the analysis toward the overdetermination of the "national romances," as Doris Sommer calls them, by the conjunctures of primitive accumulation. Beckman correctly points out the problem of time in *María*, indicating the double inscription of the novel in the capitalist administration of time and the spatial-temporal gap between Europe and the Cauca Valley. Efrain's travel to London would be the argumentative knot to show that by arriving late to María's decease and death, he symbolizes the problems of the "unequal development" of Latin American capitalism:

> Through references to clocks, *María* unfolds within the spatiotemporal coordinates of what Fredric Jameson calls 'singular modernity,' which refers to a single but internally variegated capitalist system. And *María* expresses through literary form what it means to fail to realize value within that system (552).

Beckman's reading raises a crucial question to overcome the methodological aporias of ecocriticism. If the epistemic-critical collapse of moralizing rhetoric and literary criticism is insufficient to answer the aporias of representing nature in literature, is it enough to project the temporalities of global capitalism into the temporalities of literary-ideological imagination? Here, we can refer to the Althusserian theory

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of "relative autonomy" that inspired Macherey's theory of literary production. Regarding the *Ungleichzeitigkeit* or non-synchronicity of capitalism in the 19th Century, the Romantic novel do not merely mirror the variegated temporalities of the historical present, but they constitute another temporal mediation. Because of capitalism's unequal development, Isaacs created this ideal space without history. To put it in Beckman's own terms, precisely because "in a hurry," the internal clock of the novel produces a metonymic representation of Nature as melancholy.

Freud's concept of melancholia provides a starting point to delve into this novel's internal temporality and its ecological institution. Melancholia is first defined as a narcissistic regression of the libido; it corresponds to the "identification of the ego with the abandoned object," thus impeding the work of mourning that gives up the cathexis and enables the return to the normal psychical economy ("Mourning and Melancholia" 159). The predominant feature of melancholia is the strong fixation and the impossibility of giving up the object that "fell upon the ego," producing then a series of self-torments that yet the melancholic lives "not without pleasure," as Freud states (162). However, in 1921, Freud offered a more advanced concept, fully understanding melancholia as inscribed in the same economy as its opposite, mania. Freud encounters in love a perfect example of this dialectic between mania and melancholia: while the maniac transforms his own narcissistic cathexis in the ego-ideal, in lovely infatuation, the object experiences a "hyper-cathexis" that devours the subject in a masochist way (*Group Psychology* 76). This is the type of relationship we see developing through Isaacs' novel, a continuous devaluation of Efraín's ego regarding María—who simultaneously works as a suture against the crumbling of Nature and the hacienda system.

In this sense, one must observe that Isaacs' novel repeatedly anticipates its tragic ending, leaving us traces of the melancholic attachment to nature through Isaacs' stunning descriptions of the Cauca Valley and the hacienda. The idyllic landscape progressively remits to María, as the feminine symbol that prevents the dissolution of the broken Nature: "Aquellas soledades, sus bosques silenciosos, sus flores, sus aguas y sus aves ¿por qué me hablaban de ella? ¿qué había allí de María? […] Era que veía el Edén, pero faltaba ella" ("Those solitudes, its silent forests, its flowers, its waters, and its birds, why did they talk about her? What pertaining to María was there? I saw the Eden, but she was missing"; 72; my trans.). Nature expresses the masochistic comfort enabled by love against a word of artificiality and pretense: "La naturaleza es la más amorosa de las madres cuando el dolor se adueñado de nuestra alma" ("Nature is the loveliest mother when sorrow has taken over our souls"; 129; my trans.). Efraín, consequently, contrasts the feigned kindness of London with the dark forest of the Cauca Valley as if they were opposed sides of a diffracted world: "Aquella oscuridad y silencio eran gratos para mi después del trato forzado y la fingida amabilidad usada durante mi viaje" ("Darkness and silence were pleasant to me after the forced intercourse and the feigned kindness I used in my travel" 299; my trans.). Towards the novel's ending, María's death retrospectively recreates the narrative as the realization of an irrecoverable past, as a space of melancholy and, therefore, a conservative attachment to pre-capitalist Nature.

María's passing symbolizes the triumph of the absolute abstraction of commodified time, to use Stavros Tombazos' terms, over Nature and simultaneously erects the fantasy that sutures this historical and imaginary tragedy. This fantasy, erotically defined by the Isaacs as "castísimo delirio" ("most chaste delirium," 326; my trans.), denotes the social divorce the Cauca Valley has been a victim of. It is the delirium of persisting in a temporality different from exchange value, the melancholic attachment to ruinous naturality.[20] "Esa casa cerrada y sus contornos solitarios y silenciosos" ("that closed house and its lonely and

20. The second chapter of Doris Sommer's *Foundational Fictions* offers a good survey to better understand this relationship.

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silent surroundings" 323; my trans.); "mi alma abatida va en las horas de mi sueño a vagar en torno del que fuera hogar de mis padres" ("my soul goes during sleep hours to wander around what was my parent's home" 326; my trans.), are examples of this dilapidated allegorical environment.

Isaacs' novel masterfully effectuates the equation between María, the hacienda *El Paraíso*, and Nature. This ideology inscribes its resistance to abstraction in the ecological death of Latin American feudalism, going even further when Efraín decides to take shelter in Nature from the tragedy of María's death in the last lines of the novel: "Partí a galope por en medio de la pampa solitaria, cuyo vasto horizonte ennegrecía la noche" ("I set out at a gallop over the lonely plains, whose vast horizon was darkening the night" 329; my trans.). The novel opens up the melancholic temporality of the *hic et nunc* of the hacienda through its very ending. Beckman's polemical affirmation, according to which the object of María's nostalgia is "not an old patriarchal world" (555), needs to be calibrated in the sense that there is no "real world" behind Efraín's literary imagination. It is the ideological world of Romantic ideologies, of Nature as melancholia.

Gómez de Avellaneda's Sab and the ecological rift

While Isaacs' *María* allows us to clarify the relationship between melancholic cathexis and the veneration of nature, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab*, another novel of the Romantic movement, shows the literary mediation of ecological rift through primitive accumulation. Gómez de Avellaneda's most crucial novel has been frequently read accounting for the racial issues it problematizes (abolitionism) and the role played by women and gender transgressiveness in the novel (feminism).[21] Some readers put into question the emancipatory politics of Sab, indicating its inscription in the discourse of master-slave love and the cultural phenomena of "Siboneyismo," namely, the necessity for a new cultural identity based on an Arcadian idyllic Cuba in which racial conflicts are superseded. In that case, *Sab's* abolitionism remains a project pertaining to the Cuban liberal elite's identity politics during the 19th Century (Gomariz 112). But more importantly, this elite project bonds to the same species of Romantic ecology that we see developing in Isaacs' *María* and what Adriana Méndez calls the "feminization of nature" (156).

The elements that in María emerge notably eclipsed by the melancholic atmosphere created by Isaacs' imagination in Gómez de Avellaneda's novel are much pristine. Especially the opposition or "Romantic rivalry" (Méndez, 163) between the authentic creole Cuban society and the foreigners—who are at the same time the bearers of capital. As Méndez correctly points out, the novel's rhetoric "denounces the fundamental cause of the slavery system: a radical split between nature and culture, a severing of the bonds between natural and social bonds" (166). Bucolic landscapes are, in other words, the depositary of sentimental, "oceanic" feelings, to speak Freudian. Romantic literature assumes its compromises with Nature in a way that resembles the contemporary treatment of Nature as a "muddle totality" (Latour, *Facing Gaia* 109), yet another name for the agency of the earth and the "distributed intentionality" of all things.[22] In Gómez de Avellaneda's Sab, there is an implicit moralizing critique of what contemporary ecological thinking calls the Promethean mentality, hand in hand with a vindication of nature as justice and revanche.[23]

Published in Madrid in 1841, Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* stands out for its gothic components and the strong metaphoricity of its characters. Sab, the slave and "mayoral" of the hacienda Bellavista, clearly expresses the great Cuban tragedy during the 19th Century, the persistence of the institution of slavery amid the changes in the regime of accumulation. Carlota, infatuated with Enrique, an English merchant

21. For a feminist reading that interpretate *Sab* as an antipatriarchal novel, see Marina Martínez "Gertrudiz Gómez de Avellaneda y el amor romántico en *Sab*." For gender transgressiveness in Gómez de Avellaneda, see Brígida Pastor's "Gertrúdiz Gómez de Avellaneda: Bording Crossings in Genre, Gender, Nation."

22. For a comprehensive problematization of the Gaia hypothesis, see Harrison Fluss & Landon Frim's *Prometheus and Gaia*.

23. See Isabelle Stengers' *In Catastrophic Times* in which she attributes agency to Gaia, another name for the earth as being, following famous James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis.

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primarily interested in her fortune—and not without racial hints; he is Jewish—represents the triumph of capital over Nature and the poetic souls, "almas poéticas." Finally, Teresa constitutes the most gothic character of the novel, a Lacanian void, a character of insignificant physiognomy, "fisionomía insignificante," without Carlota's charm, but increasingly revealed as the attitudinal knot of the text itself, inasmuch she appears as the womanly survival of the Republican values. All these characters move through a dualistic color palette in which the extreme points are Nature and money, land and gold, maritime capitalism, and telluric landowning. Gómez de Avellaneda's novel institutes the literaturization of the "ecological rift" defined by John Bellamy Foster as a "deep chasm" in the metabolic relations between human beings and nature (7). This rift appears overall as a contradiction between the social metabolism, i.e., the accumulation of capital and production of surplus value, and the natural metabolism or the use values (Bellamy Foster, 147). Literature, as emphasized above, is a specific form of fantasy regarding this ecological rift inspired by various pantheisms. Against the religion of money, Romantic literature offers the religion of Nature.

Sab's narrative complexity relies upon two converging movements. First, the gothic mystery moves toward a romantic dichotomy between exchange value and Nature. Carlota is the object of Sab's obsession, and she finds herself strongly compelled to realize her love for Enrique. In contrast with Teresa, Carlota appears as the object of desire throughout the novel. But Gómez de Avellaneda's novel brilliantly transforms Carlota into a kind of commodity in a rigorously Marxist sense since she embodies the double face of commodity: exchange value and use value. For Sab, the obsessed slave, Carlota represents pure love, while for Enrique, she is just business. Sab anticipates this future: "He will take her to wife like a piece of merchandise, calculatingly, for profit, transforming into shameful speculation the most holy bond" (Avellaneda, 109).[24] The narrator supports this position by describing Enrique as the result of a "profit-oriented atmosphere" of education according to the rules of greed and strictness (135). The irony is that Carlota sees her dream of marrying Enrique as the beginning of a new life without slavery. Gómez de Avellaneda anticipates this naivety when stressing that Carlota "loved in Enrique the ideal object of her imagination" (40). Trapped by the effect of her imaginary illusion, Carlota becomes captive of Enrique's desire mediated by money, forced to live on calculation and convenience. Carlota was originally "inútil," "useless," as a key moment of the novel reminds us: she was deprived of value. It is Enrique who has turned her into a valuable commodity. Gómez de Avellaneda seals this evolving movement of Carlota's character by speculating about her current wanderings: "Perhaps Carlota, as Teresa had foreseen, is now living in populous London" (275). Buried in accumulation, Carlota becomes absorbed by the exchange value.

Sab, the slave, stands for the other movement of the novel, one directed toward Nature as divinity, justice, and plenitude. Sab's voice embodies the stark criticism of social and human life and the vindication of Nature:

> I cursed nature, which condemned me to worthlessness and shame. But I was unjust, Teresa, for nature has not been any less our mother than yours. Does the sun hide its light from the regions where the wild black makes his home? Do the streams dry up in order not to quench his thirst? Do not the birds sing for him and the flowers emit their perfume? But human society has not imitated the equality of our common mother (97).

Society prevents Sab from achieving his object of desire, Carlota, pushing him to wish for the ruin of civilization. On the other hand, if gold is the "God" of Enrique, as Avellaneda insists, the God of Sab is a kingdom of justice to which he never ceases to appeal and call at all times: "for that other life where love is eternal and happiness. is

24. I used Nina Scott translation. When quoting words or expressions in Spanish, I follow the *Cátedra* edition.

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boundless, where there is equality and justice, and where souls which men have separated on earth will be united in the heart of God for all eternity!" (100). Interestingly, Sab's denunciation does not hurt Carlota's father, the owner of the hacienda, exhibiting the moralistic understanding of the world in Gómez de Avellaneda's abolitionism. That is why Nature is the subterfuge in the face of a human society fractured between the use-value of land and the exchange-value of commerce. Sab's final denunciation, in a letter he pathetically wrote at the very moment of his terrible agony, represents the need to take refuge in Nature from the unstoppable advance of capital: "Among men, I have failed to find the great harmony that God has established in nature" (141). Sab's death closes the eschatological promise of a new kingdom of intelligence, of a kingdom of Nature as God, reflected in that pre-capitalist life with which Gómez de Avellaneda builds the moral background of his novel.

Mármol's *Amalia*: white ecology and apokatastasis

There is yet another moment of 19th-century Latin American Romanticism that could help us to understand the solidarity between pantheist religiosity and the moralization of Nature, José Mármol's "Monólogo del mar" ("Monologue at sea," following Helen Lane's translation) in his novel *Amalia*, published in 1851.[25] In *Foundational Fictions* Sommer argues that Mármol's *Amalia* constitutes an attempt to reconcile the Argentine interior (Tucumán) with the city (Buenos Aires): "Amalia's inevitable affair with the Buenos Aires boy will signal a national rapprochement between center and periphery, or at least between modern history and Arcadian pastoral" (99). Sommer insists that *Amalia* is a love history about the production of a "new child" between the countryside and the city, also contending that it constitutes a European model of mestizo romance, different from the enactment of José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* as new "Argentina's epic" (113). However, something is missing here that is crucial to understanding the importance of *Amalia*, precisely regarding the transition from depicting the Argentine interior as barbarism to its vindication as national poetics. Mármol's novel is a primal Romantic rejection of the city. For the first time, the city appeared to shelter the decomposing tendencies of urban life against the purity of Nature and the countryside. This is the tradition that will survive in both the poetic exaltation of the gaucho and the naturalistic rejection of Buenos Aires' plebs. Mármol's *Amalia* anticipates dismissals of what in 1902 José María Ramos Mejía calls the "negrada bonaerense," the Afro-Argentine masses from Buenos Aires that supported Rosas' "neurotic" dictatorship.

Located at the center of the novel, Mármol's "Monologue at sea" is a text whose programmatical content refers to the political anxieties of the Romantic mentality he represents. After traveling to Montevideo in search of support for the cause against Rosas' dictatorship, Daniel Bello, the novel's main character, seems deceived by the political streams of his epoch; the Unitarian establishment, opposed to Rosas' regime, is unable to understand the deep causes behind the tyranny—individualism, the social fragmentation of the Argentine society, the lack of fraternity (Mármol, 271). Bello's monologue clearly expresses the idea of fraternity that Mármol is looking for, opposed at the same time to the urban multitude behind Rosas' regime, the "plebs of Buenos Aires," and the political views of the Argentinian exiled community, whose main representatives were Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in Chile and Juan Bautista Alberdi in Montevideo. While Sarmiento's *Viajes*, published in 1849 in Chile, ascertained the need for another model for Latin American liberalism based in the United States as an exemplary model, Mármol's literature remains faithful to the Romantic project. He is not as fascinated with the American frontier life and its consequential negative individualism as Sarmiento. Disenchanted with the Unitarian establishment, Bello exclaims:

25. I used Helen Lane and Doris Sommer's translation and edition for the present article. For all the quotes and words cited in Spanish I used the *Cátedra* edition.

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> Those stars, as eternal as the gaze that illuminates them, will one day see above these waves the fulfillment of mind's beautiful reveries! Yes. The future of America is written in the handiwork of God Himself: it is a magnificent and splendid allegory in which the Great Poet of universal creation has revealed the destinies of the New World (281).

Politics must be transformed into the allegorical image of Nature. In this sense, Mármol's project resembles "Romantic Spinozism," as described by Eileen Hunt Botting regarding the British writer Mary Shelley: a project determined to conceive love as "apokatastasis" (16), i.e., restitution or restoration of the continuity between human and "non-human," to recur to Latourian languages, through love and reconciliation.

Daniel Bello's monologue alludes to several features of American nature to reinforce this continuity and reconciliation between nature and society:

> These immense grasslands […] these rivers, as vast as the ocean, that cross each other like arteries of the gigantic body of America […] those dense forests, where Nature's wild orchestra invites us to share in the harmony of art and the human voice […] These clouds, delicately tinted with Nature's cheeriest and softest hues. Yes, all these magnificent spectacles are eloquent words of God's figurative language (281).

In sum, all those landscaped realities are the language of God. Daniel Bello's lover, Florencia, is defined in turn as "hebra de luz," a connecting strand with the totality of nature as God.

> The moon hid at that moment its mother-of-pearl [faz de nácar] amid the veils of a dark cloud, and Daniel bowed his head on his breast, intoxicated by his spirit's rapture […] lulled by the waves of the powerful Río de la Plata [del poderoso plata] (282).

Argentine political currents must follow the nature of the Río de la Plata and the pantheistic harmony of the Americas. Rosas' dictatorship finally represents another image of nature, a divorced and more real nature in the Lacanian sense: a nature that produces anxiety, an antinature.

While the Romantic characters of Mármol's Amalia are representations of the melancholic organization of the psyche and sensitive, delicate organizations, Juan Manuel de Rosas' Buenos Aires is depicted as a deformed mass composed by gauchos, "Indios," blacks, and mulattos: "Rosas stood face to face with a short, fat mulatto, with an enormous head, a flat, narrow forehead, chubby cheeks, a snub nose, whose ugly features added up to a portrait of the degeneration of human intelligence and the mark of imbecility" (Mármol, 29). These obscure plebs, "obscure and prostituted multitude that he had raised from the mud of society," represent Juan Manuel de Rosas' "science" (63). References to the darkness of this material multitude are unfree of racial attachments. Mármol recognizes throughout the novel that the Porteño plebs are mainly constituted by black subjects, by the alliance between Rosas' terror and the "African race," the main instruments of Rosas' domination (550). As María Rosa Lojo indicates, in *Amalia*, barbarism functions as "antinature," as a crack in the harmony of Nature produced by human forces. As Lojo recalls, Mármol's image of Nature is perfectly compatible with the *locus amoenus* of the Edenic garden. It is the "human" who destroyed, interrupted, and perverted the figurative language of God (La "barbarie" 87). In other words, Mármol cannot avoid recognizing that this antinature emerges from the very heart of the Argentinian people, "sprung up from virgin

forests," pushed to the revolution by the dominance of its passions. Rosas, the dictator, is paradoxically the expression of the same Nature that Mármol wants to recover as an image of social conciliation. Mármol even recognizes that he individualizes the whole Argentinian people (320). At the same time, we discover that Nature, venerated so vividly in Mármol's *Amalia*, is a metaphoric trope of the white elite, but terror propels its internal division, divorcing nature from nature: "The terror had no limits now. Spirits were prostrated, ill, dead. Nature had been divorced from Nature" (587).

Mármol's *Amalia* remarkably dislocates around two different notions of nature, that of Daniel Bello in the "Monólogo del mar" and Rosas' nature as antinature, the self-division of Nature as barbarism and multitudinous, plebeian brutality. Some nature is, consequently, "rotten nature," to take Adrian Johnston's language, a nature weak in the sense of Hegel's "impotence of nature" (Johnston, "Reflections" 30). Mármol's ideological Romanticism involves a dialectical moment in which the weakness of nature produces its own "more-than-nature" subjectivity—destructive, derailed, barbarous. The impotence of nature is precisely its capacity to produce a denaturalized subjectivity, Rosas' dictatorship, that contests the cosmological dream to return to "fictitious synthesis and totalities" (Johnston, "Reflections" 32). But Romantic ideology could consist of either resisting the emergence of this "twist of nature" (Johnston, *A Weak Nature* 51) into antinature or understanding it as a new *Naturphilosophie*. Mármol takes the first path, converting the novel into a hallucinatory fantasy that permits to correct the fracture of the Real produced by the Buenos Aires' dark plebs through the acclamation of naturality in the "Monologue at sea." And this is perhaps the definitive moment in which Mármol's philosophical intelligence collapses into the class positions he intends to represent. Because the dark plebs and Buenos Aires' multitude are at the center of the author's fantasy. As Todd McGowan reminds us, the prevailing white racist fantasy is the transformation of the racial other into an obstacle for the object of desire (27). If, towards the end of his novel, Mármol puts so much attention on the darkness of Rosas' populace, it is precisely because the racial other stands in for a weak nature, for a perverted naturality that produced the Argentinian tragedy and obstacles the Nature of Romanticism, i.e., the uncanny form of white cosmology or apokatastasis.

Conclusion

The literaturization of Nature is the predominant ideological device of literary Romanticism, both in and beyond Latin America. This concept, literaturization of Nature, functions to understand the ways in which nature is incorporated into the signifier field of literary production, constituting a metonymy of complex historicities. Beyond if the Romantics asserted that nature is pure beauty or pure ugliness (and everything in between), they were all committed to finding moral definitions for what is natural and what is not, producing thus the obscure zone of the non-natural, artificiality, commerce, exchange value, dark plebs, etc. Additionally, the literaturization of Nature entails an additional and tautological turnaround: the naturalization of Nature. Nature becomes a reified structure that surpasses and occludes history. Even if historical and historically informed, the Romantic novel pretends to recover what the subject leaves behind when it intersects with the signifier chain, an extra-discursive Nature in its sacred immediacy. More importantly, this reified Nature remedies the contingencies of history in general and capital in particular. It allows the Romantic subject and its literary mediations to find solutions for a world in constant danger. Nature plays then the role of the non-contingent.

The opposition between nature and non-natural, human and non-human, and its interminable variations reassembles the system of

oppositions that it tries to destroy. The theoretical and critical task, in this regard, should be the deconstruction of these oppositions and their re-inscription in the historical skein that reproduces them as ideological interpellations—just as, for example, Jacques Derrida started the "deconstruction" of the opposition between life and death that informed the philosophies of life (Vitale, 35). Because Romantic literature's theoretical and philosophical culture remains inseparable from the conjuncture of primitive accumulation, today's ecocriticism and the new philosophies of life hidden behind the environmental approaches to literary objects are deconstructable by reading the paradigmatic fetishization of nature that emerged in the 19th century. In the first place, both moments of capitalistic ideologies irresolutely tend to the moralization of natural otherness, to its transformation into the key that solves the mystery of human extinction. In the second place, this moralization of Nature performs a sublime fantasy in which the ecological-aware subject is fulfilled by certain enlightenment. Just like Daniel Bello, we are purportedly now reconciled with Nature—but is there any narrativization of Nature freed from social, political, or even racialized cathexis? The ecocentric subjectivistic dream has the worst consequences. The veneration of Nature always departed from the rejection of human artificiality and praxis and the vindication of an Arcadian past, whether it is the melancholic attachment to pre-capitalist forms of relationship with Nature, the pristine pre-colonial societies, or the apokatastasis of wildlife. In this regard, our sophisticated ecocritical trends repeat the gestures of Romanticism. The ecological realm becomes a world with dignity and a moral status superior to the "human" world. The stumbling block with the moralization of theory is thus just around the corner. This is precisely what Frederic Jameson criticized in late capitalism's rejection of consumption, which re-emerged amid the capitalist counterrevolution of the 1990s: "Critiques of consumption in late capitalism […] mobilize an ethical or a moralizing rhetoric and make judgments that are inseparable of such stances" (406).

Paradoxically, Romantic humanism surfaces amidst the most antihumanistic utterances of the ecocentric mentality. In the name of decentering humanity from nature and displacing Cartesian binomials, "human exceptionalism is paradoxically affirmed at the very point at which it is rejected" (Ware, 4). Even from the side of new materialisms and object-oriented ontologies, the main trends informing the ecocritical turn, there is suspicion regarding Latour's insistence on hybridization. Graham Harman, for example, indicates that Latour "preserves the very two terms", human and nonhumans, that he meant to abandon (58). As Andreas Malm suggests, these new hybridisms dissolve all the modern taxonomies "in the boundless ambiance of matter" (56). At the same time, however, they forget the exclusivity of the human audience of their statements. It is precisely this paradox—that we cannot convince matter about our disposition to become hybrids with objects, things, bags, and rocks— that produces the boomerang effect, a sort of eco-narcissism. Freud's inflicted wound on humanity does not rely exclusively on rubbing in human noses that something dirty, sexual drive, determines a large part of their acting outs and passages to the act. Freud's point in "On Narcissisim" is precisely that the very startpoint of analyzing and deconstructing humanity's narcissistic self-conception is to recognize the constitutive narcissistic character of the human subject. The most untreatable narcissistic is the one that does not acknowledge narcissism in its own subjective constitution. Same thing with grand declarations of being able to compost with non-human entities or become "nonmodern."

By ignoring the capitalist rift that leads to our extinction ideologies, our contemporary "ecologically aware" criticism turns into Romantic forms of eco-masochistic humanism—just as Efraín cures his object cathexis with the melancholic appraisal of Nature in Jorge Isaac's María. This "enlightened openness to the world-without-us," as Jacques Lezra

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indicates, derives into a humanism of "masochistic heroics," and their "effective politics is empathy" (182). What makes Lezra's analysis of new materialisms effective is his observation according to which, from the beginning, the problem of ecologically oriented philosophies is their focus on how to "treat" objects" and how to be grateful to materiality. There is no space for the "narratological contradictions" (189) of the objects as they appear in a poem, in a novel, in sum, in literary production. Quite the contrary, the outstanding feature of Romanticism is presenting and narrating objects, matter, landscapes, rocks, oceans, and nature as if they were devoid of relations. Against this Romantic ontology of the objects, literary criticism must enact an "ontology of relation," as Étienne Balibar conceives it. Regarding nature, this ontology of relation searches for another method concerning the environment in literature. Instead of fetishizing objects and matter, it recognizes that nature is contingency, which means that somehow, we must historicize the concept of Nature for each case in which it emerges as an ideological artifact or analytical determination[26]. Nature, to use Althusser's language, pertains to the ideological conjuncture enacting it as a (post) humanistic solution or civilizational enemy. Understanding this requires a profound rupture with Romanticism.

26. Althusser's insistence on clinamen is crucial in this sense. It pushes us to think of nature as conjunctural, avoiding both the naturalization of Nature and its literaturization.

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