

ECOLOGY AND THE FANTASTIC. THE EXAMPLE OF *LE MONDE ENFIN* BY JEAN-PIERRE ANDREYON¹

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Recibido: 02-10-2019
Aceptado: 09-08-2020



ABSTRACT

This article analyzes *Le monde enfin* by the French writer Jean-Pierre Andrevon as an example of the relation between the new fantastic and ecology. Adopting canonical fantastic theories as a point of reference, it presents the development of the new fantastic as a genre and Andrevon's important place in this literary field. Thereafter, it examines the narrative roles of humans and nature in *Le Monde enfin* in order to demonstrate how the author plays with the conventional definitions of the character and the malevolent phenomenon. As the study strives to prove, Andrevon's ecological preoccupations strongly influence his literary work. Moreover, the article evokes intertextual references in *Le Monde enfin* and examines the text in relation to philosophical concepts such as deep ecology and the Gaia hypothesis.

KEY WORDS: ecology, the fantastic, fauna, flora, Andrevon

1 This study has been conducted as part of a project subsidized by the Polish National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki, 2018/29/B/HS2/00748, OPUS15): «Nowa Fantastyka Jean-Pierre'a Andrevona» («Jean-Pierre Andrevon's New Fantastic»). The project is led by Katarzyna Gadomska.

ECOLOGÍA Y LO FANTÁSTICO. EL EJEMPLO DE *LE MONDE ENFIN* DE JEAN-PIERRE ANDREYON

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza *Le monde enfin* del escritor francés Jean-Pierre Andrevon como un ejemplo de la relación entre lo neofantástico y la ecología. Adoptando teorías canónicas de lo fantástico como punto de referencia, presenta el desarrollo de lo neofantástico como un género y el importante papel de Andrevon en ese campo literario. Posteriormente, el estudio examina los roles narrativos de la naturaleza y el ser humano en *Le Monde enfin* con el objeto de mostrar cómo juega el autor con las definiciones convencionales del personaje y del fenómeno malvado. Como se intenta demostrar en el presente artículo, las preocupaciones ecológicas de Andrevon influyen fuertemente en su obra literaria. Además, el estudio señala las referencias intertextuales de *Le Monde enfin* y examina la obra en relación con conceptos filosóficos como la ecología profunda y la hipótesis Gaia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ecología, fantástico, fauna, flora, Andrevon



1. THE FANTASTIC AND THE NEW FANTASTIC: ESSENTIAL TERMINOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS

Since the fantastic² is one of the key concepts of this article, it is first and foremost necessary to broadly address its definition and its historical evolution. Several contemporary critics, such as Roger Caillois, Louis Vax, Tzvetan Todorov, Joel Malrieu³ (to enumerate the best known), have been trying to establish the boundaries of the genre in question. Their critical approaches, different as they are, do have certain common points. Firstly, all theorists postulate that a real framework is absolutely essential for the fantastic effect to occur. Secondly, specialists of the genre highlight the importance of the malevolent phenomenon (otherwise called the disruptive element), the intrusion of which into the real framework constitutes a shock, a scandal, a disruption of the laws

2 The French term *le fantastique* is more and more often translated into English as *the fantastic*, as opposed to *fantasy*, which is considered less precise and often refers to a different genre. See in this regard: Bozzetto & Huftier (2004: 15-31).

3 Caillois (1958), Vax (1965), Todorov (1970), Malrieu (1992). Other, more recent attempts to describe the poetics of the fantastic literature were made by Roger Bozzetto (2001; 2005; 2008), Christian Chelebourg (2006), Denis Mellier (2000), Nathalie Prince (2015) and David Roas (2018).

governing reality (Caillois, 1965: 61). In the nineteenth century fantastic, which theorists refer to as classic or canonical, the disruptive element is so conventional that Roger Caillois (1958) identifies only its twelve variants, including for example: diabolical pact, appearance of a phantom, wizard curse, vampire activity, inanimate objects coming to life, etc. The disruptive element is often portrayed as almighty and the fantastic narrative always ends with its victory over the character. The latter, crushed by the phenomenon, frequently perishes or falls into madness: a spiritual death. This distribution of narrative roles appears to be fixed, especially in the nineteenth century fantastic.

The classic fantastic reached its apogee —its golden age— in the nineteenth century Europe and United States. Nonetheless, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the genre became highly codified and simplified. Therefore, it remained of little importance in the first half of the twentieth century.

During the nineteen-eighties, however, there were several efforts in France to reform the genre, so that it would meet the needs of modern readers and regain its former popularity. Jean-Pierre Andrevon ought to be named as one of the reformers who wanted to open new perspectives for the fantastic, referred to since then as the «new fantastic» or «neo-fantastic». He is a very prolific writer (the author of about 180 texts: collections of short stories, novels and novel series), a recipient of numerous literary awards (such as *Prix Julia Verlanger*, *Grand prix de la S-F française*, *Grand prix du roman d'aventure*), a critic and a theorist of modern fantastic and horror cinema, as well as a devoted ecologist. In 1980, Andrevon edits the anthology *L'Oreille contre les murs*, a crucial publication for defining the principles of the new fantastic. The anthology includes several texts by French and Belgian writers, such as: Jacques Sternberg, Alain Dorémieux, Daniel Walther, Pierre Pelot, Michel Griamaud, Patrice Duvic, Gaston Compere, Jean-Pierre Bours, George W. Barlow, Philippe Cousin, Serge Brussolo, and others. In the preface, Andrevon outlines the history of the genre from a Hegelian perspective⁴ and formulates the postulates of new *fantastiqueurs*.⁵

4 The concept of nonmimetic fiction —*littératures de l'imaginaire*— whose hegemony has been dynamic and dependent on the historical time, as well as on the needs of the readers, reminds us of Roger Caillois's theory (1958) in which the marvellous —*le merveilleux*— is succeeded by the fantastic in the nineteenth century and then science fiction in the twentieth century.

5 The term *fantastiqueurs* is used deliberately in the present study in order to designate the creators of fantastic literature. The term was popularized by Pierre-Georges Castex (1951), who employed it to characterize the nineteenth century masters of the fantastic, such as E.T.A Hoffmann, Charles Nodier, Honoré de Balzac, Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée, Gérard de Nerval and Guy de Maupassant. In addition, Jean-Pierre Andrevon (1980: 10-12) uses this term to define the new fantastic writers listed in the present study. This clearly indicates the correspondence between the canonical and the new fantastic.

When Andrevon evokes the golden era of the fantastic literature in the nineteenth century, he also compares the genre in question to dusty Gothic cathedrals, due to its overly schematic nature. As Andrevon argues: «Revenants, fantômes, zombie, apparitions / disparitions merveilleuses ou maléfiques: tels sont les archétypes de cette littérature fantastique qui eut qualitativement et quantitativement son apogée au XIX^e siècle, avec ce qu'on appelle le gothique, et qui ressemble aux cathédrales du même style, pareillement boursoufflé, pareillement, poussiéreux» (1980: 7). According to Andrevon, the twentieth century brings a crucial change, as the admiration for the advancement of science results in the hegemony of a new genre: science fiction. As he observes: «Le fantastique disparaît pour faire place à la science-fiction. C'est que la science explique tout» (1980: 8). However, the nineteen-seventies mark the disappointment with science and its limitations, which entails the rejection of science fiction and the return of the fantastic. Nonetheless, it is a new kind of the fantastic, which fulfils the needs of contemporary readers. As Andrevon summarizes: «Années 70. La matière est rétive, l'atome ne nous ouvre pas de verts paradis (...), l'espace est trop vaste (...). Et le temps, surtout, se dérobe (...). La science-fiction devient science-catastrophe. (...) Alors on fait un grand pas en arrière, on revient à la case départ. Au fantastique. (...) Un fantastique qu'on peut appeler fantastique moderne, pour bien marquer nos distances avec l'autre, l'ancien» (1980: 8-9).

Characterizing the new fantastic, Andrevon emphasizes the importance of the real; however, this factor cannot be reduced to a realistic background intended to make the intrusion of the supernatural phenomenon believable, as is the case with the canonical fantastic. The new fantastic must happen *hic et nunc*, here and now, so that the reader feels the close presence of the threat: «On n'a plus de futur (visible). Mais on a un présent, riche en strates d'horreurs obscures à explorer» (1980: 9). The real aspect of the new fantastic must be characterized by banality, triviality, commonness, and it is this «familière étrangeté» (Afeissa, 2014) of the world that becomes the source of modern horror.⁶ This «insolite quotidien» (1980: 9) «sait se glisser dans les décors les plus plats, les plus gris, les plus banalement désespérants : ceux dans lesquels on vit, mais que notre œil traverse tant sont translucides leurs architectures» (1980: 120), such as a garage, a junkyard, the subway, a large office, a railway station, a hotel, a cinema, a modern building, and «plus généralement ces grandes villes bâties comme autant de labyrinthes» (1980:

6 This anxiety-provoking metamorphosis of the reality is observed by David Roas (2018: 3-21).

12). This marks one of the basic differences between the canonical and the new fantastic. It is worth mentioning that in nineteenth-century novellas, the role of the real —*le réel*— was often reduced to a few sentences in the incipit, in order to establish the spatiotemporal framework, whereas in the new fantastic, the banal, everyday reality is all-pervasive and virtually becomes a full-fledged hero of the text.

It is not only the structure and function of the real that change in the neo-fantastic. Andrevon also notes some changes to the disruptive element. The writer rejects the traditional phenomenon, which he finds too conventional for the modern reader, as it is always linked to a naive and oversimplified kind of supernatural. This means the absence of motifs such as a phantom or a vampire (alternatively, they can appear, but in a new way, without inducing anxiety). Andrevon proposes that the new phenomenon should stem directly from the anxiety-provoking contemporary reality, which also emphasizes the role of the real in the new fantastic. As examples of this type of phenomenon, the writer mentions: inner emptiness experienced by the modern man, exploration of the depths of his psyche,⁷ his troubled mind,⁸ life in the time of cataclysms (such as ecological — the myth of the last man and the all-powerful, frightening nature,⁹ historical — wars, genocide, totalitarianism, social — overpopulation and its opposite: the extinction of the human race), the pessimistic topic of «no future» (1980: 8-9). It is easy to notice that

7 As Andrevon observes in one of his interviews about the internalization of the new fantastic: «la S-F c'est Marx et (...) le fantastique c'est Freud ! Ce dernier procède de peurs beaucoup plus intérieures qui viennent souvent de l'enfance : la peur du noir, de la maladie, de la perte de ses parents ; tout ce qui nourrit la petite bête gluante qui est en chacun de nous. Ce qui est intéressant pour un auteur, c'est de faire sortir ses peurs de lui et de les communiquer à ses lecteurs» (Comballot, 2013).

8 Obviously, this Andrevonian postulate is not entirely new, as in the nineteenth century there existed the clinical fantastic, which inspired itself with the human mind as a source of horror (as visible in some texts by Théophile Gautier, August de Villers de l'Isle-Adam, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Guy de Maupassant). Nevertheless, there are certain differences in the implementation of the classic and the new clinical fantastic. In the nineteenth century, the clinical fantastic often exposed the influence of external factors, such as drugs, alcohol, paranormal phenomena (telepathy, mesmerism), on the human mind. Madness was usually referred to directly, explicitly classified as a mental illness (in medical terms). On the contrary, in the new fantastic, madness is not usually a result of external factors. It appears out of nowhere, affecting not only individuals, but also larger social groups (collective psychosis). In the same way, the disturbing behaviour of the characters is not explicitly defined as a mental illness, a psychosis or a neurosis. The reader is confronted with peculiar, anxiety-provoking acts and left to interpret them as a potential mental illness. The classic short story which perfectly illustrates the clinical new fantastic is Andrevon's «Ici», from the collection *Paysages de Mort* (1978). It describes the profoundly lonely existence of a man who never leaves his house and obsessively repeats the same rituals every day. The story is virtually a textbook example of obsessive-compulsive disorder and agoraphobia, but it is left for the reader to identify and interpret: therefore, unlike in the classic fantastic, the cause of the character's uncanny actions remains unknown and becomes in itself a source of hesitation. n the everyday life. rspective, ion)

9 Cf. Estok & Sivaramakrishnan (2014).

some subjects have been acquired from science fiction or dystopia: consequently, the new fantastic appears porous as a genre.

In his preface, Andreuon evokes the names of a few, mostly English-speaking writers (King, Herbert, Masterton) who, in his opinion, implement their own visions of the new fantastic and can become examples for French-speaking authors to follow.¹⁰ He also recommends taking inspiration from horror cinema,¹¹ as transmedia relations can help to enrich the new fantastic.

In summary, the writer intends to use the term «new fantastic» in the broadest possible sense (closer to the anglophone concepts¹² and relatively far from certain restrictive French theories),¹³ emphasizing the hybridity and transmediality of the genre in question.

2. THE NEW FANTASTIC ENGAGED IN THE «HERE AND NOW» – ECOLOGY IN THE NEW FANTASTIC

Andreuon himself strives to implement the aforementioned theoretical postulates in his work. As he has been interested in ecology for years, ecological commitment is of the utmost importance in his writing. He comments on his environmental concerns as follows: «Je voulais mettre en forme mes préoccupations écologiques, préoccupations qui m'angoissent et qui devraient angoisser la totalité des habitants de cette planète s'ils veulent survivre» (Comballot, 2013); «On écrit sur ce qui nous motive, sur ce qui nous effraie aussi, et pour ma part, c'est plutôt l'avenir très proche de notre pauvre planète Terre, sous l'angle de la dégradation de l'environnement, de la pollution, de l'effet de serre. Vous savez, ce n'est pas une posture. Je suis vraiment pour l'extinction de l'humanité...La nature saccagée est une douleur permanente et je me suis préoccupé d'écologie dès le début des années 1970, en participant notamment à la première revue du genre en France : *La Gueule ouverte*» (Sabourdy, 2014);

10 Andreuon does not hide his admiration for Stephen King. In his work, one can find several intertextual allusions to King's texts. Andreuon is also called «The French Stephen King».

11 *The Exorcist, The Omen, Jaws, Star Wars, Superman.*

12 Cf. Bozzetto & Huftier (2004).

13 For example, Andreuon's concept is far from one of the most restrictive definitions of the fantastic, conceived by Tzvetan Todorov. According to the latter, the essence of the fantastic lies in the hesitation between the supernatural interpretation (convincing, but incompatible with reality) and the realistic interpretation of the described events (1970: 29). Thus, Andreuon's concept of the new fantastic harkens back to the beginnings of the genre, when writers (E.T.A. Hoffmann, Charles Nodier) and critics (Jean-Jacques Ampère, Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne) opted for a transgeneric, broad vision of the genre in question.

«L'écologie et tout ce qui touche à la survie de la Terre, hélas bien malmenée, me semblent importants et suscitent des sujets d'histoires» (Comballot, 2013). Thus, by uniting ecology with the fantastic, the writer implements his postulate of a «here and now» genre, inspired *par excellence* by everyday life, by the «familiar strangeness» of the contemporary world in the shadow of a catastrophe caused by climate change and the collapse of ecosystems. This paper presents the accomplishment of this postulate in one of the most famous Andrevon's novels: *Le Monde enfin*,¹⁴ which Andrevon himself refers to as his *oeuvre maîtresse* —masterpiece— outlining all his ecological concerns.¹⁵

Speaking of ecology, it is crucial to mention two antithetical philosophical approaches that define the relations between nature and humans and give rise to two branches of ecologism. Andrevon is a proponent of one of them, namely the second one.

The first approach, which can be called anthropocentric or humanist, dates from Protagoras's philosophy and is later developed in the works of Descartes and Kant. It claims that man is the master and possessor of nature, which remains inferior to him, because animals are beings devoid of reason, hence worthless. Man needs to control nature, created by God as disordered. As a powerful subject, man is the only one capable of organizing and governing nature, which can also be achieved using technology and science. The aforementioned advocates of this approach articulate the absolute value of the human being in relation to the world and to nature.

These philosophical ideas influence a branch of ecologism called «H» (humanist) ecologism. The movement in question perceives nature as an asset that needs to be protected in the name of the survival of humanity: safeguard-

14 Without being familiar with Andrevon's theory of the new fantastic, it is possible to classify *Le Monde enfin* as an example of ecological (environmental) or post-apocalyptic science fiction. Nonetheless, according to the author himself, the novel in question constitutes a typical neo-fantastic text, summarizing Andrevon's ideas and postulates concerning the reform of the fantastic literature. In accordance with them, the plot revolves around the confrontation of the protagonist and the phenomenon; the disturbing phenomenon —the main source of horror (absent from typical science fiction)— is derived from reality; from the ecological perspective, the novel is engaged in everyday life. We would like to clarify that by typical, generically pure science fiction we understand a narrative genre which, as its name suggests, is fictitious and based on considerable or even impossible scientific and technical progress, given the current state of science. Its action takes place in a more or less distant future, in a fictitious past, or in a parallel universe. The canonical science fiction addresses a limited number of themes, such as: travelling in time and space, colonization of outer space, encounter with extraterrestrials, confrontation of humans with their technical creations (robots, computers, etc.). In short, typical science fiction is primarily concerned with conjectures and extrapolations of all kinds from current scientific knowledge.

15 Among Andrevon's works, this one remains the most representative of the analyzed issue. For this reason, the present study concentrates on examining this particular novel in the everyday life. In respect to the phenomenon, the author concentrates on examining this particular nov-

ing natural resources and meeting human needs are the purpose of this branch of ecology, also referred to as «superficial» ecology.

The second vision, opposed to the first one and based on Spinoza's and Darwin's philosophy, argues that man does not occupy a privileged position in nature: he is only a fragment of the world and a natural being despite his «cultural» gestures and air of civility. Thus, one day the human race may become extinct in the process of evolution and the indifferent nature may continue to blossom without people.¹⁶

This second concept is at the origin of «non-H» or «non-A» (non-humanist or non-anthropocentric) ecologism, also known as deep ecology.¹⁷ This branch of ecology asserts that natural beings, namely the already existing non-humans, must be preserved for their own sake, because they are intrinsically and morally valuable. For this reason, rights must be conferred upon them. The most radical ecologists even speak of biospheric egalitarianism or biocentrism, that is to say the equal rights of all biological species, including humans.

Undoubtedly, Andreuon is a proponent of deep ecology and sometimes takes an even more radical stance by saying that in order to preserve nature, humans must consciously and voluntarily submit to the extinction of their species. These ideas reappear in his novel *Le Monde enfin*. This long text narrates a solitary journey of one of the last men on Earth, which changes com-

16 Darwin's theory inspired several fantastic narratives that tackle the theme of the human race extinction and the appearance of man's successor: a superior being, sometimes of extraterrestrial origin. Some examples of the narratives include: *Letter from a Madman*, *The Horla* (the first and second version) by Guy de Maupassant, *The Color out of Space*, *The Outsider*, *At the Mountains of Madness* by H. P. Lovecraft.

17 The founder of deep ecology is Arne Naess (1913-2009), and its main representatives are William Fox, Bill Devall, and Georges Sessions. Naess sees deep ecology as a «platform» of exchange and dialog for the pursuit of ecological wisdom, that is, harmony and ecological balance. In «The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary» (1973) Naess recognizes the need for the realization of the following postulates:

1. Humans are knots in a biospheric net of intrinsic relations.
2. The relations between humans and nature must be based on biospheric egalitarianism.
3. The principle of diversity and symbiosis: diversity increases the potential for survival, development and richness of living beings. The struggle for survival, in the Darwinian sense of the term, must be interpreted as an ability to coexist and cooperate in complex relations. Naess wants to «live and let live». He also argues that the reduction of human population would be good for humans and absolutely necessary for non-humans: «Humankind is the first species on Earth with the intellectual capacity to limit its number consciously and live in an enduring, dynamic equilibrium with other forms of life. Human beings can perceive and care for the diversity of their surroundings» (1990: 23).
4. He criticizes the exploitation of humans by humans and of nature by humans.
5. Humans must fight against pollution and resource depletion from a broader perspective, taking into consideration the aforementioned points.
6. Naess supports autonomy and decentralization of decisions: according to him, we must «think globally, act locally».
7. One should never neglect the political opportunity to propagate deep ecology.

pletely after an ecological disaster and a mysterious pandemic that causes the death of most people and the sterility of the few survivors.

In the classic fantastic nature is most often portrayed as the evil, anxiety-provoking phenomenon that persecutes the character, oppresses him, and eventually leads to his downfall. Thus, one observes a rather conventional distribution of narrative roles: on one side, a weak human character; on the other, an all-powerful phenomenon: nature that always triumphs over humans. Sometimes, nature is personified, for example by a god of nature (like the Greek Pan),¹⁸ by a goddess bound to natural forces (e.g. Persephone¹⁹ who returns to Earth for six months every year in order to restore vegetation for spring and then spends the other six months in the underground kingdom with Hades; her mother Demeter — the mother of the Earth, the goddess of agriculture and harvest)²⁰ or by a demon that originated in nature (like the Wendigo — a spirit of the forest).²¹

Without being familiar with Andrevon's environmental concerns, one might be under the impression, especially at the beginning of the novel, that nature is portrayed there in the traditional way, namely that it fulfils the function of the evil phenomenon that crushes and oppresses the human character. After the ecological catastrophe, man loses his superior, anthropocentric position at the top of the hierarchy of beings. This motif, frequent in fantastic literature and in science fiction is known as the end of the Anthropocene: the end of human domination.²² The last human survivors are mentally and physical-

18 Cf. *Great God Pan* (1894) by A. Machen, *La Flûte de Pan* (1897) by J.-H. Rosny aîné.

19 Cf. *Duma Key* (2008) by Stephen King.

20 Cf. The comic book *Perséphone* by Loïc Locatelli Kournwsky (2017).

21 Cf. The Wendigo is the protagonist of literary texts and popular cinema. Lovecraft, the founder of the myth of Cthulhu, speaks of Ithaqua, one of the Great Old Ones, who is otherwise called the Wendigo and shows several parallels with him; *The Wendigo* by Algernon Blackwood remains one of the most famous versions of the Native American myth: the Wendigo is portrayed as a forest spirit that feeds on men and drives them to madness; *Simetirre* by Stephen King evokes an Native American cemetery cursed by the Wendigo; *Wendigo* by Graham Masterton mentions a ritual of summoning the Wendigo. The cinema develops the myth of the Wendigo in: *Wendigo* (1978) by Rodger Darbonne, *Ravenous* (1999) by Antonia Byrd, *Wendigo* (2001) by Larry Fessenden, *The Descent*, (2005) by Neil Marshall, *Lone Ranger* (2013) by Gore Verbinski. The Wendigo character also appears in several television series, comics, role-playing games and video games.

22 From a geological point of view, in the history of the Earth, the Anthropocene —the Age of Man— refers to the geological time that began when human activities achieved a significant impact on all the Earth's ecosystems. In other words, the Anthropocene is the era in which humans became the major geological force, capable of globally modifying their environment. The very term is recent: it was used at the end of the twentieth century by Paul Joseph Crutzen to refer to the new era in the history of the planet. According to Crutzen (2006), the Anthropocene followed the Holocene and began with the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century. The scientist even suggests the specific date of appearance of this new era, namely the year 1784: the date of patenting the steam engine, invented by James Watt, which started the industrial revolution. However, both the definition and the dating of the Anthropocene remain controversial.

ly degenerated. In the text in question, they are portrayed as fallen beings, doomed to gradually become extinct. Weak, solitary, immersed in gloom, they embody all the stereotypes of the traditional fantastic character. On the other hand, nature is experiencing remarkable growth, exceptional exuberance. Plants invade the last vestiges of the ancient human civilization: rural areas, villages, towns and roads are colonized by nature:

Des broussailles, des ronces avaient poussé partout, rendant abstraites les frontières artificielles longtemps maintenues entre les pâturages et les terrains de culture intensive, pareillement abandonnés. Des maisons, nombreuses parsemaient la vallée. De haut, elles paraissent encore habitées, à cause de leur bon état apparent. Les toits de tuiles, d'ardoise, de tôle ondulée étaient rarement crevés, seulement moussus, d'une mousse grise, sèche, poussiéreuse, friable. Du lierre, de l'ampélopsis, des liserons et autres plantes grimpantes s'étaient déployés sur la plupart des façades, qui se trouvaient ainsi encordées d'un foisonnement robuste de larges feuilles brillantes. Quelques portes avaient jailli de leurs gonds, beaucoup de vitres étaient brisées, des plantes envahissaient les pièces abandonnées, que des animaux petits et grands avaient colonisées (2006: 43); Les routes étaient crevassées, terreuses (...). Des végétaux vivaces avaient poussé dans les fissures du bitume ou du goudron, des chardons, des pissenlits, de la ciguë, du plantain, des ronciers. La N 75 (...) n'était plus un ruban noir et tranchant, seulement une large piste marbrée de vert, qui s'accordait au panorama sans imposer outre mesure sa présence. Les biotopes autrefois morcelés par un réseau routier de plus en plus dense communiquaient de nouveau, dans une harmonie qui retrouvait peu à peu la perméabilité de ses articulations naturelles (2006: 44).

The characteristics and the anxiety-provoking role of plants in Andrevon's novel, especially in its first chapters, seems to be in accordance with the principles of «animal and plant horror», analyzed, among others, by Dawn Keetley. One of the aspects of «plant horror» is the free, unlimited expansion of vegetation and its recolonization of cities, viewed as a kind of vengeance upon the humankind: «We are surrounded by vegetation; when humans falter, vegetation surges in to take our place—creeping over our buildings, pushing up through our roads, taking what we were forced to abandon» ; «Plants menace with their wild, purposeless growth: Plants may not (...) be able to move around, but they can grow—wildly, prodigiously, with a super-reproductively that risks threatening our own capacity to amass more of our species than theirs» (Keetly, 2017). This peculiar, frightening motif of the expansion of nature as a form of revenge on humans is present in the analyzed text. Big cities, like Paris, start to look like tropical forests, plant labyrinths, jungles inhabited by wild and exotic animals:

De l'autre côté du fleuve murmurant, le Palais de Justice élevait sa pesante masse grise où des mouchettes vertes, plus envahissantes de jour en jour, mettaient des touches coquettes; (...) le dernier homme dans Paris alla se pencher au-dessus de la Seine qui, pure comme du diamant, roulait sans empressement aucun entre ses frontières de pierre noire. Dérangé par son approche, un alligator nain se souleva sur ses pattes courtaudes, courut étonnamment vite sur quelques mètres, se jeta dans le courant (...). Il [i.e. le dernier homme — K.G., A.S] suivit des yeux, dans la transparence de l'eau, la forme fuselée qui ne tarda pas à disparaître vers l'aval, s'enfonçant dans la masse de végétaux emmêlés qui avaient commencé à se multiplier depuis l'île de la Cité, menaçant de colmater les quais (...). Il trouva les hippopotames plus loin, une famille ayant élu domicile dans le square du Vert-Galant. Le dernier homme dans Paris, alors qu'il passait sous l'ombre tendue du Pont Neuf, les observa un instant à travers la largeur du fleuve. Les hippos piétinaient pesamment les pelouses en friche avant de se jeter de tout leur poids (...) dans le lit de plantes euthropiques dont la couverture se défaisait sous leur masse pour se reformer aussitôt. Les animaux braaient de plaisir (...). Il croisa un bison solitaire en traversant le Pont Royal majestueux et glacé. (...) Après avoir traversé le quai de Tuileries, où ne rôdait à perte de vue qu'un rhinocéros (...) le dernier homme dans Paris tourna à droite, place du Carrousel, et s'enfonça à travers la brousse haute vers l'angle rentrant du Louvre ; les vitres biseautées de la pyramide s'étaient depuis longtemps fracassées sous le travail acharné des éléments, mais la fine architecture de métal restée debout, servant de perchoir à une nuée de corbeaux hitchcockiens.²³ (2006: 215-216)

This strange behavior of nature trying to erase all traces of humans seems to be fully conscious and premeditated: nature takes revenge on man, its former master and possessor. Dawn Keetly argues that whereas nature and plants are often treated as a mere background to people's everyday existence, they are in fact an anxiety-provoking figure of the Other, the unfamiliar, entailing rupture with normality and with everything that we know about the world: «Plants embody an absolute alterity. Plants exist on (and beyond) the outer limits of what we know (and what we have wanted to know): they are the utterly and ineffably strange, embodying an absolute alterity» (2016: 6).

In order to demonstrate that, Andrevon uses the already evoked, traditional fantastic technique, namely the personification of nature. At first, the planet is personified by two anxiety-provoking figures: «a female plant giant, (...) the mother Yeti» and «a female Wendigo» (2006: 229). Let us recall that the

23 It is worth noting that this explicit mention of the Master of Suspense —Alfred Hitchcock— emphasizes the relations of the analyzed novel with horror.

Yeti, the abominable snowman, is a cryptid²⁴ born from the folklore of Nepal, India, Bhutan and Tibet. In popular literature and culture,²⁵ the Yeti is a savage, all-powerful creature, always hostile towards humans. In Andrevon's texts, the Yeti becomes the Mother Yeti, a snow woman embodying the forces of nature. The second name, the feminine Wendigo (*la wendigo*), also comes from the masculine form (*le wendigo*). The Wendigo is a supernatural being, originating from Native North American folklore. This evil creature with a heart of ice is a spirit of the forest and nature. The Wendigo is a giant Native American Manitou, hostile towards humans, because it feeds on human flesh. These two personifications of nature highlight the threat it constitutes to people, as well as its omnipotence, which contrasts with human weakness.

Later in the novel, in order to personify nature, the writer resorts to the «Gaia hypothesis» developed in 1970 by the English ecologist James Lovelock.²⁶ Lovelock uses the name of Gaia, the Greek goddess of the Earth, to represent the Earth²⁷ that he sees as a living being, an intelligent super organism that self-regulates in order to preserve life by means of the Gaia principles: all the hypothetical constraints which make it possible to preserve the stability of the biosphere, the equilibrium and the maintenance of life. The violation of these laws by Gaia's inhabitants causes destabilization, degradation or death of the ecosystem. Thus, Gaia can defend herself against the destructive activity of her inhabitants by eliminating them. In the Andrevonian novel, Gaia²⁸ con-

24 A cryptid is a creature that is believed to exist without any scientific evidence. Cryptids are studied by cryptozoology. Some examples of cryptids are: the Kraken, the Loch Ness monster, the Big Foot.

25 In literature, H. Ph. Lovecraft mentions evil creatures that remind us of the Yeti. They are called the Abominable Snowmen or Mi-Go and they live in the ice and rocks of the Himalayas (*The Whisperer in Darkness*, *At the Mountains of Madness*). The Lovecraftian images of the Yeti are used by Henri Vernes in *Les Dents du tigre*, the action of which takes place in a Lovecraftian setting on the uncanny plateau of Leng in Tibet. The Yetis also appear in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling. In video games, the Yeti is the protagonist of *Yetisports*, *Tomb Raider 2*, *Far Cry 4*, *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *World of Warcraft*.

26 Lovelock presents the Gaia hypothesis in the following texts: *The Ages of Gaia* (1988) *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (1979), *Gaia: Medicine for an Ailing Planet* (2005), *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006).

27 Lovelock draws inspiration from Henry David Thoreau, the pioneer of environmental awareness and a representative of literary ecology, who in 1851 presented a spiritual vision of the Earth, similar to the Gaia concept: «The earth I tread on is not a dead inert mass. It is a body—has a spirit—is organic—and fluid to the influence of its spirit—and to whatever particle of the spirit is in me». He refers to our planet as a «living Earth», a «living thing» (in Worster, 1994: 79). In religious ecology, one of the branches of ecology, the myth of Gaia is one of the founding ones: Gaia symbolizes a lost world, an Eden, an earthly paradise from which humans were cast out because of their original sin: pollution and destruction of the planet. Other religious ecology myths are related to the one mentioned above. The myth of the apocalypse (present in Andrevon's texts) and the myth of a Savior or a martyr who redeems people's sins (in Andrevon's writing, the last man can be an example of a martyr; the myth of the Savior is present for example in Barjavel's *Ravage*. See in this regard: van Gaver, 2011).

28 It is not only Andrevon who exploits the Gaia hypothesis and Gaia's character. This motif can be found in popular culture and literature. For example, Gaia appears in the following literary texts: the *Foundation* series by Isaac Asimov, *Lovelock* by Orson Scott Card and Kathryn H. Kidd, *Helliconia* by Brian Aldiss, *Portent* by James Herbert, *Les Messagers de Gaïa* series by Frederick d'Antony, *Genesis* by

sciously kills humans in order to be reborn: «Gaïa a fini par se gratter pour se débarrasser de ses puces» (Andrevon, 2006: 128). This particular choice of vocabulary («scratch», «fleas» referring to humans) contrasts the power of nature with the miserable condition of man: transient, weak, but vain after all.

It must also be emphasized that all these three anxiety-provoking personifications: the Yeti mother, the female Wendigo and Gaia, represent the feminized nature, a maternal figure who is vengeful and persecutory towards her human offspring.

However, as the story goes on, some doubt and ambiguity arises about the true distribution of nature's and humans' narrative roles. Is nature actually the evil phenomenon while man remains its victim? By introducing this ecoambiguity,²⁹ Andrevon presents a surprising reversal of these roles. After the disappearance of parasitic humans, the Earth is reborn: it heals from smoke and pollution to regain its former beauty and purity:

Le satellite (...) tourne autour de la planète avec une monotonie consternante. (...) La planète tourne sur elle-même et autour du soleil, avec une constance au moins aussi grande que le satellite. Elle est légère, gracieuse, on pourrait la comparer à une balle de caoutchouc, dont elle possède le granulé de surface, où alors ce pourrait être une orange, disons une orange d'un joli bleu vif, que les fumées et les nuages peu à peu libèrent. (Andrevon 2006: 154); (...) Sous le ventre bulbeux d'ALPHA 2 [i.e. sonde spatiale — K.G., A.S.], la Terre montrait le même visage paisible (...) Une bonne tête de planète, lavée d'une grande part des nuages tumultueux qui, à l'époque du lancement, colmataient sa surface. Même les entonnoirs aux bords craquelés creusés par les cyclones semblaient avoir déserté le plateau. (...) La chape brune couvrant la péninsule indienne et bavant sur l'océan ? Disparue. Quant à l'ozone en dentelle, il s'était pour la plus grande part reconstitué. *Aussi incroyable que cela pût paraître, la Terre était propre, elle était redevenue bleue, cette fameuse planète bleue (...)* Et même un peu plus bleue. Car l'eau avait monté, c'était incontestable. Elle avait gagné sur les terres émergées, s'était amusée à ronger certaines bandes côtières parfois loin en profondeur. (2006: 461. Our emphasis)

Denis Viennet characterizes this mechanism of the planet's self-purification as «un processus cosmologique dans lequel les formes et les forces de

Poul Anderson, *La Théorie Gaïa* by Maxime Chattam, *Gaïa* by Yannick Monget. Some films inspired by Lovelock's ideas are: *Outbreak* by Wolfgang Petersen, *The Happening* by M. Night Shyamalan, *Avatar* by James Cameron, the *Final Fantasy* series. Some video games using the motif are: *SimEarth: The Living Planet* by Will Wright (1990), RPG *Final fantasy VII* by Yoshinori Kitase (1997).

²⁹ Let us recall that, according to Karen Laura Thornber, «ecoambiguity refers to the inconsistent, frequently contradictory interactions between people and the natural world» (quoted by Estok & Sivaramakrishnan 2014: 2).

vie (végétale, animale...) et aussi les forces minérales sont en expansion» (2009: 13). After the human race becomes extinct, nature undergoes the process of self-purification, resuming possession and control of the world. Contrary to Cartesian philosophy, humans do not appear to be masters and possessors of the Earth, but rather usurpers, whose irresponsible and non-ecological activities considerably changed the planet. After casting out the human usurper, nature recolonizes the world.

All the author's sympathy for nature is clearly visible in the ending of the novel where Andrevon explicitly shows that the disappearance of the human race proves to be a blessing for nature, as the last traces of artificial culture imposed by man are erased, and the natural order is restored on the planet. The writer evokes several species that are reborn thanks to the absence of man and he repeats as a leitmotif that the world finally belongs to them (this is the idea that appears in the title of the novel: *Le Monde enfin*):

L'abeille Xylocope vrombit à la verticale du calice de la pivoine arborescente. Le lièvre sort avec prudence la tête de l'orifice de son terrier ; ses oreilles indiquent neuf heures quinze mais il se trompe sûrement: il n'y a plus d'heure d'horloge, seulement celle du soleil. Et il ne risque plus le plomb du chasseur. (...) L'abeille plonge tête la première dans l'enivrante odeur carminée de la pivoine. Le monde est à elle. (...) Une effraie solitaire inscrit ses volutes sur le fond déchiqueté des nuages. Le monde est à elle. (...) Le lérot est un petit rongeur au dos rouquin et au ventre blanc, qui tiendrait dans la paume d'une main s'il y avait encore une main pour le capturer et le tenir (...) Mais aucune main ne le menace. (...) Un renardeau de quelques mois coupe perpendiculairement la colonne de fourmis au travail. Le monde est à lui, il commence à en prendre la mesure, il en profite. (...) Les loups (...) eux, personne ne les mange, ni les chasse, enfin. (...) Ils ont pour eux le monde, enfin. D'autres, enfin, ne le possèdent plus. (2006: 623-633)

Therefore, the ending of the novel emphasizes the idea that nature henceforth imposes itself as an autonomous narrative force and no longer a mere reflection of the human subject. Even though the story of the latter finishes in the novel and his voice is silenced, the story and the narrative of nature (re)commence. In that sense, *Le Monde enfin* fulfils the first main distinctive criterion of an environmental text, as defined by Lawrence Buell. According to this author, being one of the founders of ecocriticism, a literary text is environmentally oriented when «The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history» (Buell, 1995: 7).

3. CONCLUSION

Even this brief analysis of the recurring motifs of Andrevon's novel highlights its environmental and neo-fantastic dimension. From the ecological perspective, *Le Monde enfin* is engaged in the «familiar strangeness» of the real. And it is this *hic et nunc* commitment that drives the author to address the end of the Anthropocene, the issues of biocentrism and ecoambiguity, as well as the anxiety-inducing revenge of personified and feminized Nature.

If the reader of the analyzed novel initially sees a text that respects the traditional author-reader contract of the canonical fantastic, with the conventional distribution of narrative roles, their perception of the text evolves as the story progresses. Later, nature is no longer perceived as the evil phenomenon. Andrevon's novel forces us to reject the anthropocentric worldview and urges to adopt a broader, more general perspective: a «non-H» vision. Thus, nature becomes the true protagonist and subject of the novel, as it has all the rights to abundantly develop in the spirit of biocentrism and without harmful human influence.

The ecological motifs make this game of canonical fantastic clichés particularly interesting to the contemporary reader, who, on the one hand, notices the derogation from the classic fantastic rules, and, on the other hand, is familiar with the ecological issues in his distressing everyday life. This union of ecology and the new fantastic not only meets the expectations of the modern reader by encouraging them to reflect on the world in which they live, suggesting awareness and modification of harmful behaviour: it also opens new perspectives for the development of the genre in question towards a certain kind of ecological *Bildungsroman*.

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