Food and Appetites

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The Hunger Artist and the Arts

Edited by

Ann McCulloch and Pavlina Radia

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Since Plato, the artistic process has been associated with excess, but also with reining in of appetites. Franz Kafka's short story, "The Hunger Artist" perhaps best delineates the author's hunger for what Antonin Artaud called "an absolute space," a soulful space beyond one's physical self, wherein the artist like the wolf in Arthur Rimbaud's poem, "Hunger," "devours himself."[1] Similarly, in the visual arts, Francesco Goya's "Saturn Devouring his Son" has become emblematic of the modern human condition. This book traces the various figurations of food as hunger, desire, and appetite, figurations that point to the complex dialectic of consumption and consummation of ideas and forms underpinning the arts. It examines the relationship between nature and science, desire and the arts, appetite and hunger, space and the act of artistic creation. One of the aims of the book is to explore established theoretical and historical conceptions of "nature" in the arts and re-think their relationship to appetite in the globalised world.

Recent resurgence of interest in the role that hunger plays in literature and the arts has generated new aesthetic and ethical questions about the ways in which appetite and the lack thereof constitute an important means of figuring humanity and its complexities. While "hunger ...inevitably raises the question of its representability" as Elizabeth Angel-Perez and Alexandra Poulain have argued (2008, ix) and of embodiment (Delville, 2008), it also exposes the very limits of representation to "signify" reality—be it the physical experience of hunger or its metaphorical guises. As Ernest Hemingway elaborated in *A Moveable Feast*, art is a form of hunger, of curbing appetite, of fleshing out by omission. For Hemingway, hunger worked as a sharpener of artistic experience: when in Louvre, he realized that "all the paintings were sharpened and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry" (1992, 71). While modernist avant-gardes were particularly enamoured with this aesthetic figure, contemporary literature and culture also point to the disastrous and literal manifestations of hunger that continue to affect more than eighty percent of the world population.

Examining the many guises and figurations of hunger in literature and the arts, this book strives to give an overview of the themes that emerge

from the idea of the Hunger Artist alongside the fact of food: the latter's significance as a barometer of social class; its rich source as a metaphor in literature and art; its unequal distribution throughout the world; and the means by which its consumption can lead to gluttony and further exploitation of the "hungry." Highlighted throughout this book is the trans-disciplinary nature of the contributions achieved by mapping how the arts in their representation of social, psychological, political, and philosophical perspectives draw attention to the problems associated with excessive human cravings. As the individual chapters of this book demonstrate, this trans-disciplinary character may be seen in the hunger of the anorexic adolescent; the hunger of the poor; the hunger of the artist; the hunger for power over others; the hunger of the drought and famine stricken. Such hungers are seen to have causes—familial, social, and global—and each finds its representation or presentation in works of art. Hunger draws attention to an absence as well as signifying an uncontrollable craving; it is a craving that activates revolutions and is used as a metaphor for the essential ingredient in an artist's psyche. Its opposite condition is that of satiation and the availability of food. This availability brings about complacency, gluttony, self-obsession, and blindness to the plight of others and of the environment. It also includes a denial that the technological age that originally sponsored this satiation, albeit for the few, has brought about climate change not as a metaphor but as a reality, born from the hunger to create and to destroy.

Moreover, the question of this book is also whether Eros (and its association with love, life, and creativity) and Thanatos (and its association with hatred, death, and destruction) have lost their oppositional qualities. Perhaps the mirror- image of apparent reality as presented in the arts no longer reflects, but instead, refracts converged desires of lack and excess, of ignorance and denial. Have we become so subsumed in a world produced by controlling and milking the bounty of nature that we are less able to differentiate between the destructive and constructive values that contributed to our formation? Or, to heed Matt Hood's question: how significant is Gary Snyder's insight that we need to find our place once again within the food-chain as our distance from the source of our food, although offering superficial comfort, has made us distinctly more ignorant? It therefore becomes a dimension of this book that "food" is examined as a crucial theoretical determinant shaping literary, performative, and visual arts as a site where power intersects with desire, intervention with consumption, but also where creativity and conflict might neutralize, if not subvert, various forces of evil and destruction.

Part One, **"Nature Consumes the Machine**,**"** investigates the impact that technology has wrought on Nature and how human hunger for progress has generated works of art, theory, and scientific paradigms that have and reflect both unlikely and predictable dualities. In Chapter One titled "Climate Change: The Metaphor and the Reality," McCulloch maintains that actual climate change has brought into the world of ideas a sense of "Nature," not as a construction, but as a reality and, as such, has contributed to a subversion of theories of art and literature from Kant's concept of "disinterestedness" to poststructuralist conceptions. She argues that there are signs in current literature and art that "nature" has found a new role commensurate with its new status as an active agent. McCulloch contends that the arts are moving away from reflexivity. They have, she maintains, completed their contract with the 20th century wake-up call that representation in the arts hitherto was exclusionary. McCulloch argues that new agendas have emerged for writers and art practitioners. Globalisation has cut down the world to size; it continues to re-invent and subvert capitalism, but it is also (in a rather paradoxical manner) forced to deal with the hard economy of "Nature" so long neglected as a major actor. Nature itself is not constrained by aesthetics, arts practice, or related theories and histories even though the latter have attempted to exclude it. Nature is insistent and relentless in its imprint not only as an autonomous agent, but as a reactor to human nature which in its attempt to tame it and control it has given a slow, but steady birth to it as an antagonist. Theoretically, this chapter picks up on a critical dialogue with *deconstructive* postmodernism's claim that all religious and philosophical world views are fabricated to justify the power of the dominant elite. She questions not the validity of the insight, but its theoretical methodology which erred when it represented nature as a mere frame, a source of cultural construction, rather than as an agent in itself. McCulloch, however, argues that human beings have come to understand that we are neither in control of the "food-chain" nor situated outside of it; instead, we are "of it."

In Chapter Two, "Hungry Ghosts: Poetry of Gary Snyder," Matt Hood examines our relationship with nature further through his examination of Gary Snyder's poetry within the context of Snyder's philosophy of "the wild mind." Hood identifies Snyder's deployment of food as sacrament, particularly as it pertains to some of the most important dimensions in his work. For Snyder, the food-chain as a critical matter of life and death is a process of sentient beings coming into form. As industry predominates in the modern world, we increasingly misapprehend the food-chain. In distancing ourselves from the source of our food, we forego the important

sacraments that were so much part of our ancestry. This has detrimental consequences for our sense of self and our place in the world. Transposing this prevailing ignorance of worldly processes requires a transformation of self that can only be achieved through what Snyder, drawing on Buddhist philosophy, refers to as the practice of "non-harming (*Ahimsa*)." Yet, in keeping with Snyder's thinking, this chapter questions whether any enactment or presentation of the world ultimately has any impact upon the world or whether the world just *is*.

In Chapter Three, "Eating Out: Food as a Trope of Exclusion in the Novels of Zakes Mda," Ken Barris explores how Mda uses food as a marker of tension between spatial access and exclusion. The trope, Barris argues, fuses social and economic spaces from which the novelist's characters are barred by material deprivation. The only access they have is through a satirically drawn imaginative feast of their own construction. In a modification of the trope, diet is used to mark out a space of carnivalesque identity for Toloki, the protagonist of Mda's novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995). Barris analyses how related devices are used in Mda's subsequent novels *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and *The Whale Caller* (2005), further raising the question whether wishfulness can energise sufficient social agency or whether a strategy of transcendence can be justified in a literature of deprivation. While acknowledging that Mda has been criticised for refusing the documentary burden of anti-apartheid radicalism while writing about life in black townships so constrained by poverty that their present economic disenfranchisement resembles the political exclusion of apartheid, Barris argues that a deeper dynamic is at work. In asserting that humour and desire are indestructible, even under such terrible social conditions, Barris shows how Mda performs a spatial reconfiguration of a different kind. Mda, he concludes, restores a central place for human individuality that has been displaced not only by apartheid, but by the exigencies of the struggle against it.

Whereas Barris examines literary work that represents societies bereft of food and social and cultural sustenance in South Africa, Kathryn Keeble's chapter, "Science for Art's Sake: Mark Oliphant as Hunger Artist in Postwar Australia," reminds us of the extent to which scientific research interferes with humanity, creating systems that have the potential to destroy a civilization. Aligning the Australian scientist Mark Oliphant with the analogy of Kafka's hunger artist, Keeble presents the scientist through an aesthetic lens, demonstrating the ways in which his zeal for scientific discovery becomes irrevocably affected by the politics of university research, both nationally and internationally. Like the hunger artist in

Kafka's cage, Oliphant lost control of himself. Beyond the media circus of sitting in the imagined synchrotron, his scientific art became one with his life. He was a performer and in the end, like the hunger artist, he stopped trying to please anyone. This chapter argues that Kafka's allegory of the artist starving for his art parallels Oliphant's struggle to build a state-of-the-art particle accelerator to his own design and on his own terms. In the post-war world, Oliphant's ideas represented the hunger artist's nostalgic view of the old days at Cambridge University's famous Cavendish Laboratory, building scientific installations from "string and sealing wax." In translating the essence of Kafka's story, Keeble reveals that Oliphant became a hunger artist, eventually turned on by his audience, replaced in their affections by a predatory panther at centre stage.

Part Two titled **"Voracious Appetites of History"** focuses on the predatory, panther-like capacities of history to devour its own subjects, but also how people in particular historical eras saw themselves in relation to 'Nature." In his chapter, "Mary McCarthy's Swizzle Sticks: Food, Drink, and Consumerism in the American Depression," Art Redding selects his time-line in terms of texts written by the novelist and satirist Mary McCarthy dealing with society from the 1930s to the 1960s in America. According to Redding, American advertising in this decade perfected the art of "branding" whereby individual consumers, as Roland Marchland has noted, found comfort in the celebration of domesticity and commercial propaganda. This chapter, however, explores what Hilde Heynen terms the "dovetailing" of modernity and domesticity by considering the complex "kitchen practices" of American modernity during the 1930s. Redding argues that, although Mary McCarthy's progressive set—bohemians, Trotskyites, artists, and debutantes—were, or perceived themselves to be, far removed from the denizens of middle America, her writing provides an indispensable guide to the (largely women's) work of incorporating both modernist design and modernized everyday practice into the fabric of American life. Furthermore, he argues that her 1963 novel about the decade, *The Group*, for example, is devoted in considerable detail to the etiquette of cocktail parties, the nuances of fashion and interior decorating, and novelties of prepackaged cooking. Redding's argument is that what marks and distinguishes the novel, and the decade it depicts, is how characters both train themselves and are trained in the interplay of self and commodity.

From the rather sterile world of commodities and modernized America, dedicated to the beginning of canned foods and convenience, with no awareness of the impact this might have on the natural world, to Joan

Simalchik's confrontation with moments in history where food and its absence is highlighted, is an enlightening leap. It does indeed put side by side the antics and metaphors of the "haves" and the "have not's." Chapter Six, "Feast or Famine: Dialogues of Appetite and Deprivation," is Simalchik's response to her question: What is revealed in the dialogue between the powerful and the disempowered? Simalchik maintains that the representations of food, and its availability or scarcity, contain the possibility of revealing the complex dialectic of consumption. The consequent power relations, she demonstrates, are represented implicitly and explicitly and frequently reflect the agency of lived experience. This chapter demonstrates how art can be read as a dialectical dance that allows for power to be recognized, but also to be dislocated and shifted. Simalchik's main thesis here is that food does not exist on a plane alone, but is the subject of control and commodification. In war and in peace, in wealth and in poverty, she argues, a basic element of the human condition is the need for sustenance. Presenting numerous examples in which "food" is the motif at the centre of power, whether set in the nineteenth century in Charles Dickens's portrayal of the British work-houses or in the 1997 film set in Auschwitz *Life is Beautiful*, Simalchik argues that those imbued with power frequently exploit and oppress others in the one-sided dialogue that deprives them of agency. Her chapter further investigates the coercive power of a globalized food industry to influence and restrict food choices and determine what food can be grown and consumed and decree who can be the recipient of the "product."

Chapter Seven serves as a bridge between **Parts Two** and **Three** in this volume. Paul Monaghan in "The Fire that Cooks: Prometheus, Hunger, and the Arts in Greek Antiquity" prepares the reader for the third part which focuses on how the desire to create and to discover new means of expressing new knowledge resembles the hunger of the artist as presented by Kafka. Monaghan takes us back to ancient Greece, identifying there a mythic and philosophical view of hunger that may well explicate the different pathways western civilization took in its need to satiate its hungers and perhaps its mistaken quest that it was bound to master nature successfully. Monaghan draws on the myth of Prometheus, in which the Titan god's love of humankind results in human life being filled with hunger and suffering, and the further elaboration of the myth in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* in which the Titan is promoted as the inventor of all material culture and the arts, hailed as the means by which human beings may rise above this abjection. Monaghan then examines Platonic and Aristotelian understandings of human hunger by reference to what Plato called *penia* ("poverty") and Aristotle *steresis* or privation, a

condition that in the latter's teleological system assumes an impulsive movement towards fulfillment, where the end or telos for humanity is understood to be an approximation to divine "Mind." Monaghan here argues that all three views of hunger are based in the concept of *Ananke*, a mythical/philosophical figuration embodying the pervasive oppositional forces of Eros (attraction) and Eris (repulsion). Hunger, he maintains, then, both in the sense of bodily and spiritual need, and the role played by the arts in satisfying that need, is seen in ancient Greece as embedded in the human condition.

How the Aristotelian concept of *steresis* translates into the twentieth-century preoccupation with aesthetics and experimentation lies at the heart of **Part Three, "Visualising Flesh: Ravenous Desire of Image and Text."** The chapters of this section investigate the relationship between appetite and hunger, image and text. Both image and text are re-presentations of reality (Barthes, 1978), but also inevitably vehicles for managing "hunger." In "Ravenous for New 'New' Worlds: Imagining *Amerika* and the Eroticism of Logos as Appetite in Joseph's Drapell's Visual Fictions and Paul Bowles's Fictional Compositions," Pavlina Radia examines the "ineffable" of artistic hunger and its re-presentations. Drawing on Emmanuel Levinas and George Bataille, she points to the ways in which the artist's concern with aesthetics becomes a form of re-imagining what Levinas refers to as "the hither side of reality." Radia then argues that, like cartographers and explorers, both visual and literary artists wrestle with the infernal, erotic capacities of logos as both privation and appetite. Aligning Drapell's visual appetite for colour and Bowles's fictional compositions with Georges Bataille's definition of eroticism as "an insane world whose depths, far beyond its ethereal forms, are infernal," Radia exposes the dialectics of Eros and logos underpinning Drapell's visual and Bowles's fictional works while simultaneously pointing to not only their aesthetic, but also socio-cultural implications.

In Chapter Nine, "The Uncanny at the Dining Table," Deborah Walker continues the thread of the argument by investigating how the images of objects and people are visually capable of embodying the dynamic of human relationships, their familiarity or lack thereof. Drawing on Freud's concept of the "uncanny," Walker explores how the estranged familiar often informs the politics around the dining table. Her chapter locates the uncanny as the figure of sensory deprivation in the context of Australian domestic life as exemplified by a tradition in Australian painting with particular attention given to contemporary painter Deborah Walker. Referring to other relevant Australian artists like John Brack, Terry

Matassoni, and John Forrest, Walker concludes that for contemporary painters, the question of the unfamiliar lurking within the "homey" of domestic safety is a particularly poignant indicator of hunger as a form of intimate and deeply individual, as well as culturally defined privation.

Chapter Ten, "Something like an Emergency," on the other hand, explores writing as a hunger to break through impasses in language and love. In this chapter, Josephine Scicluna discusses her poetic experimentation with hybrid poetic forms that instigate a productive intertwining of musical and verbal encoding of human experience. Tom Kazas comments on the improvisational techniques used in his composition of music evoking Deleuze and Guattari's notion of deterritorialising the refrain. Scicluna argues that writing musically has nothing to do with the "hunger for the return of what has been lost," but rather becomes a means of "holding" or "elongating" moments in order to disturb the notion of the linear time. In other words, for Scicluna, writing allows for reconnecting with the cyclical, bodily time that disrupts language by putting it into a "state of emergency." The chapter evokes the theoretical works of Gaston Bachelard, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, as well as the critical and poetical works of the great American poets like Adrienne Rich to mobilize formal experimentation and to break preconceived expectations of hunger and appetite as primary mechanisms of starvation and satiation. By opening up her own poetry to music, Scicluna executes her own, albeit poetic, state of emergency to subvert conventional paradigms and awaken us to the reality beyond words, to the space where poetry becomes music, music poetry.

In *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno, for example, suggests that while "artworks are alive in that they speak in a fashion that is denied to natural objects and the subjects who make them" (1997, 5), "even the most sublime artwork takes up a determinate attitude to empirical reality by stepping outside of the constraining spell it casts" (1997, 5). How artists and their art navigate the sublime and the empirical forms the crux of the complex relationship between practice and theory. **Part Four** of this book, **"Feeding the Creative Process: Metaphors of Nourishment,"** reveals that, while the artistic practice estranges the familiar, the empirical (or, as Goodrich emphasises, the "literal") is what frequently feeds the creative process. As Dominique Hecq emphasises in Chapter Eleven, "Blue, like an Orange: On Writing, Mourning, and Anorexia," creative practice and theory are not only intertwined, but can also serve as a means of "fictocriticism" whereby the relationship between writing and food can be investigated, specifically in relation to the work of mourning. Drawing on

Jacques Lacan's notion of *suppléance* as "a kind of stand in that helps the self cohere," Hecq argues that writing and the mourning anorexic obsessed with food and its preparation operates under the same economy as the "enigma of *suppléance*." The chapter on Hecq's *Hush*, a memoir of cot death, comments on the role that food –in both literal and metaphorical forms—as lack and sustenance can play in the mourning process. This chapter concludes that what feeds the anorexic writer is her ability to shift from "the metonymic axis of language to the metaphorical."

The concern with food as metaphor permeates Chapter Twelve titled "The Metaphorical-Literal Distinction: Feeding the Literary Arts?" In this psycho-linguistic investigation of Giuseppe di Lampedeusa's popular novel, *The Leopard* (*Il Gattopardo*) (1958), R. A. Goodrich asks whether the commonly disputed metaphorical-literal distinction between food as metaphor and food as a consumable does not in fact perpetuate the normativity of metaphor while simultaneously exposing "doubts between the cognate concepts of the concrete and the abstract." Arguing that such a distinction is tendentious at best, Goodrich returns us to the work of Aristotle to shed light on the precarious position of metaphor in literary arts. Building on Aristotle's *Poetics*, Goodrich emphasises that the metaphor "virtually knows no bounds" as it is "neither constrained by the geographical origins nor the historical period nor the chosen occasion of its utterance." In other words, for Goodrich, the metaphor is what nourishes both the artist's and the reader's cognitive processes.

Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen bring us full circle to the ways in which human nature and its foibles inform artistic practice. In "Skeletons of Desire: Unleashing *The Push and the Pull*," Darryl Whetter discusses his bicycle novel, *The Push and the Pull*," in the context of the protagonist's desire to be free from the shackles of his family history. A playful punning on Joyce's *Ulysses*, the novel takes the reader on a bicycle odyssey with Andrew Day, the touring cyclist, for whom food is both "fuel and cargo." In line with the machine in the nature argument is Whetter's juxtaposition of the "second skeleton" of the bicycle with a degenerative, neurological condition that destroys the protagonist's father's skeleton. Cycling becomes a means of escape, but also—inevitably—a vehicle that feeds Andrew's desire to lessen the grip that memory has on him. Like Hecq's anorexic writer, Whetter's protagonist curbs his desire for food in order to nourish his "art."

In the final chapter of this book, Tom Vernon invokes the theoretical writings of Walter Benjamin to contemplate the origins of art. In "The Angel at Our Table: *Angelus Novus* and Where Art Comes From," Vernon brings us back to the epistemological complexities of theory and practice. Drawing on Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Vernon considers the artistic process as inevitably tied up with the philosophical realm. Analysing various sources of inspiration that fed his novel, *The Drifts*, Vernon argues that the progression from "food as art" to "art as food" is both a positive transformation and a destructive wreckage whose "debris (the loves, the insults, the achievements, the loss, and so on) shape our present." For Vernon, theory constitutes an important form of nourishment that, like a physical experience, has the power to shape human creativity.

Consequently, the individual chapters in this book cover a wide range of topics that deal with food and its various (dis)figurations. Bringing together theory and practice, as well as engaging with specific socio-cultural issues and the increasing globalisation of not only literal but also aesthetic, philosophical, and political hungers, this tome hopes to open further discussion about the intimate relationship between nature and science, the arts and human experience.

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Notes

[1] See also the 2008 study by Elisabeth Angel-Perez and Alexandra Poulain, *Hunger on the Stage*, in which they refer to Kafka's "hunger artist" story as relevant to theatre and "the spectator's gaze" (2008, ix).

PART I

NATURE CONSUMES THE MACHINE

CHAPTER ONE

THE HUNGER ARTIST: CLIMATE CHANGE IN NATURE AND IN THOUGHT - THE METAPHOR AND THE REALITY

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Fear associated with "Climate Change," its impact on the natural world and on the lives of people, is a current global preoccupation and we are well aware how doing anything about it will require re-ordering, or re-conceptualizing the world that has evolved since the Enlightenment. "Nature," if one characterizes it as an agent, a network of organisms reacting to its harnessing by humankind, is, at least metaphorically, striking back at the way it has been abused in the grand plan that was dedicated to progress. By "Nature" I refer, on one level, to the living world. This would include animals, plants and all microorganisms; it also includes the ocean, rivers, and naturally formed landscape. Philosophically, "nature" has been seen across time, in the western world, as the essence of a thing, and when one speaks for example of "human nature," there is the assumption that human beings are something according to their natural innate qualities. Progress, with its technological inventiveness, industrialization and transformations, is seen to entail artificial interventions of "nature" and therefore as antagonists to its natural state. Although some thinkers believed that it was clear that action in aid of economic, political and social development should seek to change and improve nature, others may well point to "Climate Change" as the result of human labors that has led to our understanding that interference in one part of nature is liable to have unexpected and unwelcome consequences elsewhere.

This chapter is an investigation of how the concept of "nature" has been used by philosophers, theorists, and art practitioners in their hunger

to understand, represent, and even change the world. Perhaps the title of this chapter should include a further sub-heading that refers to the presence and absence of nature not only in terms of how we choose to live our lives in response to it, but also how the arts have represented or denied its significance at different times throughout history. In calling this chapter "Climate Change: The Metaphor and the Reality," I seek to find a relationship between the changing patterns of using nature as a concept or metaphor in art and theory and the actual lived experience which has chained nature to the needs of scientific and technological progress. When I speak of the metaphor and place it beside "climate change," I refer to a philosophy of art and aesthetics and the ways in which understanding and creating art and literature are subject to the ideas of each period from which they emerge and usually relate to the extent in which the society in question has formed them in response to human needs. On the other hand, there will be some periods in history where people have lived according to its cycles, acknowledging that one is "of nature," or one is simply overwhelmed and subject to its force. "Climate change" in this sense is metaphorical in itself, as it refers to climates of thought dictating how human beings have hungered for expression within the artistic forms made available to them. In dealing with climate change as a metaphor of changing aesthetics, I will show the extent to which "Nature" has been left out of the equation. In fact, it will be demonstrated how nature, as represented by the agencies of the earth, experiences of the body and the actuality of its dependence on food receives little artistic expression. We are, as Nietzsche pointed out, members of a group he terms "despisers of the body": As he so adroitly expressed it - "Let them not learn differently nor teach differently, but only bid farewell to their own bodies – and so become dumb" (Pearson and Large 2006, 264). Terry Eagleton notes in a similar vein: "Friedrich Nietzsche once commented that when anybody speaks crudely of a human being as a belly with two needs and a head with one, the lover of knowledge should listen carefully" (Eagleton 2003, 4). Yet when "food" appears in the arts, it is primarily as a metaphor, and hunger becomes a word to express desire that is rarely concerned with food and the needs of the body itself. Instead, it is concerned with its source and the power its availability or non-availability has in determining the wellbeing or poverty of people living in the world.

Conversely, when I speak of "climate change as a reality," I invoke nature - not as a source of cultural formation, but as an agency in itself. Nature is understood as the landscape that surrounds us, the geography of our worlds both regional and global; human reliance on the food that the earth provides, the changing seasons; the warming of the earth that has

occurred because of technological progress which is not disconnected to human nature in its need and hunger to progress scientifically and technologically. The act of hunger situates desire on a dividing line between the will to live and the will to die; these conspiring wills face each other in mirror images and the line between them blurs - Thanatos and Eros feed from each other. The protagonist in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (2006) lives but only to the extent that it keeps him on the edge of death, and Camus' Meursault in *The Outsider* (1983) embraces death in the end in order to celebrate his hunger for life. These characters embody a philosophical "climate change," a kind of paradigm shift reflecting their capacity to find a means towards ethical engagement when the moral maxims underwent change and promises of eternal redemption no longer underwrote authority. So these characters are placed in combat with death by gambling with its ultimate power to obliterate them. Antonin Artaud notes that "what is important, it seems to me, is not so much to defend a culture whose existence has never kept a man from going hungry, as to extract, from what is called culture, ideas whose compelling force is identical with that of hunger" (Artaud, quoted in Hamsun 2006). Kafka's hunger artist performs the relevance of this hunger – the relevance of deprivation in the name of art - deprivation due to exploitation and deprivation due to becoming obsolete in performative terms. Artaud's interest in the compelling force to create, and Kafka's identification of what is sacrificed in pursuit of representing this force, are ideas ensconced in symbolic forms. Kafka also has a further agenda, as Hannah Arendt points out, to destroy a world that has deified the law. He delineates its hideous structure and does so by contrasting reality with pretence; "function," in society, is not really authenticity, we know, and via the protagonist we get a taste for the will to truth that exists outside being a functionary (Arendt 2007, 98). Kafka's hunger artist anticipates this role and enacts it accordingly.

It is all metaphor—this hunger, this food for thought, and when food is actually mentioned (or its absence), it appears primarily as a means to represent, for example, a philosophical idea or a psychological state. This is true as much in the philosophy of art or the history of art theory as it is in literature itself. This chapter will argue that actual climate change has brought into the world of ideas a sense of "Nature," not as a construction, but as a reality and, as such, subverts theories of art and literature from Kant's concept of "disinterestedness" to poststructuralist conceptions that all meaning is a human perceptual construction via language and images. The rejection of this latter intellectual thesis as having no detectable moral ground, as endlessly involved with what is impossible to know, has killed

off aspects of postmodernist preoccupation as effectively as Nietzsche's mad-man in the market place when he dared to proclaim another murder-one that heralded the existential angst embedded in modernist literature. "The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Whither is God' he cried: 'I will tell you.' We have killed him-you and I. All of us are his murderers" (Pearson & Large 2006, 224).

What has also been made evident is the strange absence of materiality in aesthetics and philosophy and in literary texts of "Nature." Climate change in thought, that is, as a metaphor, can be seen to reflect paradigm shifts in aesthetics from the eighteenth century to modern times in ways that have excluded nature from being seen aesthetically. By this, I do not mean that it has not been represented in art, but that its representation has not as Hepburn argues been guided "by an understanding of the real nature of the natural world" (Carlson 2001, 426). Kant's disinterestedness of the eighteenth century, determined that art was to be conceived as an object with formal qualities and objects related to the picturesque; this set a standard to seeing nature (or at least how this model conceived it) in an artistic manner that excluded its reality. With disinterestedness "as the central theoretical concept, landscapes as the paradigm, objects of aesthetic appreciation, and formalistic, picturesque appreciation as the favored mode for such objects…. aesthetic appreciation of the natural world was increasingly marginalized" (Carlson 2001, 424). Modernist and postmodernist conceptions of subjectivity that include emotion and cognitive inclusion of art history, further removed "nature." Modernist art appreciation for example, focuses on art itself – its processes, designing intellect and its philosophy. Its most extreme form as noted by D. Mannison and R. Eliot, who in responding to the view that aesthetic appreciation itself is limited to art, argued "that the appreciation of the natural world is simply not aesthetic appreciation" (quoted in Carlson 2001, 425). Post-structuralism, in the wake of modernist homage to subjectivity, continued to deconstruct the natural world like a text or utilized aspects of its parts in the construction of an art form.

However, there are death-cries to aesthetic philosophising and reflexive theorising which involved nature being marginalized. In contemporary art such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road (*2006*)* which is acted out in a world where nature has withdrawn its sustenance or Don de Lillo's *Falling Man* where an event has torn away people's constructed edifices, one is confronted with the great force of nature as an agent and the destructiveness of human nature in its attempt to own it and harness its sources and energy for technological supremacy and political advantage. One, in this contemporary world, is less inclined to look at the limitations

and/or possibilities of language, whether it pertains to Jacques Derrida's application of difference and his insight that language itself deals with its own inability to represent the world/self accurately or even Michel Foucault's insight that language and narrative reflect designated "power," that the "self" is an illusory function of power relations (1980, 117). Instead, one is drawn to stories that are recognizable, actual and represent an event or experience as it is happening. There is no need for the mediation or the translation. I am not arguing that insights of thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault are no longer applicable. Instead, their insights have become ingrained; they are part of literary conventions stored as critical arsenal, but perhaps no longer regarded as the most dominant means of accessing meaning (no matter how elusive these thinkers determined this meaning to be). One is less interested in how artistic texts are constructed or even what they might symbolize and more interested in the stories being told and the ideas being engaged. The characters, objects, and the scenes in which they exist are not symbolic or representative of something other; they and their circumstances are as real to their audience as *War and Peace* was to its nineteenth century readers. The material world is described and not used to represent something other. "Nature" has insisted itself as a presence and as such brings new questions to post-structuralist analysis. Similarly, "nature," whether related to the cravings of the body or simply the food we eat, is less likely to be used to merely represent the processes of creation of art or its content, and perhaps more interested, for example, in utilizing "food" or its lack to represent cultural, social or psychological conditions that are simultaneously understood as both literal and metaphorical. I am not by any means the first person to say that metaphor is a problematic device when used to disguise, exclude or cement nature as metaphor. As early as the 1960s, Alain Robbe-Grillet attempted to write novels without it, knowing the extent to which it constructed artificial attitudes that were being enacted as permanent realities of human conception. His attempt to write novels without adjectives or any language that engaged with metaphor, drawn from nature, led to a rather barren kind of writing that as one person remarked appeared more like shopping list than narrative. Nevertheless, his experiment did indicate that the relationship between art and the world was a problematic one. The hunger to create for the artist does involve some kind of collision, avoidance or embrace of nature. Whereas the Romantics embraced it, though more than not to celebrate the large themes of human nature expressed in the seasonal habits of the natural world—Birth, Love and Death—the modernists were more

inclined to use it to represent inner states of being rather than articulations in terms of itself.

There are however new alignments, collisions, and integrations between the aesthetic and the natural world when art comes to deal with political questions and when this involves presenting the actual state of nature rather than utilizing it as a cultural source or a source of unproblematised metaphor. Robbe-Grillet's call for writers to be less anthropomorphic, to see the world as it is and not to pretend that there is something meaningful there to be discovered came on the cusp of a modernist critique evolving into a post-modernist one. The latter tended to turn the perception of not being able to reach truth into a discoursing of the world whereby the discourse focused on why all in the end was unknowable. What seemed to be ignored is that it is our nature to create and destroy and in our mistaken view that nature was clay in our hands, we became unable to see what simply 'is' under the weight of discourse. This involved not taking note enough of the ever changing and developing capacities of men and women, (reflective of human nature), involved a destruction of the natural world which has turned round and bitten them. The old rules and formulations of what made a great novel that Robbe-Grillet found irrelevant were discarded in post-modernist novels but rather than art deal more directly with what was there it became the play-thing of thinkers and writers – the thing that would engage with the play of the thought rather than an interest in the world itself. Perhaps we have now arrived at a place where Robbe-Grillet's views might be considered anew.

The fact of climate change is inevitably a political, social and economic area of debate. It is now a time when literature, art, and aesthetics are reflecting this. This is new in the sense that global warming is relatively new, but discussions about environmental issues are not. Since the purpose of this essay is to identify how nature has been represented whether marginalized or accessed in terms of its existence rather than merely as a source of metaphor, it is relevant to look at two poets who fall into these two oppositional camps. As early as the 1960s, poets, for example, were seen to divide into two wide categories: those who wrote about it from a political perspective and those who continued to take from nature its rich source of metaphor. In order to illustrate this I will discuss two Australian poets who died at the end of the twentieth century. My "case studies" come from the mid1960s on the cusp of the post-modernist era. What is being focused on here is the manner in which these two poets pinpointed destruction in the environment. One did it merely to illustrate a point about the dearth of poetry, the other, though playing with metaphor to communicate her position, was more interested in dealing with nature

itself in terms of how natural environments were in danger. In order to illustrate the two uses of "nature," I will be looking at an exchange between the two Australian poets: A.D. Hope and Judith Wright. Hope was of the old school and, although many of his poems represent the sublime nature of Australia's landscape, it was invoked on most occasions to make a philosophical point about the human condition.

Hope as a philosopher was adamant that the provisional status of knowledge is a haunting idea that western thinkers find difficult to embrace. The fact of our capacity to re-invent theory is perhaps comforting to those that see life as 'becoming' rather than about 'being' but only if we are wise enough to recognize its products, even when we uphold them, they have temporary status from one age to the next. Hope, although a prime exponent of the provisional nature of knowledge, did not at any point consider questions about the destruction of the ecological world which makes his exchange with Wright more interesting. Although concerns for the environment have been reflected in nature writing for centuries, the present environmental global crisis is creating narratives that make older assume new historical interest.

Australian poets A. D. Hope and Judith Wright working within a modernist context exchanged poems concerning environmental ethics within an environmental literary frame. Of course, for Judith Wright environmental issues, or conservation, as it was more commonly termed during the sixties, were of paramount significance; for Hope, they were the metaphorical source for a literary essay: "The Discursive Mode: Reflections on the ecology of poetry" (1956-7). In this essay, Hope argues that the forms of poetry are related to one another, in fact, form an ecology comparable to that exhibited by the world of plants, and that, just as indiscriminate felling of forests may lead to erosion and a desert ecology, so the disappearance of the great forms of poetry, such as the epic, in the last two hundred years has led to a desert ecology of poetry in which only small stunted forms like the personal ejaculation or, that – to quote him " monstrosity of our time, the free-verse lyric survive". His essay ended with the suggestion that to restore the eroded landscape, a revival of hardy and courageous verse satire might be a good starting point. As is typical of Hope he has drawn on analogy in order to present an argument and yet how inappropriate this appears now with his choice of conservation, as if the environmental issues are less important in themselves than how they serve him as a poet. Judith Wright's response deals simultaneously with the conservation issue and Hope's argument that we needed to return to old forms of poetry. In both cases, she implies the importation of the old,

whether trees or poetic forms, are disastrous for Australia, its ecology and its poetry:

> Poetry's forests are all felled,
> Its trees can sink no roots, you say.
> By neither root nor fallow held
> The heart's earth dries and blows away.
> Its sand and rock and clay lie bare
>
> Plan then to rehabilitate.
> We've made a desert: obviously
> We must confirm this altered state
> And make a new ecology
> With thorn-bush and with prickly pear.
>
> Import the cactus and the aloe,
> Mark out these sands with ordered stakes.
> A desert fauna soon will follow
> Of scorpians, rats and tiger–snakes
> O what a garden will be there. (1978, Section 23)

Wright, here, is, of course, being somewhat mischievous as she will go on to argue that rather than this bringing about "…the world restored by plants/The Cave and Spring as once they were?' such imported items will be destructive and give rise to "scorpions, rats and tiger-snakes." She is arguing for the ecology when she notes that what is brought in to Australia will be like a "pest" and that we should grow what suits "our climate best" as much as she is arguing against the imposition of ill-fated, obsolete Eurocentric poetic forms. Her plea is for vegetation and poetry to grow from its own soil and reflect its own peoples in Australia and not those from other landscapes and other traditions. And so she writes:

> The workers answer from the field:
> 'Use willing small low-growing things-
> the evening-primrose seeding wild,
> The faithful grass that spreads and springs
> And drinks the dew and needs no care'. (1978, Section 23)

A. D. Hope's response to her poem is playful, fully aware that her poem was critical of his view: Judith, my treasure, my wonder, my delight,/What prompted you to give me such a nip?
His answer is one that draws on nature to first illustrate the value of her poetry:

How should I answer you? You, who swept the rain
Over the arid landscape of our verse
Six inches at Ayers Rock or the Barcoo-
And, overnight the lyric everywhere
Covered the ground with blossom, filled the air
With scatter and chatter of bright wings again;
You, who give grain and vines where once there grew
Saltbush and spinifex and Paterson's curse. (1978, Section 23)

Nevertheless his argument is clear and his metaphors are accessed only to argue by analogy that planting "poems" drawing only from what the Australian intellectual and natural landscape, results in:

Nothing but thorn and cactus can take root;
But they survive where tenderer bud and spray
Shrivel to dust among the burning stones.

Although he concedes that if any poet can create new Australian poetry, it will be she who may succeed:

… Be Ceres, careless at her golden store;
Be my desert, what you have always been:
My bow of promise through drought-breaking rain,
My pillars of cloud and fire sent on before,
My cornucopia, my chrysostrom, my despair. (1978, Section 23)

Hope's response to her poem recognizes that each speaks a different voice for their age; he begs, a little, in the last stanza, for the right to plant his way and notes "God's plenty is our share." Wright would wonder at this "God's plenty is our share." The vigour with which her interests in the environment shaped the last twenty years of her life, during which time she no longer wrote poetry, is testimony to her awareness that "our share" and "God's plenty" had become alien, obsolete concepts. Hope, of course, is not, in this poem, really interested in environmental issues; he draws from the topic merely to argue, via poetic analogy, that the art of poetry is in decline because traditional verse is being replaced by free verse and what he termed "poetic prose"; He yearns to import rhymes and music from other lands and past history. Wright, on the other hand, in the foreword of her work *Going on Talking,* written decades later, makes the association between environmental loss and the 'increasing neglect and unpopularity of poetry' (1992, 24).

The noted exchanges between Hope and Wright occurred in the mid-sixties a few years after Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), in the wake of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), and led to an increase