

Ecology without Sovereignty: Iberian Bio-Perversity in the Work of Manuel Rivas

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In his novel *Os libros arden mal* (*Books Burn Badly*), published in 2006, and in a host of public addresses and newspaper columns published between 2004 and 2008, the Galician writer Manuel Rivas undertakes a sustained critique of the implications of sovereignty and dangers of subtending political legitimacy with a form of power able to declare exception to the rule of law. In the former case, in *Os libros arden mal*, Rivas resuscitates through literature the collective memory of the Francoist period, using the Falangist burning of A Coruña's libraries on the city's docks on August 19, 1936, as a point of departure, and in so doing, revisits the historical reception of Carl Schmitt in Galicia and Madrid, as well as the influence in Spain of Schmitt's concept of sovereignty. In the latter case, Rivas's articles and public comments tie the exercise of Schmittian sovereignty to a host of pressing social and political issues besetting Spain in the twenty-first century, including police brutality and misconduct, ecological catastrophe, increased migration to Europe, and the North American War on Terror and corresponding conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which included the participation of Spanish Armed Forces. In sum, Rivas's journalism from the period, largely compiled in the edited volume *A cuerpo abierto* (2008) but published originally in his regular column in *El País*, reveals that despite the coda of the Francoist "estado de excepción permanente" (state of permanent exception) that began in 1939 and lasted "hasta el fin de la dictadura" (the end of the dictatorship) ("El certificado"), sovereign power, with its structure of inclusion and banishment and binary dependence on viewing State territorial lines through a friend/enemy distinction, persists as a condition of political existence in democratic Spain. In this respect, Rivas's literary thematization of sovereign power in *Os libros arden mal* and trenchant social commentary elsewhere reaffirm Giorgio Agamben's contention that sovereign power is, and has always been, concerned

with the “production of a biopolitical body” (*Homo Sacer* 6), thus intimating a continuity between the limit case in which one finds a permanent exception, as in dictatorial Francoism, and the ways in which life is politicized and subjectivized in modern liberal democracies.

In this essay, we will first outline the critique of political sovereignty undertaken in *Os libros arden mal* and thereafter outline how Rivas translates this discussion to a host of contemporary debates, with special emphasis on ecological catastrophe and what he refers to as “bio-perversity,” in his journalistic work and public commentary. Additionally, we will investigate Rivas’s related proposal for an alternative politics based on a return to the revolutionary sentiment of the *Nunca Más* movement. In considering the extent to which such a revolutionary movement is able to think beyond the logic of sovereign power, we will relate Rivas’s work to both the concept of pyropolitics, as understood by Michael Marder, as well as Mick Smith’s suggestive appraisal of a radical ecology that constructs political communities upon the rejection of “the inversion of reality that defines politics as membership of a political citizenry always beholden to sovereign constitutional principles, emphasizing instead the creative mutualistic potential of politics as such” (xviii). Marder’s and Smith’s thought shares with Rivas the underlying influence of Carl Schmitt’s notion of sovereignty, and our analysis will make explicit this conceptual intersection.

Os libros arden mal’s plot encompasses nearly six decades, from the onset of the Civil War to the end of the twentieth century, and arches forward from two major plot points whose respective protagonists interweave and clash over the course of the narrative. On the one hand, the story traces the dislocating effects of the Spanish Civil War on a group of naturist adolescents who, in the novel’s opening pages, are planning a special train trip to the countryside in Caneiros, a voyage itself disrupted by the outbreak of the war. The second nodal point of the plot, two chapters later, features the burning of books near the quays and docks of A Coruña’s harbor, where the reader is introduced to two key institutional agents of the Francoist legal order: the budding jurist Ricardo Samos, who commands the brigade in charge of the books’ immolation and later becomes Chief Magistrate of A Coruña, and his subordinate Paralelepípedo, whose given name is Tomás Dez. Dez works as an official censor and takes under his supervision one of the aforementioned youth, the singer Luís Terranova. In lockstep with Carl Schmitt’s concept of sovereign right, the shape of power exercised by the two Francoist agents revolves around the singular ability to order bodies, both within the legal order of norms and permissibility, as well as the right to except certain forms of existence from the application of the law. Samos and Dez, in other words, resemble to varying degrees the existential position of the chief sovereign, Franco, in being both

in and outside of the law simultaneously. As participants in the exercise of sovereignty, Dez and Samos are the antipodes of those bodies toward whom the law has been suspended in a form of political banishment.

Though not Franco, Dez and Samos mimic Schmitt's interpretation of the role of the commissar in the French Revolution. The 1792 National Convention, formed in the wake of a major upheaval in August of that year, took on dictatorial qualities and retained the right to suspend the law in a state of emergency, even in the absence of a sole monarchical authority. The Convention, assimilating the sovereign will of the people but unable to be present in all reaches of the French nation and its colonies at once, selected and sent out commissars to all corners of administration who were "bearers of sovereignty," having "full powers to take all the measures needed to promote the interest of public security, tranquility and order. . . . The fact that this was in reality an unlimited power has been openly recognized" (*Dictatorship* 139). In Rivas's text, Samos and Dez assume the commissarial role of leveraging the permanent state of emergency put into practice by Francoism in order to except putatively dangerous bodies from the normal legal order and situate them, in Agamben's words, in an "inclusive exclusion" whereby their dehumanization is only legible in reference to a political order in which they no longer participate.

The specter of Schmitt over the elaboration of power in the novel is nothing if not explicit. Amidst the conflagration of A Coruña's libraries, the young Samos identifies Schmitt as his "novo, venerado mestre" (new, revered master) (*Os libros* 85; 53). Samos moreover revels in the thought that he was putting Schmittian theory into practice by virtue of contributing to a Falangist movement that had managed to transform two esteemed leaders of the Galician Republican establishment, the mayors of Santiago de Compostela and A Coruña, Ánxel Casal and Alfredo Suárez Ferrín, respectively, into what Agamben calls *homo sacers* who are both banned from the new legal order and left vulnerable to being killed with impunity: "Sentiu algo semellante á vertixe ao pensar que aquelas dúas personaxes da República, alcaldes electos polo pobo, estaban agora presos en calidade de inimigos da nación. Mais era unha vertixe excitante, embriagadora" (He felt something like vertigo to think that these two figures of the Republic, democratically elected mayors, had been imprisoned as enemies of the nation. But the vertigo was exciting, intoxicating) (85; 53). Samos, who is penning a graduate thesis on the nineteenth-century Spanish conservative theorist and influence of Schmitt himself, Donoso Cortés, displays a blatant admiration for the German jurist of the Third Reich throughout the text. Rivas furthermore novelizes the encomium bestowed upon the thinker by Manuel Fraga Iribarne in 1962 when Schmitt was inducted as an honorary member into the Instituto de Estudios Políticos

in Madrid. As Gregorio Morán notes, Schmitt, after his detention in a North American work camp after the Second World War, was invited frequently to Spanish universities, even after Spain's shift toward a position of neutrality tempered the Regime's openness to German National Socialism. Having worked in the Nazi embassy in Madrid in 1942, Schmitt "conocía de primera mano tanto a los veteranos—García Conde—como a los alevines— Manuel Fraga—. Por si fuera poca la mutual atracción entre el Régimen y el jurista alemán, su hija, Ánima Schmitt, estaba casada con el profesor Otero, de la Universidad de Santiago de Compostela" (58) (knew first-hand both the veterans—García Conde—and the novices— Manuel Fraga—. As if the attraction between the Regime and the German jurist weren't strong enough, his daughter, Ánima Schmitt, married Professor Otero, of the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela). The presence of Schmitt in the novel is well noted, being mentioned principally by Morán (59), as well as Crumbaugh (58) in his lucid analysis comparing Fraga's political ideology with Schmittian thought. The two aforementioned studies, due to their respective differences in scope, note Rivas's fictionalization of Schmitt in passing, and to build on this foundation, we will next argue that the critique of sovereign power in the novel ties the security of territorial space to the notion of the human and processes of dehumanization, an emphasis that has particular importance for the radical ecology to be discussed later and through which Rivas offers an alternative politics.

In his 1927 work *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt argues that the geographically bound territorial unit of the State presupposes the existence of the political, which he argues is a category that can be reduced to determining the difference between friend and enemy. Friendship and enmity, namely, "denote the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation" (26). Other categories of association related to moral, economic, and other realms of behavior are distinct from the political but can rise up to its status if the intensity of their valence can theoretically push participants to the limit case of a life or death conflict in which two sides assemble as friends and enemies, or as allies and strangers. Schmitt promulgates a version of the State whose territory encompasses citizens who uniformly share whatever qualities link them together in an inherently political way, which for Schmitt implies that the body politic inhabits a homogenous space made coherent via the ability of sovereign power to dispose of unwanted lives and demand sacrifice of those wedded together in friendship. The Sovereign uniquely possesses the right to suspend the legal order, thereby declaring a state of emergency and mandating that those who are bound by political friendship sacrifice their bodies against declared enmity: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (*Political Theology* 5). Furthermore, the requirement for a domestic, homogenous, space grants onto the sovereign a prerogative to use the right

to exception in order to ferret out internal antagonism, which endangers the political nature of the State:

The endeavor of a normal state consists above all in assuring total peace within the state and territory. To create tranquility, security, and order and thereby establish the normal situation is the prerequisite for legal norms to be valid. . . . As long as the state is a political entity this requirement for internal peace compels it in critical situations to decide also upon the domestic enemy. (*The Concept* 46)

As commissarial representatives of the personalistic sovereignty wielded at Spain's center and ensconced in a situation of a permanent state of emergency, institutional agents of the likes of Samos and Dez are bestowed with the nearly unconstrained power to adjudicate domestic enmity, defined in reference to their interpretation of whatever passes for the "normal situation" of Francoism, which for Rivas represents nothing less than permanent martial law. Those who are reduced to the status of domestic antagonist in *Os libros arden mal*, however, are not easily identifiable foreign pathogens radically distinct from what Francoist ideology paints as an ideal adherent to the nationalist movement. Rather, the raw materiality of nonpolitical existence—or, in Agamben's terms, bare life—is a latent potentiality that tenuously and ambivalently coexists with any given individual's political existence (*bios*).

A prime example in the text is the aforementioned naturist youth and singer, Luís Terranova. Dez, en route to his position at the censor's office, comes across Terranova in the street pretending to be a Portuguese Romany street performer in order to avoid military conscription and obscure his links to the cultural institutions and intellectual movements whose books were subject previously to the dockside burnings. Dez, upon uncovering the ruse, points out that Terranova's identity papers "agardan por vós nalgún tobo dos arquivos. Se alguén abre ese arquivo e atopa eses papeis, ides pasalo moi mal" (are waiting for you in a file somewhere. Should someone open that file and find those papers, you'd be in for a bad time) (213; 150). In the limit-case situation of Francoism's permanent state of emergency, bodies such as Terranova's are assigned positions and given functions, such as military service, that serve to reduplicate and sustain the ideological bonds that hold the State together in political friendship and Terranova's papers here mark the inscribability of his political existence. Having been found deviant and thus antagonistic to the internal security of the State, Terranova enters into an ambivalent situation, with his political life hanging in the balance. Dez, as the commis-

sarial representative of sovereign power, discloses to Terranova the right to decide on suspending the singer from the order of political friendship and thus situate him in a space of exception: namely, a carceral institution such as the prison that flanks A Coruña's lighthouse and cemetery. Dez, smitten with Terranova's singing voice and his physical beauty, convinces authorities to allow him to take the youth in, thereby taking "posesión del. Gobernaba a súa vida e gozaba o seu corpo. E mantendo o poder, o cargo, a consideración social" (possession of him. He governed his life and enjoyed his body. Without losing face, power or position) (236; 167). In miniature, the Dez-Terranova dynamic mimics the relationship of the sovereign to the political subject, with all of its attendant erotic overtones of possession and obligation. In such a scenario, the subject, Terranova, is left vulnerable both to power's demand to offer up the body as a form of sacrifice— as an object to be sacrificed to the desires of authority— or, in the worst case scenario, to be disposed of with impunity as a beastly, worthless existence.

In effect, the latter possibility comes to fruition once Terranova announces his intention to leave Dez. Terranova, at this juncture, transforms into the internal antagonist referenced in Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, only within the microcosmic framework of Dez's household: "O feitizo fixérase con toda a casa e [Dez] tiña que reconquistala" (The whole house was under Terranova's charm and he'd have to reconquer it) (238; 169). In the wake of internal peace being disrupted, a state of emergency sets in in which violence with impunity becomes permissible to regain security and the homogenous space necessary for the reinstitution of law. Having decided to de-situate Terranova's body from the unsettled household through corporeal torture, Dez's "andar era marcial" (walk now was martial) (238; 169) as he and an accomplice transport and brutalize Terranova next to the city's lighthouse. The lighthouse is an important object in the novel, as it is at once a mark of Galician historical emigration, Republican forced displacement, and, as Terranova's beating demonstrates, also the geographical point associated with those bodies declared to be irredeemable for the purposes of the State. To wit, the lighthouse, as a means of escape and permanent banishment, is distinct in purpose from carceral institutions such as the barracks, where one is taken if it is necessary to "domesticar" (151) (domesticate), insinuating some possibility of return to the polis once the errant body has received sufficient discipline and punishment.

Samos, the judge, shares Dez's endeavor to catalogue and inscribe human typology in order to fend off existential chaos. In contemplating his brother-in-law, for example, "daba a impresión de que o xuíz esculcaba dende sempre a Leica e que aínda así sería incapaz de identificalo nunha rolda de recoñecemento. Era un ser mutante, caprichoso ao seu ver, que facía cachi-

zas a súa idea dun catálogo de caracteres e condutas” (it seemed the judge had forever been studying Leica and still wouldn’t be able to pick him out at an identity parade. He was a mutant, capricious creature, in his opinion, who gave the lie to his idea of a catalogue of personalities and behaviours) (499; 366). In the same way that the State endeavors to produce a totalizing homogenous space of friendship in order to distinguish external enmity, Samos’s worldview indexes the sum of humanity into a neat array of descriptors, reinforcing further the central obligation of authority to inscribe the placement and function of individual bodies. Those that do not fit into Samos’s ideology, such as Leica, adopt a beastly nature—he is a creaturely “mutant” whose existence is excessively human in the sense of being able to adopt an array of poses and activities. Leica, further, bears a close resemblance to Terranova, whose body is “unruly” and “crude” once defying the logic of authority, which ultimately compels Dez to reveal his form of power as arbitrarily decisionistic.

Dez and Samos are self-described “katechons” (158) who, in Schmitt’s words, are “restrainers” that alone redeem a state of order when chaos is imminent or taking hold of a “normal” political situation (*Nomos* 60). From the perspective of katechonic power, bodies adjudicated to be excessively human dismantle the indexical ordering of subjects and become vulnerable to exile, death, or retraining. The latter possibility describes the case of a man accused of homosexuality that Samos sends to a Badajoz prison: “O seu é unha doenza. E vano curar” (He has an illness and he’ll be cured) (287; 204). A similar destiny befalls the gravedigger Polka when placed in forced labor after the Civil War, a form of work given to those whose status is reduced to being a “desafecto” (disaffected): “Chámome Francisco Crecente, *Polca* para os amigos, xardineiro municipal, especialista na poda de palmeiras, e son un desafecto. Era como se che saíse un edema que antes non se vira” (Polka to my friends, municipal gardener, name’s Francisco Crecente, Polka to my friends, municipal gardener, specialist in pruning palms, oh and by the way I’m disaffected. It was like an oedema appearing that hadn’t been there before) (160; 108). Disaffection, in the rubric of sovereignty, is akin to the reemergence of a subject’s naked, creaturely life when stripped of its political participation, like a latent edema that swells up to reveal the body’s raw materiality. In states of exception, such as Polka’s forced labor, the retraining of bodies and their vulnerability to death with impunity overlap in a kind of sinister Venn diagram in which the techniques of subjugation wielded by both sovereign and biopolitical power co-exist in a precarious balance.

The transmigration of Terranova’s and Polca’s bodies from the political *oikos* toward a state of abandonment reveals further the manner in which Schmittian sovereign power proposes the human as a category from which

a subject might be displaced. In the above example, the descriptor of “disaffection” designates those forms of beastly life degraded to a subhuman level having fallen out from the jurisdiction of law by the one who transcends order in possession of the right to the exception. Rivas shows through the novel that when filtered through the matrix of sovereign power, the threshold of humanism is similar to that of the law, both founded on self-authorized violence and perched atop a shifting foundation. Agamben views the foundation of humanism and that of the State to be similar in that both are spaces of exception whose lines are constantly redrawn: “Perhaps not only theology and philosophy but also politics, ethics, and jurisprudence are drawn and suspended in the difference between man and animal” (*The Open* 22). Further, man is “always the place—and, at the same time, the result—of ceaseless divisions and caesurae” (16). Polka, for his part, falls under the shadow of disaffection whereas Terranova, amidst his beating and exile from Dez’s household, is indexed as a “desgraciado” (wretch), crushed “como unha miñoca” (like a worm) (236; 167). It is a logical paradox for Samos to consider the human a malleable category, both in terms of his faith in the totalizing indexicality of human typologies as well as his firm belief in anthrosupremacy. If, through the menacing prism of sovereignty, the human comprises a mutant, creaturely substance, any stable attempts to define and divide its types would inevitably stumble or need revision. In addition, if the human insistently transforms atop an uncertain foundation, any stable articulation of its distinction from the animal or nonhuman would be a logical impossibility.

If the human might be anything, it is nothing at all. The explicit desire to assert anthrosupremacy informs the crux of Samos’s approach to power, a contradiction to which the judge is oblivious. His attraction to hunting, for example, and placement of a menagerie of stuffed animals in his study, is for him proof that “alí estaba a natureza real, conquistada” (real nature had been overcome) (300; 214). If the logic of sovereign power situates a malleable creatureliness at the core of the human, then “real nature” is equally mobile and in flux, and thus could never be superseded definitively. Creaturely nature, moreover, exceeds the ordering function of the law, which necessitates a companion figure—the sovereign, whether commissarial or otherwise—to likewise straddle the threshold of political inclusion and, like the *disaffectos*, exert a beastly, rogue function. In this way, the sovereign and the beast share the paradoxical relationship stipulated earlier by Derrida (32) in overlapping as rogues beyond the law while also existing as each other’s antipodes.

In the same time period that Rivas was elaborating *Os libros arden mal*, the notion of sovereign power appeared with regularity in his columns in relation to more contemporary issues in Spanish society. In 2008, for exam-

ple, Rivas critiqued the European Commission's approval of the Directive of Return, which allowed European countries to detain and deport immigrants without legal documentation. Rivas, writing just after the Commission's approval, described the proposed detentions, which could reach a maximum of eighteen months in duration, as efforts to amputate "derechos civiles elementales e introduce espacios de excepción jurídica y policial" (basic civil rights and introduce spaces of juridical and policial exception). The measure, more concretely, denied political status to human bodies who lacked the papers necessary for inscription within the normal legal order, situating them on the same tenuous plane as Terranova when discovered in the street by Dez. Two years prior, Rivas took aim at the abuses in the Abu Ghraib prison during the Iraq war as well as the extralegal presence of the Guantánamo Bay military base, a frequent object of inquiry in relation to Agamben's notion of the exception. Guantánamo, for Rivas, is antithetical to a democratic mandate and is a metaphor for the persistent latency of sovereign power underlying Western geopolitics: "¿Dónde está hoy Guantánamo? Aparece y desaparece. Es un edema que cambia de sitio en la piel del planeta" ("El tic") (Where, today, is Guantánamo? It appears and disappears. It is an edema that moves about the planet's skin). It is here profitable to recall that the gravedigger Polka refers to his reduction to the status of being disaffected as akin to an edema appearing on his own skin.

Edema comes from the Greek verb *oidein*, to swell, and could be thought of as a slowly intensifying sound or the hypnotic movement of an ocean's waves. To feel "swell" also means to be filled with a particular emotion. It is also an irregular and perhaps unexpected surge. An edema, then, conjures a political image of an irregular blight that also gestures at a threshold or limit. Swollen edemas unfortunately serve today as examples of normative behaviors and events. We shall explore this in detail below through what Marder has described as "the extremism of the centre" (80). In 2002, there are two major swells that continue to resonate in Iberian environmental history: the *Prestige* oil spill and the *Nunca Más* movement. The coastal areas of northern Portugal, Galicia, the Basque Country, and France witnessed not only a "swell" of toxic petroleum, but also a swift denial of the *Prestige* oil spill by the Spanish state. The state's disavowal is troubling since the *Prestige* remains the largest oil spill in Western European history and constituted a state of emergency. Drawing on Galician author Suso de Toro's book *Galiza á intemperie* (*Galicia Exposed*), this event qualifies as an ecological exposure. The reference to *intemperie* (intemperance) suggests that the national and regional governments, through their obfuscation and lies, rendered the coastal areas along the Atlantic a zone of exception, vulnerable not only to the often rough elements of wind and sea but also to the tons of toxic pitch leaking out of the *Prestige*.

The *Costa da Morte* (Coast of Death) region, as a collective of human communities and ecosystems, was stripped of any protection by the state when it decided to send the *Prestige* oil tanker back out to sea. In addition to the government's negligence, what was remarkable about that particular moment was the democratic surge—or swell—in response to the state's absence. Witnesses along the coasts famously challenged the government's narrative and spearheaded cleanup efforts even at the risk of their own health. The *Nunca Más* movement is a flashpoint in the environmentalist history of post-Francoist Spain in part because it raised awareness about the fragile entanglement between Iberian communities and the petroleum industry that is by no means limited to the *Prestige* case itself. The oil spill was no accident. It was an event occasioned by a sovereign act of the Spanish state that sought to bury wreckage emblematic of the risks inherent to the horizon of global energy burnout. The *Prestige*, then, remains a telltale of our current energy burnout in which, as Michael Marder puts it in his book *Pyropolitics*: “the past, the present, and the future burn together in a process that is indistinguishable from incinerated life” (95).

While a 2016 *sentencia* (ruling) did charge to the ship's captain with crimes against the environment, no court has been willing to examine the negligence and wrongdoing by the state itself. Given the fury with which Prime Minister Rajoy's government has cited the Spanish Constitution to suspend Catalonia's regional autonomy, it would be wise to heed Rivas's advice and turn back to “some of the least often read paragraphs of the constitution,” whose clauses address issues of environmental justice (“El *Prestige* y el ‘Barril’”). Article 45 guarantees environmental protection as an indispensable part of collective patrimony, promising legal and penal proceedings against violators of environmental justice. To date, however, we have seen only disregard for environmental justice as a cornerstone for Spanish democracy. The Sovereign's inaction effectively suspended Article 45. While Agamben explicitly limits his analysis of political sovereignty to human subjects, Mick Smith has convincingly extended this analysis to include what Agamben himself regards as mere territory. Indeed, ecosystems and nonhumans are prime examples of the included exclusion since they are categorically excluded from the polis yet their survival currently depends on the decision of human sovereignty. Moreover, Smith argues that an ecological emergency will not produce more vigilant environmental policy, but rather suppress the possibility: “It will be coextensive with the imposition of emergency measures and potentially disastrous technological, even militaristic, ‘remedies’” (204). The state's response to the *Prestige* crisis suggests an extension of the Sovereign's right to except over entire regions of its territory, which includes estuaries, urban areas like Vigo and A Coruña, aviary refuges, beaches, and fisheries. Following Smith,

one can argue that the ecological emergency created by the *Prestige* will not lead to a better distillation of state sponsored environmental justice, but rather to its opposite: a precedent suspension of political agency that would protect regions, communities and biodiversity.

Writing on the legacy of *Nunca Más*, Rivas has noted that, in addition to the initial shock created by the crisis, shame (*vergüenza*) is what forged the revolutionary element of the movement. It became a struggle against indifference and enrolled the arts as a space for creative autonomy, to build hope out of imagination (*A cuerpo* 266–67). It was the construction of another narrative that sought to single out the deceit and treachery of the State, which Rivas defines as *bioperversidad* (bioperversity). As Rivas notes in a 2008 column: “España necesita manifiestos de convivencia y lexemas de simpatía: cultivar la biodiversidad y no la bioperversidad” (“Lo común”) (Spain needs manifestoes of coexistence and lexemes of sympathy: to cultivate biodiversity and not bioperversity). It is our claim that such a shift in thinking toward coexistence and biodiversity derives from undoing any ecological sovereignty that enlists human interest as the sole arbiter of what counts as environmental protections. Throughout his work, Rivas elaborates an alternative mode of thinking and creative expression that he describes as “a cuerpo abierto” (open bodied). Territory—as the static backdrop for Schmittian sovereign power—is an unstable ground for the sovereign enclosure. Powerful actants such as neglected oil tankers, swollen riverbeds, fields of eucalyptus trees, hurricane winds, and drought-induced wildfires fundamentally destabilize any notion of territory serving as the stable bedrock for political life.

Bioperversity continues to be a prominent feature underlying Galicia’s political and economic life. In a column from May 2007, Rivas contemplates what he describes as an “ondada depredatoria” (predatory wave) resonating from the following phrase: “Nos también queremos ser multimillonarios” (“A ondada depredatoria”) (We too want to be multimillionaires). The slogan belongs to a group of citizens petitioning the city of Barreiros to remove protections for coastal areas, which, at the time, prohibited the construction of new houses. Rivas is particularly concerned with the territorial effects that this project entails, which he describes as a *feísmo* (ugliness) created through the phenomenon of *violencia catastral* (catastral violence), which mines, manipulates, and destroys the raw materiality of public and private lands in the name of displaying wealth and prosperity. Notably, this is not about becoming rich; it is about obtaining the appearance of being rich. The logic of becoming a multimillionaire particularly demands the need for housing and automobiles emblematic of its status. The appearance of seaside (Mc)mansions would dramatically alter the composition of Galicia’s coastlines, not only installing uniform iterations of “luxury,” but also threatening coastal ecosystems.

Such concern about *feísmo* may appear couched in localist esthetics merely worried about the view. In fact, Rivas does offer up the Cabo Vilano wind turbine project in another column dedicated to this subject of catastral violence. The novelist himself notes the irony that a founding member of Greenpeace España and mouthpiece of the *Nunca Más* movement would be critical of what appears to be an important regional turn to alternative energy sources (“Piscifactorías”). Yet this apparent contradiction points to a more complex position waged against ecological sovereignty. Rivas, it turns out, has exposed the undoing of the sovereign enclosure due to the unstable ground of territory.

The cadaster is a line by line inventory of what belongs to a territory, drawn up for the purposes of taxation. This account catalogues all territory under the sphere of human influence, that is to say, sovereignty. Ideally, the cadaster is not only a record of ownership, but also a record of what is protected from ownership. These lines also index areas protected from new development, whether this involves new mansions, golf courses, or wind turbines. Ecological sovereignty, following this logic, functions because humans are the wise stewards of nature and *decide* to protect it from economic development. The cadaster should provide a means of limiting the exploitation of ecosystems in the name of economic progress. In practice, however, public and private lands are constantly under threat of “depreciation,” as Rivas puts it, due to the tendency to except certain territory from the protection of the law.

Rivas’s notion of *violencia catastral* refers to harm, degradation, and destruction of the cadaster, the territorial collective of both public and private lands. To examine this devaluation, consider the status of a national park or nature reserve. Ideally, these places would retain a sacred catastral status, protected from any ransacking or extraction. The devastation of the Illas Cíes (Cíes Islands) during the *Prestige* crisis points to shortcomings of protections given by human sovereignty over nature. Having just become part of the Parque Nacional de las Islas Atlánticas de Galicia (National Park of Atlantic Islands of Galicia), the islands were hit by eight hundred tons of oil in 2002, affecting at least 70 percent of the islands (Carbajo). The national park, meant to be a sanctuary, comes to resemble more closely a standing reserve, encased by a Heideggerian *gestell* (frame), which, on the worst of days, strips it of any protection. These “protected” spaces were excepted as the sovereign decides to deny the impact of the oil spill since the islands lose any possible participation in the political sphere. Smith observes that this framing of “protection,” under the auspices of human sovereignty, is a guise for resourcism: the perspective that the natural world is a set of resources awaiting the fires of human ingenuity (103). Nature sanctuaries and national parks, not to mention unprotected territory, are instances of an inclusive exclusion, predicated on the notion that ecosystems are excluded from sovereign protections yet sub-

jected to deprecation and contamination that will lead to ecological collapse. Smith provocatively calls any understanding of nature based on resourcism a “suspended animation,” suggesting that the reduction of ecosystems, marine life, or fisheries to a dollar amount fails to account for the biodiversity at work in these places (103). Suspended animation, then, is the harbinger of bioperversity. The continued cultivation of such a political project ultimately cannot protect biodiversity, but rather contributes to its demise. Ecosystems are ultimately vulnerable to perversion: toxic alterations or “turns” against the creatures that inhabit them, including human beings. Biodiversity, then, ultimately finds no champion in any form of environmentalism based on human sovereignty over nature. The sovereign is not only unsustainable from an environmentalist position; it is also, for both Smith and Jean-Luc Nancy, “untreatable” (Smith 214).

The untreatable bioperversity of the sovereign is visible in the extreme behavior inherent to the contemporary practice of global energy extraction and consumption. In the aptly titled essay, “¿Hay vida antes de la muerte?” (Is There Life before Death?), Rivas addresses “Burn-Out” as a syndrome currently “devastating” developed countries. Despite the depletion of personal or collective resources, burnout points to a desire to continuously expend energy (*A cuerpo* 329). Citing Zygmunt Bauman’s *Liquid World*, Rivas observes that this syndrome is not merely an elitist “anguish” for those few who quickly and continuously skate over the precariously thin ice of the global economy, but rather serves as a metaphor for a globalized world itself (329). The need for speed has become a way to cover over and ignore the very crisis it is fueling. Velocity leaves in its wake fires, spills and floods of unimaginable scale and danger. Unfortunately, the risks inherent to this activity only take center stage when they interrupt the high-speed trajectories of global capital. Drawing on Schelling’s notion of combustibility, Marder argues that global energy consumption is currently operating as a totalizing fire on a planetary scale: “The tragedy of the twenty-first century is that we have taken it upon ourselves to actualise this potentiality and to burn everything that is combustible, including, at some level, ourselves” (94). Though its planetary scale is extreme, this practice is so normative that it hardly bears mentioning. Global energy consumption today depends on extracting ancient bodies of plants and animals to be processed and burned in the name of the economic expansion and human ingenuity. Following Marder, we describe these practices as “the extremism of the centre,” which enables all other forms of extremism (80). Energy extraction and consumption clearly follow from the premise of human sovereignty over nature, constituting, in this case, the right to decide what to extract and burn in the name of progress. Any latent environmental potentiality is always in danger of being condemned—like the libraries of A

Coruña—to the flames. Consider, in the North American context, the plight of the subalpine larch in western Montana’s Bitterroot Valley. If the flames of 2017’s dramatic wildfires had reached their habitat, the rare tree species likely would have disappeared from the region.

One recent ecological edema that has flared up in Galicia is the October 2017 wildfire, strengthened in part by the unusual Hurricane Ophelia, whose winds swept across the peninsula as the storm moved north. Prime Minister Rajoy returned to his native Galicia and rightly noted that the “*sinfin de incendios*” (the endless fires) were not a matter of chance. However, in lockstep with a Schmittian friend/enemy logic, Rajoy did not mention global warming, hurricane winds, or droughts, but rather attributed the fires to criminal arsonists (García). (Others have even attributed the fires to jihadists.) In fact, these deadly fires are tied to poor forestry policies at work in the region (that have nothing to do with raking forests). As Suso de Toro noted in a recent column, the monocultural production of eucalyptus in northeastern Spain is another major factor for the fire’s extremity (“*Lo que arde*”). The cultivation of eucalyptus has a long and problematic history throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The tree grows quickly and sells well. Such justification for eucalyptus plantations operates on the logic of ecological sovereignty, since it assumes that Galicia’s rural areas are merely standing reserves, awaiting extraction and development. Nature, then, is a suspended animation of resources awaiting our manipulation and harvest. Of course, given its papery pulp, eucalyptus also burns well, easily fueling the “*sinfin*” observed above by Rajoy. Moreover, as de Toro notes, the tree actually thrives after wildfires have cleared its habitat of other species. The contentious history of the eucalyptus is pocked with bio-perversity because the species contributes to the corruption and annihilation of biodiversity.

In Marder’s pyropolitical reading of Schmitt, he notes that the Nazi jurist himself recognized that the trouble with fire is that it is a pure and, I would add, contagious form of enmity (17). Wildfires, when tendered, lit, fueled, and fanned by anthropogenic climate change, will not yield to the sovereign enclosure or its fanciful notions of nature as a territory held in suspended animation. In this sense, wildfires are the anarchical aftershocks of human-driven planetary burnout. Fire, when out of control, consumes everything combustible inside and out. In fact, Schmitt rightly suggests that democracy has failed to confront the risks inherent to its political and economic projects (17). Of course, as we have suggested, this is paradoxically due to liberal democracy’s adherence to the Schmittian notion of territory as a sovereign enclosure.

Global energy consumption is an extreme albeit normative behavior. The extremism of the center has kindled fires it cannot contain and—naturally—does not wish to acknowledge. When the State is forced to acknowl-

edge a crisis, as Prime Minister Rajoy has unfortunately demonstrated, those responsible are the enemies of the state—arsonists or jihadists—and not the state itself. The bioperversity examined in the above pages continues to swell and “go viral.” In conclusion, it is important to emphasize Rivas’s invitation to an open bodied ecology as an alternative approach to the dangers of ecological sovereignty. To return to the phenomenon of *violencia catastral*, Rivas writes: “Porque tamén a paisaxe padece. Tamén a terra berra. A súa psique e a nosa están moi conectadas” (“Piscifactorías, canteiras e taparrabos”) (Because landscape also suffers. Land also screams. Its psyche and ours are connected). Rivas’s open bodied ecology is instantiated here particularly through the land screaming. For Peter Schwenger, even if “no scream can reconstitute the I that emits it,” all screams are remarkably similar since they are all forced responses to the horrors of being entangled (395). Screaming becomes one channel for open bodied ecology. In an anthropomorphic move, this description presumes the existence of what we can describe as a “catastral mouth.” The *boca*, in fact, is a persistent image in Rivas’s work: “E esa boca, a do máis estraño (o máis formidábel, o máis abraiante, o máis terríbel), é a boca da literatura” (*A boca* 9) (And this mouth, the one of the most strange (or most formidable, or most stunning, or terrible), is the mouth of literature). As we try to imagine a territory screaming, it is important to note that these mouths are by no means limited to a creaturely anatomy. Rivas writes of *bocas* as conduits for all sorts of trickling, creaking, screaming, groaning, or rumbling. A recently dug well, for example, becomes a *boca* for the gurgle of water (“El cuervo de Noé” 11). Discussing his mother’s storytelling, Rivas provides us with a stunning example of open bodies at work: “A veces el rumor de la corriente de la conciencia de mi madre subía de tono, se aceleraba, incluso se desdoblaba y multiplicaba en voces diferentes” (11) (Sometimes the stream’s trickle in my mother’s consciousness rose in tone, accelerated, even turned and multiplied in different voices). While washing clothes on the riverbank, his mother’s monologues take on the flow, swells, and eddies of the river’s *boca*. The feedback loops between the river and the speech operate through concentric circles, telling stories that have no singular source. For Rivas, this is one peculiar property of open bodies: they begin to speak with voices that are not their own. “Se algún día falas cunha voz que non é a túa, non te preocupes. Non adoezas. Iso pásalles aos corpos abertos” (if you ever talk in a voice that isn’t yours, don’t worry. Don’t panic. It’s what you get for having an open body) (*Os libros* 197; 139).

To undo human sovereignty over the natural world is about directly confronting what we referred to above as ecological exposure (*la intemperie ecológica*) and the dangers it involves throughout the biosphere. As noted

above, the state's decision to deny the impact of the *Prestige* oil spill effectively suspended Article 45 of the Spanish constitution and rendered parts of Galicia's coastline as a zone of exception. Since 2002, Rivas has documented a variety of examples that show that the *Prestige* is not a limit case but rather part of a larger and ongoing history of Iberian bioperversity. In sum, undoing human sovereignty over nature gives us a new approach to the mobile and strange richness of biodiversity. A potent arena in which to consider such an open bodied ecology is the creative realm. In a poem from the multilingual collection *A desaparición da neve* (2009), Rivas dedicates "Historia del arte" to the Galician painter Antón Mouzo, whose work was partially damaged when the Pequeno River swelled over its banks. Mouzo, as an artist concerned with his own work, intervened to save his partially submerged work.

Antón loitou contra o naufraxio,
 salvou os cadros do afundimento.
 E logo curounos un a un.
 Os afogados, os enlamados, os fanados.
 O seu estudio era un hospital de campaña.
 Tiña unhas mans pequenas, lizgairas e sinceras,
 de enfermeira de prematuros.
 Quería que os seus cadros fosen felices. (48)

(Antón fought against the shipwreck,
 And saved the paintings from sinking
 Later he saved them one by one.
 The drowned ones, the muddied ones, the amputated ones.
 His studio became a military hospital
 He had small hands, agile and sincere,
 Like a nurse for premature babies.
 He wanted his paintings to be happy.)

Notably, the objects swept up in the overflowing current of the river are grouped together in the image of a shipwreck, which should of course remind us not only of the *Prestige*, but also of the countless shipwrecks that have occurred in the history of the Coast of Death region. Instead of giving the damaged work a *coup de grâce* to effectively destroy the work, Mouzo opted to cure (*curar*) his works, a verb that also suggests "preserving" or "weathering" the damaged canvases. The studio, following Rivas's metaphor, becomes a triage hospital at the frontlines of a battle. In this case, of course, the battle is one waged against the elements of what we described above as ecological exposure, which left his paintings screaming like wounded children. The stu-

dio loses its protective enclosure and becomes a space directly exposed to the floodwaters of the river.

This history of art offers an account of the artist's sovereign enclosure—his studio—that has been breached by the flood outside. Put differently, the Pequeno flood shows us that the exterior cannot help but seep into the interior. In this way, Mouzo and Rivas point to artistic creation that not only encounters ecological exposure, but also creates within it, elaborating an open bodied ecology. Rivas goes on to speculate about what Mouzo hopes for his paintings. It might not be, according to Rivas, happiness that Mouzo sought for his paintings but rather that they be:

Portadores dunha saudade desposuída
de tristura
Talvez por iso o primeiro que reparou
foi as cordas dos violines
a serie inconclusa das *Naturezas vivas*

(Carriers of a dispossed *Saudade*
of sadness
The first one he saved depicted
violin strings from an incomplete series
called Animated Lives)

The last verse offers a direct alternative to Smith's observation that human sovereignty over nature holds it in suspended animation. Artistic expression *a cuerpo aberto* is about animating what had been suspended. Mouzo's "Animated Lives" constitutes an encounter between the lives of the paintings and ecological exposure. Instead of *naturalezas muertas* [still lifes], Mouzo is working to create animated lives in his paintings, which are all animated due to lines, waves and murkiness left on the canvases by the water of the Pequeno. This creative act is, by chance, not limited to the decisions of the artist but rather operates via co-creation with actants such as muddy floodwater. In this sense, Rivas's open bodied ecology, though certainly a rejection of ecological sovereignty, makes no attempt to evade the dangerous events observed today. Indeed, the sovereign refusal to address ecological devastation is at the heart of what Smith and Nancy described as the sovereign's untreatability. The danger of losing biodiversity also entails what Rivas has described as "amnesia forestal" (arboreal amnesia). As species disappear or burn in the bioperverse turns of ecological sovereignty, we lose an untold amount of knowledge and history held within those organisms. In this way, Rivas illustrates what Marder described above as a worldwide burning of past, present and future. The

loss of libraries, forests, estuaries or fragile island ecosystems constitutes an erasure of untold richness. Reimagining these losses in creative expression allows us to see the stakes of Smith's claim that protecting a species or ecosystem is ultimately a liberation from any claim of human sovereignty (103).

Amnesia forestal pairs well with *amnesia retrógrada* [retrograde amnesia], another term Rivas has used with regard to the debates surrounding the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and Francoism ("Garzón"). This essay has traced how Rivas has tirelessly examined how the Sovereign's permanent state of exception has persisted throughout the dictatorship and well into the evolution of Spanish democracy, especially in regards to ecological catastrophe, collapse, and bio-perversion. Rivas appears to echo Walter Benjamin's observation that the study of oppressed peoples serves as a warning about the dangers of a normative state of exception. *Os libros arden mal*, we argued, traces the histories of people whose exception from the political order has dehumanizing consequences that shine light on the unstable foundations of both the law and humanism. Rivas's concern extends into environmental debates, especially regarding human sovereignty over nature which we see as an untenable position due to the danger it poses in today's world. In its place, Rivas offers an open bodied ecology that requires that the collective be shielded from the sovereign right to decide on legal exception. The continued assertion of human sovereignty exposes ecosystems to potential collapse. Protecting endangered species and ecosystems requires a negative ecology: an ecology freed from human dominion and decisionism. An open bodied ecology, then, rejects any kind of assertion that human communities should be considered the sole stewards, protectors, or shepherds of the natural world. Instead, ecological thought *a cuerpo abierto* urges us to consider ecological collectives as networks of alliances forged across species that would better protect biodiversity from the most dangerous decision operating at the heart of human sovereignty: the decision to burn the present, past and future of the biosphere.

Notes

1. English translations of *Os libros arden mal* will be taken from Jonathan Dunne's excellent version of the text. All other translations are the authors' own.
2. Though also reproduced in *A cuerpo abierto*, we are citing the original publication of the article in *El País* in order to better convey the historical contextualization of Rivas's remarks.
3. Derrida perhaps best expresses his dynamic in his two-volume meditation on the relationship between the beast and the sovereign. While the sovereign rises up above the

- law, the beast falls out from under it: “they both share that very singular position of being outlaws, above or at a distance from the law, the beast ignorant of right and the sovereign having the right to suspend right, to place himself above the law that he is, that he makes, that he institutes, as to which he decides, sovereignly” (32).
4. Rodríguez López asserts that the relationship between Hitler’s Germany and Spain centered on the university setting and included exchanges of lecturers, scientific discoveries, the presentation of honorary doctorates, and scholarships for Spanish students to learn German and travel to the country, though relations cooled after Spain’s post-war declaration of neutrality (101–28). For another extensive analysis of the influence of Schmitt and Nazi ideology in Spain, see Janué i Miret (94–97). Sesma Landrin (243–80) similarly analyzes the reception of Fascism in Spain, with special emphasis on the creation of the Instituto de Estudios Políticos.
 5. Samos is also confronted by the arbitrary dimension of his juristic decisionism. The lawyer of the man sent to prison for violating the same-sex clause of the Ley de vagos tells the mother that Samos is “a lei . . . Que nestes casos había xuíces que tiñan unha vara de medir e outros outra. Que de vostede dependía que fora ou non a prisión” (the law, in such cases some judges have one yardstick and others, another, and it depends on you [Samos] whether or not he goes to prison) (286; 203).
 6. Mariano Rajoy infamously described the *Prestige* oil spill as “little trails of clay” (“hilillos de plastilina”), effectively denying the *Prestige* event was an oil spill at all. For more on the *Prestige* crisis, see Trevathan.

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