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Landscapes and aesthetic spatialities in the Anthropocene

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A Landscape for Early 20th-Century Poetry: Pastorals of the Little-Magazine Avant-Garde

Elin Käck♦

Commenting on the devastating earthquake that occurred in Sicily on 28 December 1908, symbolist poet Alexander Blok writes: "Science flourishes in order to subjugate the earth; art flourishes in order—like a winged day-dream, a mysterious aeroplane—to fly away from the earth; industry flourishes in order that people may part company with the earth" (Blok, 2003: 144). For Blok, there is clearly a nature-culture divide, and we should be careful to presume that culture can match nature's strength, for, as Blok points out, "the flag of culture can always be lowered whenever the distant thunder of approaching storm is heard" (144).[1] In recent years, the realization that humans impact the planet on a geological scale and that we have entered the Anthropocene has challenged the notion of such a divide. Defined by Crutzen, Steffen and McNeill, the Anthropocene entails a state in which "[h]uman activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita*" (Crutzen, Steffen & McNeill, 2007: 614). Central to this new epoch is that "humans have become a proper geological (rather than merely social or biological) agent akin to meteorites and volcanoes" (Vermeulen, 2020: 3–4). The implications of this are vast. As Steven Vogel points out, seeing "nature as something separate and ontologically distinct from the human makes no sense," since "our position in the world is fundamentally active and transformative, and so the 'nature' (or rather the environment) we inhabit is always one we have already helped form" (Vogel, 2015: 43). In other words, the whole idea of a nature-culture divide can be called into question.

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1 These lines were delivered when people faced the devastation of the city of Messina, with an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.1 that destroyed over 90 percent of the buildings and killed between 30,000 and 60,000 people (Parrinello, 2012: 29–30), perhaps even as many as 100,000 people (Kozák, 2008: 170).

According to Kant in *Critique of Judgment*, there are phenomena in the face of which "our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle" but which are still "attractive" to us "provided we are in a safe place" (Kant, 2001: 527). Even with the telegram spreading news of Sicily's destruction across the globe in 1908, there is, in fact, a safe place from which to witness and think about—aestheticize—this event. But what happens when the threatening phenomena of nature permeate everything or exclude the possibility of a safe vantage point for the artist? Or when threats usually ascribed to the powerful entity of nature are actually caused by humans in the Anthropocene? While these questions were not wholly formulated 100 years ago, the 1921 volume of the literary magazine *The Dial*—"one of the most important cultural and literary journals in English" (Molesworth, 1990: 147)—provides a snapshot of the state of landscape poetry, or poetry depicting and engaging with nature, at the time, and of the concerns and questions then deemed relevant in relation to the aesthetics and aestheticizing of nature. For while, as Joshua Schuster points out, "Modernism was never very green" (Schuster, 2015: 3), Modernists still wrote many poems featuring nature, including pastorals. The relationship between Modernism, pastoral, landscape, geology, and the Anthropocene is worth exploring, and a particularly interesting intersection of these concepts emerges in the forum of the Modernist little magazine. How did four different poets, whose poems were all published in that same volume of the little magazine *The Dial*, make sense of their shifting natural world, and how do they speak to the more recent transformations of nature in the Anthropocene?

Published first in Boston and Chicago in the 1800s, and from 1918 onwards in New York, *The Dial* was a forum for the transnational avant-garde and featured the work of Modernist poets such as Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot. Like many similar publications, *The Dial* provided poets with an educated readership. Marianne Moore's "A Graveyard," Hart Crane's "Pastorale," Maxwell Bodenheim's "Summer Evening: New York Subway Station," and Malcolm Cowley's "Mountain Valley" are four rather different poems, but they display a shared interest in nature and landscape. Of the four poems, Moore's is probably the most well-known today. Crane is known for his major work *The Bridge* (1930), to which the short lyric "Pastorale" forms somewhat of a contrast. Bodenheim was a member of the New York avant-garde and published books as well as many pieces in little magazines. Cowley, last, is known for his account of the Lost Generation in Europe in *Exile's Return* (1934), but in "Mountain Valley," his subject seems rather to be planetary in scope. These authors all come together in the 71st volume of *The Dial*, where they also explore questions of landscape, pastoral and nature in poetic form. Reading them together, and considering their embeddedness in the same volume, itself a space or landscape, thus uncovers something of the *Zeitgeist* as well as of shared aesthetic queries. Allowing these poems to converse with each other and with both contemporaneous and more recent theories on landscape and aesthetics, nature,

and the Anthropocene, reveals that these poets are not only highly aware of the aestheticizing practices involved in representations of nature but also in subtle ways work to undermine and destabilize overly simplistic nature-culture dichotomies.

Poetry and Landscape, Human and Non-Human

Long before the notion of the Anthropocene, of course, the question of human and non-human was a topic for discussion. This was the case even in relatively popular journals, such as *The Smart Set*, where, in a 1919 piece, H. L. Mencken brings forth the argument that "the anthropomorphic theory of the world is made absurd by modern biology" (Mencken, 1982: 4). Mencken acknowledges that people will want to cling to this notion despite evidence to the contrary: "One and all, these sentimentalities are based upon the notion that man is a glorious and ineffable animal, and that his continued existence in the world ought to be facilitated and insured. But this notion is obviously full of fatuity. As animals go, even in so limited a space as our world, man is botched and ridiculous" (4). Mencken sees lions as "more dignified" and ants as "far more intelligent and ingenious" (4). While Mencken's piece is meant to entertain, it is interesting to note that anthropomorphism was being discussed in a relatively popular print medium, with around 30,000 to 40,000 subscribers (Thacker, 2012: 17), compared to the circulation of 8,000 that *The Dial* had in 1920 (Molesworth, 1990: 147). Of course, as David M. Earle points out, "for the literary elite, Mencken, as well as his *Smart Set*, became an emblem for middlebrow culture" (Earle, 2009: 40). This is not entirely in contrast to a journal such as *The Dial*, whose "intended audience was the interested, informed general reader" (Golding, 2005: 44) and which Bryher apparently told Marianne Moore (who would later become the editor of this very journal) she thought "reactionary" (Molesworth, 1990: 157). Regardless, this only serves to underscore the matter-of-factness with which Mencken could ridicule anthropomorphism even to a so-called middlebrow audience.

If the discussion of human and non-human has a long history, the same can no doubt be said of the artistic representation of landscape. This long history, however, makes landscapes a complex motif. As Carol Watts remarks on the pastoral, "[s]tepping into the realm of the pastoral, however literally, dredges up a complex field of meanings," with "forms of nostalgia" and "already mediated kinds of human and natural encounter" among other things (Watts, 2013: 286). In other words, representations of landscapes must reckon both with prior representations of landscapes within a long tradition and with the ways in which humans have positioned themselves in relation to and mediated landscapes over time.

Beyond the important notion of space as a foundational condition for American writing, where "American culture has been permeated by the notion of landscape

since the beginning" (Spiegelman, 2005: 8), there is also the specific way in which poetry is related to space. Perhaps, as W.J.T. Mitchell has argued, "spatial form is no casual metaphor but an essential feature of the interpretation and experience of literature" (Mitchell, 1980: 546). Not only is the pastoral genre one of a long history, from antiquity and onwards, but poetics seems to lend itself to being formulated in spatial terms and metaphors. William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson, and Robert Duncan all use the term *field* to describe poetry, and this field is, Harriet Tarlo explains, "a place to think about thinking, to perform, to enact and embody our physical relationship with the world. It is a micro-environment. It is an energy field, a trajectory" (Tarlo, 2013: 114). Poetry thus both portrays nature—be it as fields, meadows, hills or valleys—and is conceptualized spatially as a field, meadow or other form recognizable from nature.

Moore's Seascape Gaze

Of the two poems Marianne Moore had in the July 1921 number of *The Dial*, "A Graveyard," later republished as "A Grave" in her *Selected Poems* (1935), was her favorite (Moore, 1997: 164). In this poem, which she discussed with Ezra Pound already in 1919, making revisions after his comments (124), Moore describes the relationship between nature and its spectators: "Man, looking into the sea— / taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you / have to it yourself—" (Moore, 1921: 34). For Moore, "it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing," but the sea proves to be the limit to this rule: here, no such central position or point of vantage is offered (34). Moore's ocean is a graveyard, but it is also a place that overrides willpower. In it, "dropped things are bound to sink" and even if they then move in various ways, such movement is always without "volition" and "consciousness" (34). To be sure, the sea, like the volcano and earthquake, has the capacity to produce a sense of wonder. Kant mentions "the boundless ocean heaved up" along with volcanoes in his list of nature's frightening yet attractive powers (Kant, 2001: 527). In Moore's poem, however, humans seem not to acknowledge the sea's power, fishing and rowing without considering death, which is actually all around them.

As Bonnie Costello has noted, "[t]he structure of landscape retains an opposition between mastering spectator and expansive scene that masks our involvement in what we view" (Costello, 2003: 8). In Moore's poem, the spectators are plural: one assuming and imposing onlooker, whose gaze seems to compose the scene of the object viewed, here the sea, and other spectators, who have relinquished their vantage points to this one Adamic figure. In the poem's complex interaction, we are observing the ocean being observed. This is also a relevant feature of the eyesight-site matrix, for, as Costello has argued, "[t]he 'shaping' of the land is an indeterminate process, for while the artist shapes the scene to his composition, he is also responding

to a space already composed, not only by his angle of vision, but also by the society which has preceded him, and which has divided and rationalized natural space" (10). This is in line with Sabine Wilke's assertion that "landscapes are never nature in and of itself but affectively manipulated acts of reception" (Wilke, 2012: 107).

Looking at the sea thus means looking at something always already known, yet utterly unknown in its mysterious depths and veil of mythology. It means looking with a gaze that is already informed by the gaze of other, prior spectators, as though it were scripted in advance. In Moore's poem, the view is something which can be taken from others, which places a certain emphasis on the actual act of looking, regardless of whether what is seen is already known and familiar through handed-down knowledge of the sea. There seems to be a particular importance attached to the state of looking, as though the bodily act of gazing at the sea is especially meaningful, perhaps even associated with some form of ownership over what is beheld. The democratic stance conveyed in the poem, where a view is something to which all people have an equal right, is problematic when every single onlooker has bodily mass that actually takes away from the amount of view available. Thus, if everyone who has a right to the view were to claim this privilege at the same time, there would be no view to see, as it would be obscured by the mass of people engaged in the act of looking. In a sense, the act of looking into the sea can be read through the lens of what John Urry has called "the tourist gaze," which "is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience" (Urry, 2002: 3). But Moore's sea is no mere helpless subject to this gaze, for it "is a collector" and can "return" the gaze, redirecting it mirror-like to the spectator (Moore, 1921: 34).

Interestingly, Moore's two poems are followed by the short story "Wreck" by the French novelist and dramatist Jean Giraudoux. The narrator has been shipwrecked on a beautiful island. However, as anxiety over being rescued surfaces, the narrator steps into the sea to feel the water, "through some superstition which bade me beware losing contact" (Giraudoux, 1921: 38). For Giraudoux's speaker, standing "in the middle of a thing," as Moore deems to be human nature, is essential in maintaining contact with civilization, and nature without traces of humans is utterly unbearable.

Crane's Pastoral Lost

Preceding Ossip Zadkine's sculpture *Job*, known today as *The Misery of Job*, and part of the 1914 wooden series *Job and his friends*, we find Hart Crane's poem "Pastorale." In this poem, the speaker contemplates nature, but there are "[n]o more violets," and fall seems to have taken hold of a landscape characterized by "bronze and brass" as well as "wind" (Crane, 1921: 422). While this image of entropy, a consequence of the cycle of the calendar, is expected, the question asked by the poet adds a layer of complexity:

If, dusty, I bear
an image beyond this
already fallen harvest,
I can only query, "Fool—
have you remembered too long;

or was there too little said
for ease or resolution—
summer scarcely begun
and violets,
a few picked, the rest dead?" (422)

These closing stanzas begin with a conditional that is on the one hand an acknowledgment of the old, recycled theme, "dusty" perhaps, from use. But the "image" borne by the speaker "beyond" this harvest now gone is testament to the difficulty of distinguishing between the natural world as encountered through empirical study and eyesight, and the inherited notions of pastoral. Given the title of the poem, self-consciously committing to a genre with roots in ancient Greek poetry, this aspect of inherited forms of nature as represented in poetry is highly relevant. Yet, the question the poet asks himself, as the "Fool," suggests that this image has also been kept far too long. To remember something for a time that is considered "too long" is unusual, as remembrance is typically considered a virtue—and especially so if remembrance is tied to canonical genres, which live through acts of canonization and continuous reactivation. It is as though this season is not possible to put to rest in any meaningful way, when "too little was said" and it ended before it had even begun. Those violets, which should, perhaps, have been the focus of a pastoral poem are now gone, and their fates look slightly different. Some were left to decompose in their natural habitat, and some were picked. For the poet, however, none remains. Perhaps this poem is also making a statement about poetry and being a poet. Several American poets in the early twentieth century considered themselves to be latecomers to a craft whose tradition was already crowded with canonical examples. Stephen Fredman, for example, has argued that "the poet finds him or herself in the awkward position of a latecomer to a European tradition that is both constitutive of and alien to the conditions out of which the poet writes" (Fredman, 1993: 17). Writing pastoral poetry about America, often then framed as new land, becomes fraught with difficulty when the forms with which to do so are old and have been used to represent the so-called Old World. The pastoral is burdened from previous use and there is a risk that the genre will inscribe itself over the actual land, rather than help accurately represent it in forms of art. According to Warner Berthoff, Crane is here "an overt imitator, giving a turn of his own to admired exercises by immediate precursors—Pound's 'Portrait d'une femme,' Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady'" (Berthoff, 1985: 9). This might suggest a double belatedness, where it is the handed-down motif

that is being re-written. Of course, in terms of coming at the pastoral belatedly, recent developments in the theorizing of the Anthropocene make it clear that the pastoral is perhaps no longer even attainable. In *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben writes that new forms of natural beauty will emerge in the course of planetary change, so that "in the same way that the smog breeds spectacular sunsets, there may be new, unimagined beauties" (McKibben, 1990: 58). This beauty, however, will not have the same meaning to us, since it is simultaneously read as threatening. Here it might be pertinent to recall Kant's argument about the sublime, and how its aesthetic effect is possible only when the observer is placed at a safe distance from the perceived threat. The sublime, which according to Kinsella is "the contrary of" the pastoral (Kinsella, 2007: 15), might be more relevant to the aesthetics of nature in the Anthropocene, which includes an element of threat, as McKibben's example of the smog sunset suggests.

Because of the title of Crane's poem, it is worth asking what sense of the pastoral he may be alluding to. Terry Gifford distinguishes between three different uses of the term, where the first is connected to the historical form of poetry and has "motifs which we can recognise as deriving from certain early Greek and Roman poems about life in the country, and about the life of the shepherd in particular" (Gifford, 1999: 1). The second use of the term is much broader, and designates "an area of content" where what is described is "the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban" (2). This quite general use does not require shepherds or actual landscape, so much as aspects of nature being present in the texts. Finally, there is the more critical use of pastoral as "pejorative" and which criticizes such representations as "an idealisation of the reality of life in the country" (2). In Crane's poem, the urban is not readily present, but the sense of loss seems rather to belong to nature's own cycle. Perhaps the following line points to an artificial transformation of this cycle, however: "the year / broken into smoky panels" (Crane, 1921: 422). The calendar, if envisioned as panels, divides each year into monthly portions. Thus while the "harvest" is indeed mentioned in the poem, it seems closer to Gifford's second type of pastoral. This division between the urban and the rural is not all that informs the poem, though, since it rather sets up a conflict between the rural and the aestheticizing of the rural. This is not something we see only in Crane's work. As Costello observes, many poets "express an anxiety that landscape might become mere image, disengaged simulacra to which we become passive spectators of our own creations, rather than channeling experience" (Costello, 2003: 17). If, as in Crane's poem, there are no violets left to portray, perhaps this can be avoided. His poem will not turn landscape into image in that way, but will lament the loss of a motif both in nature and in the poem, perhaps in a way suggestive of W. J. T. Mitchell's notion of landscape as "an object of nostalgia" (Mitchell, 2002: 20).

Bodenheim's Underworld

Maxwell Bodenheim's "Summer Evening: New York Subway Station" is placed right after an installment of Sherwood Anderson's short story "Out of Nowhere into Nothing," which ends with one of the characters staying out in the fields all night despite knowing that such odd behavior requires "the necessity of explanations" (Anderson, 1921: 169). Bodenheim's poem is, as its title suggests, an urban poem, but it draws on nature poems in certain ways. For example, the opening lines suggest a flawed organization of nature: "Perspiring violence derides / The pathetic collapse of dirt" (Bodenheim, 1921: 170). The heat of the subway is described as "the recollection / Of an orgy in a swamp" and the subway train itself is metaphorically seen as "caskets" which "rattle on," snakelike (170). Here, nature is present mostly in the analogies made. This is not really in any kind of violation of the pastoral as such, for, as Kinsella points out, "[t]he pastoral is not really about nature, except insofar as it is about landscape, the mediation of nature through human interference and control" (Kinsella, 2007: 2). In Gifford's taxonomy, this pastoral would be of the second type, with rural contrasting with urban in various ways.

Bodenheim's "Summer Evening" is informed by the call to modernization within the visual arts, for example by Ludwig Mediner, who wrote about representations of new urban environments as early as 1914. For Mediner, new forms in nature call for new artistic forms as well, and his primary target is impressionism, which he deems too hazy for the painter's new landscape. Even though Monet, for example, had indeed painted the city, the mode is not suitable for a new generation: "These were landscape artists who carried the sweet haziness of their bucolic work over into their paintings of the city" (Mediner, 2003: 168). The most pressing question is whether one can "really paint the teeming confusion of houses and boulevards in the same transparent stippling style, as if they were brooks and flower-beds" (168). Mediner clearly says no and advocates "angular lines" which previous artists and theorists had argued could not be found in nature and "geometrical forms" to capture the "battles of mathematics" that we see every time we regard the city, where "[w]e are pierced on every side by angularities" (170). Analogies between painting and poetry have their limitations, but the call for new forms to represent new realities seems to resonate also within the world of poets in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Bodenheim's poem draws on older ideals while simultaneously incorporating new motifs. The "Summer Evening" in his title is traditional enough, but the addendum of the "New York Subway" reframes the title as one of an urban site. While Mediner urged artists to use angular lines to capture the straight lines of the city, Bodenheim describes his city with analogies to nature—"swamp" and "dirt" help convey the unpleasant nature of this modern underworld, whose dead are transported in caskets, and mass is denoted by "bales," straight from the pastoral world of farming, where hay is unitized by bales. The lingering pastoral in Bodenheim's poem is partly

noticeable as an absence, but one that is activated by the explicit remains. There is, for example, a "sturdy girl," with a weary face, who is "[r]ound and poverty-stricken" (Bodenheim, 1921: 170). We may recall William Wordsworth's 1802 "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems*" and the Romantic call for representation of wholesome, simple countryfolk in poetry: "Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language" (Wordsworth, 2006: 1498). But in the context of the noisy and sizzling underground this girl seems to be a misplaced motif, one which does not quite add up. So much so in fact that her hat, which is black and also "crisp and delicate" fails to "understand her head," which makes the whole portrait seem somehow disjointed (Bodenheim, 1921: 170). Whereas Mediner's humans and animals are read as "geometrical constructions" (Mediner, 2003: 170), Bodenheim's bodies seem heavy and thoroughly corporeal, sweating and worn out. There are other shapes as well, the whole scene being "made of mosaics" (Bodenheim, 1921: 170), but such fragmentation conjures up less mathematical regularity and fewer straight lines than those Mediner advocates for. There is the sheer force of the city in Bodenheim too, but the agent of this movement is not as easily determined as in Mediner's philosophy of pictorial composition, since the mosaic of the scene is "[m]oulded and blown apart by unseen breath" (170).

Because it features the subway as a form of underground that can also be read as an underworld, the link to the pastoral is perhaps not entirely evident. Yet, it seems that the elements of pastoral life, from the "sturdy girl" to the "bales," are left to converse with the other elements from nature included in the poem, such as the swamp and the rattle of the casket-like train cars, both slightly uncanny, to produce a scene that is, on the one hand, dissociated or eerie and on the other, in the context of the bustling city that accommodates all of this, completely commonplace.

Cowley's Cold Crust

Between Paul Rosenfeld's essay "American Painting" and Giorgio de Chirico's painting "La Matinée Angoissante" in the December number of *The Dial*, we find Malcolm Cowley's poem "Mountain Valley." The speaker of the poem is here a "we," and it is a collective which has had to struggle "for bread" (Cowley, 1921: 670). It is hard to grown corn in the valley, since it is "too narrow" and "we have driven / Our ploughs vainly against the flanks of the hill" (670). Thus, we are here dealing with Gifford's second kind of pastoral, about life in the country, but perhaps also with the third, critical one, where country life is revealed to be idealized. Cowley's "we" are giving up, refusing to uphold the futile quest for bread with endless work on a soil that refuses to yield results. The poem seems to suggest that this quest was always

futile, and that there will be a point in time, much later, when human existence on the planet will seem only a parenthesis. Indeed, there is a sense in which a later stage in a planetary evolution is anticipated in this poem, for there is no use, the speaker says, for either the poet or the others belonging to the "we" to go on struggling:

> Some day when the crust of the earth has grown as cold
> As the dead craters of the moon, these hills will wrinkle
> Like the wrinkles on a forehead; they will draw
> Together like a finger and a wrinkled thumb,
> Squeezing the valley between them, and there will be
> For us magnificent sepulture, O my kin. (670)

As Kant writes in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, "[a] long duration is sublime" (Kant, 2003: 49). However, there is something frightening about such a scope as well, according to Kant: "If it is projected into an incalculable future, then it has something of the fearsome in it" (50). Thus, Cowley's poem taps into this fearful mode, while Crane, for example, seems to point more clearly backwards, through the pastoral tradition. At first glance, Cowley seems to be envisioning a time after the human, a post-anthropocentric time, when nature is doing the looking, but at the same time, much like for Moore's sea which is capable of returning the human gaze, nature can only be envisioned as a spectator in anthropomorphized terms. The two closing lines demonstrate the power struggle implied here: the hills themselves are anthropomorphized and described as "[s]taring down at our cornfields covetously" (Cowley, 1921: 670). This geological formation will become our grave, our sepulcher, and will thus outlast us, even swallow us so as to integrate us with it. And yet, a "magnificent sepulture" also has connotations of a lavish, ornate and constructed place of burial and tribute and requires to be read as a grave by a human subject that can recognize and organize such procedures of burial. How such a grave can be comprehended in a post-human geology is one of the main questions the poem leaves us with, just as it also forces us to ask who will recognize the human shapes of the geological formations in such a future. Indeed, the destructive nature of these formations is rendered in human terms: wrinkles, foreheads, thumbs, and fingers. Human anatomy informs the simile, but this also means that these geological formations, this crust, have ultimately become not only sepulcher, but sculpture. Rock in imitation of the human subject. Perhaps this is indicative of what Willard Spiegelman has suggested about the American relationship to landscape, where the spectators are "nervous" because they "have the uncanny sense that the landscape is looking back at [them]" (Spiegelman, 2005: 9).

The poem does not only set up a conflict between human and non-human, here as the earth and its crust, but also between land as yielding produce and land as a formation read as sculpture and thus seen as art. This might be seen as a nature-

culture divide in a new and dual rendition. As W. J. T. Mitchell has phrased it, "landscape is already artifice in the moment of its beholding, long before it becomes the subject of pictorial representation" (Mitchell, 2002: 14). The poem stresses the artifice of landscape by figuring it in human terms, endowing it with human features, but it also points to a nostalgia in light of the decay of farming—of landscaping, if you will, for, as Gareth John reminds us, "[l]andscape is both a noun and a verb" (John, 2012: 143).

Poetry and Geography in the 1920s

Only a few years after the appearance of these four poems, all in one way or another dealing with landscape, Carl O. Sauer would publish his groundbreaking study "The Morphology of Landscape." This text, published in 1925, approaches landscape from the vantage point of geography, of which it is "the unit concept" that is used "to characterize the peculiarly geographic association of facts" and "an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural" (Sauer, 1925: 25–26). Sauer highlights the "anthropocentric" nature of geography and writes that "we select those qualities of landscape in particular that are or may be of use to us" (29). Not only that, but Sauer also claims that in its application within the field of geography, "landscape is not simply an actual scene viewed by an observer" but rather "a generalization derived from the observation of individual scenes" (26). The same, I would suggest, holds true for landscape poetry such as pastorals. In the early 20th century, they drew attention to the fact that they were aligning with, perhaps also struggling with, a long tradition, as Crane's "Pastorale" does, and thus they also show that they are not just the product of a single observation, but of a more intricate amalgam of prior observations and renditions. Even for Moore, whose poem centers on a single spectator, the masses are presumed, and their view is being claimed. For Bodenheim, the snake-like train with its casket-cars comes with lessons from previous renditions of the underworld as well as a threatening nature that marries remnants of the pastoral now displaced in the big city. Last, for Cowley, landscape is no longer of use to the "we" of the poem, but this does not mean that it is no longer interesting as a poetic motif. While it may no longer yield corn, and while its farmers may soon be buried in the very same valley they hoped to fertilize, the valley itself takes on human form and enters the rest of its planetary, geological life, irrevocably marked by the human spectators that rendered it art. Purdy notes that the Anthropocene has changed the world so that it is "part natural, part made" and writes: "The planet's landscapes, its forests and fields, along with the species that inhabit them, are a mélange of those we have created, those we have cultivated and introduced, and those we let live—or, in only the deepest jungles, have not yet reached" (Purdy, 2015: 15). While this insight seems new to us, as a lesson of the

Anthropocene, it has been conceptualized for a long time within art and poetry as part of a discussion of mimesis. Poets have long recognized that nature is always intricately intertwined with spectatorship and that the natural and the artificial are difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish from one another.

The engagement with landscape goes well beyond these still rather disparate examples and even beyond the general link between poetics and landscape that has been theorized by so many poets and scholars. The unifying feature is, perhaps, rather the magazine itself. Little magazines such as *The Dial* form landscapes to house poems such as the ones we have discussed here. It is no wonder that terms such as media ecology (e.g. Bulson, 2017: 231–232) have been used to discuss their operations. Indeed, as is pointed out by Thacker, a 1918 issue of the American modernist journal *The Little Review* featured an advertisement for the British magazine *The Egoist* (Thacker, 2012: 7), which was "a primary vehicle for modernist authors" (Morrisson, 1997: 440), just like *The Dial*, in 1920, "gave *The Little Review* a full-page ad that the smaller magazine could not have afforded itself" (Golding, 2005: 45). Thus, they not only refer to their own interior content, with articles and poems speaking to each other through the medium of the journal, but they are also related to each other in a larger ecosystem of Modernist journals. For poets like Crane, Golding argues, little magazines such as *The Little Review* and *The Dial* affected his own writing through what he encountered within their covers, "influencing the available modes of poetic production" (50). Cowley's poem comes right after an essay on American painting that highlights the early Modernist painter John Marin, whose watercolors "express through the liberation [of the medium] the nature-poetry he feels" and in whose art "Nature is felt in her endlessness" (Rosenfeld, 1921: 664) in a number that also features one of Bodenheim's stories as well as two poems by Moore. Crane's poem is followed by a biblical sculpture by Zadkine, who mixed with artists such as Chagall, Picasso and Modigliani in Paris. The importance of the magazine as a context is actually highlighted by the poets themselves: upon the publication of the October 1921 number of *The Dial* in which his poem was featured, Crane wrote to the critic Gorham Munson: "My poem is on the stands now (Oct. *Dial*) and is in the good company of Anatole France, Santayana, and D. H. Lawrence" (Crane, 2006: 251). Thus, as is the case with our four poets, their respective landscapes interact in the landscape of the journal, showing with full force the implications of W. J. T. Mitchell's assertion that "[l]andscape is a medium" (Mitchell, 2002: 14).

To return to Blok, finally, we may note that science, seen both in Cowley's agriculture and the marvel of the subway in Bodenheim's poem, has not managed to subjugate the earth, for earth outlasts all human efforts at cultivating it in "Mountain Valley." As for art, which Blok saw as a means to escape from earth, it is in Crane's "Pastorale" shown to be intertwined with nature, and, as we recall, it is art that the sculptural forms of the remaining crust of the earth suggest, almost as if there was a return to art at the end of Cowley's poem. Industry, lastly, which Blok

saw as a means through which we could sever our ties with the earth, is, if seen as manifested in Bodenheim's busy subway, haunted by eerie analogies with nature, suggesting that there really is no such escape. Useful though the nature-culture divide may be as a rhetorical device and a figure of thought, these poems work against oversimplifications of the relationship between culture and nature, between art and earth, and between poetry and landscape.

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