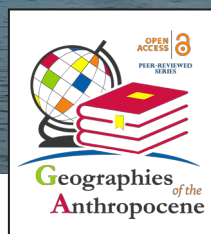


NARRATIVES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE ERA

Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Editors)

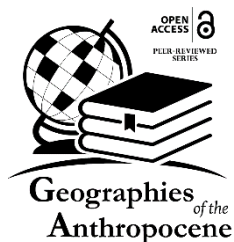
Preface by Kirill O. Thompson

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Narratives in the Anthropocene era

Charles Travis
Vittorio Valentino
Editors



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Charles Travis, Vittorio Valentino (Eds.)

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7. On the environmental issue: when poets listen to Mother-Land

Sébastien Aimé Nyafouna¹

Abstract

Within the framework of current configuration of the international and Quebec literary sphere, Rita Mestokosho, along with Joséphine Bacon, Naomi Fontaine and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, is likely to remain one of the most promising voices of Native literature. From her far-off Ekuanitshit where she was born in 1966, she invites her reader to enter her intimate geography that unfolds in a painful past and a promising present. And to that point, her collection of poems *Comment je perçois la vie* (2010) is the perfect illustration of this temporal correlation. That's because the poetic writing is, first and foremost, the unveiling from within that Mestokosho feels the imperative to go through this channel to express her deep Being. Shown in its greatest accessibility, her poetry arises from the outset as a constituent of an existential quest that crosses all her literary creation. Thereupon, to understand the work requires surreptitiously to return to this dark beginning from which everything starts. Applied to the text of Mestokosho, we believe that literature is a powerful instrument of liberation and identity reconquest of the dominated peoples, a recapture which, in our view, must necessarily lead to a surpassing of the self, an opening to the World via the poetic Listening of the Mother-Land. We talk about Anthropocene. Our study is mainly focused on Rita Mestokosho's poems without forgetting to deal with other poets to strengthen our analysis.

Keywords: Identity, Memory, Writings, Great North, Territory, Foster-Mother, Quebec Indigenousness, Tradition, Modernism, Anthropocene.

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Introduction

As François Paré points out: “I don’t think it is possible to write a work in which places of identity belonging are not a predefined source of interpretation [...] (Paré, 1994)²”. This helps understand the literary approach of Rita Mestokosho, all the more as her poetry is deeply rooted in Quebec’s Far North (Mestokosho, 2010). Each poem constitutes itself a picture, an opened window on this territory full of histories. Mestokosho calls for reviewing, exploring it: « Concerning the environmental issue: when poets listen to the Mother-Land ». Therefore, it is through this title that we aim at examining her short story *Comment je perçois la vie*. Patrick Chamoiseau has already depicted what it means to write from the standpoint of the dominated (Chamoiseau, 1997). As for Mestokosho, writing has a restoring function: it cures, liberates, transforms, fortifies, réconcilates, i.e the subject hurts it soul itself. Moreover, it becomes relevant to look at the poet’s relationship with the French language. Finally, we shall see that Mestokosho’s poetry has the particularity of celebrating the world. In the calm of nature, nothing goes unnoticed; everything makes sense, and it is a question of revealing, through the poetics of words, the singularity of each being that is there. Writers and poets, in particular, make environmental issues their own. Therefore, it is clear that the anthropocene as an epistemological reflection on human action on Nature hardly appears as a poor blind spot lost in the interstices of the planet of Letters. At least, in the light of what has just been mentioned, it will be necessary to see in what ways the anthropocene perspective finds its articulation with literature.

1. Writing to find oneself, writing to ‘repair’ oneself, writing to overcome oneself

As usual with Rita Mestokosho, the writing bears the scars of an original wound. Some of the poems cause exaltation, others are full of melancholy. Clearly, each word, each line of the last category expresses an inner tear, that of the Innu people fundamentally dispossessed of their Mother Land by these “men machines” (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 49). The latter, whom the author chooses not to name explicitly, refer to the settlers

² The translations are ours.

Land “usurpers”. It goes without saying that human activities have a significant impact on the future of humanity:

Human activities have become so pervasive and profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary terra incognita. The Earth is rapidly moving into a less biologically diverse, less forested, much warmer, and probably wetter and stormier state. The phenomenon of global change represents a profound shift in the relationship between humans and the rest of nature (Steffen *et al.*, 2007).

These are so many symbolic wounds inflicted to Mother Earth who, enduring the weight of centuries of deforestation and industry, has constantly suffered the consequences of the capitalist relentlessness of natural wealth. The disruption of *ecosystem* balances sustained by the abusive exploitation of our biotope can only lead to the loss of the biocenosis. As a victim of his own greed, man is thus signing his own demise. At the same time, many scientists agree that the spread of most infectious diseases, including the Covid-19 pandemic, is the result of the disruption of the natural ecosystems that used to ensure the harmony of life. Zoonotic diseases are thus developing almost everywhere, i.e. a system of virus transmission that takes place essentially between humans and animals, with the precision that the contamination is of course carried out in both directions. The French researcher Serge Morand makes this observation: «Studies on emerging infectious diseases attribute their increase to human activities» (Morand, 2018, p. 27). Further on, he supports his argument on the origin of these pathologies:

The explanatory factors are those of ongoing global changes: climate change and its variability, globalization with economic development and international trade, land use changes including deforestation and associated biodiversity loss, and biological invasions. The impacts of these changes on arthropod vectors, such as the Asian tiger mosquito, are among the most cited examples. EIDs³ are a phenomenon related to these global changes that is characteristic of a new geological era: the Anthropocene (Morand, 2018, pp. 27-28).

³ Emerging infectious diseases (EIDs).

In the context of Quebec, the destruction of indigenous ways and ways of being is more than overwhelming to an extent that it causes a sustainable loss of benchmarks with multiple consequences on the environment. Between Heaven and Earth, there is the smoke of the factories that rises to the point of polluting all the airspace. As a result of this long-lasting suffocation, the ozone layer is shrinking considerably due to the consequent emission of greenhouse gases:

May the memories of lost children come back to me between heaven and earth and I would say of this land my land what my father said "Bout de bois de Dieu," that native who drove a big machine on two wires of iron, the most stupid creature of the white gods, and who only one day left his way (Diallo Falémé, 2011, p. 21).

In this passage, Djibril Diallo Falémé evokes the eclipse of the landscapes of his childhood cruelly carried away in the symbolic passage of a train that the poet takes great care to designate by the sinechdoche «a big machine on two wires of iron, the most stupid creature of the white gods». In the meantime, something has changed in the scenery. The title of the collection *Mon coeur à l'envers* (2011) stages very rightly this sudden change of period, a sign of a timid shift in a destructive modernity of the living environment. Once the African forest was a peaceful place, now the same place has lost its sacred part. Poaching, trafficking of ivory, wood and precious stones are so devastating. «Habitat fragmentation and agricultural and livestock intensification affect local biodiversity in terms of both species richness and the composition of animal and plant communities» (Morand, 2018, p. 28). The observation is that humans no longer have their *Residence on earth*. Roughly speaking, they are engaged in resistance to Nature, at least through the gestures they make against it. This is a trend that we see everywhere. The lack of understanding remains global. Let us recall only that the climate disruption causes the melting of the ice without forgetting these tons of waste dumped in the oceans, of what to be, for Pablo Neruda, nostalgic of a time, of a time where one still held a great respect for the Earth. The being of the Chilean poet suffers greatly:

There will always be/ between my feet and the earth, /
manufactured goods, stockings, shoes, / or simply an infinite air, /
reinforcing the isolation and loneliness of my being, / something
tenacious (Neruda, 1972, p. 61).

Neruda witnesses helplessly as the fauna and flora were desecrated. Mother Earth was stripped of its original purity. Henceforth, “ manufactured products ” interpose themselves between the poet and the Earth, impossible - at this level of fragility - to operate a real poetic transparency between beings who inhabit the World. As the adverb of time “always” attests so well, the rupture, that is to say the crisis of the ecological link, only spreads over time. If nothing is done, then we are going to disaster. In instant, new arrivals - carefree business people, shall we say - begin to buy hectares of land. Equipped with chainsaws and tractors, they were already in a hurry to cut down trees and clear vast tracts of lands. As a result, large-scale modern agriculture replaces traditional subsistence crops. Policies to extend the area under cultivation have accentuated the use of natural habitats, mainly for the benefit of industrial livestock. The argument of profitability has become for the majority of the rulers an excuse of barely veiled convenience. In the past, the indigenous peasants had a few plots they exploited to live in respect of Nature. Today, this is not the case: the latter are struggling to make a living from their vicious Earth. At the same time, Elizabeth May, the leader of the Canadian Green Party, is warning about the considerable dangers of certain environmental practices, largely related to the immoderate extraction of schist gas:

In our desperation to hang on to something that is in declining supply, and increasing in price, we are prepared to spend more money, more energy, and do more environmental damage to squeeze out the last bits, such as scraping bitumen in Alberta [tar sands], such as trying to blow apart rock with high-pressure water to liberate natural gas, at the same time running the risk of massive water contamination (Burrows, 2011).

We never cease to reduce our Mother Nature to a wretched skin of sorrow which, even in its moments of agony, continues to attract all the lusts of the great economic powers. It is interesting to note that the consequences of human activity on nature are more than disastrous: drought, climate change, groundwater contamination, scarcity of fisheries resources or deforestation which continues to gradually decimate the indigenous cultures of Canada and elsewhere:

We live between two worlds, modern and traditional one. The equilibrium between the two is not easy due to the fact that our traditional land is threatened by destruction of the big forestry

companies, hydroelectric dams and mines. Our life and survival are linked to that of rivers, forests and lakes (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 71).

Daniel Chartier reviews the literary figures that, generally, cover the northern space:

Several figures and characters that populate the northern narratives evoke the displacement, the journey and the relationship of the being to the territory. Whether Natives (Amerindian, Inuit, Métis or Sami) or Scandinavian (Viking or Wanderer, as in Knut Hamsun's novels) people living in the Arctic, settlers, gold diggers, missionaries, trappers and hunters from the historic North, or even the imaginary characters of popular narratives (Santa Claus, polar bear, monster, iceberg and supernatural characters), all are defined by a movement or a displacement that is their own. Gold digger goes to North looking for wealth, Santa plans his way from home to home from the North Pole, Inuit pursues caribou herd, the colonizer extends the limits of inhabited regions etc (Chartier, 2006, p. 132).

The native writers take a stand. They find in the literature the only way to express themselves, to make themselves known to others, to make themselves heard, beyond the borders of Quebec.

According to Amin Maalouf, the intimacy of people, is their literature. It is there that they reveal their passions, aspirations, dreams, frustrations, beliefs, worldview around them, their perception of themselves and others, including ourselves (Maalouf, 2009, p. 206).

It is in itself a survival instinct to take the pen. In any event, it would be unreasonable to do otherwise, to indulge in this infamous ostrich policy which would have us accept the unacceptable powerless. Consequently, literature becomes a space of struggle in which a liberating word is intensely elaborated, launched into the tumult of the world. The commitment, in the sense of the French philosopher Sartre, resurfaces. We don't need to insist on it. Faced with the circumstances of the moment, it is non-negotiable and unconditionally imposes itself. It is up to the authors-singers of their peoples to take their responsibilities. Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio⁴ confirms this view:

⁴ The collection *Comment je perçois la vie, Grand-Mère : Eshi uapataman Nukum. Recueil de poèmes en innu et en français* was prefaced by Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio.

Today, in the aftermath of decolonization, literature is one of the means for the men and women of our time to express their identity, to claim their right to speak, and to be heard in their diversity. Without their voice, without their call, we would live in a silent world (Le Clézio, 2010, p. 74).

However, there are not only men in this noble endeavor for recognition; women also take part. Writing is everyone's business. Distinguishing herself from all literary paternalism, Rita Mestokosho writes freely as she sees fit, as she feels. In this regard, Quebec poet H  l  ne Dorion supports this idea:

Women bent down to write, to remake a face to language, desire, poetry. They knew how to give a feminine body to the poetic approach. Without territory but also without borders, the writing of women has circulated in the infinite tremor, rivaling the intimate with the collective, making the concrete resonate in the abstract and breaking up the partitions of the genders so that the feminine circulates (Dorion, 2005, p. 34).

Of course, “today we are on this stage where nothing can be done without women” (Slama, 1981, p. 65). As a bearer of cultures, Mestokosho is fully aware of her mission to fertilize a better tomorrow: “What to live in a community/ It is learning day after day/ What is my true identity/ In the hope of a better day» (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 57). The question of identity is not to be excluded in the reading of Mestokosho’s poems, it constitutes evidence. Maurizio Gatti, whose work focuses on Quebec’s Autochthony, makes this characteristic observation of the full necessity of writing to exist:

Literature and message of artists can indeed be as effective in the long run as politics, if not more: they have the power to focus international attention on specific issues, but more fundamentally to give pride and dignity. Subversive, they can contribute to the autonomy, expressive and mental freedom that totalitarian or repressive regimes around the world have always tried to control. Quebec's Francophone Amerindian literature has now become an area of knowledge that contributes to the understanding of Amerindian and Quebec realities and issues (Gatti, 2004, p. 25).

Gatti's remark is relevant enough to capture the scope of the "message" of Native authors in search of singularity. They hope, through art, literature, dance, cinema and music, to be the voice of their peoples face to what we consider as an expropriation of their Mother Earth. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the collection *Comment je perçois la vie* (2010) is also placed under the sign of otherness. The poet promises: "I will not forget to learn/ And share to others" (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 57). Mestokosho refuses to submit to the backward fold to break the locks of hatred. She lets herself be invaded by the song of appeasement and forgiveness, with a real conviction that openness always prevails. Thus, it paves the way towards diversity and reconciliation that, let us say, do not directly imply a renunciation to the self, to what makes us, defines us in a short, to our existential ontology. In what to think of the poetics of the various in the slippery sense: "The Various is reborn when men are concretely diversified in their different freedoms. Then he no longer demands that we renounce ourselves" (Glissant, 1969, p. 101). Certainly, "writing in French so as not to forget" (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 71), but also and above all writing to think bigger, let us hear, to surpass ourselves while remaining oneself, adopting "a true Innu way" (ibid., 63): "And then came a day when I saw the light / A light that invited me to forgive myself / And even if it is said that happiness is fleeting / I erased from my mind the dark corridor of my past, to make room for the light" (ibid., 39).

These words mark the prefiguration of a new ray of hope, "a breath of hope" (ibid., 17), which contrasts with the great abyss of the past, that of domination, that of the rape of the territory. Basically, writing is part of a posture of encounter. The poetess systematically refuses to languish in an eternal lamento. As a result, it should be noted that the motif of light — not unlike Uashtessiu, Uashtessiu, lumière d'automne (2010) (Désy & Mestokosho, 2010), another collection co-written with the Quebec poet Jean Désy — runs through the entire collection. In this, it can only be revealing of the illumination of consciousness which, transfigured, goes to the great « meeting of giving and receiving »⁵ where the North and the South meet to do, in the most sincerity, the praise of fraternity, that of hearts' pacification to a worldwide scope.

⁵ « I'll wrap up. Marx and Engels ignored us quite a bit. Teilhard invites us Negro-Africans, along with the other peoples and races of the Third World, to make our contribution to the "meeting of giving and receiving". He gives us back our being and invites us to Dialogue: to *be more*» (Senghor, 1993, pp. 12-13).

White and Black people are all sons of the same mother land.
 And they sang in multiple voices, singing
 Hosanna Alleluia !
 As in the the childhood realm (kindgom), once upon a time when I
 dreamt
 So, they sang the innocence of the world, and danced the
 blossoming
 Danced forces that punctuated, punctuated the
 Force of forces : Justice granted, that is
 Beauty Goodness
 (Senghor, 2006, p. 310).

It is clear that, from now nothing will be without this ability to listen the two parties. As such, writing provides the possibility of enchanting the present in which autochthones and allochthones live in harmony in the world through a poetic language that sings cultural diversity and approaches.

2. A poetic language across cultures

Mestokosho's inspiration appears from the plurality of ancestral voices responsible for enlightening the spirit for the vitality and the preservation of native roots. Let us remind the poet has a lot inspired from her native culture. For her, the speech is an echo; it deeply resonates in all the ages, as we can read in her poem «Née de la pluie»: «I was born from sounds and music / With the rhythm of the ancestral drum / Which captures all cynical silence / And warms this theatrical cold» (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 55). Mestokosho's writing and her narratives all imbued with an important orality, are rooted in tales, myths and legends in which she grew up from childhood: «You told me stories» (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 67). In this example «tu=you» refers to Nukum, the grand-mother of the poet whose evocation is ensuring. As it arises, the situation of enunciation here testifies an emotional closeness bringing together the two beings who never leave each other when they are no longer of the same world. The imperfect tense confirms the absence of Nukum. As the guardian of secular traditions, is no longer. However, the dialogue gives flesh to this person who is so dear to the poet. We come significantly to a poetic absence that can, at any time, be converted into a dazzling presence. Formally, the exchange participates in its materialization. The poem is understood as the prayer rhythmic of a

gentle invocation. After all, the adult becomes again the child who used to listen to the wise words of Nukum, omnipresent in the writing of the collection.

Now, back to the title *Comment je percois la vie, Grand-Mere*. It foresees life as grasped by the poet, in the sense that it does not dissociate with that of her grand-mother. Therefore, a link is established between two conniving feelings and two glances. Meanwhile, the effect of the comma is considerable: it is not exclusive as one could believe at a first glance. It is rather inclusive. This punctuation sign aims at empowering the contact between Rita Mestokosho and Nukum, and beyond, with her earlier ancestors :

I crossed the gate which destroyed my universe
But some people have seen me doing that
Because I was like water in the river
That freezes in winter.
I fled towards the eternal lands of my ancestors
And I became the prodigious child
My body is here but my spirit remains there
Far away, very far in my ancestors' lands
I talked to them with opened eyes, everything faints
I open the eyes to learn how to fly
Towards all my brothers who need me
My life is going forward

(Mestokosho, 2010, p. 62).

Mestokosho's language is animated by an energy that always leads him to expand to new lands. The book, once published, does not have to lock itself in a given territory. It has to escape, to dispossess itself of his author to fall into the hands of a virtual reader, the time of an incursion into the universe of fiction. The latter can only come into contact with the unconscious of the writing subject through a language intended to convey the writer's thought and message. The literary text obeys the universalization which becomes, on this occasion, text-world. It goes beyond the categories, flying over national, geographical or even psychic borders: When a space is brought back to the territory that embodies politico-institutional set considered as homogeneous, or to the « nation », which is an historicization of such a set, it is inevitably governed by this stereotypy» (Westphal, 2007, p. 234).

What Westphal mentions regarding the dangers of the spatial assignation can be adapted in our study by a simple shifting of terminology. Relatively,

without compelling the equivalence, we substitute «space» to «literature». Mestokosho has not chosen to linguistically stiffen her collection. Its richness finds all its relevance in the heterogeneity and the media coverage that find their expression culminated in virtuosity of a language and that interferes with the terms of the native land. Thus, the poet does not prevent herself from incorporating in her poems. For sure, that does not mean the author should flout his/her native land to be read. In this regard, we will not forget that one's writes according to his/her own experience, added to or adjusted to the familiar areas that surround us. Andrée Chedid shares this idea as follows:

I tried to join my land, to the earth; / Words, to
the frame of silence; / The wide, to the veiled song.
/ Tempted to say the possible meeting, / Free the
place from the traps of the refuges; / Bow the floor,
to the point of sharing it.

(Chedid, 1987, p. 230).

On these junctures, the poetic language highlights the nature of the landscape; it is at the same time a song, an expression and literary making more aesthetic the real-life.

Then, the collection *Comment je perçois la vie* of Rita Mestokosho is incarnating the mother tongue of the poet — l'innu aiamun — that can be combined with the French language in her writing. By way of illustration, let us see that as follows:

Shena tshitei
Tshika uapaten assi tshe uitshikun
Tuta tshipuamuna tshetshi inniuimakaki
Tshika uapaten tshitinnium e minuashit.
(Mestokosho, 2010, p. 16).

Let your heart opened
You will see that nature will help you
Let your dreams blossom
You will see your life will change...
(Mestokosho, 2010, p. 17).

The superposition of linguistic mediums is not innocent. It must be said that Mestokosho does not reject the French language. She hopes, through this judicious interference of languages, to reach a wider audience. The

work no longer belongs; it escapes from itself to submit to logic of reappropriation through reading. Hence the need to write in a language other than the mother tongue. Mestokosho finds no alibi there. She is more concerned with being read and understood by others. Starting from this process of circulating the text, here is what she says about it: “Writing in a language, the French language is also a necessity. To be able to broadcast our concerns to a broad audience in a poetic language” (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 71). She promotes the diversity of tones and styles. Is it a truism to find it in her poem “l’arbre de la vie” ⁶ (Mestokosho, 2004, p. 94) biblical references (“the third day”, “the fifth day”, the “seven days”)⁷ ? Not at all. In fact, all those intertexts echo Genesis Story. As it appears in the collection, the references to the sacred text considerably enriches Rita Mestokosho’s book that keeps on calling for the celebration and reconciliation with the World, a theme which is dear to the poet. She does not only marvel at the beautiful eyes of the Nature-Earth: she metaphorically transforms her pen to a weapon of struggle. Her literary approach is merely Anthropocene. Brian R. Cook, Lauren A. Rickards and Ian Rutherford precise:

The Anthropocene stands out as a statement about the planet, encompassing and extending the challenge of thinking globally, which echoes the discourses surrounding global climate change and sustainable development (Cook *et al.*, 2015, p. 1).

We understand that the Anthropocene is part of the horizon of a future that takes hold in the present. From a strictly temporal point of view, we will say that the Anthropocene philosophy follows the trajectory of a collective becoming: it is a question of the future of humanity, of the phenomenological relationship of man to Mother Nature. In this context, the

⁶ Genesis 2.9 « And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.», The Holy Bible, Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared & Revised Set forth in 1611 and commonly known as the King James Version. Online: http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Bible_King_James_Version.pdf.

⁷ *Ibid.* / Genesis 1.13 «And the evening and the morning were **the third day**», The Holy Bible, *Ibid* ; Genesis 1.23 «And the evening and the morning were **the fifth day**.», *ibid.* ; Genesis 2.3 « And God blessed **the seventh day**, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. », The Holy Bible, *Ibid.*

poets have, once again, something to tell us. Let us immerse ourselves in the river Rhapsodies of El Hadj Abdoul Hamidou Sall, where the author returns to the singular attention that the poet gives “to beings and things”:

The poet is, more than any other, attentive to beings and things, to what passes and changes. He is the one who, always, through time passing through a space where everything is both precious and threatened, remains the attentive guardian of the temple and the harmonious bugle of the future (Hall, 2010, p. 58). A poem-anthropocene, both in form and in the message it delivers, Sall’s text sufficiently alerts us to the necessity of renewing, while there is still time, the phenomenological link between man and the world. At the end, as Julio Cortázar states in his “Open Letter” to Neruda,

[...] the poem is born to be more than a poem, stone in the edifice of a future disconnected humanity, hammer or handshake in the multitudinal workshop where slowly begins to forge another image of man on the planet (Cortázar, 1972, p. 8).

Man, from the pedestal of his sufficiency, continues unconsciously to destroy the planet, to harm it, a fatal blow that anticipates its next extinction. We are hardly in a fairy tale: we are talking here about our sustainable ecological footprint, the scientifically observable and measurable global consequences, without losing sight of the pollution of the seas and oceans, To which must be added the soils contaminated by the use of pesticides, chlordecone is a revealing example in Martinique. One wonders if there are still any of these corners of Nature with the wild charm that still resists civilization. Yet, it seems to us, humans (at least some) forget that somewhere their destiny, therefore their survival here below, remains unconditionally bound to that of Earth. If we formulate things more simply, we will say that to destroy Mother-Nature is to destroy oneself in the short and long term does not go against the climatosceptic theses. That such a reality should not be seen as a matter of pure bad faith when our future is terribly threatened...It therefore seems urgent to change our way of being in the world. Preserving nature at the same time means thinking about future generations.

At such a rapid rate of over-exploitation, the Earth as a whole is inevitably subject to exhaustion. In fact, we will be held accountable. In light of all these crucial questions, we understand that it is high time to do something before it is too late. It is now or never will be said to make our Earth better: “And I am in your hand/ Earth my beloved land my stake and my cause” (Chedid, 1955, p. 19). Obviously, given the urgency of the

moment, long speeches will not have been enough. In this way, in order to respond to what we call the Great World Devotions, action necessarily becomes the horizon of a vital praxis that adjusts to the dynamics of an environmental ethic in the perspective of a global governance of the planet. The 2015 Paris Conference on Climate Change is an example of an initiative to encourage for a better well-being of all, but we must moderate our consumer appetites for a while by turning to renewed energies. This presupposes adopting other alternative ways of producing more respectful of our biosphere. This naturally requires an awakening pedagogy based on a mesology orientation that reflects seriously on the relationships between humans and their environments, their living environments in a way. It is a question, i.e., of making people aware of the dangers of their bad practices on the environment.

In the preface of his book entitled *Poetics of the Earth : Natural History and Human History*, Augustin Berque makes this relevant remark:

The environment is a universal given (an *Umgebung*, as Uexküll calls it), while the milieu, or ambient world (*Umwelt*), is a unique elaboration of this given. It is an elaboration of meaning which is proper to each species (of living beings) and proper also to each culture (for the human species) (Berque & Feenberg-Dibon, 2019, p. 10).

It emerges from this the protection of Nature (our common good) becomes the business of all. For this reason, an environmental ethic that does not separate from the question of Anthropocene must adopt a transdisciplinary reading in order to establish an Anthropocene of the plural where geographers, historians, ecologists meet, literature, doctors, etc. in order to reflect on the scourges that humanity is experiencing. In his interview with Jean-Marc Moura, Bertrand Westphal recognizes the richness of this approach:

Today, it seems difficult to limit the study of literature to the strict field of text and language as has been the case in recent decades, because literature too is in the world, as are those who examine the hypotheses and variations (Westphal & Moura, 2018, p. 171).

Once again, literature grasps the planetary actuality to question the meaning of existence while advocating, within the framework of poetry, the tender celebration of the World.

3. A poetry of celebration and reconciliation with the World

Writing is also, to a certain extent, à poetic celebration of the beautiful world.

In the same literary order of analysis, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*), Lamartine (*Méditations poétiques*), Chateaubriand (*Mémoires d'outre-tombe*), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (*Études et harmonies de la nature*), Hugo, Musset, Sand and Vigny have found in Nature their only place of refuge, a space with sober singularities in which they find the tranquility of the soul. Lulled by an enjoyable silence, romantic poets draw poetic inspiration from this place of incredible shows. In other words, Nature, “the sanctuary into which God enters” (Chateaubriand, 2014a, p. 15), is conceived, according to such a reading, as a label of transformation and inner transfiguration. It should be noted that for these writers the internality of being is renewed in pure contemplation of the world. Some will go so far as to see in Nature the very manifestation of divinity. Philippe Jaccottet clearly restores the quintessence of this poetry of celebration and reconciliation with the World in these words:

We stop being disoriented. Without being able to fully explain it, or to prove it, one experiences an impression similar to that given by the great architectures; there is new communication, balance, between the left and the right, the periphery and the center, the top and the bottom. Murmuring rather than radiant, a harmony is perceived. Then one no longer wants to leave this place, to make the slightest movement; one is forced, or rather inclined to recollection. This enclosure of crumbling walls where oaks grow, that sometimes crosses a wild rabbit or a partridge, is it not our church? We enter more willingly than in others, where the air is lacking and where, far from igniting, we are lectured (Jaccottet, 1993, pp. 128-129).

In Rita Mestokosho's writing, the beauty of Nature-Earth seizes itself in the crucible of a spiritual alliance between here and elsewhere, connected by poetic reverie. We can read:

Through my dreams, my moher
The Earth leads me to another world.
I travel with the Great Eternal Spirit on the eagle's back (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 38).

These lines highlight a language with chthonian vibrations whose breath finds its resonance in the abysses of the world. Mestokosho's poems make the reader travel through the song of the Earth, which constitutes his breath and pulsations, echo the fascinating voice of Walt Whitman:

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs, / The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn, / The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind, A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms, / The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag, / The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides, / The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun (Whitman, 1885, p. 30).

For Mestokosho et pour Whitman, this is to rediscover the fragrance of nature that stems from the cosmopoetic relationship between beings. To poetize, presupposes to stage a holistic vision of existence through which things and beings communicate spiritually. Far from being anthropocentric, even egocentric, the poetry of Rita Mestokosho takes above all an anthropocenic orientation. It is worth noting that her collection of poems *Comment je percois la vie, Grand-Mère : Eshi uapataman Nukum* applies well to the ecocritical reading which tries to give the scoop to the literary treatment of Nature in its composite set :

If for the scientist, ecology is the study of the interaction between organisms and the environment, for the general public, the term refers to an attitude that takes into consideration the interconnection of all human beings and is concerned about how we inhabit the Earth. This responsibility of man towards the environment is reflected in ethical and political positions, the range of which is wide and varies considerably from one country to another (Schoentjes, 2015, p. 15).

In the same order of analysis, the rapprochement between people should lead to another rapprochement, and not the least, that of the great openness to the World. In this case, we are no longer in a Cartesian logic of possession. Let's see, according to Michel Serres, to *natural covenant* of poetic solidarity with the Living:

Back to nature, then! That means we must add to the exclusively social contract a natural contract of symbiosis and reciprocity in which our relationship to things would set aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect; where knowledge would no longer imply property, nor action mastery, nor would property and mastery imply their excremental results and origins. An armistice contract in the objective war, a contract of symbiosis, for a symbiont recognizes the host's rights, whereas a parasite-which is what we are now-condemns to death the one he pillages and inhabits, not realizing that in the long run he's condemning himself to death too (Serres, 1995, p. 38).

It remains to learn to listen to the beats of Mother Earth, in other words, to become familiar with her poetry. Men have long misrepresented Nature:

The traces of our action are visible everywhere! And not in the older way that the Male Western Subject dominated the wild and savage world of nature through His courageous, violent, sometimes hubristic, dream of control (Latour, 2014, p. 5).

A policy of the Anthropocene must put reconciliation with the World at the centre of its action. Following the Amerindian cosmogony that establishes a continuum between beings and things, Rita Mestokosho's poetry proceeds from a calm relationship with the dark forces. From the outset, a relationship is born, at the maternal boundary between the poet and his native space:

My thought is intimately linked to the Earth From her entrails; I taste Life She plunged me into the deep waters of her mother's womb so I could feel the beating of her heart, even when I sleep (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 38).

In this excerpt, all the majesty (or even the capital letter) returns to the "Earth". It is to the honor. The poet, in addition to snuggling in her, makes Gaia a being in her own right. We are in the hymn register. The further we go in the reading of the collection, the more we realize that it merges with Foodland. In reality, the waltz of alliterations in [m] and [s], combined with the assonance in [é], gives the poem a tranquility mixed with lyricism. There emerges from this passage an endless rapture as we notice in verse 3, whose significant length continues in the following verse. This

stretch-span follows the slow trajectory of the “waters”»⁸. The poet Diallo Falémé plunges his soul back into the blessed waters of his Falémé, this tributary that he never ceases to carry in his heart, for he says to himself that the rivers are the sign of intercontinental integration, concord and brotherhood between people: “I’m going to seek love throughout waters. / Because in the ground of my consciousness grow bad weeds nostalgia for my sleeping April” (Diallo Falémé, 2011, p. 23). “And the water lilies, among the reeds, / The large water lilies on unruffled waters” (Verlaine, 1960, p. 65). We find, in this regard, the Bachelardian semantics of poetic reverie, of the nest and from the cellar as places of refuge. This lexicon of secrecy is intended, among other things, to reveal the primary innocence that draws the contours of Intimacy:

In its current meaning, intimacy is a matter of the self and the family circle. It is of the order of the nearest subject. It is, in particular, that territory from which the subject measures both his identity and his availability to the world, that territory from which he autonomously modulates the hospitable nature as we find, for example, an indication in the expression «I welcomed him in my intimacy» (Serfaty-Garzon, 2003, p. 69).

From the above lines, Mestokosho’s text clearly reveals this poetic communication that aims at renewing the relation to the Nourishing Earth. In a globalized world that obeys the capitalist law of profit, the protection of ecosystems remains little in sight. With a few rare exceptions, many industrialists find it difficult to grasp the importance of promoting sustainable development for the great happiness of humanity. As for Rita Mestokosho, she makes the preservation of Nature her ultimate battle horse: “Your message is to protect the land / I will protect it as long as I live with it” (Mestokosho, 2010, p. 15). The future form calls for a destiny that lasts as testifies by the temporal

adverb “ long time”. While there is still time, the poet erects ramparts-poems against the abusive exploitation of natural resources. Certainly, one day, there will be scarcity, then exhaustion. In the meantime, something must be done to anticipate the planetary disaster:

Do not take the earth’s last breath

⁸ « The water is milk as soon as it is sung with fervor, as soon as the feeling of adoration for the motherhood of the waters is passionate and sincere » (Bachelard, 1942, p. 141).

Allow our mother to breath
And see her children running out of breath
In the nature that is my shelter
(Mestokosho, 2010, p. 49).

From this questioning, one can read all the commitment of Rita Mestokosho. She writes to awaken and draw attention, by insisting on epiphora «breath». Hence, the power of demanding advice, that is to say, she solicits a favor through which the secular addressee would understand the ecologic emergency of moment. «We will not always inhabit these yellow lands, our delight ...» (Perse, 1960, p. 124). One day or another we will go, we will no longer be here. Let us, in this ephemeral time of our stay in the world, to treat the Land that shelters us with elegance. It is in this respect the poet François-René de Chateaubriand expresses his last wish:

I want to end my career;
Entered the night of the tombs,
My shadow still quiet and lonely,
In the forests looking for rest
(Chateaubriand, 2014b, p. 31).

The Quebec poet Gaston Miron seems to express the same query than Chateaubriand:

Finally, I can look at you face to face / in the most vegetal
maintenance of space / earth alternately taciturn and tormenting / earth
all at once in heat and chilly... / so that one day I finally rest/ in your
lowest flight... (Miron, 1999, p. 166).

We bear in mind that nature takes a major place for the poets. Any existence, whether human or not is sacred. There is any reluctance to preserve and above all to respect it. In the final analysis, this is what summarizes all the topicality of their writing. From the questions they raise, their poems touch and talk to us by all means.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the relation of the past to present for the poet Rita Mestokosho, is centered in a search for identity where time regulates life. Between usurpation, exploitation and assimilation, the Natives of Québec

have suffered for a long time regarding the deprivation of their lands. Foreigner in his own country, Innu has become unrecognizable due to the Westernization of consciousness. To this point, the writers consider writing as a means of expression and claiming for the Human Being. What can gain literature? (Audeguy & Forest, 2014). For Mestokosho, it is absolutely and unavoidable to write, i.e to poetize, in fact, who we are. Her poems embody the native culture. As we pointed out, her poetry, that is imbued with an anthropocenic dimension, is revealing the World. In this way only, it becomes possible to re-appropriate the Mother-Land, to re-activate the poetic contact with the immediate environment. Victimization is meaningless for her. Instead, she prefers lucidity and confidence to the future. She promotes dialogue between people, this would be necessary to emphasize linguistic interference to make more visible her work that Le Clézio praises: «Rita's poetry alludes to all of us, wherever we are in the world, no matter how are our origins and our history» (Le Clézio, 2010, p. 10). In short, we bear in mind that Human Being can't get rid of Nature where he/she draws his/her subsistence.

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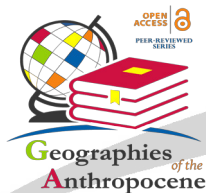
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"The Anthropocene has still the rank of a scientific hypothesis. Yet, it has already sedimented in our imagination with its stories of climate change and mass extinctions, global pandemics and energy crisis, technofossils and oceanic plastic, social justice and new minerals that are changing the face (and the bowels) of the planet. Investigating this imagination from multiple angles, *Narratives in the Anthropocene Era*, brilliantly edited by Charles Travis and Vittorio Valentino, is an indispensable tool for situating these stories into the conceptual horizon of the environmental humanities".
(Serenella Iovino, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

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