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Stratigraphy of the Walk and Post-anthropocentric Narratives:
The Case of Antonio Moresco

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Abstract – Drawing on material ecocriticism, new materialism and eco-narratology, this article proposes an analysis of the narrative structure of the novel *Gli increati* by Antonio Moresco as a case of “Anthropocene storytelling”. Specifically, I consider the practice of walking as a prompt for the novel complex temporal and spatial dimensions. My discussion situates within a broader reflection on the recent challenges posed by the concept of the Anthropocene to traditional modern epistemologies, based on conceptual dichotomies and linearity. I propose that the novel serves as an example of a narrative organised not by the principle of causality, but by what I call “stratigraphic logic”.

Keywords – Anthropocene; Eco-narratology; Antonio Moresco; Stratigraphy; Walking.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of the Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer 17-8) has emerged in the environmental humanities as a catalyst for the urgency of disrupting the contemporary Western belief-system that has led to the contemporary climate crisis – a system rooted in the epistemological and ontological dichotomies of Modern thought, especially the separation of nature from culture (Latour). Based on this perception of human beings as separate from the rest of the other species, a conception of nature as a passive object for satisfying the demands of production and domination of the most industrialised societies has imposed over time. The convergence between the exploitation of the Earth's resources far beyond the limits allowed to support a capitalist socio-economic system and signed the 'beginning' of the Anthropocene (Fressoz and Bonneuil). As a philosophical concept, the Anthropocene can function to unravel such logics in favour of an opening to the production of new, collective imaginaries that undo the predatory epistemologies that have been at the root of such causes.

At the level of literary representation, the modern bourgeois system of thought is tightly linked to the birth of the novel; thus, as several scholars have noted, the problem with the repetition of the use of such "traditional" forms in the Anthropocene is structural, because they do not challenge the anthropocentric paradigms on which they are built, which consist in the centrality of the human subject and in the division between the human and non-human worlds (Ghosh; Benedetti). In this sense, the concept of the Anthropocene has also posed major epistemological challenges to the narratological categories of space and time, especially in terms of "scale derangement" (Clark 150; Caracciolo, *Narrating the Mesh*). If this separation is no longer tenable today, what form should a narrative of the Anthropocene take? What kind of narrative strategies can be used to confront the complex and non-linear spatio-temporalities of the Anthropocene?

Drawing on material ecocriticism (Iovino and Oppermann), new materialism (Barad) and eco-narratology (Caracciolo, *Narrating the Mesh*; James; James and Morel), I identify one of the motifs particularly suited to interpreting the Anthropocene in narrative as that of walking.¹ On this assumption, I propose a formal analysis of the novel *Gli increati* (2015) – the third of the *Canti del Caos* trilogy – by the contemporary Italian writer Antonio Moresco as a case study of "Anthropocene storytelling". In doing so, I specifically address walking as a prompt for the novel's spatio-temporal complex and, as I call it, "stratigraphic" structure.

¹ For further enquiries on the reformulated concept of space in narrative theory and eco-narratology see also Puxan-Oliva.

2. “È camminando che sono nato come scrittore”

In regard to the act of walking, Francesco Careri writes:

L'atto di attraversare lo spazio nasce dal bisogno di muoversi per reperire cibo e informazioni necessarie alla propria sopravvivenza. Una volta soddisfatte le esigenze primarie del camminare si è trasformato in forma simbolica il camminare che ha permesso all'uomo di abitare il mondo. Modificando significati dello spazio attraversato il percorso è stato la prima azione estetica [...]. (Caseri 3)

Freed from the “primitive” impulse of survival, walking became during time a “purely aesthetic act”, charged with a plurality of symbolic meanings – from Dadaism to Surrealism, Situationism, Minimalism to Land Art, with different modes of engagement depending on the movement; some of them were, as for the Surrealists, strictly bound to the discursive dimension of narration (Caseri 3-9).

In terms of narrative, walking has been an extremely prolific theme in literary history; however, what I want to suggest here is that in the context of environmental disasters and ecological problems, the “purely aesthetic” dimension of walking falls back to restore the primary meanings inherent to the practice, responding meaningfully to contingent and material imperatives dictated by fear and the need for survival. The Anthropocene, on the other hand, has, in Harawayan terms, made “earth [...] full of refugees” (Haraway 100); these walks thus bring into play structures of meaning that deal with the urgency of life and the threat of death. We could think, for example, of the various works of climate fiction that deal with the theme of climate migrations (White), or that develop their plots around survivors wandering in post-disaster worlds in search of food – most notably, in this sense, Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (2007); in some cases, works of different genres fuse embodied experience with aesthetic representation with explicit ethical intentions, such as the case of *Il sentiero degli dei* (2010) by Wu Ming 2.

Moreover, walking is not only a literary theme but also guides the unfolding and the pace of a narrative structure that has to do with the movement of the body in space – it implies a certain attention to its material dimension. In this sense, walking allows the immersion of the subject in the world, generating an intrinsically ecological and *performative* aesthetic, and it does so by fostering an intra-active (Barad, *Meeting the Universe*) relationship between human and non-human worlds, matter and discourse, becoming an instrument for raising environmental awareness.

In the specific case of a writer like Antonio Moresco, the narrative structure of walking informs his entire literary production and derives from an embodied practice: he founded an association called “Repubblica Nomade”, which organises collective walks across Europe and Italy as a form of “existential resistance” and civil disobedience (see *Repubblica Nomade*) – echoing all similar practices throughout history from the naturalist Henry Thoreau to the modern urban *flâneur* of Walter Benjamin.

If, on the one hand, the practice of collective walking is based on a political and ethical assumption, on the other hand, Moresco often refers to his daily practice of solitary walking in Milan or Mantova:

Sono due modi opposti di camminare: il primo interiore, autistico, simile a una trance; il secondo vissuto come una trascendenza collettiva, un'impresa, una prova. Il primo è la testimonianza di un lungo dolore fronteggiato attraverso l'oltranza del cammino. Il secondo è una riflessione sulla potenza metamorfica del cammino. Per quanto mi riguarda, non c'è opposizione tra i due modi di camminare: nel camminatore collettivo c'è dentro il camminatore solitario, così come nel camminatore solitario c'è dentro il camminatore collettivo. (*Il sogno*, 10)

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Most importantly, in one reportage of these walks, Moresco refers to the practice of walking as a practice that unites the dichotomies, as it is meant to “unire mente, viscere e cuore, sentimento e visione” (*Repubblica nomade* 28) between people, and between people and their environment; in this sense, walking is configured as a performative nature-cultural intra-action that brings awareness of humans as a species, that is, as part of a terrestrial community of human and non-human subjects. Walking assumes inherently ecological meanings: “Un movimento che contraddistingue fin dall'inizio la nostra specie e che si accentuerà nel futuro per i cambiamenti climatici e ambientali determinati dal rapporto folle e suicida della nostra specie con l'unico pianeta di cui dispone, e che qualcuno si illude [...] di poter fermare [...]” (36).

It is precisely because of this natural-cultural dimension, both material and discursive, of walking that for the writer there is an inherent relationship between spatiality, bodily movement, and literary creation: “è camminando che sono nato come scrittore” (*Il sogno*, 51), he writes. Writing, knowing and walking are entangled concepts that interact in the process of meaning-making of reality. For Moresco, then, walking can be read as a “movimento umano distruttivo-costruttivo non separato” (*Lettere a nessuno* 475) from which meaning emerges and can be understood, a performative intra-action between matter and discourse.

2.1. The Stratigraphic Model

In the pamphlet *Repubblica Nomade*, Moresco defines the status of his own walking experience in terms of spatial coordinates: “Questi non sono solo cammini orizzontali, sono anche cammini verticali” (21).

Now, cognitive studies have largely demonstrated that our perception of time is based on spatial schemata (Turner), and that the notions of horizontality and verticality normally structure our spatial orientation in dichotomous terms. However, the intersection of horizontality and verticality emphasises the correlation between the two axes and calls for a new form of spatio-temporal orientation, which I call “stratigraphic”.

The geological principle that defines stratigraphy is, in fact, superposition: over time, geological residues overlap, intersecting the spatial horizontality of each stratum with the “verticality” of time, visually embodied in the cumulative succession of strata. The assumption of Moresco about the overlapping of verticality and horizontality also shapes his idea of narrative structure:

L'avventura è verticale, immobile. Chi la compie muove se stesso dentro l'immobilità. Le avventure sono orizzontali. Chi le compie sta fermo, è tutto il resto che si muove verso di lui in direzione opposta. Grandi libri di avventura sono: l'Iliade, non l'Odissea, il *De rerum natura*, il *Genji monogatari*, *La Divina Commedia*, *Don Chisciotte*, *l'Etica di Spinoza*, *Il sogno della camera rossa*, le *Poesie della Dickinson*, *Moby Dick*, *I fratelli Karamazov*, *Pinocchio*, *Il castello*, *la Recherche*... Ma il più grande libro di avventura che sia mai stato scritto sono i *Vangeli*, dove qualcuno corre l'avventura verticale più lacerante, più commovente e più grande: quella di essere Dio. (*Lettere* 455)

Once again, walking and writing are synonymous in Moresco's language, both concepts interacting and shaping each other. Starting from these assumptions, I will analyse the literary transfiguration of the embodied and “stratigraphic” experience of walking in the novel *Gli increati*, focusing on the narrative strategies Moresco uses to engage with the complex spatio-temporal paradigm of the Anthropocene. But why should such a novel and its “stratigraphic” spatio-temporal coordinates be considered as an example of “Anthropocene storytelling”?

If our aim is to understand the concept of the Anthropocene as a philosophical, ethical, political and broadly cultural upheaval in the ecological sense – a constructive framework for

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the destructive reality of the climate crisis that opens up new paradigms for interpreting the natural-cultural complexity of our time – by “Anthropocene storytelling” I do not necessarily mean narratives that address the risk of the end of the world due to anthropogenic impacts from a thematic point of view. Rather, I refer to contemporary narratives that critically explore the relationship between the human and the non-human, while challenging established narrative conventions that reflect the very paradigms from which the environmental crisis emerges – such as those of the bourgeois novel:

Perché neppure in una simile irripetibile emergenza riesce a rimettere in discussione le strutture mentali su cui si fonda, economiche, politiche, filosofiche... e ad andare verso un cambiamento non solo orizzontale ma anche verticale, una metamorfosi. (*Il sogno* 63)

In terms of narrative form, the stratigraphic logic for meaning-making can function as an alternative to the classical semiotic square, which relies not only on conceptual contrasts and oppositions, but also on the linear progression of these concepts. Conversely, the stratigraphic logic does not exclude one element in favour of another. Instead, it is in line with the phenomenological logic preached by the probabilistic approach of quantum physics (Barad, *Meeting the Universe* 97-131) which is useful for understanding the interpenetration of all actors in the world, both human and non-human, in the process of their becoming – that is, in a *performative* sense.

3. *Gli increati*

The entire structure of *Gli increati* is built around a journey that recasts Dante’s Comedy in ‘stratigraphic’ terms: the story follows the narrator on his metaphysical walk in the “City of the Dead”, a *catabasis* that takes place in the context of a final war between the living and the dead, between physical and metaphysical systems in collision. It represents a total apocalypse that aims to mark a radical paradigm shift towards the eschatological vision of the “un-creation”, an inconceivable and unspeakable “magnete che sta magnetizzando ogni cosa e che ci sta portando alle soglie dell’increato” (823).

The text breaks the conventions of any narrative structure, experimenting with style and language, breaking diegetic levels as well as space-time conventions in order to confront the concepts of creation and destruction, end and beginning, life and death on every possible level of meaning. The representation of the walk in *Gli increati* means to subvert the very Cartesian plane of verticality-horizontality, because, again, “L’avventura è verticale, immobile. Chi la compie muove se stesso dentro l’immobilità. Le avventure sono orizzontali. Chi le compie sta fermo, è tutto il resto che si muove verso di lui in direzione opposta” (*Lettere* 455). Along his walk, the narrator encounters a multitude of characters, fictional and not, with whom he enters into dialogue and with whom he continues to walk.

The work is too large to be discussed in its entirety here, but precisely because of its structure and the disruptive meanings it conveys, it emerges, I argue, as a paradigmatic case for Anthropocene narratives. We will focus in particular on the subversion of the categories of space and time.

3.1. Complex Temporalities

In the terms of classical narratology, there is a story as soon as there is an act or event that indicates a transition from one previous state to another (Genette, *Nuovo discorso* 12-3). This implies a *sequence* of actions that follow a *causal* logic. However, one of the most challenging

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aspects of the Anthropocene for narrative involves its complex causality. As the eco-narratologist Marco Caracciolo explains,

The problem with climate change is that its effects can be detected on a local level, sometimes dramatically, through catastrophic weather events such as deadly hurricanes and heat waves, but climate change *per se* is a scientific abstraction that works on a scalar level not directly commensurable with everyday experience. [...] the causal connections between industrial activity, meteorological patterns, and a particular heat wave escape sensory experience entirely. We perceive the heat wave; we don't perceive the complex causality behind it. (*Narrating the Mesh* 8)

In eco-narratological terms, then, the complex temporalities of the Anthropocene express themselves through structures that formally disrupt the linear temporality of events; the novel *Gli increati*, as I argue, does so through its *stratigraphic* structure.

Temporality in stratigraphy, as we have seen, follows the principle of superposition, which means that in the novel every moment is immanent – past, present and future do not presuppose the logical exclusion of each other, since they always happen simultaneously. The *horizontality* of the sequence of events always presupposes their *synchronicity*, which follows the *vertical* coordinate of superposition. This structure develops on several levels. The first level is that of enunciation, where verbal forms of past present and future are implied in the same sentence and for the same subject. Therefore, in the novel we read sentences, such as:

“E poi non ero io che vedeva quelle cose! Le ho sentite raccontare [...] quando ero vivo, sarò!”
“No, no! Eri tu, eri tu! Sarai tu!” “Ma allora tu sei quella camerierina, quella che sembrava una camerierina ma che invece era Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova!” “Sì, lo sarò”. (254)

Una volta, quando ero vivo, sarò, mi sono messo a camminare insieme a molti altri vivi, nel mondo, se eravamo vivi, se non eravamo invece già allora in tracimazione dalla morte alla vita, oppure, prima ancora, o dopo ancora, dalla vita alla morte che viene prima, che veniva prima. (300)

Come quando mi spostavo sulla macchina di quel soldato reduce dalla più grande guerra fino ad allora mai combattuta su questo pianeta, su quella macchinina piena di sacchi di riso e cilindri di formaggio ricoperti di cera nera, e io ero molto piccolo, sarò, e mio padre guidava ... (301)

Ma io sono già sceso lungo uno di questi sentieri bianchi, quando ero vivo, sarò. (305)

“E perché adesso porto questa veste, se allora il seminario era prima, sarà, e quando ero in questa sede non avevo più la veste, non l'avrò?” provo a domandare ancora “E adesso che cosa sono? Chi sono? Sono vivo o sono morto?” (632)

Furthermore, at the level of enunciation, temporal indications emerge in the form of recursive epithets associated with the terms “life” and “death”. These references articulate a cyclical structure that destabilises conventional causality, wherein life is both preceded by and follows death and vice versa: “Perché la morte viene prima. Perché quello che viene prima viene dopo” (83); ““Ma non è possibile, se la morte viene prima, se la vita viene prima, se adesso è adesso”” (305).

Apparently, life coming before and after death as well as death coming before and after life shape temporality in loops, but each term does not exclude the other, nor eliminate one another: life is *co-present* with death. There's no dichotomy between the two, neither a synthesis; in this sense, Hegelian dialectics with its linear temporality, is disrupted: “Non ci sono contrapposizioni, dualismi, neppure antinomie” (44). The very structure of the meaning making process is questioned through the co-presence of all possibilities: “living *or* dead” not only becomes “living *and* dead”, but also “living *is* dead”; the diachronic axis of time exists *within* its synchronic axis, they coincide, “Perché quello che viene prima viene dopo” (83).

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The overlapping and coincidence of two different ontological states of being at the micro level of enunciation reiterates in the macro level of narrative temporality – in this sense, the author's focus on both of what he calls the “infinitamente piccolo” and the “infinitamente grande” (*Lettere* 600) can be seen as an element of “Anthropocene storytelling”. In the novel, then, the internal sequence of the events of the story, following the path of the author-narrator's voice, follows a chronological order, since there is a coincidence between the time of the story and the time of the narration – given that this temporality is not and cannot be considered linear in the classical sense, “Perché, se il tempo non c'è, non c'è più, non c'è mai stato, allora non c'è neanche il tempo del racconto dei vivi e non c'è i tempo del racconto dei morti” (26). The equivalence and interdependence between the two levels are extreme: the simultaneous merging of the temporal levels of the narrative and the placing of the narrator's voice in a constant metaleptic dialogue with the reader, allow the work to be grasped in its becoming, in its *coming into words*, realised through the enunciatory act of the voice – a performative act of *enunciation-creation*.

This does not mean, of course, that there are no temporal anachronies, which indicate in classical narratology “all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative” (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 40); however, these anachronies fit within the stratigraphic framework previously highlighted, so that facts that precede the time of the narrative also occur after that same time, as well as in the present; we shall then graphically refer to them as ana/chronies.² One of the most evident examples of ana/chronies is the following one:

“Io non capisco bene quello che sta succedendo...” provo a dirgli ancora. “Se tu adesso sei tracimato dalla morte, che cos'eri prima, quando ti ho incontrato per la prima volta?” “Tu mi stai incontrando per la prima volta adesso.” “Ma allora come mai ti ho incontrato prima?” “Perché mi hai incontrato quando eri dopo”. (630)

The scheme of ana/chronies in the novel is complicated by the metaleptic nature of these structures. As part of the *Canti del caos* trilogy, *Gli increati* refers to facts and events that, while remaining within the complex temporality analysed, transcend transfictional boundaries placing themselves in dialogue with the facts and events narrated in the other two works of the trilogy – namely, *Gli esordi* (1998-2011) and *Canti del caos* (2001). The reader of *Gli increati* is thus confronted with numerous analexes and prolexes that are *also* “transfictional metalepses” (Lavocat 498). An example could be the following one:

“Ma io ti ho già incontrata, una notte, quando ero tra i vivi!” mi viene in mente all'improvviso. La ragazza, ferma davanti a me, continua a guardarmi con gli occhi socchiusi, il suo volto trema un po' mentre mi sorride, la sua bella bocca dagli angoli sempre più allungati, il suo mento sollevato e ricoperto di morbida carne, il suo collo bianco. “E anche allora facevi la fotografa! Fotografavi i morti, mi hai detto, perché non c'era nessun altro che aveva il coraggio di fotografare i morti. Proprio i morti, non i vivi da morti! Hai fotografato tu tutti gli scrittori e i poeti morti nel corso del tempo. Avevi voluto fotografare anche me. E io mi ero stupito, e ti avevo detto: “Ma io non sono morto!”. E tu mi avevi guardato senza rispondermi, mi avevi sorriso. Perché mi avevi fotografato? Perché ero già morto? E perché, se mi hai già fotografato, adesso mi fotografi ancora? (31)

Of course, there are some cases of “authorial autoreferential metalepses” (Lavocat 499), such as in the following passage:

² I follow the same mechanism for related concepts such as dis/continuity from Barad (see *Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come*).

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“Ma allora...” mi passa per la mente “chi era quell’uomo con gli occhiali che ho incontrato nel seminario, e che mi guardava come si guarda se stesso? Ero io? Ma come faceva a essere io se io ero o mi percepivo da un’altra parte e in un altro corpo? E io come facevo a essere lui, se lui poteva guardarmi dall’interno di un altro corpo come se stesse guardando se stesso? È proprio vero, io non so niente, non capisco niente. Però adesso qualcosa sto cominciando a capire, anche se quello che capisco mi sembra che non si possa capire, non si capirà...” “Sì, sì...” riprende a dire l’uomo tenendo il volante abbracciato e sorridendo quasi a filo col parabrezza. “E poi, se è per quello, ci siamo incontrati ancora. Non ti ricordi?” “No. Quando?” “Ma sì, mentre lavoravo alle pompe funebri, e stavo correndo per un servizio quando ti ho visto lungo la strada, su uno scooter, abbracciato a un vecchio che rinsecchiva a vista d’occhio...”. (651)

The transfictional metalepses in Moresco do not only lead to the encounter between two or more inhabitants of “ontologically different worlds” (Lavocat 499); they also refer to such encounters as facts that, on the chronological level and in relation to the act of enunciation, *have* already concretely occurred – they have already been narrated –, *are* still occurring, and *will* also occur in the future, according to the complex temporal scheme of *Gli increati*. Thanks to both these metaleptic and analeptic mechanisms, such episodes are constantly re-enacted through their narration in different narrative contexts.

The result of such narrative mechanism is the break of the illusion of a linear, progressive temporality in favour of a much more complex causal reality, characterised by “strange loops”, in Timothy Morton words (Morton 7; Caracciolo, *Narrating the Mesh* 153). Moreover, it is no coincidence that eco-narratologists have identified the mechanism of metalepses as a literary tool “particularly attuned to the climate crisis”, since it channels “the puzzling entanglement between human-scale action and environmental realities” while disrupting the “aesthetic illusion” underlying the dichotomy between matter and discourse, reality and fiction (Caracciolo and Ulstein).

In the narrative context of *Gli increati*, at the level of frequency, the reader is often confronted with cases of *repetition*, a category that, according to Genette, indicates when an event is narrated several times; and yet, in the repeated occurrences of such events, we are also confronted with the category of *iteration* (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 115-6). This is because, according to the stratigraphic logic of the novel, the events are, in fact, repeated several times, resulting in an overlap between the two categories. Thus, the reader will recognise characters from the other two novels in the trilogy – “il Gatto”, “il padre priore con le sue due teste”, “il seminarista sordomuto”, “la suora nera”, “il colonnello dei piumanti”, “Gesù”, “Lenin”, “la Pesca”, etc. – which all return to recall and *perform* their past-present-and future stories, again and again.

Symmetrically, as we can see from previously quoted passages of the novel, formulaic repetition is one of the most obvious characteristics of *Gli increati* also on a rhetorical level, so that the paranoid redundancy of the statements contributes to shape the mortonian idea of the “strange loops” taking place to disrupt linear temporality. This relates to the climate of gnoseological and spatiotemporal uncertainty that is considered one of the major features of the Anthropocene (Caracciolo, *Strange birds and uncertain futures*). In the novel, this uncertainty is not only expressed through the collapse of the very logical basis of dichotomous thinking, but also rhetorically exaggerated by the recursiveness and obsessiveness of the questions. Many gnoseological questions are asked by the narrator throughout the text, according to an accumulative principle that addresses both the fear of not knowing and the *impossibility* of knowing: “È perché la morte viene prima? È perché il prima è dopo? È perché il dopo è prima? È perché ogni cosa succede prima che sia successa? È perché si possono ricordare solo le cose che non sono ancora avvenute?” (31).

The result of all these narrative mechanisms is the collapse of the very structure of narration as interpreter of that of modern economic, political and philosophical certainties in the face of the risk of mass extinction – a collapse that calls for a true “metamorphosis of the minds” (Moresco, *Il sogno* 63), as in the author’s intention.

3.2 Agentic Spatiality

As we have said, the simultaneity of vertical and horizontal coordinates profoundly shapes the narrative structure of *Gli increati*. That is also true in relation to the *movement* of the various characters, to which we can refer with an oxymoron: a “motionless movement”. On the one hand, the protagonist moves through space, encountering different characters; on the other hand, he does not move, he stays: it is the body of the other characters that “jump” on him – and it is also the space *beneath* his feet that moves. The adventure is both *vertical* and *horizontal* (*Lettere* 455).

In the novel, the category of space is then treated in the same way as a character in “immobility-motion”: as an agent among agents, mobile and immobile at the same time, space co-participates in the act of *becoming a form* that is *Gli increati*. This is made possible by the fact that space, freed from the role of mere “background” (Benedetti 20) to the narrated events, is given the capacity to act:

Giro a un gomito stretto, corro ancora lungo una piccola piazza impennata, poi lungo una stradina in discesa, dai ciottoli lucidi e neri risucchiati dalle acque seminali che scorrono sotto questa città, nel profondo. Imbocco una strada più grande. Mi guardo attorno sbalordito, senza fiatare.... (Gli increati 316-7)

In this sense, the protagonist's movement, expressed through the constant use of verbs of movement – “turn”, “run”, “entering” - or accompanied by adverbs of place – “I look *around*” – corresponds to the visual and undulating movement of the space, characterised by the narrowness of a bend, immediately followed by the rise of a square or the descent of a road, or by flowing water. The impression is of a space that is anything but static, since the adjectives used to describe it mainly come from verbs: the space *contracts*, *rears up*, *goes down*, its components flow, like the waters of the River of the Dead beneath the city. In this passage, we can clearly see that there is a real intra-action between the protagonist and the space, which co-creates the movement of both narrator and the space itself.

More than being descriptive, references to space tend to present it as an active agent rather than a static frame. It is no accident if what is traditionally called the “background” in the novel most often appears blurred and undefined: it exists only through its *actions*, the verbs are directly linked to the natural and urban elements that compose it, they become subjects, like the trembling earth: “Ma perché c’è il terremoto qui nel regno dei morti?” [...] “Da dove vengono queste scosse se qui è tutto morto? Da dove viene questa forza che continua a tormentare la morte?” (24). The Cities of the Dead are in fact constantly shaken by earthquakes: “La terra sotto i miei piedi trema ancora di più, poi si ferma, riprende a sussultare e a vibrare sotto il mio corpo che si sposta verso chissà dove, in queste città investite dalla pioggia nera e dalla percussione degli eserciti...” (252); the description of the streets always refer to their shaking, “questa strada [...] sussulta e trema sotto il velo di neve” (612).

On the one hand, the earthquake causes the inhabitants of the city to flee; on the other hand, the same earthquake originates from the collision of the bodies of the living and the dead, by their final confrontation, so that the earthquake is in fact the result of a tangled mesh of complex causality: “Perché queste due enormi faglie dei vivi e dei morti si stanno fronteggiando, perché si cominciano già a sentire gli scuotimenti e i sussulti di questo mo-

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vimento sismico di vita e morte che precipitano l'una contro l'altra andando a occupare lo spazio unico che c'è dietro e dentro la vita e dietro e dentro la morte" (24).

The space is torn, its body is made of moving and colliding matter; it is a concrete, material actor that participates in the walk and contributes to the creation of the narrative. This means that the entire storyworld of *Gli increati* does not have an independent, pre-existing setting of its own; it does depend on the act of walking-narrating of the protagonist, whose act of enunciation co-creates time-space in performative, intra-active terms with the time-space of the storyworld. In other words, the storyworld depends on the "mapping" agency of the narrator's voice and vice versa: a phenomenon caught in the making.

Discourse is then inseparable from materiality: space actively participates in that "semiotic seismic" of stratigraphic superposition of life and death. If their opposition represents the structuring principle of the process of signification which is dichotomy, stratigraphic logic questions the very same process in geographical terms:

Si è creato uno spazio vuoto, uno scarto, tra la vita e la morte, tra la vita e il sonno, tra la morte e il sonno, per questo spostamento tellurico di vita e morte che si stanno fronteggiando e affrontando al termine della loro vita e della loro morte, e che sta tormentando e scuotendo le nostre città di morti come quelle dei vivi. (25)

Finally, at the level of topographical representation, the City of the Living and the City of the Dead are cast against each other: the city of the Dead is the double "spectre" of its counterpart. At the level of spatial construction, the overlap then echoes the logic of the temporal overlap between past, present and future: the reader is thus called upon to enter and imaginatively merge two spatial planes of fictional reality, to *merge* them, following the same stratigraphic logic that permeates the entire novel: "c'erano dappertutto quelle luci morte che ci sono dentro le luci vive, e mi scorrevano ai lati quelle schiume rabbividenti di volti irrorati e di bocche" (19).

4. Conclusion

If the ecological crisis has its cultural roots in modern Western epistemologies, and if the very basis of Western epistemology is dichotomous thinking, we can finally consider *Gli increati* as a case of Anthropocene narrative. As we have seen, the novel challenges Western logic at its most formal level, testing the limits of narrative structures and language, and it does so through the embodied practice of walking. Drawing on an eco-materialist epistemology grounded in the continuity between matter and text, the embodied practice of walking can be used as an image and a metaphor that guides an alternative logic to dichotomous thinking, which I call stratigraphic logic. By challenging Cartesian logic based on conceptual dichotomies and linearity, stratigraphic logic supports narrative strategies that can represent a form of storytelling of the Anthropocene, such as *Gli increati*.

In the novel, the categories of space and time hold together the vertical and horizontal dimensions, language and its grammar bend, and a new, post-human concept of semiosis emerges – one that no longer logically adheres to the principle of non-contradiction, but rather to that of stratigraphy. Following a "stratigraphic semiosis", Moresco creates a new narrative structure that, more than others, deeply confronts the collapse of old, predatory thinking and opens up to a profound *metamorphosis* of the mind.

E allora anche questa narrazione che sto cercando di farvi arrivare sarà un tutt'uno con un simile smottamento di faglia. Non sarà una narrazione lineare ma per spostamenti d'asse, avverrà qualco-

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sa che si irradierà come lo spostamento a blocchi fracassati e compenetrati causato da un terremoto, non come quello fluido del fiume e del tempo. (42-3)

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