

3 In the End

Anthropological Narratives in Fiction and Life

THE LULLING WHISPERER

So far, my methodological steps have proceeded almost biblically from the Word to the World, namely from the epistemological concerns of language and discipline in the first chapter through the underlying ontological conceptions of genesis in narratives of civilization and wilderness in the second chapter and to this final chapter that examines how anthropological narratives of nonhuman and human animal nature inform our cultural and social endeavours and the anthropogenic “evolution” of our environment, tracing them through a range of scientific and fictional literature for children and adults.

Drawing on Daniel Dennett’s studies on the philosophy of biology and Richard Dawkin’s theory of memes as the cultural equivalent of genes, Jack Zipes (2009) makes a strong case for certain (fairy tale) motifs – specifically, the variations of “The Frog Prince” tale through space and time – that turn into memes, transmitting vital information about viable reproductive strategies and relationships. This final part of my inquiry echoes Zipes’ call for collapsing the borders between disciplines for a better understanding of the significance of children’s literature and for tracing these motifs in the biological adjustments of human and nonhuman organisms to cultural variations. It is in this context that I explore the effects of technologies, including language and literacy, as they constitute the integral elements of *doxa*, *body hexis*, *habitus*, ideology, and of the physiological makeup of the forms of life affected by civilization. There is an urgency for understanding the mechanisms and the reproductive function of these motifs, drives, and the narratives, which – stemming from the position of domestication, like the self-defeating civilized institutions – have the propensity to turn into a tumour that ends up devouring its agents, its biosystem, and finally itself. My point being that if transformation, movement, and change constitute a vital aspect of life, we can still rewild ourselves, if we agree to rethink our narratives and our lives.

If life was generated by an impulse of an electric current, then to maintain vitality, living organisms must ensure the flow and exchange of energy or symbiosis. From this perspective, civilization is essentially unsustainable since, in its pyramidal socio-economic structure, the energy flows one way, vertically, with fewer and fewer possibilities for restoring it in the lower ranks, thereby generating a need for expansionism and colonialism

and an impetus for overpopulation and monoculturalism (domestication). The recurring genocides of nonhuman and human animals are, therefore, demanded by the development of the civilized plot, where not only does life cease when the flow of energy is blocked but there can be no exchange of passion, no possibility for rejuvenation, no chance for the unpredictability of chaos. Such stagnation of creativity, love, and life itself is the consequence of these disproportionate relationships that ultimately exhaust the givers to the point of death.

This narrative acts on every level of life. It interferes most deeply to control sexuality and reproductive processes, destroying the balance in the previously symbiotic communities since any such interference is based on maximizing the consumption by the civilized at the lowest (energy) cost possible. Pesticides and herbicides follow this logic of control of others' reproduction, since the poisons are designed to attack the reproductive systems of those species that the civilized perceive as useless, competitive, and hence hostile – the side effect being that the land and water get contaminated with poisons that are then shared with other species (including human). Civilized practices thus result in the anthropogenic overpopulation of domestic species, such as “cattle”, that swamp the environment with feces, methane, reproduction and growth hormones, and other pollutants. The ever growing numbers of monocultural animal farming demands an ever growing production of monocultural crops needed to sustain these animals in their unimaginable conditions of suffering, not to mention the pain of the other animals labelled as “pests” as they are being driven to extinction. But most of all, the earth is overpopulated by the human species itself.

In this world colonized by civilized human animals, redefining ourselves is of utmost urgency as seven billion human animals, armed with a linear, parasitic narrative, have occupied the planet, desertified its continents, polluted the oceans, and are draining the reserves of fossil oils accumulated throughout the billions of years of life on earth. Civilized human minds are thus bound to each other through myths, their bodies through a hierarchically shared means of subsistence and a panoptical identity imposed by means of violence, through symbolism, language, (un)knowledge, and laws.

Civilization, once identified by its visible technological monuments such as pyramids, has more recently been described in terms of the implied changes in social organization and, more specifically, the social stratification, political organization, and coercion entailed in the building of these monuments (Fried, 1967; Carneiro, 1970). The political power to build a pyramid – rather than the technology to do so – became the defining characteristic of the new social order, the state, in which an élite class monopolized the use of force and controlled direct access to essential resources such as land, or water, while the bulk of the population was forced to exchange its labour for food.

(Cohen in Ingold, 1997: 273–274)

For this system of order to be effective and the arguments for adhering to *society* compelling, identity, knowledge, and narrative have to be based not on truth but on manipulation through a monopoly of the technologies of violence. As discussed in Chapter One, language and education constitute some of these technologies that operate through an omnipresent threat to life. This threat has to be internalized by the victims – the “resources” – regardless of truth, facts, or the accuracy of the established causal relationships between suffering, wilderness, civilization, happiness, mortality, crime, disease, *et al.* Probably, civilization was the *Shaitan* against whose manipulative and misleading lulling whispers the Qur’an had warned:

- Say: “I SEEK refuge with the Lord of men,
 2. The King of men,
 3. The God of men,
 4. From the evil of him
 who breathes temptations
 into the minds of men,
 5. Who suggests evil thoughts
 to the hearts of men –
 6. From among the jinns and men”.

(Qur’an, sura 114 Al-Nas, ayat 1–6)

This concluding part of the book examines the *doxic* whisperers, the myths at the root of the narrative of civilization that inform the distinct cultural and anthropological “materialization” of its ontologies through science, mythology, and art and that legitimate the silencing of the voices of the billions of victims of the longest and most brutal of holocausts in the history of civilization, that of the extermination of wilderness. With the exception of a few truly wild texts, much of children’s literature projects at least three of these myths as self-evident truths.

The first myth constructs civilization as either a natural aspect of evolution or the result of humans fulfilling divine purpose. It is a state towards which all beings strive, yet only humans, due to their specific characteristics (physiological possibilities for spoken language, bipedalism, or divine breath) have been able to attain. As Kropotkin observes, Darwin interlinks the question of morality with the evolution of intelligence (Chapter Four of *The Descent of Man* is dedicated to questions of morality), both of which he attributes to the nature of adaptation and a requirement of life: “any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts ... *would* inevitably acquire a moral sense of conscience, *as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well-developed, or nearly as well-developed, as in man*” (Darwin, 2004 : 120–121, italics mine). Hence, even while he does not rule out the “possibility” of animals attaining moral standards, Darwin nonetheless assumes the human animal is superior and leader in this “most important” “difference between man and the *lower* animals”.

The second myth holds that wilderness is a place of destitution, illness, constant danger, and death, whereas civilization provides quality of life, safety, health, and longevity for *all* its domesticated subjects. Those who justify civilization assert domestication is better than wilderness, even for the slaughtered children of cows, chickens, and pigs, as well as for the humans dying in poverty or under bombs. This myth claims everyone naturally prefers the “benefits” of civilization (otherwise how can they live) and, therefore, depicts victims as agents willing and choosing to forfeit independence, movement, and self-determination. “After all, domestication was their evolutionary choice. They could have opted either to die [because humans have learnt how to kill them on an unprecedented scale] or to serve human interests [for example, the slaves who rebelled were exterminated]; they chose to serve; this choice is theirs and hence it must make them happy. Pleasing the master and enjoying doing it was the best survival strategy *for them* to adopt”, says the master (for illustrations of this logic, see the hypotheses of such evolutionary theorists as Driscoll *et al.* [2009] and Shipman [August 2010], among others).

Finally, civilization maintains it is the source of morality, ethics, and compassion while wilderness is a dark place of brutality, amorality, and ruthlessness.

Misrepresenting coercive relationships becomes easy once the purpose for a person’s existence – and by extension for all the persons who meet the criteria to form that group – has been defined by the one who profits from controlling such persons’ lives and exploiting their effort and time. Here, language¹ reveals the real value of power; it constitutes the tool that allows us to define and name the other and then have that other succumb to the definition by overwriting her narrative. In a similar vein, in *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1979) discusses how Europeans constructed a visual and literary narrative of the “Oriental” as “other” and this narrative served as a body of knowledge and mechanism of subjugation and colonization, which instituted a framework for exploitative, one-way relationships regardless of the reality or self knowledge of the Oriental “other”.

Because of historical nuances, it may appear that the narrative changes, when, in reality, its domesticating platform remains the same. For instance, it claims “true” knowledge today is no longer based on the “false”, monotheistic Tree of Life. Yet the contemporary version of the narrative simply replaces the biblical genealogies with the evolutionary genealogies that nonetheless confirm the human animal at the crown of creation, and Darwin’s Tree of Life is the same old motif without which the human animal cannot fathom existence.

Tracing this topos through the landscape of civilization and wilderness, one can see the trajectory of the animist understanding of the Tree as a being among others, the one that breathes life, giving out oxygen by day and carbon dioxide by night, offers fruit as food and branches as shelter. With the spread of civilization, the tree becomes more and more separated from its

reality and nature and becomes an abstraction and a symbol for life where life itself is being appropriated, domesticated, and annihilated; its evolutionary branches are depicted as leading the human animal to the throne of existence. A popular children's poem by Shel Silverstein (1964), *The Giving Tree*, portrays this parasitic relationship – whereby the avaricious boy obliges the tree who masochistically craves to be consumed by him – as a tale of love, in which the victim exists to please the abuser and is glad to be tortured and consumed. This translation or substitution of concepts is possible due to the underlying Darwinian² assumption: that sacred *doxa*, lulling and comforting us with the lie that this is the resources' evolutionary choice and the victim is redeemed by her limitless, self-sacrificial giving, while the one who consumes her is vindicated by the very fact of his agency, consumption, and humanity.

“Once there was a tree ... and she loved a little boy,” the story begins. “And everyday, the boy would come” and take things from the tree or ask for something. And the tree always gave of herself. At first he wanted to play king, eat apples, climb her branches, sleep in her shade “and the boy loved the tree very much; and the tree was happy” (Silverstein, 1964), we are told.

The relationship keeps escalating throughout the story as the boy keeps coming back asking for more. Hence, the next thing he asks for is money; she does not have any, she says, but offers him to pick her apples for him to sell: “Then you will have money and you will be happy”. She reiterates that severing, abusing, and using her for his purposes will make him happy and, therefore, being severed, used, and consumed by him makes her happy too.

The next thing he wants is a house, then a boat. The tree suggests he cut her, and so he does. The story is repetitive but the greed keeps augmenting: the boy goes away, forgets about the tree, then needs something, comes back, and the tree is always there, always glad to see him and give him what he needs. This is presented as a two-way relationship; apparently the tree herself keeps coming up with the ideas of how to be better exploited. In reality, this is an exemplary tale of apathy, deafness, and ignorance that lead to rape, abuse, and murder. He never once inquires about how she feels or what her needs are, for the concept of reciprocity is absent in domesticated relationships; what matters is that the boy loves to have a good life and the tree loves him by giving herself, her biggest need being to offer herself for his consumption so he can have what he wants.

And so the boy cut off her branches and carried them away to build his house. And the tree was happy. But the boy stayed away for a long time. And when he came back, the tree was so happy she could hardly speak. “Come, Boy,” she whispered, “come and play.” “I am too old and sad to play,” said the boy. “I want a boat that will take me far away from here. Can you give me a boat?” “Cut down my trunk and make a boat,” said the tree. “Then you can sail away ... and be happy.”

And so the boy cut down her trunk and made a boat and sailed away. And the tree was happy ... but not really.

And after a long time the boy came back again. "I am sorry, Boy," said the tree," but I have nothing left to give you – My apples are gone." "My teeth are too weak for apples," said the boy. "My branches are gone," said the tree. "You cannot swing on them –" "I am too old to swing on branches," said the boy. "My trunk is gone," said the tree. "You cannot climb –" "I am too tired to climb," said the boy. "I am sorry," sighed the tree. "I wish that I could give you something ... but I have nothing left. I am just an old stump. I am sorry. ..." "I don't need very much now," said the boy. "Just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am very tired." "Well," said the tree, straightening herself up as much as she could, "well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest." And the boy did. And the tree was happy.

(Silverstein, 1964)

This story articulates the fundamental mythology of civilization: the abused and consumed victim is happy to serve the needs of her consumer even beyond death. While undoubtedly children and adults are active agents in extrapolating meaning, and might be able to see this relationship for what it is, nonetheless, if their whole experience confirms to them the naturalness of such hierarchical, one-way relationships of exploitation, then most likely the story would act as a meme to consolidate the *doxa* and the ideology of oppression. In fact, understanding the language of domination is a requirement on which the story itself is built: hence, the tree understands the material, emotional, and aesthetic requirements of the master. Indeed, numerous critics have interpreted this poem as being about the destructive consumption of nature. Feminist perspectives have also pointed out that the gender of the two characters is not coincidental: the tree is female: "the boy cut off *her* branches ..."; "cut down *her* trunk ..."; "*she* could hardly speak ..."; "*she* whispered ..."; "said the tree, straightening *herself* up ..."; and so forth.

However, this narrative has been so normalized through the past seven-thousand years of domestication that the violence and abuse no longer stand out since they are part of the civilized narrative and its legitimizing norm. Hence, the problem of this story is a much deeper, ontological one, for regardless of whether the tree is a metaphor for the "unequal" expectations of sacrifice between the genders, according to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003), metaphors conduct real images and real ontological concepts that then guide people through their relationships with their world, and, I would add, these metaphors guide them in concordance with the legitimate norm of the civilized – i.e. abusive – narrative.

Therefore, even if we assume the tree in this book is a metaphor for mother, again, only in a symbolic culture can it be taken to "represent" other

relationships the direction of which is pre-set as a one-way relationship of giving. This metaphor can make sense only to the civilized because they have a ready formula by which to solve the equation of such relationships: everything exists for the purpose of the food chain and resource consumption. If this relationship is about the legitimate abuse of mothers, it can make sense only in an agricultural, sedentary setting, where a matrimonial relationship for upper classes means joining capital and maximizing it through offspring, whereby a child takes everything from his parents. Parents provide the comfort to buy friends, travel, accumulate symbolic and material capital, and later their death makes for a comfortable place to sit for the boy, who knew how to maximize his chances and put his heritage to the best possible use. For the economically disenfranchised, on the other hand, the children themselves become resources and are sent to work, even die, at an early age.

This narrative makes an important omission, namely that, in the wild, a being, whether she is a human mother or a tree, supports millions of symbiotic relationships and communities of other plants, bugs, birds, squirrels, human and animal children, ad infinitum. Therefore, by ignoring the tree's real experience and voice, the poem ignores all the other victims of the boy's greed and self-centred classism, sexism, and anthropocentrism. Reducing this complex society around the tree to the needs of the boy and the services the tree can render him and then attributing this abusive relationship to a metaphor that stands for other "giving" relationships becomes the guiding principle that fits all the different stories into the plot of a narrative that naturalizes and legitimates abuse. As civilization progressed, the contradictions between exploitation, giving, locking, stealing, moving, dying, hunger, wealth, community, individualism have eluded resolution, becoming more and more entangled and convoluted through complex representation. The deeper the domesticated culture stepped into its own horror, the more "refined" and complex became its art and literature and the more excruciating the pain of wilderness.

Even though *The Giving Tree* is straightforward and its pictures corroborate the text, its unresolved conflict lies in the contradiction between the way the text applies the term "love" to the female tree as a giver and to the male human animal as a consumer and, in the manner of civilized unknowledge, essentializes these aspects as natural qualities that are based on the individual's "biological" class: gender, race, species, etc. In this regard, the story exemplifies the role of language in overwriting the meaning of wilderness in children's narratives, confusing the basic ontological concepts and offering a rationale for justifying violence by silencing the victim and conflating obedience with desire and the fear of death with joy.

This anthropocentric and ethnocentric rationale ignores the slave's perspective on this relationship, silences her voice, and stifles her will, all of which make it difficult for the victim to choose life outside the prescribed civilized limitations and to resist the unknowledge that dismisses her choices, desires, and life itself. The myth depicts the victim as author of her choice and agent of her own victimization. Of course, in the real

world, even when these choices are imposed and real desires are unattainable, people still live, love, hate, laugh, and weep. As long as one lives, there is always a part salvaged from the ever-colonizing civilization and thoughts, joy, and pain remain an integral, even cherished part of one's memory and hence one's self. However, to say the millions around the world who live on \$2 a day do so because this is the best they could do, or the cows get slaughtered because they have chosen it, or any of them are happy with their choice can happen only in the absence of intelligence, knowledge, and empathy.

Sometimes children's picture books acknowledge the irresolvable conflict and the violence of domesticated relationships. Often, pictures contradict the text and, of course, these conflicts and tensions add layers of information and complexity. However, even while children are wilder than adults and they do, as Zipes (2009) observes, contest and resist this meaning, in the final instance few have the strength and the possibilities to overcome the domesticating, directing, controlling, and self-imposing flux of civilized topoi. Somewhere in the depths of our souls, no matter how wild we may be, having been touched by civilization, as if kissed by the plague, we may still catch the echo of the whispering tempter, attempting to lull us to the naturalness of abuse and its rewards. Facing the omnipresent institutional threat of violence and death, not many children grow up to resist this narrative, its voice silencing all other voices of wilderness, and since their movement is constricted and their space colonized, many may not have the Moomin option to simply walk away to a promised land.

ANNE'S CHOICE

Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Greene Gables* (1908) illustrates how children's literature articulates this topos of subordination to the gendered and speciesist expectations of civilization. The novel (consisting of nine books) depicts economic inequality as normal and promising. Two farmers, brother and sister, from Prince Edward Island want free labour on their farm and so come up with the idea of ordering a boy from an orphanage in Nova Scotia. By mistake, the orphanage sends them a girl. The underlying basis for their decision is, therefore, exploitation, for who else can be more easily taken advantage of than an orphan without any social, symbolic, or material capital? Of course, there are also good intentions in the reasoning that "well, the orphan would have fared so badly, abandoned in this institution, while we could share what we have". However, the narrative leaves unquestioned the basis for the arrangement of social relations that allow for some people to be unable to afford to keep and love their children while others can choose to take a child as a labour resource and a source of joy. Instead, the novel presents both parties, the victim and the exploiter, as authors of their choices and depicts their relationship as viable and enriching for all, thereby omitting the foundation of violence and its effects on them and their world.

Unequal relations are thus embedded in the narrative at its very inception: the dispossessed orphan is there to work on the colonized land turned into an agricultural resource where all forms of competition (“weeds”, “pests”, “natives”, “foreigners”, animals, birds, etc.) get either controlled, domesticated, or exterminated. The development of the plot culminates in Anne’s gendered and “professional” response to the civilized expectations of her: she represses her dream to travel and learn about the outside world, to realize herself as a writer, and turns down the scholarship that would have allowed her to fulfill her inner purpose. Instead, she chooses to stay on the farm and take care of her adoptive mother. The message of the book is appealing to readers because it speaks to the inner – perhaps on the cellular level – need for community and co-operation.

To an extent, like Sendak’s Max, who, in his own domestication, negotiates a sense of empowerment by invading wilderness, colonizing it, and taming the wild others as well as his inner dreams, Anne tames herself and kills her own dream by aligning her happiness with the role of a good resource for the farmers and their farm, and accepts a gendered role that is prescribed by civilization, as domestication is also about the control of sexuality, reproduction, and the incarceration of resources in farms, schools, offices, *et al.* According to the narrative, therefore, Anne proves to be a good investment for someone who makes a living off colonization, which is the essence of agricultural farming that consumes purpose, meaning, lives, time, and space of everyone dwelling in that nexus. Most important, the book tells us, Anne renders everyone happy: the colonizing farmers, the colonized land, and herself as she gladly curtails her own movement through space and interdisciplinary knowledge by declining the offer to travel to university, which would have provided her an opportunity to follow her heart, expand her knowledge, and write. Of course, the university and the city themselves are part of the process of colonization of the country space and, therefore, regardless of her choice, Anne’s options are limited to the civilized spectrum of relationships. Thinking she is the author of her choice and believing she chooses community, she actually makes the choice that is appropriate to her gender and social standing that define her within a domesticated and domesticating hierarchy.

The point here is not to argue for the abandonment of the elderly or the weak in favour of one’s own interests. In wilderness, most human and nonhuman societies have been known to take care of the injured, the old, and the weak (Bekoff and Pierce, 2009; Kurtén and Gould in Kurtén, 1995; Boesch *et al.*, 2010; Goethe and Kropotkin in Kropotkin, 2006, among others). The difference between choosing to help in the respective contexts of wilderness and civilization is that in wilderness, the force that drives individuals to share comes from within the individual in a landscape that does not submit to the concept of rightful ownership, and, therefore, it is not a hierarchically imposed subjugation but a lasting bond and relationship that aides, rather than hampers, self-realization. Those who can gather more share with those who are unable to reach food. Inability to access food in the conditions of wilderness

either stems from some larger environmental disbalance (e.g. drought, sudden unprecedented drop or rise in temperatures, etc.) or from personal weakness. In wilderness, conflicts of interest also arise; however, unlike in civilization, there is no theory that makes any single outcome the rule of thumb or “law by precedent” that locks individuals in hierarchical systems.

In contrast, the civilized paradigm, based on domestication, private property, and capitalist economy, is a perpetual system of sanctions against the dispossessed “resources” that locks them, their food, and space in social constructs of permanence. The extent of exploitation and pollution this socio-environmental system has produced makes it a system of catastrophic disasters that has become a global epidemic known as the Sixth or the Holocene Extinction.³ It is to this narrative that *Anne of Greene Gables* submits. Here, the expectations of self-abnegation, self-control and self-sacrifice abide by the rules of a rigid hierarchical order, which can be expressed in Foucauldian terms: “the genius of the social fabrication of the individual is to make that individual the principle of his or her own fabrication, thus guaranteeing the sense of authenticity in what is fabricated” (in Frank, 1998: 2:331). Hence, Anne has to accept the narrative and invent a series of stories whose contradictions will cancel themselves out and in which she emerges content and with a sense of empowerment for having chosen this narrative herself, thereby becoming the author of her own victimization.

Several theorists and historians of children’s literature – for instance, Gillian Avery (1975), Jack Zipes (1983 and 2002), and Andrew O’Malley (2003) – have observed there have been two concurrent narratives expressed in children’s books written in the English language that address two distinct audiences, divided along economic, social, gender, or racial lines. Needless to say, these categories distinguish the empowered from the disempowered. The narrative addressed to those who control the resources depicts qualities such as individuality, originality, creativity, leadership, spontaneity, dishonesty, greed, etc. as positive. For instance, in *The Wind in the Willows*, Kenneth Grahame (2003) portrays the aristocratic Toad as lovable and rightful owner of wealth even as he breaks the law, lies, steals, and escapes from prison at the expense of the working class. His friends, even while they do not own property themselves, act to make sure the revolution does not happen and to prevent the Weasels, those wild, proletariat masses, from redistributing Toad’s possessions, all the while Toad himself is gallivanting around the world, playing with technology, and breaking laws and moral codes.

Members of the exploited categories, in contrast, are expected to conform to the social expectations of themselves as human resources. Their status as objects, as exploited, as underclass already warrants their portrayal as deviant and untrustworthy. Here, the qualities that are depicted as desirable for the first category become negative, dangerous, and illegal, while obedience, dependability, diligence, hard work, and servitude are exalted (Avery, 1975; Zipes, 1983 and 2002; O’Malley, 2003). *Anne of Greene Gables*, the washerwoman and her daughter who help Toad in *The Wind in the Willows*, the peasant girl

who heals the rich boy in *The Secret Garden* while not wanting anything for herself, among endless other examples, illustrate these standards.

In this way, a fictional book like *Anne of Greene Gables* inscribes itself within the larger narrative of domestication. Along with land, Anne constitutes a resource for the farmers and is the one to renounce her wildness, while the farmers cling to their ownership, space, and time. In this Darwinian narrative, among the civilized options, Anne picks the most viable strategy: to serve the interests of those who are more powerful than her, and coming from an orphanage, she a priori does not have any social or other capital. She chooses to define herself in the owners' terms, aligning her own self-knowledge with their definitions while concealing conflict of interests. Both, we are told, are happy with the way the narrative unfolds and, as readers, we remain ignorant of other possibilities, such as a revolt that could lead to rewilding, because, presumably, according to the civilized narrative, wildness poses an even greater danger than poverty and orphanage, while civilized predatory relations and stratification provide a haven of safety. In this way, Anne's choice reiterates the Darwinian premise that nature itself is unwelcoming – even hostile – to life; and, therefore, she cannot venture away and should not leave the farmers behind. This premise presumes living beings are in a perpetual mode of adaptation to their world and in competition with one another, developing more and more sophisticated strategies to overcome the adversities of wildness either through alliances or violence and war.

Identification with these misconceptions of happiness and misrepresentations of the real constitutes the ultimate alienation; like *maya*, the mirage of hope or the infinite nightmare within a nightmare, it reappears constantly in children's books in various forms. We see these projections in literature, science, and art, and they mislead us, taking us away from being, abandoning the enchanted world of the Hundred-Acre Wood that could have been and accepting boarding school as a natural verdict of evolution, creation, and genes. These projections haunt us in the singing voices of the Oompa-Loompas, the happy slaves of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and through the deeds and passions of Nosov's Mites. Together they lull us to surrender our reason to the myth that evolution into this state is ineluctable, and since we cannot choose the best option, we will have to settle for Sunny City and Prince Edward Island, as both are still far better than the Moon.

NOT EVERYONE OPTS TO JOIN ALICE AND GO DOWN THE WHITE RABBIT HOLE

Imposing a lie in the conditions of wildness is extremely difficult because knowing requires presence. Moreover, it is critical for survival to know the truth and in the absence of institutions that impose one perspective on bodies, time, and space, there are no legal consequences for groups and individuals who refuse to abide by fictional and untruthful narratives. Most important, these narratives encompass a variety of perspectives, temporalities, and logics that regulate

a balance through the unpredictability of outcome and consequences. As my earlier discussion of indigenous tales from Russia shows, there is no one righteous party to own the right to win or to possess something or someplace permanently, be it a symbolic narrative, factual information, or a tangible object. If a person dislikes or disagrees with another human or nonhuman person or perspective, one can follow the Moomin example and simply ignore or move away. The range of symbiotic relationships allows beings to cooperate without the need to modify the other's purpose or changing their direction. Hence, Moominmamma and the children hop on the Hattifattners' boat to hitch a ride, then jump off when they feel they are not interested in exploring the horizons towards which the boat turned its course, but they do not force the Hattifattners to change their course. The Moomins walk the rest of the way until they help a marabou stork find the glasses he had lost, who then decides to carry them to Moominpappa, simply because he wanted to, because their lives together are better than being without each other, and not because he felt obligated. In other words, they do not need a system of prostheses, slaves, or technologies.

It does not mean there are no creative or playful approaches toward truth(s) or challenging ways of seeing, interacting, and influencing the outcome of an encounter. The folk tales around the world are testimony to non-domesticated peoples' awareness of tricksters and the various forces that can surprise, even overwhelm, whom every creature and all communities must know and be able to reckon with. This means that through the various lies and truths, a sense of Truth emerges in the ability of a community to exist through presence, empathy, and mutuality. This skill safeguards against the development of technologies as a grammar of substitution, alienation and subjugation. Namely, mutualistic and commensalistic relationships in the animal world, so aptly captured by the Moomin family's ride with the stork and the Hattifattners, show that even though animals are capable of using external tools or "limbs", most refrain from developing technologies as a grammar. Hence, in addition to the biological adaptations discussed earlier, birds and animals have also been observed to make external tools. According to Joshua Klein (2008), crows make hooks to extract worms or use coins to obtain food from vending machines, or, as Nold Egenter's (1987) and Mike Hansell's (2005) research shows, apes indulge in complex architectural practices, among infinite examples. Yet, most cultures choose not to develop technologies. And in addition, evidence shows that throughout the ages animals knew of the principles of domestication: parasites, microbes, plants, and other animals are known to be able to change the behaviour of their prey to benefit their own culture in the manner of civilized human animals. Needless to say, the knowledge of domestication and technology was available to non-civilized humans too. As Mark Nathan Cohen (1977: 19) observes:

There is fairly widespread consensus among anthropologists that the knowledge that plants grow from seeds is probably universal among

hunters and gatherers and that this knowledge has probably been available to human groups since very early times, long predating its application in full fledged agricultural economies. For example, Flannery (1968: 68) states: We know of no human group on earth so primitive that they are ignorant of the connection between plants and the seeds from which they grow.

Similarly, according to Bronson (1975: 58): Deliberately growing useful plants was neither unique nor a revolutionary event. It probably happened in many places starting at an early date. This is not a complex idea or a difficult idea to develop. It is not beyond the inventive reach of any human being. We can be quite sure that activities resembling cultivation go far back into the Pleistocene.

(Cohen, 1977: 19)

The obvious question this raises is why most human and nonhuman forms of life have chosen not to go down the path of domestication if they are capable of making artificial tools and if the relationship between seeds and plants, or chicks and hens, or calves and cows, or babies and mothers, etc. is a connection that can easily be made by all humans and animals? Indigenous peoples around the world have known about the mechanisms of reproduction all along; they have tended diverse forest gardens and helped salmon reach their reproduction sites safely (Ellen in Ingold, 1997), yet with the exception of a few sporadic outbreaks of civilization in the human history of Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Mesoamerica (e.g. the civilizations of Mali, Egypt, Aztec, Maya, India, or the Tigris and Euphrates), most chose wilderness.

In this light, the Agricultural Revolution was not a discovery after all. Yet the adoption of its singular, linear, humanist narrative has given rise to the structural, physiological, and morphological changes in humanity and the earth itself. The civilized socio-economic and epistemological structure this narrative fuelled has made no longer possible choices like Moominmamma's to ignore or avoid conflict within the confines of such constructs as deviance and illness. And one of the ways in which this revolution has succeeded is through lies. For instance, by generalizing its trajectory on all of humanity, this narrative misrepresents itself as an evolution of "humanity" as a whole when in reality it only pertains to those who have adopted the civilized mode of living and with it hierarchical and parasitic relationships. Non-domesticated culture is not an evolutionary step taken and abandoned in the past. It still exists today and the only reason non-domesticated peoples are not thriving is because of colonization and extermination by the civilized. This generalization, however, is a necessary part of the normative legitimating process that silences the colonized and presents the colonizer as a better and logical consequence of natural selection. By doing so, this narrative also omits the fact that it is very young on the scene of life; as discussed in the introduction, it is a mere seventeen thousand years old (Ellen in Ingold, 1997; Sunderland, 1973; Dickens, 2004) and to this day nomadic

peoples persevere in the various corners of the globe. It also omits the fact that evolution is an ongoing process and, therefore, even if some of us have “evolved” into destructive cyborgs, we can still choose to change our narrative and evolve in a different direction, towards life.

Evidence gathered in the fields of ethology, primatology, and human animal studies such as anthropology seriously challenges the civilized narrative and supports Kropotkin’s theory of evolution that sees wilderness as welcoming and favouring life, where beings thrive in diversity, and all organisms, regardless of the degree of their simplicity or complexity, know their well-being depends on intricate symbiotic systems fostered by mutual aid and co-operation.

In contrast to the Darwinian version, which considers individual and group success in terms of reproductive outcome and alliance strategies that, in this version of the evolutionary theory, are understood as assisting in furthering individualistic and exploitative ends (libertarian anarchism and market economy are the most radical expressions of this premise), Kropotkin’s thesis on viable strategies holds that since the world provides favourable conditions for life, organisms can live well in it and, therefore, they know the happiness of one depends on the happiness of all, while the happiness of all makes the happiness of one. This does not entail everyone being the same; on the contrary, it means that individuals support difference and diversity. *Moominvalley* aptly depicts the world from the perspective with which Kropotkin experienced the wilderness of Siberia in the 19th century comparing these observations to the civilized relationships in Europe. If one individual or one species suffers, her pain is felt by others and elicits their response. Both, Jansson, a children’s fiction author, and Kropotkin, a scientist, agree on that the principle of knowing the world is to empathise with it and understand its sentience; for by tuning to the experience of others, we can grow and move outside the claustrophobic borders of our reality tunnels, which are often circumscribed by our personal interests. It is this ability to feel, understand, and care for the suffering of the other that allows a person to understand and, therefore, to know the other on her terms, accepting that the reason for the other’s existence could be none other than to simply derive pleasure from existing. From this perspective, the suffering of one becomes a cosmic tragedy of whole symbiotic systems of being.

Evidently, all forms of life tend to choose the most efficient ways for living their aspirations and reproducing themselves as ideas, knowledge, experience, and physiological beings, as well as adapting their environment to their needs and themselves to their environment (Kropotkin, Darwin, *inter alios*). The relationships between the various forms of grass and weeds point to the sophisticated intelligence of these plants to have worked out a symbiotic balance with other forms of life for millions of years. If grass still lives, in spite of the brutal civilized human mowing and use of pesticides and herbicides, it demonstrates resilience and intelligence that allow it to overcome even the exceptional brutality of civilized humans. Since everyone is intelligent and is capable of both resisting human interference in one’s reproductive choices and choosing whether to interfere in the reproduction of others, then the

question begs itself: Why, apart from some viruses, microbes, and humans, has no one chosen to control the sexuality and reproduction of others or to modify their purpose and lives in the organized and globally totalitarian and expansionist manner of human civilization? If species choose what is best for them, and what is best for them is supposedly to conquer, curtail, and control, why don't they go down this path? Could it be they have known this path was not optimal for them and for life in the long term? Could it be they are far-sighted and the civilized humans are not only amnesiac but also myopic, and perhaps amnesia and blindness are corollaries?

Palaeontological, anthropological, and archaeological research, as well as sociological and demographic statistics on epidemic diseases, strength of bones, among other indicators, confirms that the gatherer lifestyle requires little work and effort for subsistence, ensuring plenty of leisure, a healthy lifestyle, and the safety of a complex multi-species community, while agricultural civilization, among a wide range of adverse repercussions, has had a negative effect on oral and general health, particularly of women and children, and has provoked mass starvation and escalated organized and premeditated violence, otherwise known as war, that diminished the average human lifespan in half and cut it by a full hundred percent for the exterminated species (Larsen, 1995; Ingold, 1997 and 2007; Sahlins, 1974 and 2008; Zerzan, 2002 and 2008; Lasse Nordlund, 2008; *inter alios*).

Despite evidence to the contrary, the civilized narrative continues to maintain agricultural civilization improved life and this improvement caused the explosion in population and the emergence of cities. Armelagos *et al.* (1991) refute the civilized argument that falsely attributes the growth in population during the Neolithic to an alleged improvement in the quality of life, which, the myth claims, has become healthier, longer, and richer. The authors of "The Origins of Agriculture: Population Growth During a Period of Declining Health" invite the reader to look at the demographic evidence and explanations for the actual lack of growth during the Palaeolithic provided by the data on population density. In fact, population was stable and showing low mortality rates with a strong culture of self-regulation in reproductive strategies. The authors proceed by breaking down the components of the Malthusian-Darwinian argument that erroneously links "progress" or improvement in the quality of life with "fertility", "population growth", and "increase of food due to agriculture":

The interpretation of the very low population growth during the Paleolithic has influenced demographic thinking in a number of ways. The lack of Paleolithic population growth has been explained by arguing that populations were experiencing maximum fertility and very high mortality. Neolithic population explosion, it is argued, resulted from improved nutrition and health; these acted to reduce mortality, and the change in demographic pattern led to a rapid increase in population. It is further argued that reduction of fertility in the modern period, which decreased the population growth rate, introduced the

era of the demographic transition. *We seriously question this interpretation of Paleolithic and Neolithic demography and believe prehistoric populations demography deserves reanalysis* [emphasis mine]...

In reviewing the literature on population dynamics of Paleolithic population, Goodman, Jacobs, and Armelagos (1975) were able to isolate two basic and accepted assumptions used in Paleolithic demography: 1) that *the potential* growth of hominid populations has not appreciably changed since *the early Pleistocene*, and 2) that *Paleolithic hunters-gatherers were involved* in a highly stable equilibrium system with respect to their population *size and realized rate of growth* [authors' emphasis].

(Armelagos *et al.*, 1991)

Having explained the myth, the authors elaborate on where the civilized logic has misinterpreted the facts. They explain the definitions of “health” and “quality of food” have been subject to the habitual and concomitant inflation in the expected living standards and quality of life. Armelagos *et al.* demonstrate that, in reality, it has always been the other way around. Hence, an

increase in the Neolithic human population following the development of agriculture has been assumed to result from improvements in health and nutrition. Recent research demonstrates that this assumption is incorrect. With the development of sedentism and the intensification of agriculture, there is an increase in infectious disease and nutritional deficiencies particularly affecting infants and children. Declining health probably increased mortality among infants, children and oldest adults. However, the productive and reproductive core would have been able to respond to this increase in mortality by reducing birth spacing. That is, agricultural populations increased in size, despite higher mortality, because intervals between births became shorter.

(Armelagos *et al.*, 1991)

First, the authors identify civilization, with its agricultural subsistence, as the original culprit behind the high mortality rates. In wilderness people enjoy a healthier and happier existence, which are important factors for longevity. Second, the trend of stable population density in nomadic and gatherer societies always shifts to sudden population hikes as soon as they adopt sedentary and agricultural lifestyles, abruptly decreasing intervals between children and the number of nursing years. These trends have been noted throughout the literature on cultural concepts in medical anthropology. Susan J. Rasmussen's article on the Tuareg in the *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology* (in Ember and Ember, 2004: 1001–1008) illustrates this point most clearly. The Tuareg are known to be one of the most egalitarian societies still existing in the world, in which the genders enjoy equal rights to inheritance, travel, initiation of conversation, and courtship and where “working” or other classes do not exist. However, during the past half century, with the intensification of

surveillance of national borders and other post-colonial problems in Africa, some of the Tuareg clans have adopted a sedentary lifestyle. Immediately, there has been an increase in their population and growing pressure on women to have more children (between six and eight) and with less spacing between them (Rasmussen in Ember and Ember, 2004). Shorter (or no) nursing and disruption of attachment parenting ultimately lead to weaker immunity systems, with the higher population density increasing susceptibility to contagious diseases and reliance on Western medicine, the remedies of which have serious side effects that further weaken the immunity system.

In addition to the emergence of hierarchical gender roles, which a stratified, ownership-oriented culture creates through the professionalization of genders and other “classes” of human and other species, sedentarism forces one to specialize in a limited sphere (literally and metaphorically), forging dependence-oriented relationships inherently characteristic of domesticated and farming social systems, including in the production and rearing of “human resources”. Since specialization is always symptomatic of hierarchical socio-economic relations of dependence, oppression, and exploitation, the production of human and nonhuman animal resources becomes a profession of human and nonhuman animal women and thereby immediately devalues their labour so as to feed the trainers (educators and medical staff), the distributors, and the owners and exploiters of these resources. Because there is profit to be made off of the living resources themselves, each production batch needs a larger production batch to both compensate for the maintenance cost and continue maintaining it, thereby always requiring an exponential growth in population – and overpopulation generates more massacres and extinctions. Sedentarism and civilization are thus the primary causes for the overproduction of people and domestic animals, with the private ownership of land and resources ensuring there will always be starvation and extermination. The three elements of this paradigm – sedentary agriculture, civilization, and ownership – are, therefore, inseparable in today’s social order and permeate all literature, whether a text accepts these phenomena as a given (e.g. A.A. Milne), whether it attempts to contest certain aspects of it (like Nosov), or whether it wants to eradicate suffering at its root (Jansson).

Just as the 19th century European revolutions of the intellectuals forged fictional yet tenacious nationalist identities that led to the unprecedented violence of the World Wars and 20th century revolutions (Namier, 1992), so has a new vision driven the palaeolithic people to restructure their relationships and “identity”. Rooted in a new ontological understanding, this anthropocentric perspective has come to constitute the main drive of the Neolithic revolution, prompting humans to disregard the laws of wilderness for balance and the preservation of life. The physical, social, and environmental implications of this narrative for life on earth have posed serious challenges in terms of population growth, imposed gender identity and controlled sexuality, disease, ad infinitum, which require intervention on several levels, including the medical and epistemological.

However, science-based medicine has not and is not capable of solving the health problems caused by civilization. For, along with other deadly diseases, such as the plague, diabetes, coronary heart disease, or hypertension, cancer is specific to civilization and empires (Fábrega, 1997: 112–113) and shares the rationale of civilization. Its deadliness stems from the logic that drives cancer cells to reproduce infinitely without checking themselves in relation to their environment. Medical textbooks and dictionaries define a malignant tumour as the appearance of cells in a living environment that have an error in their program inscribed in a gene responsible for controlling the lifespan of cells, i.e. of their mortality and regeneration, keeping their population increase near zero. A good illustration of this balance and complexity is bacteria, who know their existence depends on their host's life – even our bodies consist of complex bacterial ecosystems where the bacteria outnumber human cells but never to our detriment (Leeming et al., 1984; and Tancredi, 1992). In contrast, cancer cells proliferate and modify their environment until they completely take over, devouring the world that has hosted these monopolists (Youngson, 2005).

The symptoms of this sickness can be traced in every aspect of life in civilization. However, attempts to cure it with the rationale of the disease itself will continue to fail, because this very rationale is the mechanism of its proliferation. For instance, if symbolic culture is part of civilization's currency, then using a capitalist system for medical intervention only reproduces itself, which is an intricate part of the sickness itself. *Insomnia* illustrates this perfectly and I will take the U.S. as an example. It is common knowledge that the duration and quality of sleep critically affect health, happiness, and the general quality and longevity of life. In 2006, 70 million civilized Americans of all ages were reported to have suffered from sleep disorders: "Prescriptions for sleeping medications topped 56 million in 2008 – a record, according to the research firm IMS Health, up 54% from 2004," says Denise Gellene in her March 2009 article on the economy of sleeping pills (Gellene, 2009).

The commercial profit from insomnia not only boosts the medical establishment, according to Gellene's research, but a whole complex of parasitic industries. "During 2007 and 2006, drug manufacturers Sanofi-Aventis (the maker of Ambien), Sepracor (maker of Lunesta) and Takada (maker of Rozerem) spent an average of \$11.8-million a week to advertise sleep medications, according to the market research firm TNS Media Intelligence. Total prescriptions for sleep medications increased 10% and 15% respectively in those years, according to IMS Health" (*ibid.*).

The total estimated annual cost of alcohol used for promoting sleep is \$339.8-million, which is the highest direct cost, representing 60 percent of all direct costs and five percent of all insomnia-related costs. The annual cost of insomnia-related consultations with a health-care professional is estimated to be \$85.3-million (32.6 percent of all direct costs and 2.9 percent of overall costs), and an estimated \$16.5-million

is spent annually on prescription medications for insomnia (only 2.8 percent of direct costs and less than one percent of overall costs) (ibid).

The language (both semantic and mathematical) of the above text betrays a lack of concern for the personal plight of individual “human resources” or for the unhappiness of the masses, their ailments, and the drudgery of their lives. The formulation of many of these studies eliminates in advance questions that would have challenged the myth of the promises that civilization had made seventeen thousand years ago. The endless 16th century accounts of the healthy and beautiful American Indians who met the European travellers in 1492 have now been replaced by the accounts of high rates of alcohol and drug consumption as well as chronic diseases (such as diabetes) that have plagued the surviving communities since the advent of civilization (colonialism). The Indigenous communities themselves recognize their ailments for what they are: illnesses of civilization, which disrupted indigenous knowledge and community with the forest. Thus, anthropologist Linda Garro reports that the Anishinaabe refer to diabetes, high blood pressure, and other chronic diseases specifically as the “White man’s illnesses” (see Garro in Ember and Ember, 2004: 903–9; and in Mattingly and Garro, 2000).

Among the endless dry, apathetic accounts that fail to acknowledge the rationale behind suffering, the civilized narrative continues to present the “problem” of numbers in terms of business loss for the owners and profiteers of pharmaceutical products instead of as a problem of civilized despair. There is a tradition of such reports sponsored by United Nations or various governmental and non-governmental agencies, all of which are implicated in the economy of illness, suffering, and death. These reports acknowledge “a” problem, but then proceed to formulate their findings in a language consistent with the civilized narrative and political rhetoric, prompting the civilized to accept immediate band-aids that ultimately benefit the institution of private ownership and order but do not offer any real solutions that would dismantle the relationships of oppression. This is exactly what Daley’s study does:

Results estimate that the annual per-person insomnia related costs are \$5,010 for those with insomnia syndrome (\$293 in direct costs and \$4,717 in indirect costs); \$1,431 for those with insomnia symptoms (\$160 in direct costs and \$1,271 in indirect costs); and \$422 for good sleepers (\$45 in direct costs and \$376 in indirect costs).

The authors conclude that an increased awareness of the availability and effectiveness of insomnia treatments, both on the part of the public as well as health-care providers, could lead to significant reductions in the overall cost of insomnia to society.

(Wagner, 2009)

These remedies of course are not limited to alcohol and drugs (legal and illegal). There are troops of psychotherapists that feed off this suffering and their

very etiology gives them all the economic incentives to secure the existence of this pain, since an end of suffering ultimately renders their professions obsolete.

Civilization's promise of safety, too, has failed on all counts. For example, George Mason University Sexual Assault Services provides statistics on rape in the civilized countries of the 21st century: one in three women in the world experiences rape. Between five and ten percent of men report having been sexually abused as children. Sixty percent of rape cases are committed by someone in the family or known to the victim. There are private clubs with sado-masochism in every big city, and none in the jungle. Wolves never capture other wolves and chain them to get a kick out of it. But civilized people do. Humans do. Persons do.

A less discussed phenomenon but one that is particularly symptomatic of the parasitism that characterizes civilized relationships pertains to the organ trade, which occurs both "willingly" by coerced donor-sellers but also by theft from and murder of unwilling victims. In a December 2007 report for the World Health Organization, Yosuke Shimazono calls attention to the growing threat to the lives of poor people around the world posed by the demands for new organs by wealthy "developed-worlders", whose own organs have been failing due to civilized progress, particularly in agricultural chemistry, industrialization, and technology. This phenomenon is eerily reminiscent of Haraway's cyborgs, and here again, the promise for a better life by means of "progress" responds only to the needs of the wealthy, even if, ironically, it is responsible for the deterioration of their own health in the first place. Like the cyborgs, the rich continue their evolution by incorporating new organs and limbs, thereby depriving the poor "developing-worlders" of often the last resort they have, the healthy organs they were born with.

The shortage of an indigenous "supply" of organs has led to the development of the international organ trade, where potential recipients travel abroad to obtain organs through commercial transactions. The international organ trade has been recognized as a significant health policy issue in the international community. A World Health Assembly resolution adopted in 2004 (WHA57.18) urges Member States to "take measures to protect the poorest and vulnerable groups from 'transplant tourism' and the sale of tissues and organs". Despite growing awareness of the issue, the reality of the international organ trade is not well understood due to a paucity of data and also a lack of effort to integrate the available information.

(Shimazono, 2007)

This curious and tragic phenomenon exposes the enormity of the problem of the poor quality of life. It challenges the civilized myth of improvement, which the author does not question since Shimazono asserts that the "Member States" of the WHO are trying to protect the vulnerable, when in fact the very existence of the state, with its borders and its labour and economic structure, is the main culprit in the vulnerable conditions of the displaced,

exploited, and oppressed. The critical question that the authors do not ask is: How come the civilized world's organs are failing, if their civilized diet, chemically treated water, medications, and other scientific inventions – the very guarantees of safety and health for which people have been willing to surrender their freedom and forget their world – are supposed to ameliorate life, while the people who do not have these “luxuries” and who, in spite of the abuse and exploitation they endure, still manage to keep their organs intact for the sale, after which they, incidentally, die?

This aspect of civilized hierarchical relations regarding illness and healing, whereby the sick rich recuperate their strength and heal at the expense of the poor, is a motif that is also commonplace in children's literature where its rendering strives to normalize self-sacrifice in the poor and offer the rich a *carte blanche* for self-empowerment by parasitizing others. As discussed earlier, Hodgson Burnett's (1910) *The Secret Garden* is one of the more explicit of the most cherished of civilized narratives that reconfirms the status quo of parasitic inequality. However, there are also texts that attempt to challenge this topos. Again, as seen earlier, Nosov questions the role of the doctor in normalizing unequal relationships of control. A contemporary American author, Margaret Peterson Haddix (2004), also projects the narrative of illness and health as an integral part of social relationships in her book *Because of Anya*, where, in the spirit of the Indigenous understanding of community, questions of illness, identity, and healing become resolved through empathy and acceptance by friends.

The most important point, however, is that regardless of whether the motif is explicit or whether it remains un-enunciated, if the underlying premise that directs the plot and provides the topos of these parasitic relationships is not challenged, the cyborg – including the human with replaced human organs or limbs – continues to grow, incorporating ever more limbs, devouring ever more lives, increasing population growth accompanied by higher mortality rates and shorter life spans of the dispossessed. Victimization does not end here, for in addition to the organ trade, there is the problem of fatalities due to civilization: technological accidents, environmentally caused diseases among cancers, dementia, psychosis, chronic medication against depression, insomnia, among endless other ailments that make every aspect of life in civilization inferior to that in wilderness.

Thus, paradoxically, the whole civilized premise rests on the promise of safety from predators and diseases that, ironically, are civilization's own making. In order to save humanity from the mythical predator the civilized narrative has invented, the same narrative has devised a plot and a system for the ultimate predation of life consumed in all possible ways: as flesh, energy, effort, and time by the most dangerous predator of all, the human person. Daily reports fill the media with news of adults killing their children, children killing adults, adults killing adults, children killing children, people of all ages killing themselves and others. In France. In England. In Germany. In Canada. In Rwanda. In Sudan. Everywhere. Not only in war. They kill each other in school. In the office. On the street. In sleep. At home. Everywhere in the civilized world. Violence on this scale is unheard of in

gatherer societies. The Hopis or the Semai, discussed earlier, or the numerous other peoples still refuse to indulge in civilization and violence.

After reading microbiologist Stephen J. Gould's (1992) essay "Kropotkin was no Crackpot", in which Gould attempts both to redeem Kropotkin in "Western" science and to soften Darwin's emphasis on "the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life" by pointing out Darwin himself had acknowledged the importance of co-operation, evolutionary biologist Marc Bekoff and bioethologist Jessica Pierce (2009) propose to imagine a different world, driven by an alternative understanding of human and animal nature:

Stephen J. Gould continually reminds us that Darwin used the phrase "struggle for existence" metaphorically, and that even Darwin understood that bloody and vicious competition is only one possible mechanism through which individuals might achieve reproductive success. Another possible mechanism was proposed by a contemporary of Darwin, Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin, in his forward-looking book *Mutual Aid*, published in 1902. Kropotkin suggested that cooperation and mutual aid may also lead to increased fitness, and may more accurately fit our actual observations of animals in nature. Although biologists have largely explored cooperative behavior through the Darwinian lens of competition and an evolutionary arms race, we might wonder what the intellectual history of evolution would look like had Kropotkin's ideas been taken more seriously.

(ibid, 57)

They ponder what face would "science" (Western and, by virtue of its imperialist authority, world science) have acquired, had, between the two contemporaries, not Darwin's, but Kropotkin's theory been heeded. The implications are far reaching as one tries to imagine the scope of the effect of this narrative on culture and life. What would children's books present to the reader had the focus been on chaos as love instead of the necessity to endure pain for order? And if children's books were different, what would the world look like? Would the children be told in narratives like *Winnie-the-Pooh* that a world of careless play and agency over one's mind and imagination are to be forsaken when they move on to the "real" world? What would the geo-political map look like? Would there have been immigration policies, such as informing both the control of borders and the imaginary of *Winnie-the-Pooh*? Would there have been borders? Would they have looked the same – threatening and isolating limitations on life? What would our lives have been?

My life, definitely, would have been different. I look wistfully at the amount of time and effort I could have dedicated to my work and aspirations instead of on being forced to spend time and energy on proving my knowledge is on par with my white (male) peers, that being a mother does not mean I am a "housewife", as some professors have explained to me when dismissing my research projects, rather that motherhood can be only

one aspect of a human being and that, as a mother, I am capable of contributing valuable insights and work, not to mention how much energy, money, and time I spent on getting out of places to which I had been deported because a border patrol officer, guided by the narrative of civilization, did not see the combination of my name and citizenship as legitimate or even reasonable and the places to which I was deported gave me deadlines by which to sort my entry and exit permits and get out. What I could have achieved if I were not, for the most part of my life, sent running about collecting papers, arguing and trying to convince the various figures of authority to stamp them, racing across towns, countries, and continents, from department to department, from one Winnie-the-Pooh to another, at the request of the Darwinian visa officials and embassy consuls, distrusting, fearful of my name, looks, and hence my intentions? Just these examples overwhelm me with possibilities, not to mention all the other aspects of my life.

Many black people's lives, in Montreal or in other places, would have been different too (see the report by Torczyner, 2001 and 2010). Whether in public life in general or in specific settings such as academia, our voices would have been reckoned on par with the ethnic group that runs the scene of the production and transmission of knowledge, and our experience, along with the perspective that comes with it, would have been interesting and would have mattered as much as the perspectives of those who dominate the curricula and the legitimization and marketing of knowledge. But, as discussed in the first chapter of this book, the process of legitimating opinions, narratives, and imagination in civilization precludes the possibility of imagining this scenario and of striving towards its realization. The civilized terminology for domesticating such revelry calls it "utopic vision", which, when persistent, gets treated in the hospital both in reality and in fiction, as explained by Kropotkin, Foucault, and by Dr. Honeysuckle in *The Adventures of Dunno and Friends*.

Animal lives would have been different. The whole world would have been different had the number of predators remained minimal, as Kropotkin had observed was necessary for the balance of life, instead of multiplying to almost seven billion individuals and taking over 98% of the vertebrate biomass.

Happily enough, competition is not the rule either in the animal world or in mankind. It is limited among animals to exceptional periods, and natural selection finds better fields for its activity.

... "Don't compete! – competition is always injurious to the species, and you have plenty of resources to avoid it!" That is the tendency of nature, not always realized in full, but always present. That is the watchword which comes to us from the bush, the forest, the river, the ocean. "Therefore combine – practise mutual aid! That is the surest means for giving to each and to all the greatest safety, the best guarantee of existence and progress, bodily, intellectual, and moral." That is what Nature teaches us.

(Kropotkin, 2006: 60–61)

However, as soon as we come to a higher stage of civilization, and refer to history which already has something to say about that stage, we are bewildered by the struggles and conflicts which it reveals. The old bonds seem entirely to be broken. Stems are seen to fight against stems, tribes against tribes, individuals against individuals; and out of this chaotic contest of hostile forces, mankind issues divided into castes, enslaved to despots, separated into States always ready to wage war against each other. And, with this history of mankind in his hands, the pessimist philosopher triumphantly concludes that warfare and oppression are the very essence of human nature; that the warlike and predatory instincts of man can only be restrained within certain limits by a strong authority which enforces peace and thus gives an opportunity to the few and nobler ones to prepare a better life for humanity in times to come.

(*ibid*, 95–96)

Kropotkin provided extensive research on life in the wild offering poignant descriptions of the ruthless extermination of rodents, buffaloes, wolves, indigenous peoples, among many others around the world, at the hands of civilized human animals who justify their violence and destructiveness with the lie that perverts the evidence and claims wilderness is violent and brutal and that it is the moral duty of the civilized to annihilate it.

UP AND DOWN THE DRAIN

Surprisingly, and as paradoxically as it may appear, the evidence on the looming catastrophe and the anthropogenic biocide has not deterred the propagation of the monocultural civilized perspective in the most popular books, films, and works of art, including those aimed at children. In fact, most continue to be rooted in civilized mythology in spite of the available information on the Holocene Extinction and ecocide, data that are now available even in mainstream media:

... as harmful as our forebears may have been, nothing compares to what's under way today. Throughout the 20th century the causes of extinction – habitat degradation, overexploitation, agricultural monocultures, human-borne invasive species, human-induced climate-change – increased exponentially, until now in the 21st century the rate is nothing short of explosive. The World Conservation Union's Red List – a database measuring the global status of Earth's 1.5 million scientifically named species – tells a haunting tale of unchecked, unaddressed, and accelerating biocide.

... The overall numbers are terrifying. Of the 40,168 species that the 10,000 scientists in the World Conservation Union have assessed, one in four mammals, one in eight birds, one in three amphibians, one

in three conifers and other gymnosperms are at risk of extinction. The peril faced by other classes of organisms is less thoroughly analysed, but fully 40 per cent of the examined species of planet earth are in danger, including perhaps 51 per cent of reptiles, 52 per cent of insects, and 73 per cent of flowering plants.

By the most conservative measure – based on the last century’s recorded extinctions – the current rate of extinction is 100 times the background rate. But the eminent Harvard biologist Edward O Wilson, and other scientists, estimate that the true rate is more like 1,000 to 10,000 times the background rate. The actual annual sum is only an educated guess, because no scientist believes that the tally of life ends at the 1.5 million species already discovered; estimates range as high as 100 million species on earth, with 10 million as the median guess. Bracketed between best- and worst-case scenarios, then, somewhere between 2.7 and 270 species are erased from existence every day. Including today. ...

In a 2004 analysis published in *Science*, Lian Pin Koh and his colleagues predict that an initially modest co-extinction rate will climb alarmingly as host extinctions rise in the near future. Graphed out, the forecast mirrors the rising curve of an infectious disease, with the human species acting all the parts: the pathogen, the vector, the Typhoid Mary who refuses culpability, and, ultimately, one of up to 100 million victims. (Whitty, 2007)

ScienceDaily, the BBC, the blog of Cambridge University Press, and other sources, drawing on the work of biologists and other scientists, all corroborate the above prognosis. For instance, here is an excerpt by biologists and human and animal demographers Donald A. Levin and Phillip S. Levin, who observe:

that on average, a distinct species of plant or animal becomes extinct every 20 minutes. ... Donald Levin, who works in the section of integrative biology in the College of Natural Sciences, said research shows the rate of current loss is highly unusual – clearly qualifying the present period as one of the six great periods of mass extinction in the history of Earth.

“The numbers are grim,” he said. “Some 2,000 species of Pacific Island birds (about 15 percent of the world total) have gone extinct since human colonization. Roughly 20 of the 297 known mussel and clam species and 40 of about 950 fishes have perished in North America in the last century. The globe has experienced similar waves of destruction just five times in the past.”

Biological diversity ultimately recovered after each of the five past mass extinctions, probably requiring several million years in each instance. As for today’s mass extinction, Levin said some ecologists believe the low level of species diversity may become a permanent state, especially if vast tracts of wilderness area are destroyed”.

(University of Texas, Austin, 2002)

Another source states:

“The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) notes in a video that many species are threatened with extinction. In addition,

- 75% of genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost
- 75% of the world’s fisheries are fully or over exploited
- Up to 70% of the world’s known species risk extinction if the global temperatures rise by more than 3.5°C
- 1/3rd of reef-building corals around the world are threatened with extinction
- Every second a parcel of rainforest the size of a football field disappears

Over 350 million people suffer from severe water scarcity”

(Shah 6 June 2010).

Yet in spite of this information, civilized mythology continues to pervade all the aspects of artistic, social, scientific, and political expression, and the anthropocentric perspective continues to drive people in their general apathy, alienation, and self-victimization further dulling their comprehension skills. If and when there is a social outrage, it usually concerns human problems, but never the much deeper and wider scope of suffering of farmed animals or the irretrievable death of a species, whose disappearance is dismissed as either natural or as having been caused by poor evolutionary choices. Julia Whitty’s (2007) title above betrays this anthropocentrism: “Animal Extinction – the Greatest Threat to Mankind”, which centres around what is good for or dangerous to “mankind” and not to the beings who are dying out. The title assumes we should care about the extinction of animal and plant life because it constitutes a threat to “us” and not because we should care for animals to *not* go extinct simply because they suffer and we should want them to live only because it makes them happy to do so.

Scientific texts written for children also participate in the propagation of civilized mythology even while contradicting themselves. For instance, Scholastic’s advertisement of their book *Endangered Species: the New Book of Knowledge* opens with the civilized perspective and, by doing so, minimizes the effects of human agency in environmental destruction, which it later names as the original culprit in the planetary catastrophe.

A co-author of *The Audubon Society Book of Wild Animals*, Edward R. Ricciuti begins his review on Scholastic’s website by stating it is normal and natural for species to ultimately die out because they cannot adapt to the changes in the environment. Also, since the conquest of the Americas, only a handful of hundreds of species have perished – which does not even remotely reflect the scientific estimates of the “ultimately, one of up to 100 million victims” discussed above:

Plants, animals, and other living things have developed, flourished, and vanished since the first flickerings of life. Sooner or later, every species, or kind, of living thing dies out because it cannot keep up with the natural changes in its environment. Yet, in recent times, many species have passed out of existence sooner than they would have naturally. Since the year 1600, more than 500 species of wild animals and plants have disappeared from the North American continent alone. At least 1,000 more are in trouble. Worldwide, scientists estimate that 20,000 species of plants are in danger of extinction, that is, dying out completely.⁴

In other words, this “environmental” piece for children opens with the statement that extinction is natural and inevitable, and by doing so it softens the bad news and minimizes the effects of our actions on the experience and quality of life of other nonhuman and human animals. It is also indifferent to the feelings and experience of the dying animals themselves. Most important, it conspires with the civilized narrative to present children as impotent in preventing destruction and to ignore the true nature of civilization. However, if there have been only five recorded extinctions in the billions of years of life on earth, then what does it say about civilized humans if they are the ones to have brought about the sixth Holocene Extinction within the span of a few thousand years?

There are other problems with the text as well. First, the intended audience, children, are assumed to lack sophistication and need simplified material. The problem is that simplification itself becomes the norm that gets embedded in the *habitus*, which is then encoded in the child’s body and brain. It sets in as a permanence that hinders the person from ever growing into a state when she is “ready” for complexity and truth. Namely, treating young people as dumb is an important part of the mechanism by which the self-fulfilling prophecy ensures they actually do turn out dumb.

Second, the text omits the fact that this information is outdated, since the way the book of extinctions defines an extinct species is when not a single member has been spotted during half a century. Since the most intensive rate of extinction has sprinted precisely during these past fifty years, omitting this crucial fact leads to huge underestimations that could have the most dire repercussions for life on earth, if children continue to operate from the civilized-anthropocentric perspective on biodiversity in addition to relying on outdated data lagging half a century behind reality. The logic of this article is: “Five hundred species have vanished since the conquest of the Americas and others are in danger, but if you ‘conserve’ – buy new light bulbs (that supposedly save energy but contain toxic mercury), or recycle, or designate ‘wildlife’ parks managed by human professionals, etc., i.e. just like the doctors discussed above, participate even more intensely in the civilized capitalist economy, then you can help the animals that are in danger to not be in danger

any more". In this way, when the reader arrives at the more accurate estimate in the book of how many species vanish per day (between fifty and a hundred and fifty) due to the anthropogenic destruction of habitat, the information has already been tamed and does not appear as urgent as it really is. "In any case, extinctions are natural and so don't break your heart over it," goes the logic.

In fact, the BBC reports that "40 per cent of the 10,000 five- to 18-year-olds who participated [in a survey on children's attitudes to the massive species extinction] ranked watching TV or playing computer games higher than saving the environment".⁵ Others thought it was important to save animals because "our" lives depended on it and only a few took the wilderness approach: that animals should live because they are alive.

Needless to say, if civilized mythology successfully prevails in a field that claims authenticity and basis in reality, it goes rampant in works of fiction and art. Children's literature consistently presents civilized myths as self-evident truths, ranging through a variety of genres, addressed to all ages. Earlier, I mentioned the Caillou series of short picture books that depict mundane situations and offer solutions for integration into the civilized order by appealing to the child's need for acceptance and love. C.S. Lewis' (1949–1954) *Chronicles of Narnia*, written for older children, also oscillates between the "chaos" of the world of "wild" animists under the leadership of the White Witch and the desired "order" under the patriarchal rule of the Lion, whose goal is to impose on Narnia the order of Earth, *naturally*, through bloodshed.

The same holds true for the Harry Potter novels that present a divided world, first between the ignorant muggles (those unenlightened masses) and the clandestine world of the select few who possess the secret knowledge of how to manipulate natural and other forces in order to establish a civilized hierarchy. The series reflects perfectly the civilized order, where the "ignorant" masses are exploited and excluded from academia and other centres for the control and production of elite knowledge. Harry Potter's clandestine society itself is divided. Here, a handful of chosen men battle for hegemony while the rest of the men, women, and other life-forms exist to help these men's quests, maintain their power, ensure their success, keep their knowledge and powers secret, with some of these individuals and groups simply existing as slaves, such as the house-elves and "half-bloods", for those of mixed race in all supremacist ideologies are seen as inferior beings that pollute the pure race.

The same myths of civilization feed the imaginary of most of the contemporary films for children. Here is a good example of how a film plot claims to be a story about love and empowerment, when in reality it depicts subjugation, devastation, and death. The award-winning Pixar animation film *Up* (2009) was described by Rotten Tomatoes in the following words: "Another masterful work of art from Pixar, *Up* is an exciting, hilarious, and heartfelt adventure impeccably crafted and told with wit and depth", receiving 98% vote on their site and 8.4/10 on the imdb.com film database. The film includes everything in its formula for success: symbolism, alienation, violence, effacement, gendered and racialized silencing, objectification, the

heroic agency of one (white, male) character (but occasionally a white female would also do), and the desertification of the rest of life. Finally, for it to ensure financial success, it must be about white people and their agency with people of colour caricatured if appearing at all.

The film begins with a white girl called Ellie who dreams of moving her house to the top of Paradise Falls mountains in South America. She meets a white boy, Carl, tells him her dream, he promises to take her there, they fall in love, and spend their lives working little jobs trying to save money for travel, but never have enough and always end up being forced to spend their last pennies on emergencies. Life goes by and they grow old together without having fulfilled Ellie's dream, which gets relegated to a drawer in an old journal where it remains until the end of her life, collecting dust.

The film, however, portrays their lives as natural, even "romantic". The romantic aspect is concocted by the narrative's focus on the little things that bring them joy in spite of this overwhelming civilization that sucks out their very life force and thereby silences the horror of such an existence when a person cannot voice her aspirations, let alone realize her most cherished dream. The "beauty" of the film for the civilized resides in the fact that it ignores the ninety-five percent of Ellie and Carl's reality and only occasionally sketches or alludes to it. Instead, it centres on the five percent and their "positive" attitudes and reactions. It would have been a very "unlovely" film had it shown accurately the realistic proportion of joy to pain, disempowerment, and struggle. Moreover, like the cyborgs, not only are their dreams sterile, they themselves have no continuation: they have nothing to transmit and no one to transmit it to, no children of their own, no nieces, no nephews, no adopted kids, or kids of friends, no one. Only after Ellie's death does a child appear in Carl's life. And even then, as the boy scout, Russell, accidentally finds himself on board, Carl is annoyed by his presence and tries to get rid of him. For, together, Carl and Ellie exist as machines to work and pay bills and after her death, Carl appropriates Ellie's dream and gets a chance at a glimpse of what it means to live.

The film depicts this tragic life as "lovely" and "romantic" simply because the protagonists have a dream, which conveys the message that it is not important for them to live this dream while they are young and full of yearning and life. In fact, it would have distracted them from fulfilling their real purpose in civilization: work and pay bills. Do not fret, lulls the underlying whisperer of the civilized narrative, even when you do not have the time to dream it together and even if you die, someone else will live your dream on your behalf and might even take your picture on the trip to symbolize your "participation". Impotent, infertile dreaming, like androids' dreams of electric sheep, thus replaces the doing and the living.

Furthermore, the civilized plot goes on to depict the "natural" evolution of civilization that ends up surrounding the outdated, even expired, dreamer's house with high-rises. Carl gets cranky, tries to resist, but since he is impotent before the new day and age and his time is, after all, gone (mostly into work fuelling this very "evolution" and into the bills he had paid to pave it), he

has no recourse but to cede the place to developers. So he does the “heroic” thing: attaching his house to balloons he flies away to Paradise Falls, all the while talking to a picture of Ellie. The audience is expected to derive satisfaction from the fact that Ellie’s photograph and Carl make it to Venezuela and so it is “as if” Ellie has lived her dream.

The problem here is the replacement of the person by the picture and the satisfaction with the “as if” substitutes for the real life of pleasure. In the end, the film effaces Ellie and her dreams, depicting her and Carl’s docility and disempowerment as natural. But not only is there a replacement of the person by a picture, what matters for the narrative is that the house, with the photo inside, is the only one who makes it to the top of the lifeless landscape. Why would anyone be happy for a house making it to Paradise Falls is difficult for me to grasp, yet the rating of the film on the various film databases mentioned earlier demonstrates that amnesia, sterility, impotence, and downright charlatanism appear to make sense and are appealing to the domesticated masses.

The moral of the film is that most children should learn to expect a “beautiful” life of self-denial, hard work, and poverty and accept that, after all, someone else will live their dreams for them when they die or even before then. The beauty of life for the civilized consists in the knowledge of the effaced “members of society” that, in the end, they will “as if” have lived. The violence of monogeneity and capitalism, of the substitution of reality by “as if”, or of silencing, deadening, and effacement, according to the film, is not only a natural and benign way of living but even constitutes the only way, for nothing else appears in the film apart from this way of life and these kind of people. That, the audience is told, is a happy ending.

With regard to colonized landscapes and the knowledge of “other” places, the film also lives up to civilized expectations, for when Carl arrives in South America there is no one there to greet him and his new friend, the accidentally attached Russell, the boy scout. There are no people, no animals, hardly any trees, with the exception of another white male American by the name of Charles Munz, his remote-controlled dogs, and a weird bird addicted to “U.S.” chocolate. In the manner of Christopher Robin who names, Russell domesticates the bird by naming her Kevin and offering her the food she likes but which, in the manner of the Oompa-Loompas, the bird cannot obtain because it is now “American” and no longer belongs to South America, where it actually grows. Russell domesticates the purpose of Kevin in another way as well, for by giving her a male name, the female bird forgets her own children and plays the role of the useful native guide who follows Russell and Carl on their adventures, helping them in their feats and conquests. Even though, towards the end of the film, Russell and Carl return Kevin to her family, in the real world a mother’s absence from her children is disastrous not only for her own children but for the whole community. In the span of its ninety-six minutes, this narrative succeeds to completely erase the indigenous reality and diversity of a whole continent and, instead, portrays a barren landscape with no life apart from Kevin and the

greedy white American male and robot dogs. Finally, as the humans (three white American males) depart, the dead white American woman's house and photograph claim the territory at the summit of Paradise Falls.

The majority of films produced for children in English dominate the world film industry and market, and regardless of whether they are based on fairy tales, literature, or original film script, operate from these civilized precepts. For instance, another computer animated film, *Hoodwinked!* (2005), focuses on empowering older women and young girls and once again demonstrates that such empowerment must necessarily proceed at the expense of other groups that are disempowered by the agency of the newly empowered. Again the focus is on white women with the assumption that they stand for Women, unlike black or Asian women who stand for their specific, essentialized constructs and racialized needs. In order to focus on the "positive" message, the script ignores the massive injustices and the rest of the painful realities in the manner of other civilized narratives. Thus, it must portray the individuals and groups that suffer from the empowerment of these two women as happy for the protagonists' achievements and supportive of their feats, even while they themselves remain homeless, disempowered, and even dead. This tactic of focusing on the aspirations, emotions, hardships, and conquests of the "heroes" and "heroines" of civilized narratives helps the audience to identify with the conquerors' needs and to caricature the needs of others. Since these protagonists are not real and, therefore, are not competing with the audience for their own piece of the civilized pie, their representational status allows the audience to cheer for them, to desire their success, and to be sad with their failure "as if" it were their own. Since the details of the remaining characters, who are victims of this white women's feminist plot, remain sketchy and caricatured, the audience forgets about reality and joins in the depicted joy of the rest of the forest beings who, we are told, are happy to get trampled on by Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, galloping across their lives, running over animals, recklessly felling trees, causing dynamite explosions that bring about avalanches and tear down mountains, simply because the two women need to salvage granny's recipes in order to save a few private businesses. And yet, like so many other films and books, the more the narrative is insensitive and status-quo-oriented, the more it is celebrated for its "originality" and empowerment.

Most important, however, is that hierarchical, gendered and racialized anthropocentrism leads to gross misrepresentations of reality because it is rooted in the myth that depicts human agency as key to the survival of the planet: "If only we can get the right kind of management for the natural 'resources' and 'environmental' 'initiatives'", the standard logic goes, "we can make things right; if only the right kind of 'moral' people get elected in government, everything will be fixed; if only more people participate in the show of spending billions of dollars on the handful of people to represent them at their own expense to be elected to take the trip to Paradise Falls on their behalf, then there will be less hunger and

more empowerment; ad infinitum". Yet for thousands of years leaders and managers have been misleading, mismanaging, and profiting from abuse, but for some reason – and I argue the reason has to do with the postulates underlying the civilized narrative and the unknowledge and structure for social relationships that the civilized premises foster – people still believe it is just about to improve with *their* personal help and contribution, because they *possess* the agency to renounce their voice, thereby relinquishing that very agency in favour of the handful of mis-leaders, the ones whom they choose to voice their hopes, represent their dreams, and tell them what to do, how to live, what to buy, what to believe, how to become beautiful, how to become happy, like the amnesiac cyborgs without a world. But just like the representation that ends up living Ellie's dream when she dies, so do the representatives of people's will and desires – the politicians and other public figures and celebrities – live people's dreams as the people themselves die. Representation renders dreams sterile and people perfect machines that think they are empowered by their function to serve as limbs for another's will. For their part, these impotent cyborgs appear to gladly agree to be depicted as singing with joy because they have grown to be ashamed of their tears.

INTO THE MOOMINLAND

We have thus come to embody the civilized narrative invented to split us from ourselves and our world, its memes and dispositions burnt into our flesh, minds, and desires. We have become the fiction we write and have forgotten our past, our truth, our possibilities, and our future. Language was there to make this world and sever our communication with wilderness. Language and grammar are the primary mechanisms for *praxis* that allow standardization. Through formulae they help transmit the unspoken *doxa*, the *habitus* of untruth, and the ideologies of deception.

Literacy has been pivotal to the successful transmission of civilized memes and genes, altering the very brain and physiology of civilized humans. Children's narratives have come to play a central role in cementing the grammar of domestication and socializing children into an oppressive, hierarchical paradigm of civilized social relations and knowledge. As seen in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, concepts such as illness and health, sadism and masochism, in-group and outsiders need not even be articulated, since the underlying assumptions driving the civilized plot in themselves are sufficient to convey civilized meaning and transmit the *doxa* through the structure of its codes for social relationships, desires, fears, and aspirations. In this nexus of all the components comprising the civilized narrative, the role of biography, i.e. understanding the personal experience of all the interlocutors in any study, becomes particularly important, since the ability to comprehend and build knowledge can begin only on the personal level of sentience, empathy, and personal actions. Everything

depends on this ability to tune in to one's world. The less a person relates to the world outside herself and the more alienated she is, the less capable of understanding and the more damage she inflicts. When the syndrome of apathy and impotence becomes an epidemic, the repercussions are disastrous, as the 6th Extinction in the history of the world threatens to end it all.

Attempts to compromise with the civilized plot, even while slightly decreasing the pace of the looming demise, nevertheless, ultimately lead to collapse. Even in fiction and in spite of the possibilities that imagination offers, as Dunno's trilogy shows, the logic of the argument itself cannot reconcile order and technology with self-governed wilderness, since civilization necessarily sucks everything into its vortex. And even if the destruction of the institutions on the Moon bring about a change of system, it is not a revolution in the sense of a total change of epistemology and ontological positions. For the minute a person is overpowered by this cancerous narrative and accepts the path towards the machine and civilized ontology as an ineluctable fate, then, like Dunno's adventure, the progression of the plot cannot deviate from the path of evolution towards cities and states, control and order, and the ultimate descent into the mode of agricultural expansionism, which entails growth, overpopulation, and hence massacres and extinctions. Therefore, even though Nosov does his best to embrace multiculturalism, inter-gender, and other forms of co-operation, including trans-nationalism, his narrative is unable to overcome speciesism, which constitutes the root of oppression and segregation by means of the civilized construct of humanism.

Instead, Nosov tries to reconcile wilderness with civilization through empathy and conscience, and while he offers important explorations on morality, his critique of oppressive orders, nonetheless, succumbs to two pitfalls of the civilized narrative. First, in spite of being one of the fundamental aspects of morality, kindness to animals is insufficient to eradicate discrimination and disempowerment brought about by the humanist position that assumes civilized human (un)reason as superior to all. The concept of kindness, while necessary for life in wilderness, fails in civilization because it does not attack the solid socio-economic foundation of abusive relationships and hence, ultimately, remains an anthropocentric venture of a superficial and short-term nature that remedies wounds but does not heal. Healing comes from wild generosity with the wild. It is a love for the other as she is for whatever purpose she chooses.

Second, driven by an apology for technological investment, the narrative manages to remain optimistic in face of the inevitable evolution towards a general state of technological and agricultural colonialism as, particularly, the last book in Dunno's trilogy conveys. The trilogy takes the classical anarcho-socialist stance that sees a liberating potential in technology as long as there is a self-defined communal organization and leadership painted as brotherly guidance. The author acknowledges that in itself, government causes serious social problems, particularly in the context of capitalism and technology, where leadership and representation become

integral components of oppressive systems. However, since there might not be a choice, as the underlying evolutionary narrative posits, then a communist government, although problematic due to its totalitarian potential – for it needs to control the crime that it creates in the first place and to exploit “resources” – is still a preferable option to the devastating capitalist state.

In this way, the trilogy projects reconciliation with the state as an inevitable evil that can be alleviated if a society chooses to follow the principles of compassion, moderation, and co-operation. For only an informed and caring leadership is seen as capable of channelling the purpose of the machine into the organization of complex infrastructures. A complex infrastructure can thus become the vehicle for an egalitarian distribution of resources, thereby freeing time in a communally organized manner by replacing human servants with artificial machines. What the narrative leaves unsaid is the impossibility of an egalitarian distribution of resources when the point of departure is a world that needs the machine – i.e., the servant whose very purpose for existence has been defined to serve – and because of this dependence on artificial limbs and servitude, such a society becomes necessarily divided into resources and agents. Political representation becomes unavoidable in this scenario and hence symbolism and alienation – the very enemies of empathy, intelligence, diversity, and co-operation – acquire a central place in the ontological conception of living beings.

In this regard, even though Dunno’s trilogy raises many critical questions that challenge the civilized norms, it still projects the same Darwinist plot as the one underlying the Christian monarchist structure of the Hundred-Acre Wood, in which the omission of technological gadgets does not detract from the “mechanical” nature of the characters in Christopher Robin’s world, who constitute the prostheses of the human child’s possibilities. In this sense, the characters, with their propensity for greed, literacy, envy, and sterility, resemble Haraway’s metaphoric cyborgs, for they are the mutants that provide the power for Christopher Robin’s self-realization; they are the limbs that re-enact a domesticated and, therefore, impotent will that can realize itself only through the abstract re-enactment of the imaginary, the unreal, and the untrue. In this regard, the genesis here is utterly civilized: the toys from their inception have been created for the purpose of serving the human, for being named and dominated by him. They are his prey. The narrative transmits the Darwinian doom of evolution towards the ultimate cyborg and domestication through a sense of inevitability of the real-life boy, Christopher Robin, abandoning this world and transferring to boarding school, a place where he will be locked up and taught how to participate in the narrative of dependencies and machines in real life, while the story of this world, in which he was an empowered agent, must end with his integration into the humanist order. And thus, he forgets his past.

Unlike the sterile world of Pooh and in spite of the nature of language, literacy, literature, and narratives, there still exist uncompromising tales of wilderness. My third example of how a children’s book can offer wild narratives explores the possibilities of handling civilization and of remaining free in a wild world. The

Moomin books examine co-existence and ways of dealing with the pedantic and ignorant figures of authority, the Hemulens. Ignoring them and rebellion against civilization, including property damage and sabotage in confronting jailers and schools, are some of the diverse tactics explored here. Typically, under the civilized circumstances in which these books emerge, such uncompromising tales are a minority in the world of literacy and, in spite of their overt critique of racism, speciesism, institutions, and oppression, are still capable of being tamed and disarmed by the mere fact that they remain solely in the realm of “identification” and “entertainment” without truly rewilding the civilized subjects or prompting them to make specific choices in terms of actions. In this context, the personal life choices of the author reflect the meaning of the narrative and shed light on the extent of its feasibility as viable options in the real world. Here, as my interdisciplinary analysis shows, wilderness is still a feasible way of life and Tove Jansson’s personal experiences and life choices – ranging from her bohemian lifestyle, through a lifetime with a lesbian partner, to travel and years spent on an island – are not the exception in the history of the world but rather are part of its intricately rich past and an intense future filled with infinite possibilities that the diversity of wilderness avails.

Wild narratives include everything and have no standardizing grammar for outcome in favour of anyone, including humans. Hence, they too can play with representation, but it is usually in the context of the trickster who misleads, and as examined in Chapter Two on indigenous ontologies, tricksters too have a place in wilderness, where cosmic justice is ensured by the rotation of chances. Because the Moomins have no representatives and no substitution, there is no order, only chaos. Everyone lives how she deems fit and is free to pursue her own desires and dreams whenever and wherever. Moominpappa learns this as soon as he grows up and takes off to wander the earth in search of community. When, together with his travel companions, he comes ashore and steps into a kingdom, he discovers the Autocrat is the biggest joker and the traps and tricks he sets work only on those who fall for them and who accept his walls, borders, and limitations. As the Mymble’s daughter explains, these enclosures are associated with language and literacy, and they work only for those who believe in them and who know them as barriers; otherwise, they are good for having picnics and playing pranks.

The same applies to children and pedagogy. In wilderness, children are not limited by their parents but by their own needs for proximity, protection, and care. When they decide they are ready to venture further from parents and home, with all the relationships that constitute one’s feeling of belonging, in order to build their own relationships and acquire knowledge and skills, their parents help them prepare for the journey and they know they always have the old home to return to where they can bring along new members to integrate into the family.

Race, or the superficial difference of colour, is another issue that has no meaning here aside from what flowers and colours one could experiment with in decorating one’s hair. In *Comet in Moominland*, Moomintroll finds

out from Snufkin that there are creatures exactly like the trolls, called Snorks, who are not only of different colour but change their colour according to mood. It must be so beautiful, thought Moomintroll, and when he meets the colourful Snork Maiden, he finds himself intimately attracted to her. Gender roles too are constantly subverted here. Even though the Snork Maiden likes “girly” stuff, such as putting flowers on her hair and admiring herself in the mirror, it does not prevent her from being capable of saving Moomintroll from a sea monster with the help of her mirror just as he had saved her from a carnivorous bush. The Hemulen usually wears his aunt’s dress, which proves handy for Moomintroll and travel companions when it serves as a parachute, saving them from the apocalyptic wind brought by the comet. All they had to do was grab the edges of their new friend’s skirt and the wind carried them home.

The Moomin books offer a wild array of possibilities and choices. Like their real-life compatriot, Lasse Nordlund, the Moomin book characters recycle and build their own tools but they never become dependent on them, as they always have the option to move away and subsist by gathering and roaming. They are entangled in a variety of relationships, but whenever these relationships lose the aspect of mutuality, turning into claustrophobic dependencies, the characters leave, then return, and nothing but an immense cosmic harmony can contain or inform their trajectories. That is why, in the world of Moomin wilderness, there is simply no room for machines, with the exception of self-made tools and experimental devices like the ones Moominpappa makes in his solitude at sea or during the period of his life described in his memoirs. The Hemulens, who try to control and threaten with authority and order, are powerless before the sheer will of the rest of the characters to refuse to abide by these nags’ whims and when necessary, as Snufkin demonstrates, they break out of Hemulens’ prisons and burn down their walls. It is such resistance and sabotage that saves Moomin wilderness and, like real-life wilderness, the Moomin world too contains in it everything: there is fear and misery that freeze the world around the Groke, authority figures demand submission, threatening to punish the disobedient, it has madness, sorrow, loneliness, and death, but at the same time, there are the expanses of dimensions beyond this world and possibilities of knowledge beyond one’s fear, the Hemulens’ attempts to oppress forges the spirit of comradeship and resistance, and just as winter wakes up to spring, so does death bring rebirth for those who care for life and love the world.

In this respect, the three children’s books – A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Nikolai Nosov’s trilogy on *The Adventures of Dunno and Friends*, and Tove Jansson’s Moomin books – I have chosen for this study present three different paradigms for social relations and cultural systems, issuing radically different socio-environmental and political “fictional realities”. Each of these fantasy worlds has its own impact on the living world. One of my goals in carrying out this research was to bridge the gap between science and literature so as to examine the interconnectedness of fiction and reality

as a two-way road. Another aim was to engage these narratives in a dialogue with each other tracing their expression in the various disciplines and books written both for children and adults, as well as the manifestation of fictional narratives in real life.

The hardest aspect of this work has been my attempt to reconcile with the occasional despair brought about by the overwhelming statistical data and the implications of having a fictional narrative (including the myths and misrepresentations of scientific and political plots) replace wilderness and life itself. It was hard to come to grips with the overbearing role that fictional narratives play in our lives. In this regard, it no longer matters whether the replacement of life by a civilized plot is intentional or whether it is the work of a self-replicating meme and *doxa* that have gone rampant and out of hand, because fiction and narrative have come to manipulate and domesticate human and animal persons, whatever their role or socio-economic background in this hierarchy may be, compelling the individual bodies that comprise the civilized institutions to behave specifically in the interest of civilization. Hence, not only do the narratives project specific values and provide idealized and admonitory tales, they also reconfirm the ideology, the *habitus*, the *body hexis*, and the *doxa* by eliciting the reader's identification with the desires, suffering, and trajectories of the depicted characters while overwriting the nightmarish lives of the billions of human and animal people entrapped in the lower echelons of this hierarchy. The civilizing mechanism works smoothly when personal desires are adjusted to the domesticated ideology and remain in accord with its plot. This illusion of happiness, or satisfaction, breeds the ultimate doom and despair, since the narrative imposes a structure that a priori dismisses the emotions of discontent as "deviant" or "invalid" and thereby precludes the possibility to understand why the depressed or psychotic person feels miserable or rebellious. Today such people are treated with antidepressants and anti-psychotic drugs so as to align their feelings with the civilized myth and recycle them into the system of resources.

At the same time, the realization that it is not the "genetic" heritage that writes our narratives, that memes and *habitus* can be re-imagined, rewritten, and reinscribed into chaos, is liberating because we now know we do not have to be hostages of any decision our ancestors may have taken seventeen thousand years ago or perhaps even further back, thirty thousand years ago when they first tasted flesh, devised language and art, and moved out of Africa to conquer the world. Real agency and freedom reside in the passion that strives to bring down these walls of civilization that, through a narrative that imposes rigidity and the doom of permanence, misleads us by promising comfort, safety, and pills in exchange for our wildness, chaos, and life. As the Moomintrolls show us, freedom, movement, happiness, and life dwell in the cracks. They inhabit the dimensions of technological inefficiency and, most important, in the community of all forms of deviance where difference becomes a celebration and in which change and variety constitute the norm.

To regain our community with life, we must accept the risk of danger, suffering, and madness, for these are also symptoms of resistance to the civilized plot implicit in one's refusal to internalize the prescribed place with its social value. And at the same time, these are the manifestations of chaos. Accounts of wilderness tell us that even when civilization terms disruptions in individual or group participation in its narrative as "illness" and "disability" – whether "mental", "physical", or other, including the various forms of rebellion, destruction of walls and order, and "social deviance" – we can still subvert civilization's attempt to differentiate between the groups and to unformalize their individuals. By embracing the idiosyncrasies of each while admitting the shared common essence of all, we can regain the forest. With this ability to remember our past we can recover the sentience and empathy lost and reimagine a wild future. Roaming in this wilderness, we can come to share new stories by living them instead of having one story live our dreams.

NOTES

1. Foucault used the term "discourse" to discuss the relations of power as they transpired through the act of relating to the publicly acknowledged authority, an act that entailed negotiations between actors in terms of who to listen to or cite in social networks, or whose speech to allow in the public space. In this context, language is considered to be more specific to the rules regulating the dynamics of power and its communication. I find particularly useful Bourdieu's (1979) analysis of social capital especially alongside Zerzan's (2002) critique of symbolic culture and language as tools of alienation. From an anarcho-primitivist perspective, hence, discourse appears to be a much more insidious program that affects the value of taste, reproduction, cultural identity, and much more, all of which manifests itself through the articulated and the unarticulated "knowledge" of domestication.
2. Charles Darwin has indeed acknowledged in his work the dangers of the reproductive success of any given species that may lead to the extermination of another species. My usage of the terms "Darwinian" or "Kropotkian" theory or perspective pertains to (1) the main focus of the authors, i.e. what they emphasized; and (2) the main focus of the reception. Namely, Darwinian evolutionary scientists highlight Darwin's focus on the competitive aspect of social relationships whereas the Kropotkian theory was embraced for favouring the mutual aid aspect of co-existence. Kropotkin, however, acknowledged, the place of violence and competition, but considered it as a less important strategy and more as a check-in-balance regulatory mechanism, instead giving more weight to the role of co-operation as the more general strategy for surviving and proliferation.
3. Marcel Mauss' *The Gift* (1990) is an excellent anthropological exploration of the redistribution of wealth in non-domesticated cultures, such as expressed in Potlatch.
4. http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/endangered_species/background/index.asp?article=endangeredspecies
5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8697693.stm>