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Cities and Wetlands

The Return of the Repressed in Nature

Rod Giblett

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Cities and Wetlands

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To Lawrence Buell

Contents

Part One

Beginnings

1

Introduction: Looking Back, Looking Forward

I love wetlands and I live in a city; I love cities and I lived by a wetland for twenty-eight years, for the past five of which I was writing the bulk of this book. This wetland was on the outskirts of a city until the city swamped the surrounds of the wetland and I moved on to another city without many wetlands. I now live in an inner city and not by a wetland. Unlike many of the wetlands destroyed by cities, the wetland by which I lived has not been destroyed. The relationship between cities and wetlands is fraught and they are even inimical to each other: where the city is now, there the wetland was once; where the wetland is now on the outskirts of the city, the city, or its suburbs, soon will be; where the restored, rehabilitated, or artificial wetland is in the city, a wetland or wasteland once was.

Wetlands are vital for life on earth, including human and nonhuman life. The leading intergovernmental agency on wetlands states that

> they are among the world's most productive environments; cradles of biological diversity that provide the water and productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival. Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" that they provide humanity, ranging from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate change mitigation. Yet study after study demonstrates that wetland area[s] and [their] quality continue to decline in most regions of the world. As a result, the ecosystem services that wetlands provide to people are compromised. (Ramsar Convention Bureau, online)

Yet more than the mere providers of "ecosystem services," wetlands are habitats for plants and animals, and homes for people. They are also principally under threat on the outskirts of cities where they are drained and filled to create sites for more homes for more people. The relationship between cities and wetlands is fraught, to say the least. *Cities and Wetlands* traces the relationship between cities and wetlands and calls for reconciliation between them so that they might coexist, if not live together bio- and psychosymbiotically (see Giblett, 2011).

To elaborate on the title of *Cities and Wetlands* and to locate it within its primary traditional disciplines, it is about cities and wetlands in history and literature. It builds on the previous work of others in these fields, such as Mumford's classic *The City in History* and Lehan's recent *The City in Literature*. *Cities and Wetlands* might have been entitled *Cities and Wetlands in History and Literature*, though this title would have situated the book in the past and in two disciplines alone, whereas it is also concerned with the present and the future, and with other disciplines, principally geography and environmental cultural studies.

To elaborate on its subtitle, *The Return of the Repressed in Nature and Culture*, *Cities and Wetlands* is also about the repression of wetlands by cities in the past and present, and about the return of repressed wetlands in culture and nature in the present and for the future. *Cities and Wetlands* both returns the repressed wetlands to present consciousness and is about the return of repressed past wetlands in the past and the present. It might have been subtitled *The Return of the Repressed in the Past, Present, and Future*. The book is in part about cities and wetlands in environmental cultural studies, geography, history and literature, the repression of wetlands by cities, and the return of repressed wetlands in culture and nature. To locate it within its transdisciplines and theoretical framework, *Cities and Wetlands* is an environmental cultural study conducted broadly within the transdisciplinary environmental humanities.

A book about cities and wetlands would have been a very short and slim one indeed if it had merely related the early history of various cities set in swamps or marshes and their later filling or draining, dredging or canalizing of those wetlands. The scope of *Cities and Wetlands* is much wider as it considers the return, both literally and metaphorically, in both nature and

culture, of the repressed wetlands on, or in, which the city was built. It might have been subtitled *The Return of the Repressed in People and Place*. This return occurs in fact when, for example, the leveed wetlands of New Orleans were broken in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina and took the city back to its wetland beginnings, or when Venice has a high tide, or *acqua alta*, that brings up the waters below.

"Katrina" is a salutary instance of the need to think the cultural and natural together. In particular, it points to the need to think industrial capitalism and its technologies, weather, climate, cities, floods, rivers, and wetlands as intertwining and interrelated entities and agents. "Katrina" is a salutary instance of the cultural and natural operating together in and as "one single catastrophe" of history as viewed by the Angel of History, as Benjamin ([1940] 2003: 392) put it, looking back over the course of time. "Katrina" is also "one single catastrophe" of geography as viewed by the Angel of Geography looking over the expanse of space in the will to fill and the drive to drain or reclaim wetlands. Rather than a series of catastrophes proceeding one after the other through history, Benjamin's "Angel of History" sees one single catastrophe of history (392). This single catastrophe, however, occurs not only in time, in history, but also in space, in a place, in geography. As well as the "Angel of History," the "Angel of Geography" sees one single catastrophe of wetlands dredged, filled, and so "reclaimed," cities set in them and cities being re-reclaimed by them in storms and floods. In the case of "Katrina," the catastrophe of history and geography is tied up with the creation, destruction, and re-creation of New Orleans in its swampy location on the Mississippi delta.

The city thus can, and sometimes does, revert to wetland in a return of the repressed wetland in a process of displacement and transformation, like its psychoanalytical counterpart. Water is not in the place it is supposed to be in the city, and the city is transformed back into the wet land it once was in what I call the return of the geographical and historical repressed wetland, of the spatial and temporal repressed, of the lost and forgotten wetland. Just as in psychoanalysis the repressed always returns, so too in city the repressed always returns as the repressed is never totally suppressed or destroyed. Active traces of the city repressed, as much as the psychological repressed, always remain to be reactivated and return naturally and culturally. The return of the repressed wetland also occurs figuratively, such as in the fascination with,

and horror of, the dark underside of the sewers and slums of the city figured in wetland tropes. *Cities and Wetlands* might have been subtitled *The Return of the Repressed in Fact and Figure*.

Tropes are the "dreams of speech," as Nabokov (1971: 328) called them, and dreams are "the royal road to the unconscious," as Freud ([1899] 1976: 769) defined them. Tropes are the royal road to the unconscious of speech, and writing; tropes for the dark and sewery underside of the city are the royal road to the wetland unconscious, and repressed, of the city. The repressed swampy or marshy beginnings and subsequent history of wetland cities, or aquaterrapolises, return in their speech and writing about it. The trope both represses that history and returns to it; the trope not only masters the absence of the lost wetland in common with all speech and writing, but also enacts the return of the repressed.

Cities and Wetlands undertakes an ecological psychoanalysis of the investments of desire and capital, yields of pleasure and profit, and relations of power and work in the history of the modern mercantilist and capitalist city with its industries and inhabitants in their relationships to its wetlands. As such, *Cities and Wetlands* is located within what I call a psychoanalytic ecology that not only reads the symptoms and engages in a talking cure of the psychogeopathology of the will to fill and the drive to drain wetlands inscribed on the surface of the body of the earth in the foundation and development of the city, but also nurtures gratitude for the generosity of the earth exemplified in wetlands and so tries to prevent the manifestation of those symptoms in the first place by developing ecomental health through bio- and psychosymbiotic lives and livelihoods with it and its wetlands. Psychoanalytic ecology promotes moving away from an emphasis on resource-exploitation, or greed and gluttony (oral sadism), to a relationship of generosity for gratitude, of respect for, reciprocity with, and restoration of the earth. *Cities and Wetlands* also rereads the use of the psychopathological vocabulary of melancholia, mourning, and the uncanny in relation to wetlands within the intertwined eco- and psychodynamics of aesthetic appreciation, bodily engagement, gender politics, sensory experience, and environmental conservation.

In this context, Henry David Thoreau's concept/metaphor of "the quaking zone" is a useful way of thinking, living, and being the interrelationship between body, land, mind, and water. For him the quaking zone refers to both

a particular landform, such as a wetland as a place where the earth trembles, and a psycho-geo-somatic state, or affect, where mind, body, earth, and water meet and tremble in fear or flight, in horror or terror, in anticipation or fascination, in dread or hope, or a mixture of these terms. The quaking zone in general is a place and space of both fear and hope. Although Thoreau did not draw a distinction between native and feral quaking zones, he did compare and contrast the visceral and emotional qualities of being in a swamp and being in a city (as we will see in Chapter 10). Native quaking zones are more naturally places of hope than are feral quaking zones. They are also less plainly places of fear than are feral quaking zones. In addition, they are more markedly places of death and new life than are feral quaking zones.

Feral quaking zones are by no means hopeless and lifeless, but they are not as hopeful and full of life as native quaking zones. Feral quaking zones, like slums, would become more livable for their inhabitants if they became more like the fully functioning ecosystems of native quaking zones like swamps. Feral quaking zones are landscapes, such as cities, where the earth quakes and terror is experienced as a result of the inscription of modern industrial technology on the surfaces and depths (and sometimes heights) of the body, earth, and mind. The features of feral quaking zones and the quality of the human sensory experience of being them are quite different, though, from quaking zones not made by modern human hands, or native quaking zones, such as swamps which are home to the fearful and horrific alligator and crocodile, and to death, decomposition, and new life. Quaking zones are landscapes that are cultural or natural to greater or lesser degrees, or somewhere in between the two; they are in-between nature and culture, places of a culture of nature.

In *People and Places of Nature and Culture* (Giblett, 2011), I distinguish between the first nature of indigenous cultures and the second nature of "agri-urban" cultures. This second culture of nature gave rise to the third culture and nature of modernity, and of mercantile, and later industrial, capitalism. This third culture of nature then produced the fourth culture of nature of hypermodernity and modern communication technologies. Recently the fifth culture of nature of postmodernity and sacrality harks back to the first nature of culture.

In *People and Places of Nature and Culture* (Giblett, 2011), I also characterize these five cultures of nature in terms of human work (bodily and

mental): the first culture of nature works (with) nature (defined as land, air, water, and living beings); the second culture of nature works over nature in herding, tilling, mining, forging, and building; the third culture of nature overworks nature in modern mercantile, and later industrial, capitalism, and; the fourth culture of nature hyperworks nature in communication technologies (see Giblett, 2008b).

In *Landscapes of Culture and Nature* (Giblett, 2009), I traced, and compared and contrasted, the quaking zone of the first culture of nature of premodern indigenous societies and the second culture of nature of agri-urban societies with that of the third culture of nature in modernity, principally in modern cities and industrial warfare, and with the fourth culture of nature of hypermodernity, principally in landscape, wilderness, and wasteland photography, in hypermodern cities, and in national disasters. I concluded by considering the postmodern fifth culture of nature in terms of embodied being in the world and living mutually and sustainably with the earth.

In *Cities and Wetlands* I consider the history of the city in relation to wetlands as natural context and constraint in the intertwined natural and cultural histories and ecologies of the city and the wetland. Rather than the natural and the cultural being seen as entangled (as construed by some in the environmental humanities), this book and my previous work in the field regard them as both intertwined and needing to be teased apart in order that the relationship between the natural and the cultural is clearly articulated and not confused, so that the natural is not pressed into service of the cultural as legitimating trope, nor as a mere source of metaphor. This is particularly the case when the dark underside of city in its slums, or the feral quaking zone, is figured as the nether world of swamps, or the native quaking zone.

The polluting and filling of the urban wetland marks a shift in terms of a postmodern, political ecology and the cultures of natures from the modern culture of nature to the hypermodern culture of nature and the discourses of natures of aesthetics, industrialization, and conservation (see Giblett, 2011: chapter 1). Modern cities founded in wetlands flounder in hypermodern wastelands of their own making, and so either drain or fill them in response, and founder in their messy history of culture and nature intertwined. Postmodern ecology critiques this history, commemorates the life of the dead wetland, and celebrates the living earth more generally. It also tries to prevent

the repetition of the mistakes of the past by acknowledging and respecting the ecological role wetlands and other lands play in the present and into the future vital for life on earth.

Psychoanalytic and postmodern ecology address the personal, political, corporeal, cultural, and historical dimensions—the psychodynamics, politics, economics, semiotics, and symbiotics—of our relationship with the living earth at the local, regional, and global levels and at the micro- and macro-scales. All cities are situated in and are dependent on catchments and bioregions, the unique flows of water, the rock and soils on which they are built, the plants and animals that live or lived there, all of which turn the place into more than a background and setting for human action, but into a dynamic context and vital habitat for nonhuman and human beings and actors in living processes.

Although the chapters in *Cities and Wetlands* are presented in roughly chronological order, the historical geography developed in it adopts and adapts a genealogical approach in which, following Michel Foucault (1979: 31), I am interested in what he called "the history of the present," rather than the history of the past. *Cities and Wetlands* is not a history of cities and wetlands as they were in the past. It tries to think history and geography together in the intertwining of time, space, and place in what I call "temporal geography." It is a history of cities and wetlands in the present (even though the wetlands may now be absent). As a genealogist I ask: what were the driving forces, including the social, cultural, economic, and political factors, that led in the past to the founding of some cities in or by wetlands and to the absenting of wetlands from these cities in the present? As a wetland conservationist and ecoculturalist, I also ask: what are the driving forces, including the social, cultural, economic, and political factors, that might lead to the conservation of remaining wetlands in cities or their rehabilitation where possible and to a rapprochement between cities and wetlands more generally?

History is located in spaces and places; history always occurs in a place and space. Geography is set in time (past, present, and future); geography always takes place in time. Temporal geography is concerned with the geography of time, with the past, the present, and the future; the cycle of the seasons; life and death, the flows of energy and matter, the life, death, and possible rebirth of wetlands, and places hope in the future for wetlands. Hope in the future

entails a spatially emplaced and embodied history and a temporal geography of the past and present with a future that acknowledges the wetlands of cities in the past and in the present for the future. Temporal geography begins and ends in the language of time. Understanding the meanings, metaphors, landscapes, and gender politics of wetlands is part of a better understanding of one's place on earth and one's point in time suspended in the present between a past one cannot return to and a future one cannot know but can imagine and hope for.

Temporal geography works not only generally within environmental cultural studies or ecocultural studies, but also specifically within postmodern and psychoanalytic ecology that reads critically the symptoms of land pathology of the will to fill and the drive to drain wetlands inscribed on the surface of the earth in the modern city. *Cities and Wetlands* considers the intertwined natural and cultural histories and ecologies of the city by retelling the history of the founding of a number of cities in, on, or by wetlands, and their dredging, draining, canalizing, pollution, and destruction of their wetlands. It also does so by retracing critically the history of the urban wetland in the stories told about it and in some cases the maps drawn of the city.

Each chapter of *Cities and Wetlands* is devoted to an individual city and begins with an historical account of the beginnings of the city under discussion built on or by a marsh or swamp. Each chapter then goes on to consider the return of the repressed both literally and metaphorically. In some cases they also go on to make an excursion into related topics that they often have in common with other cities. Various chapters make these excursions with a range of writers for companions, often including Walter Benjamin: Paris, into its sewers and the dialectical image; Venice, into mourning and melancholy; St. Petersburg, into modernity and phantasmagoria; London, into its slums and Crystal Palace; Hamburg, into the firebombing of this and other cities during World War II; Boston, into cities and swamps; and New York, into its sewers, alligators, and the uncanny. All these excursions are linked back to the main themes and concerns of the fraught relationship between cities and wetlands, and enact in some way a return of the repressed wetland.

All histories to date of these and other former wetland cities note their swampy beginnings, but do not compare them or make the connection with

other former wetland cities, nor do general books about the cities note their common wetland beginnings and regard this feature as typical of many cities, and so worthy of note and comment. *Cities and Wetlands* makes the comparisons, presents the general history, and shows the commonalities, but also discusses how each city refracted these commonalities in slightly different ways. Cities founded in or by wetlands were developed in and out of the conjunction of ancient and modern imperialism (both endo- and exo-imperialism) and of mercantile and modern industrial capitalism: Roman imperialism founded London and Paris; Russian imperialism founded St. Petersburg; Dutch imperialism founded New York and British and American imperialism followed; French imperialism founded New Orleans and American imperialism followed; British imperialism founded Toronto and Canadian imperialism followed; and American imperialism founded Washington and Chicago. All these cities are imperialist and capitalist swamp cities.

Many former wetland cities, such as London, Hamburg, New Orleans, New York, Toronto, and Venice, were also, and still are, port cities, maritime metropolises, and trading hubs located in riverine deltas or at the "mouth" of a river where land and ocean or sea meet at the point of interchange between interior and exterior, the hinterland and the overseas commercial empire. They are also maritime marsh metropolises. Many former wetland cities were, and in some cases still are, national capital cities: London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Washington, and Toronto (as the original capital of "Upper Canada"). They are also national capital swamp cities.

Some former wetland cities, such as Paris, Chicago, and Berlin, were also, and still are, central commercial nodes located in the middle of national territories and at the center of railway and road networks. They are also swamp city central. All the iconic cities of modernity were set in wetlands: Paris, Berlin, New York, Petersburg, Chicago, and London. They represent the triumph of the modern city over premodern wetlands. All these commonalities and differences between former wetland cities demonstrate the importance of considering cities and wetlands in any critical discussion, especially to an environmental history, of either, and to the economic and political critique of the development and power of imperialism, capitalism, and modernity. All these commonalities and differences demonstrate that the European city and the city of its settler diasporas are inimical to the wetland.

The structure of the book is organized both geographically and historically with the book divided into two main parts: the first major part deals with European cities and the second major part with North American cities. Within each part, the order of discussion is roughly chronological proceeding from the oldest city, founded the earliest, to the youngest city, founded most recently. Each chapter is also arranged in rough chronological order beginning with the discussion of an early phase when the city under consideration was a city of wetlands, only to be followed by a phase when the city dredged, drained, filled, or canalized and so became largely wetlandless, and then by a phase when the lost wetlands returned in writing about the city, concluding finally with a call to a rapprochement between the city and wetland, and more generally for city and country dwellers to live bio- and psychosymbiotic livelihoods in bioregional home-habitats of the living earth that include wetlands. Such a call is made in the context of imagining, hoping for, and promoting a transition from the anthropocene to the symbiocene[1] as the geological and human period that might come after and that should replace the anthropocene. The symbiocene is the hoped for coming geological age in which humans live bio- and psychosymbiotic livelihoods in bioregional home-habitats of the living earth.

As the names of the various cities mentioned here suggest and as the table of contents indicates, the scope of the book is confined, for reasons of time and space, to European and North American cities. I have written and published previously on a couple of Australian cities and their wetlands, such as Perth (Western Australia) (Giblett, 1996: chapter 3; Giblett and Webb, 1996: 127–146; Giblett, 2013: chapter 15) and Melbourne (Giblett, 2016, in press). Perth and Melbourne were both founded by British imperialism, are both state capitals, and were both located on marshy rivers and in close proximity to ports. Other wetland cities (or former wetland cities) elsewhere in the world, for instance, in Asia, such as Shanghai, Djakarta (Batavia), Bangkok (commonly called the "Venice of the East"), and Dhaka (commonly compared to the "Venice in the West"); and in Africa, such as Kampala and Lagos, are notable absences from *Cities and Wetlands*, yet could no doubt bear the same scrutiny as I give other cities and are certainly topics for future research by others. All of these cities and those discussed in *Cities and Wetlands* demonstrate that their relation to their wetlands is a defining and salient feature of the urban project.

All the cities discussed in *Cities and Wetlands* are former wetland cities as all their wetlands have been destroyed. Unlike these cities, Perth is unique in that it is still a wetland city. The wetlands of the central business district, the "entertainment precinct," and the inner suburbs have been destroyed, but many wetlands remain in the outer metropolitan area of Perth, such as in Forrestdale where I lived for twenty-eight years. In fact, so extensive are (or were) these wetlands that a geomorphic mapping project was conducted in 1989–1990 under the auspices of the then Western Australian Water Authority with the title of "Perth: A City of Wetlands" in order to establish their extent and conservation values so as to conserve them (see Giblett, 1996: 66 and figure 3).

For wetland conservationists, the loss of the urban wetland in the past is an act of destruction to mourn as well as a motivation to prevent the repetition of wetland destruction in the future and for the conservation of wetlands and the rehabilitation of lost wetlands in the present and future. For cultural environmentalists or ecoculturalists, the loss of the wetland is a memory to retrieve and a story to retell about the fraught relationships between culture and nature, city and wetland, past and present, place and people in order to try to achieve a rapprochement between them now and into the future.

Wetlands are maternal as they give birth to new life and nourish it. They are environmental waters of nourishing milk, their living waters are the breast of the great mother, the earth, and they are the moist womb that gives birth to new life. Wetlands are also maternal as they are the tomb for decaying and dying matter that gives rebirth to new life. Wetlands as womb are the source of life and wetlands as living waters are the first source of nourishment, the first object of love and the first object to be lost in modernization, colonization, drainage, and "progress." The living waters of wetlands thus enact, more so than others, a sense of the loss of the breast as a loved object. In environmental terms, the melancholic subject wants to incorporate the nourishing qualities of the living waters of the wetland breast into itself by devouring it through drainage or filling, and even by creating artificial ones. The object of investment was initially an object of love that was later lost. The loved object, which is lost for the melancholic, is the breast of the mother and the water that is specifically breast milk is the water of the wetland, the first water that nourished life (on earth), the breast of mother earth. In mourning the world

is experienced as loss whereas in melancholia the ego is experienced as lost. Instead of seeing the object (the breast, the wetland) as lost, the melancholic ego sees itself as lost in a massive act of narcissistic disavowal and egotism. As a result the ego desires itself.

Repression is to subjectivity as drainage is to wetlands; repression (and drainage) fixes the flows of embodied subjects (and wetlands). Repression is constitutive precisely of *melancholic* subjectivity; subjectivity is melancholic and mournful. The subject desires itself as a product of a melancholic loss of the loved object of the mother and great mother, the earth, of the mother's breasts and mother earth's breasts, the living waters of wetlands. Just as drainage was necessary for modernity, so is repression necessary for subjectivity.

As wetlands are increasingly lost from the earth and are lost as an object of love that nourishes life, both mourning and melancholia are experienced and exercised in relation to them. Humans should be in mourning for the loss of wetlands that gave us life and nourished us, but instead of being in mourning and regarding the earth as losing its wetlands and becoming empty of them, humans experience this loss as a melancholic loss of our own ego, our own selfhood, and our sense of identity. The earth is becoming empty of wetlands; the earth is losing its wetlands; the world of humans and the earth is losing its selfhood and identity.

2

Aquaterrapolises: Swamp Cities and Marsh Metropolises

Human beings made the city and the city was made for human beings. The city and humanity largely go together. Humans have lived before and without the city (both outside the city, in the country, and prior to its creation), and may do so after the city, or in a ruined cityscape, in a postapocalypse world. In the meantime, cities help define human beings and confine human beings as our predominant habitat on the larger home-habitat of planet earth. Even to think of the country outside or before the city is to think of the country in relation to the city. The city is the prime term around and against which the country as noncity is defined and defines itself as absence and lack, as zero.

The city for some writers about the city has an obvious and self-serving importance. Cities for P. D. Smith (2012: xi) are "our greatest creation," where "our" refers presumably to urban humankind. Smith is largely parroting Kotkin (2005: xx) for whom "humankind's greatest creation has always been its cities." Both are following in the footsteps of Jacques Ellul (1970: 154), the great theologian of the city and critic of technocracy, for whom "the city is man's greatest work."

By contrast, "the City of God" for St Augustine is God's greatest work. Augustine (1998: 449) certainly poses the heavenly city of God against "the earthly city" of "the pagans." He later cites Galatians 4:26 that "Jerusalem which is above is our eternal mother in heaven" (457). By inference, Jerusalem, or any other secular city for that matter, which is below is our temporal mother on earth. Augustine, however, failed to distinguish among patriarchal pagans for whom the city is their temporal mother on earth; matrifocal

pagans for whom the swamp is their eternal mother of the earth as it gives birth and is nourishing; and patriarchal Christians for whom the swamp is hell on earth that is inimical to both the heavenly and earthly cities, and so for whom drainage or filling and destruction of the swamp is a divine mission and sacred trust.

The citizen, or city-zen, or city-dwelling human being, is for Smith (2012: xi) the greatest creation of humanity. For him the human species is *homo urbanus* (urban humanity), and so not *homo sapiens* (wise humanity), nor *homo faber* (maker humanity), nor *homo ludens* (playful humanity). But *homo urbanus* is not possible without *homo sapiens, homo faber*, and *homo ludens*. Indeed, the city is where all of these beings, these *homo*s, find their ultimate expression, creativity, and playground in and by virtue of the city itself. *Homo urbanus*, and the city with it, is only about 7,000 years old, as Smith (2012: xi) points out, whereas *homo sapiens* is 27,000 years old and our ancestor, *homo erectus*, is up to 2 million years old.

Moreover, for Smith (2012: 29), "in the beginning" was "the city." This is bad theology, if not heresy. In the beginning was the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1), and then there was the wetland (Gen. 1:2). The wetland was the womb of watery chaos, fecund and fertile, out of which the city later emerged. The city, as Lehan (1998: 14) says, "emerged out of water and chaos." In a word, the city emerged out of mud, out of wet land. Later for Lehan "the mud" is that "from which the city—indeed life itself—emerged" (46). The city came after God had completed his creation, including the Garden of Eden, after the Fall, and then, after Cain murdered Abel, God cursed Cain and Cain created the city (Gen. 4:17). Drawing on Ellul (1970: 5), Ackroyd (2010: 72) reminds us that "God created the natural world . . . but humankind made the city. After his murder of Abel, Cain became the founder of cities."

Cain is also the father of marsh monsters as related in the Old English *Beowulf*, an unwritten chapter of Genesis that had to be written for Christianity to demonize and destroy pagan marshes (see Giblett, 2015). The monstrous city destroyed the monstrous marsh; the dryland city dredged and drained the wetland. Perhaps this is a case of history repeating itself, of the sin of the father of fratricide being repeated and revisited on the next generation with one of his progeny, the city, killing another, the marsh monster and monstrous marsh. By contrast, in *Cities and Wetlands* I aim to nurture and

promote sibling harmony between cities and wetlands, and break the repetitious cycle of history.

Cain not only "built a city," as Ellul (1970: 5) argues, but also "for God's Eden he substitutes his own." As Eden was a garden (Gen. 2:8), the city is a substitute garden (and Ebenezer Howard's [1902] "Garden City" is a substitute for a substitute, a simulacrum). The city is pastoro-technical[1] from its beginning before it aspired to be, and became, to some extent, techno-pastoral in the twentieth century courtesy of le Corbusier and Robert Moses and both their acolytes. For le Corbusier ([1929] 1987: vi and xvii) "the great modern city" is "a vast and complicated machine," yet it is an organic machine as not only would open spaces be the city's lungs, but also "the whole city should be one vast breathing organ."

As Ellul (1970: 16) says, "It is only in an urban civilization that man has the metaphysical possibility of saying, 'I killed God,'" and it is only in an urban civilization that "man" has the metaphysical possibility of saying "I am God." Cities built on or by wetlands are not only the work of fallen "man" in creating something that God did not create, but also of fallen "man" who rises up and wrests from God the divine function of dividing land from water (Gen. 1:6), and becomes as God. The builders of the ancient city of Babel became as God by building a city that rose to the heavens; the builders of the ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and modern cities set in wetlands became as God by building cities that divided land from water immersed in the earth. However, they could not become as God by creating wetlands; in fact, they destroyed wetlands in and by creating the city. Only recently has "man" become as God by creating wetlands. "Man" thus arrogated to himself the power to both destroy and create wetlands and thereby became more than God, a super-God.

The rate and scale of the development of cities has accelerated as time has gone by. The twenty-first century is what Kotkin (2005: xvii) calls "an urban century, the first where a majority of people live in cities." Indeed, Sanderson (2009: 33) notes that "2007 marked the first time in human history that more people lived in cities than in rural areas." In the United States, this turning point came nearly ninety years earlier. Manuel de Landa (2000: 92) relates how "the year 1920 marks a turning point in the acceleration of American city building, the moment when the number of Americans living in cities

surpassed the number inhabiting rural areas." The rest of the world has been following suit ever since and catching up.

This development is noteworthy not only demographically but also environmentally. For Sanderson (2009: 33) "the most important land-use trend in the last hundred years has been urbanization." The most important land-use aspect of urbanization in this period, and what has made it possible, is the filling or draining of wetlands to "reclaim" land for urbanization to take place. In 1900 six out of the ten most populous cities in the world had been built on or adjacent to wetlands: London, New York, Paris, Berlin, Chicago, and St. Petersburg (Flint, 2006: 38). Cities are our greatest creation—and the greatest destroyer of wetlands.

In the beginning was the swamp. Genesis 1:2 says so. In the ending is the city. In the middle is the city in the swamp. The beginning of the city is in the swamp. The ending of the city is in a swamp too, both in the sense, as Mumford (cited by Hall, 2014: 344) puts it, that the outskirts of a modern city "ended suddenly in a swamp" and in the sense that the city ends in an artificial "swamp" of a wasteland. The city begins in mud and ends in crud. The city was born of wetlands, not of the forests as Harrison (1992: 47) claims. The city of Rome was born of the forests as he says, but Rome is hardly the first or archetypal city, despite being "the so-called eternal city" (46). A cursory glance at the history of the world's major and iconic cities indicates that the wetland gave birth to them. According to Alter (2005: 70), the three great nineteenth-century metropolises of London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, which are "often subjected to novelistic scrutiny … were all … built along marshlands." For Alter this is "no doubt only fortuitous," whereas I argue that this was necessary for the development of the modern metropolis and modern novel, not only for London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, but also for the two other great nineteenth-century metropolises of Berlin and Chicago and for other great and older metropolises of Boston, New York, New Orleans, Toronto, and Venice, all of which were also "built along marshlands" and were "subjected to novelistic scrutiny" (as *Cities and Wetlands* shows).

Cities are a relatively recent phenomenon with a buried history. Not only are they built, as Smith (2012: 102 and 324) suggests, "on top of earlier cities," but also many earlier cities were built on top of wetlands, such as London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Chicago, Boston, New York, New Orleans,

Toronto, and Venice. These wetland cities could be called "aquaterrapolises." Not only "beneath your feet lie yesterday's cities" as Smith suggests, but also beneath yesterday's cities lie the wetlands on which many of them were built. "Beneath the pavement, lies the marsh," to rejig the Situationists for whom beneath the city was the beach. Wetlands played a foundational role for cities.

One city was built on a city built on wetlands. Mexico City, "the largest city in the world" (Galeano, 2000: 237), was built on Tenochtitlán, the Aztec wetland city built, in turn, on wetlands. It is a salutary instance of a non-European culture successfully building a city on a wetland. Around 1325 the Aztecs began to build what Schenker (2009: 68–69) calls "the fabled floating city of Tenochtitlán in Lake Texcoco" (see the cover illustration of *Cities and Wetlands*). The city's foundations were constructed, as she goes on to point out, "by anchoring floating islands of woven reeds … in the marshy shallows at the edge of the brackish lake." Tenochtitlán, "the precursor of Mexico City" (Burrows and Wallace, 1999: xi), was a marvel to the Spanish Conquistadors in 1519, but this did not stop them from conquering what Smith (2012: 1) calls "this strange yet beautiful city in the lake." The Conquistadors did not learn how to build a city in a swamp, and so they did not pass this knowledge on to their fellow Europeans. Smith claims that Cortés destroyed "the great city of Tenochtitlán" in 1521, but Mexico City was built on its ruins and remnants of the wetland city remain to this day (6) (as I will discuss shortly). What Smith calls the "Venice of the New World" was built, like its European namesake, in a swamp, but, unlike Venice, it was not built by dredging canals and making dry land out of wet land (2). Rather, it was built as a floating city in a lake, unlike Venice, which merely appeared to be floating (as we will see in a later chapter).

Smith (2012: 4–5) goes on to draw another inappropriate European parallel: "like the Dutch, the Aztecs had become extremely skilled at reclaiming swampland both for construction and for cultivation." This is a blatant misreading of the historical record as the Aztecs did not drain and "reclaim" swampland (as if it were lost) by using dykes and windmills like the Dutch, but constructed not only, as Smith goes on to point out, "floating gardens," but also floating buildings (5). The Dutch did not construct floating buildings and gardens; they constructed fixed buildings and gardens. As a seagoing people, they craved moorings and stability in the floating and mobile

world of the ships of their far-flung empire. Smith subsumes Tenochtitlán to European exemplars, not only to Venice, but also to Dutch drainage, whereas Tenochtitlán was its own exemplar that no city or culture followed, neither in Europe as the present book attests, nor in its colonies as the history of Djakarta/Batavia shows in the case of Dutch colonization, a city that was laid out, as Merwin (2004: 156) puts it, "like a Dutch city with a network of canals." (see also Abeyasekere, 1989: 14–15).

By contrast, the noted Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano gives the corrective to Smith and recounts a wetland-friendly environmental history of Tenochtitlán from an ecocritical and radical political point of view. What Galeano (1985: 41, 67, 71; 2009: 130) calls variously "the great city of Tenochtitlán," "the capital of the Aztecs," "this warrior city," and "the city which will be queen of all others" was "of water born and of water built. Dikes, bridges, sewers, canals: along streets of water two hundred thousand canoes travelled back and forth between houses and squares, temples, palaces, markets, floating gardens, planted fields … liquid streets." The Spanish conquest of Mexico, for Galeano (2009: 130, 131, 362), "began as a water war," the first such war in Latin America, and was part of ongoing water wars in which, "century after century, the dry world waged war on the wet world." He might have added that the dry world of modern European cities and its colonies waged war on wetlands, a war that came before the water wars in Latin America and followed after them.

Unlike the Europeans who dredged and drained, or filled, wetlands at home and abroad, the Aztecs, for Galeano (1997: 44),

> responded in a remarkable way to nature's challenges. The surviving islands in the dried-up lake where Mexico City now rises on native ruins are known to tourists today as "floating gardens." The Aztecs created these because of the shortage of land in the place chosen for establishing Tenochtitlán. They moved large quantities of mud from the banks and shored up the new mud-islands between narrow walls of reeds until tree roots gave them firmness. Between these exceptionally fertile islands flowed the canals, and on them arose the great Aztec capital with its broad avenues, its austerely beautiful palaces, and its stepped pyramids: rising majestically out of the lake, it was condemned to disappear under the assaults of the foreign conquest.

The Spanish never completely destroyed Tenochtitlán for, as Galeano (2009: 131) reiterates eloquently elsewhere, "vanquished water gave birth to Mexico City, raised on the ruins of Tenochtitlán" and its ruined waterworks. Vanquished water generally gives birth to cities. Out of the womb of defeated wetlands (dead or wounded) were born many dryland cities. In the case of Tenochtitlán, the dryland city of Mexico was born out of this vanquished and ruined wetland city.

The buried and repressed wetland history of Mexico City returned, however, when "water took revenge" on the Spanish with repeated flooding of the city and continues to this day with the drying out of the city. Galeano (2009: 131) goes on to relate that "now Mexico City is dying of thirst. In search of water, it digs. The deeper it digs, the further it sinks. Where once there was air, now there is dust. Where once there were rivers, now there are avenues. Where once water flowed, now traffic streams by."

Where once there were gardens floating, there still are some floating gardens. Where once there were floating gardens, there now are also slums. The fabled floating wetland city of the Aztecs is now the infamous polluted dryland city of the Mexicans. Galeano (2000: 237–238, 264) describes how Mexico City "lives in a state of perpetual environmental emergency … Today the city once called Tenochtitlán is under siege from pollution" as "atomic clouds of [air] pollution hang over Mexico City." Wetlands are vulnerable to water pollution and valuable environments for absorption of air pollutants and for maintaining healthy micro-climates. They are bellwethers for the state of health of the environment—urban and otherwise.

Mexico City is also under siege from urban development, groundwater overextraction, and toxic plumes of water pollution billowing under the city. These siege-layers all go hand in hand. Recently Frédéric Saliba (2015: 30) reported that a "7,500 hectare expanse of gardens and canals" is "one of the few living reminders of the Aztec city of Mexico-Tenochtitlán." Like all wetlands in cities, they are under threat from urban development. The network of waterways and floating market gardens, or *chinampa*s, which "features on the UNESCO World Heritage list, is threatened by unbridled urban development and over-exploitation of groundwater." It should be a UNESCO "city of wetlands" (a designation that does not exist at present) along the same lines as a UNESCO "city of literature" (which does exist).

In response to the unbridled urban development and overexploitation of groundwater Saliba (2015: 30) also reported that the "Mexico City council is about to launch an action plan … to save this huge district of the capital, with its ancestral farming traditions and outstanding biodiversity." Local activist Claudia Zenteno points out that illegal urban development is turning the area into a slum. She made a complaint against a neighbor but "since then, it's been hell" with death threats made against her, damage inflicted on her property, and violence perpetrated against her husband, her son, and her dog as related in a harrowing story of city versus wetland. By contrast, the Aztec history of Tenochtitlán is the story of city and wetland, an exemplary one in its own right that merits retelling in its entirety and not subsumed to European exemplars as Smith makes it out to be.

Galeano is much more sensitive than Smith to the environmental history of Tenochtitlán and Mexico City, to the largely unique and exemplary status of Tenochtitlán as a truly wetland city, and to environmental history and politics more generally as demonstrated in his immense body of work (see, for instance, Galeano, 2000: 215–243). Smith's monumental guidebook for the urban age is not a guide to the environmental history of the city as the city for him does not take place in a particular place and on a specific site, but could be located anywhere. The planet earth and its surface for him is a blank slate, a tabula rasa, on which the city is inscribed. Where the city does encounter a particular physical feature such as a wetland, it "reclaims" dry land from wet land. Smith does not consider the free environmental goods the earth provides, nor the environmental impacts that the city has on the planet earth as home-habitat. The city for him is an extraterrestrial spaceship floating off world connected to the earth by nutrient-giving and waste-disposing tubes. The city for him is not an organic part of the body of the earth.

Nor is it for some late-nineteenth-century writers, such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Friedrich Engels, George Gissing, Jack London, and James Thomson, for whom the modern city (principally London) has a dark or criminal underside figured as jungle or nether land. What could be called a circularity of the figural occurs here: the pejorative associations of a jungle swamp are applied to the city slum and the jungle swamp comes to be seen in the same pejorative light (or dark) as the city slum. The obverse also applies where a human-made wet wasteland is made to figure a native wetland and the pejorative

associations of the former are applied to the latter. Late-nineteenth-century writing about London is the most prominent example of this process occurring as Chapter 4 shows. This pejorative figuring of wetlands becomes mutually reinforcing and culturally naturalized, but its logic is circular.

Wetlands were subjected to a double, double whammy in and by patriarchal society and culture. First, wetlands were inimical to the city. The hard and heavy materials of European-style cities cannot be supported in and by the soft and moist soils of wetlands. The establishment of cities in wetlands, such as London, Paris, and Venice, involved the draining and filling or canalizing and reclamation of wetlands in the foundational event for establishing European cities, and later their settler diasporas, as well as for the age of the cities that is still ongoing. The city triumphs over the swamp, the metropolis over the marsh. The repressed wetland returns, however, in floods, as with New Orleans in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina.

Second, wetlands were denigrated and demonized by Christianity in the foundational event for the establishment of Christian hegemony over sacrality in both Europe and its colonies (see Giblett, 2015). Third, wetlands were drained and filled by wind-powered pumps and later by steam-powered dredgers in the foundational event of the modern age with the development of modern industrial agriculture and cities, followed later by the expansion of suburbia in megapolises into wetlands. To add insult to injury, the slums and the dark underside of modern cities were also figured as wetlands. The repressed wetland returns in figures of speech and writing for slums and the dark underside of the modern city. Fourth, and as we will see later, modern industrial technology, agriculture, cities, and war created wet wastelands in the foundational event of the hypermodern age. To add further insult to injury, the wet wastelands of World War I were also figured as wetlands (as we will see later in Chapter 4).

In the early twentieth century the swamp was pressed into service to figure criminality. For Robert Walser (2010: 50) "the bottom-most level of criminality … is a sort of swamp." For Hans Fallada (2014b: 31) in his *Tales from the Underworld* the criminal (or "the crook") is the creature most at home in the urban jungle and the swamp of criminality as he is "like a hunter" for whom "no one escapes his rapid observation" as he sizes up "his quarry." In the early twenty-first century the swamp has been conscripted to figure terrorism. In

September 2014 Australian opposition Labour leader Bill Shorten said that it would take more than military action to "drain the swamp of terrorism." Shorten was echoing an unlikely bedfellow in former US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who, in September 2001, a week after "9/11," said that "the best way to get at the terrorist networks is to 'drain the swamp they live in,' referring to action against countries that harbor terrorist activities" (Rhem, 2001). Swamps in all these instances are figured as fertile places for the birth and nurturing of evil and not for new life and for good.

This pejorative figuration of the swamp contrasts with Henry David Thoreau (as we will see in Chapter 10). The pejorative figuration of the underside of the city as swamp contrasts with Walter Benjamin (as we will see in Chapter 6) and Sigmund Freud, especially when for both it comes to the lower-class inhabitants of the urban underside, such as servant girls and prostitutes. For Gissing the nether world of servant girls and prostitutes was largely an object of horror, whereas for Benjamin it was a source of fascination. For Freud the dark underside of the city was both fascinating and horrifying as it was a place where the uncanny as both homely and unhomely was manifested. Yet despite their differences, for all these writers on the city, its dark underside is experienced as a psychological region of dread, anxiety, or the uncanny.

Freud ([1919] 2003: 124) defined the uncanny as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar." The uncanny for Freud is a feeling or state of fascination and horror evoked by the "dark continent," whether it be of Africa, female sexuality, the slums, the swamp, or its monstrous creatures, such as alligators or crocodiles (see Giblett, 2009: chapter 2). These places are redolent of our first home as a species in primeval swamps and as an individual in a maternal womb, as well as being disconcertingly unhomely. Strolling in a town and ending up in its red light district can also evoke the uncanny, such as when Freud ([1919] 2003: 144) relates in *The Uncanny* how he was

> strolling one hot summer afternoon through the empty and to me unfamiliar streets of a small Italian town, I found myself in a district about whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Only heavily made-up women were to be seen at the window of the little houses, and I hastily left the narrow street at the next turning. However, after wandering about for some time without asking the way, I suddenly found myself back in the same

> street, where my presence began to attract attention. Once more I hurried away, only to return there again by a different route. I was now seized by a feeling that I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad to find my way back to the piazza that I had recently left and refrain from any further voyages of discovery.

Freud's lost object is himself that he repeatedly finds in the wrong place, or more precisely, the place to which he unintentionally returns. This return enacts an unconscious desire.

The uncanny is a return *to* the repressed, including the urban repressed. Rather than simply the repressed past returning to present consciousness, the present returns momentarily to the past. Two processes occur involving the repressed: a return *to* the repressed in the uncanny; and a return *of* the repressed in tropes. Both involve opposite trajectories in time: a present, momentary return to the past in the uncanny; and the past returning momentarily to the present in tropes. In Freud's autobiographical anecdote the repressed is not only his sexual repressed, but also the morally and spatially repressed of the small Italian town, its red-light district, to both of which he keeps on returning.

By contrast, Lehan (1998: 44) notes how in Dickens's later novels the uncanny is evoked and enacted in the liminal space of the marsh:

> Between the country and the city is a strange, eerie, primitive world of the marshes—a world of water and mire with houses sinking into the mud, a world of sluice gates and mills. The narrative flash points in Dickens's fiction occur where water and land meet, or where the country and city intersect, or where the past and present converge. Here we find the return of the repressed.

Here we also find the return to the repressed in the uncanny and even that the past is figured as wetland and the present is figured as city.

Along similar lines to Lehan, Alter (2005: 53) refers to Dickens's "aqueous urban landscape of iron, rust and rot." Or more precisely, waste wetlandscape. Regions of ruin and rust are the stuff-in-trade of recent writing about edgelands, perhaps beginning with Antoine Picon (2000). I return to a discussion of his work in a later chapter. Yet rather than a later development in Dickens's novels (as Lehan argues), he was fascinated with wet wastelandscapes over

the course of his long career, such as in *The Mudfog Papers*, which Lehan does not discuss. Dickens published the first part of *The Mudfog Papers* in 1837 and did not publish it in its entirety until 1880 (Dickens, [1880] 1984; see Giblett, 1996: 14–15). His fascination with wet wastelandscapes began with this and other of his earliest published writings, such as in his description of Walworth in "The Black Veil" first published in 1836:

> The back part of Walworth, at its greatest distance from town, is a straggling miserable place enough, even in these days; but, five-and-thirty years ago, the greater portion of was little better than a dreary waste … Very many of the houses which have since sprung up on all sides … were of the rudest and most miserable description. The appearance of the place … was not calculated to raise the spirits … or to dispel any feeling of anxiety or depression … [The] way lay across a marshy common, through irregular lanes, with here and there a ruinous and dismantled cottage fast falling to piece with decay and neglect. A stunted tree, or pool of stagnant water, roused into sluggish action by the heavy rain of the preceding night, skirted the path occasionally … so much of the prospect as could be faintly traced through the cold damp mist which hung heavily over it, presented a lonely and dreary appearance perfectly in keeping with the objects we have described. (Dickens, [1836] 1994: 363–364)

This prospect was not the pleasing prospect so beloved of rural landscape writers and painters but a displeasing prospect on the marshy margins between city and country in which "mud and mire" (364) predominated. The pool of stagnant water was the stock-in-trade of nineteenth-century writing about the city as it stood for a source of disease in the prevailing miasmatic theory of disease and sanitary practices of inspection.

Similar views of wetlands persist into twentieth-century writing (see Giblett, 1996), though there is also more appreciation for them contending with pejorative views. André Gide's *Marshlands*, first published in French in 1895, but not translated into English until 1953, contains contrasting and conflicting views of wetlands that acknowledges their unpleasant features but also values their redeeming qualities. This paradoxical view of wetlands is exemplary. To hold both sides of the paradox simultaneously without denigrating the wetland in pejorative terms or romanticizing the wetland in idyllic terms is the challenge.

The first-person narrator expostulates that "malignant fevers are prevalent in these marshes" and recommends eating mud worms as "the very essence of the marshes is concentrated in them" (Gide, [1895] 1953: 30). Presumably this is a health-giving essence rather than a fever-inducing one. Perhaps it is beneficial for one's health to ingest the essence of the marshes, but not to breathe its air or be stung by its fever-carrying mosquitoes. Later the first-person narrator meditates on "the feeling of an unprofitable contemplation" and is prompted to write about "the wide, flat landscapes that attract me—the monotonous heaths" and how "I seek level plains, unsmiling pools, and heaths. I wander gentle with them there" (32). He later writes that "I love wandering besides peat-bogs." He contrasts the paths through these bogs where "the earth is less spongy and more solid" with the fact that "everywhere else the ground is yielding, and accumulation of mosses sinks beneath one's feet; the mosses are full of water, soft" (38). The bog is a native quaking zone.

In Gide's ([1895] 1953: 38–39) *Marshlands*, the first-person narrator acknowledges the upside and downside (literally) of wetlands and neither represses the latter, nor valorizes the former, when he writes that

> on the surface of the waters, there spreads a marvelous iridescence, and even the most beautiful butterflies have nothing on their wings to match it; this many-cultured film is formed of matter in a state of decomposition. Night on the pools of water awakes phosphorescences, and the will-o'-wisps that hover above them seem the sublimation of those same phosphorescences.

These will-o'-wisps are neither monstrous marsh monsters, nor ghosts of the departed, nor miasmatic swamp exhalations, but a sublimation of decomposition. Out of the decaying and dying life of the wetland sublime new life springs. Slime is the secret of the sublime, as in Zoë Sofoulis's parenthetical portmanteau word "s(ub)lime" (cited by Giblett, 1996: 27). The sublime for Sofoulis is not possible without slime.

Yet the city and the wetland have been inimical to each other. It has largely been impossible for them to coexist in the same place. In most cases when a city has been located in or close to a wetland, the wetland has had to be drained or filled, or dredged and canalized, to make land for the city to be founded or developed. In the beginnings of some cities located close to wetlands, the wetland has provided a number of advantages one of which is the

military consideration that wetlands are easy to defend and hard to attack. The location of such cities is a reminder not only that many cities have their beginnings in wetlands but also that the city has its beginnings in warfare, or is an urban activity, natural state, and institution. The city fights a war against wetlands. The war of the city against wetlands culminated with Fascist Mussolini's war against the Pontine Marshes outside Rome, the kind of war he said he liked to fight because it was so easy to win in the short term with modern technology (see Giblett, 1996: 115).

For Jacques Ellul (1970: 13 and 51), "urban civilization is warring civilization," "the city and war have become two of the poles around which the entire economic, social and political life of our time move," and "war is an urban phenomenon, as the city is a military phenomenon." The first three index entries under "War" in Lewis Mumford's (1961: 656) monumental *The City in History* list war "as chief urban activity," "as natural state of cities," and "as new urban institution". He leaves the trawler of indexes and the scholar of cities in no doubt that the city and war are intimately associated and mutually dependent. Each of these three index entries has one page devoted to it. In the case of war "as chief urban activity" Mumford argues that "war and domination, rather than peace and cooperation, were ingrained in the original structure of the ancient city" (44). The layout and materials of ancient and medieval cities with their buttresses, ramparts, and moats were designed for military purposes. The modern city does not have these features but it does have its liminal spaces, quaking zones, and protected points of ingress and egress.

The city for other writers, such as Simmel and Spengler, was founded not in war but in the intellect. For Simmel (1950: 409–424) and Spengler the intellect developed in conjunction with the rise of the modern metropolis. Indeed, for Spengler (1932: 96), "the city is intellect," and for Virilio (and Lotringer, 1983: 3) the city is founded in war, or the preparations for war. Arguably the city is founded in the intellectual preparations for war. For von Clausewitz politics is war by other means, so intellection is preparation for war by other means. Arguably intellection is sublimated warfare.

Like its predecessors in settlements and towns, the city has its residents, or citi-zens, the denizens of the city, who are "a permanently mobilized standing army," as is the city itself as Mumford (1961: 44) puts it in relation to war "as

chief urban activity." In the case of war "as natural state of cities" Mumford cites Plato's *The Laws* in which he declared that "every city is in a natural state of war with every other" (51; and Kotkin, 2005: 20). Hobbes declared the converse that the state of nature is the war of each against all. The city is the embodiment of the Platonic natural state, and the individual is the embodiment of the Hobbesian state of nature and of the Platonic natural state. The Platonic natural state of every city at war with every other is for Mumford "a simple fact of observation," a fact of life and of history. The Platonic natural state of every city at war with every other city was also the rationale and context for Plato's desire for the foundation of a just city ruled by a philosopher king. The Hobbesian war of each against all was a projection of Hobbes's royalist reaction to the terrors of the English Civil War onto the state of nature in order to justify and legitimate restoration of the monarchy. The law of nature is each with all, for each is all. The just city enshrines and practices this law of nature. Law and natural state are opposed. The point and practice of law is to overturn the natural state, including the natural state of the city. In the case of war "as new urban institution" Mumford (1961: 40) argues that "urban man sought to control natural events." Urban humans generally seek to use their control over natural events to allow the natural state of every city at war with every other to be fulfilled rather than living bio- and psychosymbiotic livelihoods in their bioregional home-habitat of the living earth (see Giblett, 2011: chapter 12).

One way in which to begin thinking about how the city and the wetland might live together symbiotically is through the concept-metaphor of porosity, as it not only has an obvious swampy quality, but it also has both temporal and spatial coordinates, just like the wetland. Walter Benjamin's essay or travel diary about Naples (not a wetland city, or aquaterrapolis, as far as I can ascertain, but a rock city, a petrapolis), what Eiland and Jennings (2014: 210 and 211) call "the first of Benjamin's memorable city portraits," is for them "uncannily alive to both the city's wretchedness and its glory." In his portrait of Naples, Benjamin noted that "the city is craggy" and has "grown into the rock" on which it is built and from which it is built. He presses the porous quality of this rock into service as a metaphor for the architecture and spaces of the city. Porosity becomes "the defining feature of the city" (211), literally and materially as well as metaphorically and culturally. Commenting in a radio

talk on everyday life and festival days in Naples, Benjamin (2014: 151) notes that "what is remarkable is how the two blend into each other." Porosity is also literally and materially the defining feature of the city and its architecture partly because of the porous stone out of which it is built. In his essay about Naples, Benjamin (1979: 169) notes that "as porous as this stone is the architecture. Building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades, and stairways. In everything they preserve the scope to become a theatre of new, unforeseen constellations."

Constellations are an important astronomical figure for Benjamin for bringing seemingly disparate aspects together. Arcades and courtyards are important city sites for Benjamin (as we will see in Chapters 3 and 6). They are also gendered spaces for Benjamin where "building and action interpenetrate," as are cities themselves (as we will see later). Benjamin thus renders these places and city sites as passive feminine spaces, rather than regarding them as active fertile wombs, like wetlands. Arcades and courtyards are gendered, liminal, and porous places where inside and outside, the private and the public, fecundly and procreatively interpenetrate and invaginate to give birth to new space–time constellations, just as wetlands are liminal, porous places where solid and liquid, earth and water also fecundly and procreatively interpenetrate and invaginate to give birth to new space–time constellations.

Benjamin (1979: 170) goes on to suggest on the following page that "porosity results not only from the indolence of the Southern artisan, but also, above all, from the passion for improvisation, which demands that space and opportunity be at any price preserved. Buildings are a popular stage." Buildings are a place and space where human drama is played out. These buildings are erected on the foundation of dry land, or of wet land drained to become dry land. Wetlands are a space where the performance of divine and biological improvisation takes place and the foundation on which some cities are built. In the process, the city usually destroys the wetland in the inscription of the city in grids of streets and blocks, and the erection of monuments, on their blank surface. The porosity of wetlands is improvisation par excellence resulting from the work of the divine artisan (indolent, passionate, or otherwise) who mixed, and biology that mixes, earth and water, and thereby created space and time, and opportunity for the performance of improvisation.

Lawrence Powell (2012: 100) also presses the metaphor of the porous into service in his history of New Orleans subtitled *Improvising New Orleans*, where he notes "the porous membrane of a wall-less city implanted in a frontier," and in a porous swamp, I would add and as Powell notes. Previously he described "the town's mudscape" (99), "the spongy environment" (92), and suggests it was not easy "creating a town from a swamp" (64), which ended up "engendering strange kinds of fluidity" (105), and later describes "a semi-aquatic landscape that remained untamed" among plantations (155). In other words, the porous swamp is a watery wilderness, a native quaking zone, that became a watery wasteland, a feral quaking zone, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina (as we will see in Chapter 11). The watery wilderness and wasteland, the native and feral quaking zones, are places of both life and death.

Porosity for Benjamin (1979: 171) in Naples is "the inexhaustible law of the life of this city," as it is also the inexhaustible law of the life of the wetland, and as it should be for the life, and wetlands, of cities built in, on, or alongside wetlands. For Andrew Benjamin (2010: 45) Walter "Benjamin configures porosity as 'the law of life.' " Porosity for Benjamin is a feature of both public and private life in Naples. For him "each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. To exist, for the Northern European the most private of affairs, is here … a collective matter" (Benjamin, 1979: 174). Wetlands are permeable too and often off to the side, or the deltas, of streams and rivers collecting matter, stripping nutrients and creating new, communal life as a habitat or home for a suite of plants and animals.

Night time and sleep in Naples for Benjamin (1979: 175) are also porous as "here, too, there is interpenetration of day and night, noise and peace, outer light and inner darkness, street and home," just as in there is the wetland of dark and light, open and closed spaces, solid and liquid, time and space. Porosity for Andrew Benjamin (2010: 41) "provides a way of making space and time work together" as it is "a temporal concept rather than a purely spatial one." Wetlands, as Aldo Leopold (1949: 96) said, are places where "a sense of time lies thick and heavy." They are also a place where a sense of eternity and new life hangs heavy in their watery womb about to give birth.

Porosity has been recently employed appreciatively as a figure for the permeable and marginal cultural, economic, and political relations between nations. In discussing the vexed relationship between Canada and

its neighbor of "Empire" to the south, Jody Berland (2009: 3) notes "the porous quality of Canada's borders" metaphorically without mentioning the literally porous qualities of its lakes and wetlands that form much of the border between the two countries (see Giblett, 2014). This porosity and permeability of Canada as nation and country perhaps constitutes its post-modernity. Canada for Schecter (cited by Berland, 2009: 53) is "the first postmodern state willing to do something about post-modernity." Canada, notes Berland, is for some commentators "the world's first postmodern country" and is marked "as an exemplar of the postmodern nation" (51 and 17). If wetlands, as I have argued elsewhere (see Giblett, 1996), are the postmodern landscape par excellence, then Canada as the wetland country par excellence is also the postmodern nation par excellence (see Giblett, 2014: chapter 1). Its border porosity makes it a distinctively postmodern nation and country in both culture and landscape, in both its cultural and natural landscapes though in its relations to its wetlands, especially on the margins of its cities, such as Toronto and Vancouver, it has been just as destructive as many other nations (for Toronto, see Chapter 12; for Vancouver, see Giblett, 2014: chapter 6). Pressing porosity into service as a figure for the relation between cities and wetlands is a way of nurturing bio- and psychosymbiotic livelihoods in bioregional home-habitats of the living earth.

Part Two

European Cities and Wetlands

3

Paris: Or, Lutetia, "The Filthy Marsh"

Paris is synonymous with modernity. Paris for David Harvey is the capital of modernity and for Walter Benjamin it was the capital of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was arguably the culmination of modernity, and Paris the capital of both. Achieving this status was the culmination of almost two millennia as its history stretches back to premodern Roman times. Other contenders for the capital of both the nineteenth century and modernity, such as London, shared a premodern Roman patrimony with Paris, while Chicago was much smaller and younger. As with London (as we will see in Chapter 4), the swampy beginnings of Paris are preserved in the original name of the site and the city: Lutetia, "the filthy marsh."

As with all these cities and many others founded in a wetland, such as Berlin, Venice, St. Petersburg, New Orleans, and New York, their foundation in a wetland led in the nineteenth century to a fascination with, and horror of, the dark and sewery underside of the city in the literature and culture of the city. In the case of Paris, Balzac's *The History of the Thirteen* in *La Comédie Humaine* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* manifest this fascination and horror. The recent film of the musical based on Hugo's novel is true to the novel in this regard. Lutetia, "the filthy marsh," becomes, as Hugo puts it, "Lutetia, the city of mire." In my terms, the native quaking zone of the indigenous marsh becomes the feral quaking zone of the modern mire. This chapter traces the history and literature of Paris from lowly swampy beginnings up to the dizzying heights of the capital of modernity and back down into the fascinating depths of its underworld. It argues that Paris is a postmodern city that should try to achieve a rapprochement and reconciliation between these

zones, between the city and the swamp, between the past and the present, and between the underside and overside of the city.

Paris needs no introduction as a modern, world city. Its skyline, streets, and structures, such as the Eiffel Tower, are icons of modernity. Paris for Hazan (2010: 315–316) is "the paradigm of the 'modern' city." Paris for DeJean (2014: 5, 14, 16, 144, and 191; emphasis in the original) is not only "the key capital of modernity," but also "the capital of an empire of culture," the "capital of high fashion." Indeed for her "Paris *is* fashion" and "the most romantic city in the world." DeJean is largely reiterating Benjamin (1999a: 8), who said in 1935 that "Paris is acknowledged as the capital of luxury and fashion." Looking back to Rome, Paris for Kotkin (2005: 72 and 73) is, or was, "the ultimate European capital city" that aimed to be "the new Rome" as the center and seat of the French empire and as the new "eternal city" of modernity. Paris aimed to be the new Rome in and of the nineteenth century and of modernity.

Indeed, Paris for Walter Benjamin (1973a; 1999a), in his justly famous writings about the city (often with this title), was "the capital of the nineteenth century." Sloterdijk (1987: 115) revises Benjamin's words by calling Paris "the principal city of the nineteenth century" (which neglects the way Benjamin saw that time and history had been spatialized, such that a century could have a capital). The Marquis de Caraccioli proclaimed Paris "the capital of the universe" (cited by DeJean, 2014: 6), which has both spatial and temporal dimensions. Modernity colonized time and space, and had a capital, and its capital in the nineteenth century was Paris. "The modern city," for DeJean, "was oriented to the future rather than the past: speed and movement were its hallmarks," with Paris as *the* "city of speed and light" (1 and 122). Yet however fast the modern city could move and travel (though never at the speed of light), and however much the speedy modern city could deny or repress its past, the repressed past and the slow rhythms of its swampy beginnings always come back to haunt it.

Unlike Benjamin's view of Paris, Harvey (2006)[1] saw it as the "capital of modernity" and Weigel (2013:226) considered it as "the capital city of Modernity" (which acknowledges the way Benjamin saw time as spatialized in and by nineteenth-century capitalism, but neglects the specificity of the century of modernity to which he was referring). Paris for Harvey (2006: 24) is

not only the capital city of modernity, but also "the city of capital," the city of mercantile and industrial investment and profiteering, but London is also a strong contender for this title. Paris for Hussey (2006: 310 and 318) is "the world capital of modernity" and "the capital of modernity." Modernity is a global and temporal phenomenon founded literally in and on the basis of an earthly and local premodern marsh.

Other modern cities, such as St. Petersburg, London, and New York, could also lay claim to being the capital of modernity, or to one or another century of it. St. Petersburg might be considered the capital of the eighteenth century, New York as the capital of the twentieth century, and London or Paris as the capital of the nineteenth century. Benjamin (1999a: 427) acknowledged that London was far superior to Paris as the hub of industrial development in the nineteenth century and cites Engels, for whom London was "the commercial capital of the world." Yet for Benjamin Paris was the capital of the nineteenth century because it encapsulated and pioneered many of the developments of the nineteenth century, such as iron and glass construction in the arcades and the department store with the *flâneur* as the denizen of both, which other cities, such as London, were to take up later and follow.

Like Benjamin, Stefan Zweig ([1942] 2014) in his memoirs acknowledges the temporal dimension of Paris. For him Paris is "the city of eternal youth" in a chapter of this title. Ancient and modern Paris is the city of eternal youth and age (though he does not mention its longevity and prehistory), rather than the city of eternal age that ancient Rome was, or aspired to be. Paris for Zweig is tinged in hindsight with nostalgia and regret because "the wonderfully lively and invigorating Paris of my youth no longer exists … now that it has felt the iron brand forcibly imprinted on it by the hardest hand on earth" (149). Zweig was writing when "German armies and … tanks were rolling in, like a swarm of grey termites, to destroy" the city of his youth, which lends an ironic inflection to the title of the chapter. Nazi Germany was a swarming, and so abominable, creature that inscribed itself on the surface of the soft body of the city with its hard war machines. The Paris of his youth is for Zweig "the liveliest city in the world" (156) and "this busy, fast-moving city" (158), the city of speed and modernity. Paris for Zweig is also "the most enquiring city in the world" (223). He also refers to "the warm-hearted city of Paris" (166). Perhaps this was the city of

his youth before the Nazis broke the heart of Paris. They were following in the footsteps of the Romans who ruptured the soft and warm womb of the swamp on which the city was built.

Anthropomorphizing the city as a human body with organs, such as a heart, and with associated affects, such as warmth, is the stock-in-trade of writers about the city. The heart of the city is a cliché for the commercial center of the city. From the heart of the city, major transport arteries flow out to circulate capital and life around the body of the city. For the city to have a heart and a life it had to be born and grow in the nurturing environment of its bioregion on which it still depends for its life today. Many cities were founded in and grew out of the watery womb of wetlands, often figured as the bowels of the earth. Paris is no exception (as we will see shortly). Anthropomorphizing the earth as body with its bowels, its veins of minerals, and its parks as lungs is the stock-in-trade of many writers about the body (see Giblett, 2008a). Thinking about, and figuring, the city as a body with its commercial heart, transport arteries, heady skyscrapers, cloacal sewers, and womby wetlands is a way of acknowledging and appreciating the role and history of all of these organs in sustaining the city. I return to this topic in the final chapter of *Cities and Wetlands*.

Lutetia

Paris is a swamp city. It was a swamp city before it became a modern city and before it became the capital of the nineteenth century, modernity, and the universe. Like a number of other swamp cities and marsh metropolises, Paris has a slimy beginning that has largely been forgotten, but whose traces still remain. Unlike a number of other such cities, however, yet like London, the swampy beginnings of Paris can be found in the original name of Lutetia for the site for the city and then for the city itself. "The muddy etymology of Lutetia" is linked to "the Celtic word for marshland and to *lutum*, Latin for mud" (Jones, 2005: 4). More specifically for Hussey (2006: 3 and 7) Lutetia is Celtic for "the place of mud, marshes and swamp." The muddy etiology of Lutetia itself is also linked to what Jones (2002: 4) calls "marshy and muddy land."

Moreover, the water of the River Seine for Hussey (2006: 4, 7, 13) was "the dirty-green water" with a "marshy swamp on the Right Bank," which was what he also calls "the stinking and greasy bank." This makes the River Seine sound like "the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River" of one of Rudyard Kipling's *Just so Stories*. Perhaps Julian Green's ([1983] 2012: 77) translator had Kipling's line in mind when he translated Green's description of the Seine in flood as "*vert jaunâtre*" into "grey-green." Jones (2002: 4) concludes that "land, water and mud thus had a more dramatic relationship with the city's history than in recent times." Perhaps it would be more precise to say that the city had a more overt, dramatic relationship in the past with land, water, and mud, whereas in recent times it has had a more covert relationship with them.

Paris had an overt, dramatic relationship with the city's swampy location and history during Henri IV's reign in the late sixteenth century. Writing a century later, Nicolas Delamare, the original historian of Paris's municipal governance, wrote that at the beginning of Henri IV's reign "Paris had wide stretches of barren terrain—fields, prairies, and swamps" (cited by DeJean, 2014: 7). Yet swamps are highly fertile terrain. Rather than barren wombs, or tombs, swamps are fertile wombs. Henri transformed this fertile terrain into the barren terrain of a new city. In the process, he drove the swamps, and history, of the city underground, only for them to reemerge with a vengeance in the nineteenth century.

Paris had a covert, dramatic relationship with the city's swampy history in the nineteenth century. The repressed swampy beginnings of Paris, and any other city for that matter built on or by a wetland, return repeatedly in its history, particularly in tropes. For example, d'Aurevilly (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 25) invokes "the sediment of rancor which has accumulated" in cities. Paris and other cities were founded on the sediment of its wetlands, and this repressed foundation returns as a rich source of metaphor for its cultural life, usually, as here, in the pejorative register. Rather than the Seine being a green, greasy river, Auguste Barbier (cited by Benjamin, 1999a: 739) figured Paris as "an infernal vat / … Ringed by three bends of a muddy yellow river." Paris as hell at whose center resides the devil was a commonplace of nineteenth-century figuration of this, and other, especially swamp, cities.

The buried wetland history of Paris as Lutetia also returns in Baudelaire's figuring of "the mire of the macadam," *la fange du macadam* (cited by Berman,

1988: 156). Berman relates how "*la fange* is not only a literal word for mud; it is also a figurative word for mire, filth, vileness, corruption, degradation, all that is foul and loathsome" (160–161). In and with the modern city all that is solid not only "melts," or is sublimated, into air, but also is desublimated, or "melts," into slime. The modern city, especially its slums, founded in and on swamps, is figured in terms of swamps, but these are "man-made" artificial swamps of what Schenker (2009: 30) calls the "dark hole of poverty," of its slums, and of the filthy mud of its sewers above and below ground. For Horne (2002: 78) "the City [of Paris] in 1594" was a city of slime of human and animal waste. A little later in the seventeenth century the streets of Paris were, Smith (2012: 172) says, "famously filthy and the mud that coated everything was notorious," which was hardly surprising as "Parisian streets were effectively open sewers."

Two centuries later the city was hardly any better in this respect. During the mid- nineteenth century under the Restoration and Louis-Philippe "health and hygiene lagged in Paris" to the point that one contemporary report noted the pervasive presence of "bad gases and pestilential miasmas" (cited by Horne, 2002: 218) bearing airborne diseases, of "insalubrious smells" and of waterborne cholera. Up until the late nineteenth century the miasmatic theory of disease that diseases, such as malaria (literally "bad air"), could be carried by bad air was the prevailing medical orthodoxy. Yet for Hussey (2006: 210) Paris in the nineteenth century is "the most beautiful and powerful city in the world." Both cities lived side by side with glorious buildings situated by sewery streets, and both cities were situated one above and below the other with the buildings posed above the sewers and beneath malodorous skies. Paris was an architectural and engineering contradiction.

The buried wetland history of Paris as Lutetia also returns in Benjamin's (1973a: 171) figuring of the Paris of Baudelaire's poems as "a sunken city, and more submarine than subterranean." Benjamin goes on to refer to "the chthonic elements of the city," such as "its topographical formation, the old abandoned bed of the Seine." Paris rests, or floats, on the old bed of the Seine, and its marshes. The motto for Paris is "it floats but does not sink" as depicted in its coat of arms with its Latin motto, *Fluctuat nec mergitur* (Horne, 2002: illustration following 138). Paris, however, is not a floating city like Tenochtitlán. It appears to be a floating city like Venice, but is actually

built on land, also like Venice. Hussey (2006: 7) relates that "one of the most popular Christianized myths was that Lutetia was founded by Lucus, the seventeenth descendant of Noah, who came here to make a city on the water." The city would have been a kind of ark, full of the goods and beasts of the earth, appearing to float on water like Venice. The famous Situationist graffiti slogan of May 1968, "*au dessous les paves, la plage*" (beneath the pavement lies the beach; cited by Smith, 2012: 274) should be revised to "*au dessous les paves, lutetia*" (beneath the pavement lies the filthy marsh).

The insalubrious quality of the air was a common cause for complaint in the nineteenth century. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 322), for instance, in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* first published in 1835 as the third and final part of *History of the Thirteen* (and in turn part of *La Comédie Humaine*), relates how

> if the air of the houses in which majority of the middle-class citizens live is foul, if the atmosphere of the streets spews out noxious vapors into practically airless back premises, realize that, apart from this pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city have their foundations plunged in filth, which the authorities have not yet seriously thought of enclosing within concrete walls capable of preventing even the most fetid mire from percolating through the soil, poisoning the wells, and making the famous name Lutetia still appropriate, at least underground. Half of Paris sleeps nightly in the putrid exhalations from streets, back-yards and privies.

For "Lutetia" in this passage the English translator has a footnote that reads, "in Celtic, 'the town in the marshes.'"[2] The buried and repressed history of the city in the swamp is enshrined in its original name of Lutetia and returns in its fetid mud and stinking sewers. Lutetia, "the filthy marsh," becomes, as Hugo (1992: 1088) puts it in *Les Misérables*, "Lutetia, the city of mire." Commenting on the poor state of the air in Paris as Balzac does was a commonplace of the nineteenth century, such as Victor Considerant (cited by Vidler, 1978: 68) in 1834 who described how

> all these windows, all these doors, are so many mouths begging to breathe: and above all this you can see, when the wind is still, a leaden atmosphere, heavy, blue-grey, composed of all the filthy exhalations of the great sewer. This is the atmosphere that Paris breathes and beneath which it suffocates. Paris is an immense workshop of putrefaction, where misery, plague and illness work in concert, where air and sun hardly penetrate.

Lutetia is remembered in the name of the Hotel Lutetia that opened in Paris in 1910 and is still operating. Benjamin (1999a: 516) acknowledges "the unconquerable power in the names of streets, squares, and theaters, a power which persists in the face of all topographic replacement." How much more so does the unconquerable power of the name of Lutetia not only persist in the name of a hotel, but also endures in the massive topographic replacement of the filthy marsh of Lutetia by the city of Paris?

The repressed marsh returns in the figures for other parts of the city. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 34) in *Ferragus*, the first part of *History of the Thirteen* (and in turn part of *La Comédie Humaine*) figures "street ends" as "Parisian marshes." These are not the native or natural marshes in which the city was built but the cultural or feral marshes that the city has become. Elsewhere for Balzac other spaces in Paris were a desert. In the "Conclusion" to *Ferragus*, Balzac describes

> the space enclosed between the south railings of the Luxembourg and the north railings of the Observatoire, a space in Paris which has no sex or gender. There, in fact, Paris has ceased to be; and yet Paris is still there. This place smacks at one and the same time of the street square, the boulevard, the fortification, the garden, the avenue, highway, the province, and the capital; certainly it has something of all that but it is nothing of all that: it is a desert. (151)

Hazan (2010: 4, n.2) suggests that "perhaps Victor Hugo had this passage in mind" when he describes the surroundings of the Salpietere in *Les Misérables*,

> where it might be said that Paris disappeared. It was no longer a solitude, for there were people passing; it was not the country, for there were houses and streets; it was not a city, the streets had ruts in them, like highways, and grass grew along their borders; it was not a village, the houses were too lofty. What was it then? It was an inhabited place where there was nobody; it was a desert place where there was somebody; it was a boulevard of the great city, a street of Paris, wilder, at night, than a forest, and gloomier, by day, than a graveyard. (Hugo, [1862] 1992: 374)

Perhaps at times it was also colder and wetter than a marsh, and at other times drier and hotter than a desert. It was a liminal place, a feral quaking zone. It

was a place where the elements of earth, air, fire, and water were mixed in an unholy alliance and not as they do in the marsh in a holy intercourse. At any time its air was unhealthier than a marsh.

The buried and repressed history of the city in the marsh returns in the metaphors for the city. In 1838 Vicomte de Lannay (cited by Vidler, 1978: 69) remarked

> how ugly Paris seems after an absence, as one suffocates in these dark, narrow and humid corridors that one would rather call the streets of Paris. One thinks one is in a subterranean town, the atmosphere is so heavy, the darkness so deep. And thousands of men live, move, press together in these liquid shadows, like reptiles in a marsh.

Paris becomes again metaphorically the marsh it once was except that now it is a "man-made" or feral marsh whereas it had once been a "natural" or native marsh. Delphine de Giarardin (cited by Prendergast, 1992: 87 and 262) "stood aghast 'before an underground city' whose inhabitants lived 'liked reptiles in a marsh.' "

Haussmann: Boulevard blaster, modernity bludgeoner

Although Walter Benjamin (1999a: 83) was aware of the Roman name for the city as *Lutetia Parisorum*, he does not discuss the meaning of the word "Lutetia" (his editors do that) or note that the city was founded in and on the swamps of Lutetia, even though Haussmann, the blaster of boulevards who for Harvey (2006) "bludgeoned the city into modernity," and the novelist Balzac do, both of whom Benjamin cites repeatedly in *The Arcades Project*, though necessarily selectively (as does Harvey in his footsteps). Haussmann's project is even figured in terms of engineering the urban landscape figured as wetlandscape, such as when Jean Cassou (cited by Benjamin, 1999a: 793) describes how "Haussmann built broad, perfectly straight avenues to break up the swarming, tortuous neighborhoods, the breeding grounds for mystery … the secret gardens of popular conspiracy."

General Maurice Janin (cited by Prendergast, 1992: 86) referred to "a swarming and oozing population." Swarming creatures are an abomination

according to the Levitical (11:41) interdiction that "every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth is an abomination." Swarming creatures, Mary Douglas (1966: 56) has commented, are

> both those that teem in the waters and those that swarm on the ground. Whether we call it teeming, trailing, creeping or swarming, it is an interminable form of movement … "swarming" which is not a mode of propulsion proper to any particular element, cuts across the basic classification. Swarming things are neither fish, nor flesh, nor fowl. Eels and worms inhabit water, though not as fish; reptiles go on dry land, though not as quadrupeds; some insects fly, though not as birds. There is no order in them … As fish belong in the sea so worms belong in the realm of the grave with death and chaos.

Swarming creatures cut across the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water and belong to none in particular and some in general.

Wetlands also cut across the four Western elements as they are made up of the elements of earth and water, and are often in transition from one to the other. They mix two Western elements of earth and water, and air and fire too in hot and steamy climes. Wetlands are out of place in all the major Western categories of matter: solid, gas, heat/light, and liquid. They are dirt in Douglas's (1966: 35) sense of "matter out of place." The typical Western response to the dirtiness of wetlands has been to try and put matter back in its proper place wherever possible and where it is impossible to denigrate their deviation from the norm. Drainage, for instance, is putting the earth and water of the wetland back in their respective, and respectable, places. In the process wetlands are put in their subjugated place and drylands substituted in their place instead.

Just as the swamp was considered to be the breeding ground for malaria in the mistaken view of the miasmatic theory of disease, so the slum was considered the breeding ground for class revolt and a pretext for the boulevarding of the city. Along similar lines, Aragon ([1926] 1994: 14) regarded Haussmann as the importer of "the great American passion for city planning" whose "redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines" would "soon spell the doom of these human aquariums" of the arcades. The glass enclosures of the arcades were for Aragon, as they were for Benjamin, "the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral, the ghostly landscape of damnable pleasures and professions."

In the late 1850s and through the 1860s Haussmann, the prefect of Paris in Napoleon III's authoritarian right-wing regime and one of the fathers of what Benevolo (1971: 63) calls "neo-conservative town planning," blasted boulevards through old Paris. The modern city with its boulevards is a sublimated military feature if the etymology of the word "boulevards" is anything to go by for, according to Horne (2002: 123), it is "a corruption of the German word *Bollwerk*, meaning a bulwark or rampart." Haussmann, in the words of Berman (1988: 150), blasted "a vast network of boulevards through the heart of the old medieval city. Haussmann envisioned the new roads as arteries in an urban circulatory system … The new Parisian boulevard was the most spectacular urban innovation of the nineteenth century, and the decisive breakthrough in the modernization of the traditional city." Spectacular indeed for the boulevards were the site for the development and institution of the "society of the spectacle" with what Berman calls their "great sweeping vistas" that "helped to make the new Paris a uniquely enticing spectacle" (151). But a city whose heart had been blasted open and whose arteries were no longer connected to its heart, yet whose arteries need to be connected to a heart for the body of the city to live.

Haussmann for Hussey (2006: 11) "evokes the original meaning of Lutetia as 'the filthy marsh' to vindicate his plans" to blast boulevards through some of the poorer areas of Paris. In his own words, he "ripped open the belly of old Paris" (cited by Horne, 2002: 234) and thereby in Horne's terms "lance[d] the festering abscesses of the old city." Haussmann in his own words is a surgeon performing a caesarean section to make Paris give birth to a new Paris out of the pregnant old one where the new birth is figured not as an embryo but as abscess. Perhaps he was really a backyard abortionist who killed the old Paris growing in its womb of the maternal marsh before it reached its full term and instead gave birth to his own new Paris as his brainchild out of his own brainbox, a bachelor machine for a bachelor birth.

Michel Carrouges (1975: 21) defines a "bachelor machine" as "a fantastic image that transforms love into a technique of death" (see also Carrouges, 1954; and de Certeau, 1984: 150–153; 1986: 156–167). Theweleit (1987: 330n.; see also 315) describes Bachelor Births from Bachelor Machines as "attempts to create a new reality by circumventing the female body [and the swamps and marshes of the Great Mother Earth]—to engender the world from the

brain." The Bachelor Birth from a Bachelor Machine is a brainchild (see Sofia, 1992: 380). It entails what Theweleit (1989: 127; see also Giblett, 1996: Figure 1) later calls "cerebral parthogenesis (the masculine form of the virgin birth)." The womb is sublimated into the head that gives birth to the brainchild like Zeus who gave birth to Pallas-Athena out of his head (see Michael Meier's engraving in Theweleit, 1989: 345).

Perhaps it is only fitting that in a completion of the metaphoric circle, Paris for Julian Green ([1983] 2012: 9) was "shaped like a human brain." Haussmann's brainchild was a brain-shaped child. Haussmann's brainchild of boulevards militarized the city of Paris. "Boulevard" according to Giedion (1967: 757) "means literally a walk on the walls of a fortified town, the word going back to German *Bollwerk* (bulwark)" (as we have seen). The city for Smith (2012: 321) is "as a bulwark against the vagaries of a hostile universe." Haussmann's boulevards were the first step in the Haussmannization of the universe to build a bulwark within and without the city. Arguably there is more hostility to be found within the city itself than within the universe. The universe (and the earth within it and its wetlands) on this view is no longer a home and both have been "Haussmannized." The city is also increasing barricaded within against terrorist attacks. The barricaded city (see Flint, 2006: 238–239), the gated and ungated "communities" of the enclave estate, is the direct descendent of the bulwarked city.

Paris, or Lutetia, as woman, as goddess, as Great Mother, and as dialectical image

It is hardly surprising that Paris, according to Horne (2002: xiii), is "fundamentally a woman." But which woman? What sort of woman? And for whom? For masculinist men? Paris for Hussey (2006: xv) can variously be regarded as "a beautiful woman, a sorceress and a demon." It is not just any sort of beautiful woman, but a particular sort of beautiful woman, a woman with a French name that sums up all these qualities to some extent, a femme fatale, an enchanting and dangerous woman with surface charms, interior labyrinths, dangerous depths, and fascinating passages. Venice for some writers is

a whore and a decrepit courtesan (as we will see in Chapter 5), whereas Paris for Ralph Rumney (cited by Hussey, 2006: xvi) is "the corpse of an old whore" and "the body of Paris" for Harvey (2006: 36) is "either a harlot or a queen." For these writers, she is never Lutetia, the Great Goddess swamp mother.

Walter Benjamin also figured Paris as a labyrinthine whore. In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin (1999a: 523) cites a nineteenth-century account of "the true Paris [which] is by nature a dark, miry, malodourous city … swarming with blind alleys … and … with labyrinths that lead you to the devil." Solnit (2000: 209) argues that Benjamin figures "Paris as labyrinth … whose center is a brothel." The city for Benjamin is ultimately a labyrinthine female body. Indeed, for Benjamin (1999a: 519) the darkness of the streets "greatly resembles the lap of a whore." The sexually and spatially repressed is the bodies of the prostitutes embodying what Solnit (2000: 209) calls his "transformation of city into female body." Benjamin (1999b: 141–143) also figures "Paris as Goddess." In writing about Paris, especially in his labyrinthine, monumental, and monstrous *Arcades Project*, a femme fatale of a book, Benjamin was primarily interested in Paris as "the capital of the nineteenth century" as he put it, and in critiquing, as Baudelaire put it, "the goddess of Industry" (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 79) figured as an orally sadistic monster with her "jaws" that consume with greed and gluttony rather than celebrating the "goddess of the city," as Benjamin (1999b: 143) also put it, in the preceding centuries going back to its beginnings as Lutetia as an orally satisfying Great Goddess or Mother of the marsh.

Traces of the swamp nevertheless can be found in the *Arcades Project*. Baudelaire's writing is one of the central proof texts for Benjamin with good reason. Baudelaire for Berman (1988: 147) is "universally acclaimed as one of the great urban writers," especially of the modern city, and so of Paris. Baudelaire for Benjamin (1973a: 81) performs the labors of Hercules to "give shape to modernity." Benjamin does not mention that one of Hercules's labors was to kill the brazen-beaked Stymphalian birds that lived in a swamp and figured as orally sadistic monsters who consume with greed and gluttony and who defecate with impunity on all and sundry (see Giblett, 1996: 180–181). Benjamin's Herculean labor was to kill the monstrous goddess of industry, rather than to also celebrate the Lutetian Great Mother goddess of the marsh. The former gave birth to *The Arcades Project* somewhat surprisingly

described by Pike (2007: 67) as "the most sustained meditation to date on the devil (*inter alia*) in the nineteenth-century metropolis." The monstrous goddess of industry for Benjamin is certainly a satanic figure of ambiguous and dubious gender; monstrous Satan for Milton ([1667] 2003: 230) in *Paradise Lost* (X, 530) was certainly a swamp monster of slimy origins (see Giblett, 1996: 183–185). The slimy and swampy origins of Paris (as with other cities) make it an ideal location for the engendering of satanic and monstrous industry that consumes the earth, its inhabitants, and its resources. France for Papini (cited by Pike, 2007: 67) is "the promised land of Satan" and Paris is its capital.

Benjamin's account of Paris focuses on the culture and history of the city in the nineteenth century, a big enough undertaking in itself as the sheer bulk of *The Arcades Project* demonstrates. Yet his lack of attention to the matrifocal prehistory of the site for the city, especially when it reemerges in the literature of the nineteenth century, is somewhat surprising given his interest in Bachofen's work on "mother right," or the Great Mother or Goddess of the "swamp world" (Benjamin, 1999b: 808). This interest is expressed in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999a: 361), in his review of Bachofen's book on the topic (Benjamin, 1996: 426–427), and in his essay on Kafka written on the tenth anniversary of Kafka's death (Benjamin, 1999b: 808–809).

If Benjamin had been aware of the beginnings of Paris in the swamps of Lutetia, or the meaning of the name, he may have made the connection between the work of Bachofen, the history of Paris as manifested in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999a), and its prehistory. He may have seen Paris as the city of the Great Goddess of the swamp and not only, or even, as a labyrinthine whore. He may have also seen the city as not only the site for the interpenetration of building and action but also as founded on the invagination of fertility and procreation. Unfortunately he did not make these connections, and so it is left to others to do so as best as they can, following him in his big footsteps. Bachofen (1967), as Benjamin (1999b: 808–809) points out, discusses the "hetaeric stage" of the prepatriarchal or matrifocal "Mother Right," or "Great Goddess," of the "swamp world," when the world was swamp. Benjamin comments that "the fact that this stage is now forgotten does not mean that it does not extend into the present. On the contrary: it is present by virtue of its very oblivion" (809). This statement not only could

have served as the epigraph for *Cities and Wetlands*, but it is also the motto for my discussion of the absence and absenting of wetlands from the cities discussed in *Cities and Wetlands*, and for their ongoing presence in the present by virtue of their very oblivion. The fact that the swamps of Paris and other wetland cities are forgotten does not mean that they do extend into the present. On the contrary, they are present by virtue of their very oblivion. The majority of the residents of these wetland cities today have largely forgotten about, or are ignorant of, their lost wetlands, but they are still present (in the present) by virtue of their very absence.

In others words, and in Benjamin's own word, the stage of the swamp world has left a trace. In fact, for anything from the past to be forgotten and to extend into the present by virtue of its very oblivion is a precise definition of the trace. The trace is current absence and past presence, and presence in the present by virtue of absence. *Cities and Wetlands* reads the traces of the absent wetlands of cities in history, literature, geography, cartography, and photography. Absent wetlands also leave other traces in technology and climatology. All machines and vehicles powered by steam and internal combustion engines are a trace of the stage when the world was a swamp as its fossilized remains fuel these machines and vehicles in the era of carboniferous capitalism and the age of global warming.

Nineteenth-century French literature manifests not only this forgetting as the Great Goddess is not mentioned in it, but also this extension into the present as Lutetia is frequently invoked (as we have seen). Balzac and Hugo do not make the connection between the two, nor does Benjamin. The past of what Benjamin calls "the dark, deep womb" of what Bachofen calls (citing Arnobius) "dirty voluptuousness (*luteae voluptates*)" (Benjamin, 1999b: 809) is present in the past name of Paris, Lutetia, not merely as dirty voluptuousness, but as dirty *swampy* voluptuousness, or, as Gilles Deleuze (1989: 52) puts it in discussing Bachofen, "the lustful chaos of primeval swamps." The reminder in the present of the past name of Paris as Lutetia "takes us back," as Benjamin puts it, to the past of the swamp world in which Paris began, the world of the Great Goddess, though Benjamin forgets about this too. The present figuring of Paris as Goddess takes us back to when Lutetia the swamp *was* the goddess, and not just merely figured as such. Lutetia is an uncanny return to the repressed.

The repressed, rich, dark past of Paris swamps returns in a one-act vaudeville performance in which, as Benjamin (1999a: 56) puts it, "Lutèce emerges from the bowels of the earth, at first in the guise of an old woman." The city of Paris emerged literally from the bowels of the earth of Lutetia, the swamp, and swamp goddess. The editors of *The Arcades Project* briefly note that "Lutèce" is the "Roman name for Paris" (Benjamin, 1999a: 959, n.12), whereas it was previously the Celtic name for the wetland site of the city. Similarly in their "Guide to Names and Terms" the editors of *The Arcades Project* gloss "Lutèce" as "ancient name for Paris. From Latin *Lutetia* ('city of mud')" (1038). However, as Benjamin says later (and as we have seen), "Lutetia Parisorum," not just Lutetia, is "the old Roman city" (83). In the vaudeville performance that Benjamin paraphrases Lutetia is an old woman; in Bachofen's terms, she is the Great Goddess who lives in the bowels of the earth, the swamps.

One of the ways in which for Benjamin (1999a) the hetaeric stage extends into the present is as a point of ecological critique of the present. For him, "the murderous idea of the exploitation of nature, which has ruled over things since the nineteenth century … could have no place so long as the prevailing image of nature was that of the ministering mother, as reflected in Bachofen's conception of matriarchal societies" (361), or, in more recent terms, matrifocal societies. The green or ecocritical Benjamin has not been noted or commented upon much by Benjamin scholars, nor by ecocritics and environmental theorists either for that matter (see, for exceptions, Giblett, 2009; 2011; Mules, 2014; 2015).

How ironic that the rule of "the murderous idea of the exploitation of nature" should have its beginnings for Benjamin not only in the nineteenth century but also in Paris as "the capital of the nineteenth century" whose original name of Lutetia precisely evokes "the ministering mother" of the swamp world. Lutetia in Benjamin's (1999a: 462) terms in *The Arcades Project* is "a dialectical image" for, as he goes on to elaborate, "while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation to what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent." Lutetia is the dialectical image of the what-has-been of Paris as marsh and of the now of the recognizability of Paris as metropolis, between the filthy marsh and the miry city. Marsh and metropolis come together dialectically in the image of Lutetia, of Paris as marsh metropolis.

Benjamin (1999a: 464) elaborates further that "in the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, 'what has been from time immemorial.'" Lutetia has been from time immemorial and has been in the particular epoch of the beginnings of the history of Paris. "The dialectical image" for Benjamin is "the primal phenomenon of history" (474). Lutetia is the primal phenomenon of the history of Paris. Of course, Lutetia can be and has been forgotten by the majority of the residents of Paris, but that does not mean that "it does not extend into the present. On the contrary: it is present by virtue of its very oblivion," as Benjamin (1999b: 809) said of the hetaeric stage of the swamp world and Bachofen's (1967) conception of matrifocal societies. Lutetia extends into the present and is present by virtue of its very oblivion in Paris today and in other marsh metropolises and swamp cities. Benjamin's statement is a reminder of the motto for Paris ("it floats but does not sink"), as well as a fitting motto for *Cities and Wetlands*: "the wetlands are largely forgotten but are present by virtue of their very oblivion."

Voltaire thought Paris "half gold, half filth"; Goethe thought it "the world's head"; Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 33) in *Ferragus* thought it "a monstrous miracle" (also translated as "a monstrous marvel" (Jones, 2005: xx; see also Hussey, 2006: 243), "an astounding assemblage of movements, machines and ideas … the world's thinking box." The Paris of modernity in these terms is a bachelor machine for a bachelor birth from Haussmann's brain box. Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 64) later in *Ferragus* elaborates that "Paris may be a monster, but it is the most monomaniacal monster." The monster "falls into the slough of despond." Paris is a monomaniacal monster lurking in its monumental labyrinth. Balzac in *Ferragus* feminizes the monster and figures the city as body for

> Paris is the most delightful of monsters: here a pretty woman, farther off a poverty-stricken old hag; here as freshly minted as the coin of a new reign, and in another corner of the town as elegant as a lady of fashion. A monster, certainly, from head to foot: its head is in the garrets, inhabited by men of genius; the first floors house the well-filled stomachs; on the ground floor are the shops, the legs and feet, since the busy trot of trade goes in and out of them. (32)

Balzac (1949–1953, 2: 389) in *Ferragus* also considered that for its devotees Paris "*est un creature*," translated variously by Fanger (1965: 26 and 31) as "a

living being" and "a living thing" and by Hunt as "a sentient being" (Balzac, [1833–1835] 1974: 33).

Paris has been figured in even more diverse ways. For Hussey (2006: xv) it "has been variously represented as a prison, a paradise and a vision of hell." That is the point, pride, and shame of the city of Paris and of other cities such as London to be variously all three, often at the same time, in different places within it, a prison of gridlocked traffic jams, of gridironed streets, of tenements, of suburbia, but also a paradise of parks, arcades, department stores, beautiful houses, and gardens, as well as a hell of slums, sewers, polluted streams, "regions of ruin and rust," wastelands. "The city is Heaven. The city is Hell," as Gilloch (1996: 184) concludes. More precisely, the modern city is heaven; the modern city is hell.

Whereas the medieval Christian Dante ([1314] 2006: 630) figured the underworld as swamp, the post-Christian modern writer figures the nether world of the city as swamp (Gissing, London), or cesspool (Doyle), or the swamp as underworld (Forester), or the sewer as hell (Hugo), or the city itself as hell as with Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 309) in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* in which "this vast metropolitan workshop for the manufacture of enjoyment" is not merely figured as hell but is hell: "it is not only in jest that Paris has been called an inferno. The epithet is well deserved. There all is smoke, fire, glare, ebullience; everything flares up, falters, dies down, burns up again, sparkles, crackles and is consumed." The modern city not only takes place in a place in space but also occurs in a moment in time, in a period of history. The hell of the modern city is not only found in the city itself, in its dark and dirty places but also in the hell of the modern, in its hot and fetid events. Modernity for Benjamin (1999a: 842; see also 1999a: 544) is "the time of hell." Why? Because "the eternity of hell" is constituted by the fact "that which is newest … remains, in every respect, the same." The modern is cut off from prehistory and is constituted by its severance from prehistory. Most residents of all the cities discussed in *Cities and Wetlands* have no knowledge of the prehistory of the city in which they live. Benjamin (1999a: 544) earlier on the same page defined the "modern" as "the new in the context of what has always already been there." The modern city in general and Paris in particular are new in the context of the swamp that has always already been there.

Tours of the sewers

The hell of the modern city is enacted in what Prendergast (1992: 88) calls "the great novel of the Parisian sewers, Hugo's *Les Misérables*," first published in French in 1862. Lehan (1998: 56) relates how

> as in most novels of romantic realism, Hugo superimposes an extended religious [and epic, I would add] trope onto the city itself. *Les Misérables* describes ["the descent into the secular hell of the city"] and a climb out of hell toward a secular kind of redemption. As part of this scheme, Jean Valjean becomes a secular Christ. At one point, he is literally buried alive and then resurrected from the grave. When he enters the gigantic Parisian sewer system, carrying the wounded Marius like a cross, he is entering a Dantean nether world … he crosses a River Styx and is freed from this underworld.

For Dante ([1314] 2006: 63; see also Giblett, 1996: 27–29) in the *Inferno* (VII, 103–130), the Styx is not a river, but a slimy marsh; for Hugo also, the Styx is not a river, but a sewer. The sacred swamp, the divine marsh becomes the secular sewer. The Styx, as in Virgil's *Aeneid*, is located in the underworld. At the point in the recent film production of the musical *Les Misérables* when Hugh Jackman playing Valjean enters the Paris sewer, some members of the cinema audience at which I was present gasped in horror. The epic hero descends into the underworld, just as Odysseus (Ulysses) did, to emerge with his manhood vindicated. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1101) concludes book two of the Jean Valjean part of *Les Misérables* with the emphatic pronouncement that "*to descend into the sewer is to enter the grave*" (his emphasis) and then segues into the following book with Jean's descent into the sewer.

As such, Jean was following (literally) in the footsteps of Bruneseau, the sewer inspector Napoleon commissioned to explore the tunnels and create an exhaustive map of the sewers. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1093) calls him "the Columbus of the cloaca" and relates his exploits in book two of *Les Misérables*. Bruneseau went on a journey of discovery into the new world of the sewers of Paris. In the 1930s Benjamin (1999a: 87) briefly referred to "underground sightseeing in the sewers" of Paris. Continuing today, a guided tour of the sewers of Paris following "the history of the sewers, from the days of Lutèce

to the present day" is a current tourist attraction during the summer months (*Musée des Égouts de Paris* online).

Whereas the flâneur "goes botanizing on the asphalt" (Benjamin, 1973a: 36), the cloacer, or what Hwang (2013: 34) calls "the degraded *flâneur*," goes self-baptizing in the sewer. Both are unlike Henry David Thoreau whom Buell (1995: 389) eloquently calls "nature's *flâneur*" who goes botanizing and self-baptizing in the swamp rather than the city (as we will see in Chapter 10). Both are also unlike Benjamin himself who could be called culture's flâneur who goes botanizing in the bog of books in the *Bibliotheque Nationale* where he collects specimens of species to array, display, and study in his cabinet of curiosities called *The Arcades Project* with its convoluted taxonomy of genuses arranged alphabetically. The urban cloacer is to the underworld of the city as the urban flâneur is to its overworld; the sewers are subterranean arcades. Just as the flâneur reads off the signs of the above ground city in its arcades, the cloacer reads off the signs of the underground city in its sewers. Both do not read off the traces of the former marsh city in its streets and sewers.

Similarly the photographers of the streets and sewers of Paris read these signs of the city, but not the traces of the marsh on or in which the city was built. Benjamin (1973a: 162; see also 1999a: 6) relates that when Felix Nadar "embarked on taking pictures in the sewers [of Paris in the 1860s] … for the first time new discoveries were required of the lens" as Nadar used artificial light, the first photographer to do so (Hwang, 2013: 64). Nadar's lens does not discover the old and largely hidden (to the naked eye and camera) history and buried past of Paris as a former marsh metropolis (for his photographs of the sewers of Paris, see Benjamin, 1999a: 413; Hwang, 2013: 65, figure 1.7). Nor does Eugéne Atget a couple of decades later when he photographed the streets of Paris as what Benjamin (1979: 256; 1999b: 527; see also 1973b: 228; [1940] 2003: 258) called "the scene of a crime." These photographed streets are not only the scene of a crime, the stage on which a crime has taken place, but they are also a crime scene in themselves. These streets are the scene of a crime, the crime of the killing of wetlands, what I "call aquaterracide," a war crime committed in the founding of the city. An ecological crimes tribunal would prosecute the mass murderers of wetlands. Along similar lines, Nadar photographs the sewers of Paris as a crime scene. They are also the scene of

a crime against wetlands which were murdered in giving rise to the city. In pondering Atget's photographs, Benjamin (1979: 256; 1999b: 527) wonders if "every square inch of our cities [is] a crime scene." In viewing Atget's and Nadar's photographs of the streets and sewers of Paris, every square inch of our former swamp cities and marsh metropolises, our aquaterrapolises, is a crime scene of aquaterracide.

Benjamin (1979: 250; 1999b: 518) concludes that Atget's photographs of the streets of Paris "pump [or suck] the aura out of reality like water out of sinking ship." "Aura" is Benjamin's term for the unique appearance of an object imbued with a strange weave of time and space that he found in early photographs with long exposure times and slow shutter speeds, and not in Nadar's and Atget's photographs. Benjamin differentiates aura from trace on the basis that aura is present presence whereas a trace is past presence and present absence (see Giblett, 2008b: 59–63; Giblett and Tolonen, 2012: 32–36). Nadar's photographs of the sewers of Paris and Atget's of the streets of Paris drain the aura of the reality of Paris as a city, just like the city that drained the marshes in and on which it was built. These photographs drain the aura out of the reality of the matrifocal Great Mother of the marshes that preceded the patriarchal city. These photographs drain the aura of the reality of Paris as a ship floating (but not sinking) on or in its prehistorical marshes in accordance with its Latin motto.

These photographers inscribe the visible surface of the city and drain the aura of its reality whereas some writers trace the invisible depths of the city and present its absent reality. Unlike these photographers, the writers of the streets and sewers of Paris, such as Balzac and Hugo, trace its hidden history and buried past as a former marsh metropolis. These writers illustrate and portray the motto for *Cities and Wetlands* that these wetlands are still present (in the present) by virtue of their very absence; in a word, they have left a trace. In *The Arcades Project* Benjamin (1999a: 411–412) cites Hugo in *Les Misérables* extensively on the topic of the sewers of Paris, concluding with one passage describing Bruneseau's "descent into the sewer" complete with its "mire" with "no solid ground" and "miasmas" with its "unbreathable atmosphere … Nothing equaled the horror of this old voiding crypt." Benjamin does not go on to cite Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1094, 1095, 1096) further that this is "the digestive apparatus of Babylon."

Although Benjamin does not cite Hugo's Babylonian intestinal and machinic metaphor that figures the city as body and as machine, he does cite the conclusion to the story of Bruseneau's descent into the sewers in which for Hugo "the mind seems to be prowling through the shadow … that enormous blind mole, the past." Indeed, the mind was prowling through the past of Paris, the miry miasmatic marsh, the native quaking zone, of Lutetia on which the city was built and which still extends into the present in the feral quaking zone of man-made sewers of the city of Paris through what Breton ([1928] 1960: 154, 155) called "a mental landscape" of "the great living and echoing unconsciousness" of Paris and himself.

The psychoanalyst of the city, the psychoanalytic urban ecologist, reads the symptoms of the repressed beneath the surface of the city in its sewers as traces of the swamps in or on which it was built. Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1098) knew that "Paris is built upon a deposit singularly rebellious … to human control … There are liquid clays" and "soft deep mires." Wetlands historically have been intractable to human control until the invention and deployment of windmills and later steam dredgers and pumps.

In book two of *Les Misérables* entitled "The Intestine of Leviathan," Hugo meditated deeply on the sewers of Paris, the belly of the beast of the body politic in Hobbes's terms. Early on in this book Hugo ([1862] 1992: 1088) contrasts "Paris, that model city … that metropolis of the ideal … that nation city," the city above ground, with "a Paris of sewers," which has its "slime" and which are "grotesque" and "monstrous," the city underground (1089). The sewers are figured as a monster for they have "a maw" (1088) and "the mouth" of one sewer "with its pointed iron grating [. . .] looked like a row of teeth" (1093), which the makers of the recent film of the musical seem to have had in mind in their use of iron grating at the entrance of the sewer into which Jean Valjean descends. This sewer is both an orally sadistic monster that consumes and an aerially sadistic monster that exhales for it is also "like the jaws of a dragon blowing hell" that breathes out "the pestilence" (1093) for which it was famous. Both sides of Paris coalesce for Hugo (1088) in the "eternal city, unfathomable sewer" and "the sublimity of abjectness." In doing so, Hugo was returning to and enacting the principles he had enunciated earlier in his career as a writer.

In 1827, thirty-five years before he published *Les Misérables*, Hugo reflected at length in the "Preface" to his play *Cromwell* on the grotesque in relation to

the sublime and the beautiful. For Hugo ([1827] 1910: 345; emphasis in the original) "the modern muse … will realize that everything in creation is not humanly *beautiful*, that the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the unshapely beside the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light." For Hugo the modern muse in realizing this is merely "doing as nature does, mingling in its creations—but without confounding them—darkness and light, the grotesque and the sublime; in other words, the body and the soul, the beast and the intellect" (345–346). Hugo himself mingles them in *Les Misérables* for which his earlier "Preface" was the manifesto and blueprint. Hugo concludes later in his "Preface" that "it is from the fruitful union of the grotesque with the sublime that the modern spirit is born" (346).

The modern city, including Paris, particularly the modern swamp city and marsh metropolis, is, however, not born from the same fruitful union as the novel of the grotesque with the sublime, the monstrous with the monumental, the abjective[3] with the objective and subjective. Yet the modern city is born of the fatal union (and fetal) of city and swamp, marsh and metropolis, in which the mother swamp dies, or is killed, in giving birth to the city, in Haussmann's case by caesarean section or stillbirth by abortion. The truly postmodern city would achieve a rapprochement and reconciliation between the modern city and the premodern mother goddess of the swamp.

Hugo's manifesto on the grotesque and the sublime did not go unremarked by Mikhail Bakhtin, the most famous theorist of the carnivalesque and grotesque. Bakhtin ([1965] 1984b: 43) relates how, "in the 1820s, there was a revival of grotesque imagery in French Romanticism. We find an interesting presentation of the problem, and one typical of the French Romantic spirit, by Victor Hugo, first in his preface to *Cromwell*." Bakhtin goes on to note that for Hugo "the aesthetics of the grotesque are to a certain extent the aesthetics of the monstrous" as we have seen with *Les Misérables* (43). Bakhtin then goes on to critique Hugo's "Preface" in no uncertain terms: "but at the same time Hugo reduces the intrinsic value of the grotesque by declaring that it is a means of contrasting [*sic*] the sublime. The two complete each other" for Hugo in holistic and functionalist complementarity, whereas for Bakhtin the grotesque counters and subverts the sublime in unceasing socialist struggle both in the body and the city, as well as in the city as body (43). The sublime,

grotesque, and monstrous city is a persistent theme in the following chapters of *Cities and Wetlands*; the city as body is taken up in the final chapter (for the sublime, grotesque, and monstrous body, see Giblett, 2008a: chapters 4 and 5).

The temple of Lutetia of the grotesque lower earthly and bodily strata (as Bakhtin called it) of the monstrous feminine *was* the swamp, whereas the arcades are temples of the God of greedy capitalism, of the capital(ist) city, of new, modern, monumental Paris. The arcades, or interior passageways, of Paris in the nineteenth century for Benjamin (1999a: 37 and 546), are "the hollow mold form which the image of 'modernity' was cast" and "temples of commodity capital." Balzac (cited by Harvey, 2006: 33) describes one street in Paris as "one byway in the labyrinth … forming, as it were, the entrails of the town. It swarms with an infinite variety of commodities … stinking and stylish." Paris is a monstrous body whose production and consumption of commodities takes place in its intestinal organs and whose commodities are swarming creatures subject to the Levitical interdiction that they are an abomination.

Elsewhere Balzac (cited by Harvey, 2006: 33) calls "Speculation" "the monster." Speculation is the monstrous appetite that drives the production and consumption of commodities in the belly of the beast city assisted by the servants of the capitalists. "The stomach of Paris," for Balzac ([1833–1835] 1974: 318) in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, is the place "in which the interests of the city are digested and compressed … by some acrid and rancorous intestinal process" by "lawyers, doctors, barristers, business men, bankers, traders." The city/monster displaces and takes over the place of the swamp/monster. Benjamin cites an illustrated guide to Paris of 1852 in which "an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature" (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 37 and 158). An arcade is a miniature city and world of commodity capitalism that displaces and replaces the macro-earth and economy of swamps and marshes that nevertheless leave traces in the history of, and metaphors for, the city of Paris, and its sewers, and its prehistory as marsh.

4

London: The "Nether World" of "the City of Dreadful Night"

The former swamp city and marsh metropolis of London dates, like Paris, from pre-Roman and Roman times. Even the name of London might enshrine its wetland beginning as the name may be of Gaelic origin with *lunnd* meaning "marsh" (Ackroyd, 2001: 10). London was founded famously, and still sits, on the Thames River. When the city was founded the river was for Ackroyd "bordered by swamps and marshes" (9). As with most cities set in or beside swamps and marshes, London has a swampy and marshy beginning that the majority of residents probably do not know about as it has largely been forgotten. The exceptions prove the rule. In the case of London, these marshes and swamps have recently been remembered in Bernardine Evaristo's (2002: 168–169) verse novel, *The Emperor's Babe*, set in London's Roman and contemporary times with its description of "the marsh saltings/and impenetrable swamps of Thamesmead." As with Paris, the contemporary is in the historical and vice versa.

Since Roman times, London grew to become for Long (2014: 113) "the first city anywhere in the world to reach a population of a million," though for Lehan (1998: 30) London was merely "the first modern city in the Western world" to achieve this distinction. London for Kotkin (2005: 81) was "the world capitalist capital," the center and seat of power for what Long (2014: 79) claims was "the largest empire the world has ever seen." In the eighteenth century Galeano (2009: 158) described how "the world and the sun and the stars revolved around London" with "the splendors of London at the summit of the universe." In the late nineteenth century London for Hall (2014: 32, 51,

426) in his monumental intellectual history of urban design and planning was "unchallengeably the greatest city in Europe and even the world," whilst in the early twentieth century it "remained the most interesting, the most vital, the most evidently problematic of all the great cities" and became in the late twentieth century "the world's first true global city." Parisians and Berliners might cavil and contend with some of these partisan views of a long-time resident of London, though they cannot with the fact that London owed much of its supremacy to being, for over a century, "the world's busiest port in value and volume of trade" (426), a preeminence to which the land-locked capital cities of Paris and Berlin could never aspire. London for de Landa (2000: 80) was "part political capital and part maritime metropolis." It was also part marsh metropolis.

Like Paris and Berlin, London was also a swamp city. The wetlandscape of the swamps and lagoons of the Thames for Ackroyd (2001: 9) has "not entirely faded" as "the mist from the marshes of Westminster destroyed the frescoes of St Stephen's within recent memory." The repressed wetlands of the city return in mist, mud, monsters, and metaphors. Monsters are "engendered on slime" in the words of Dryden (cited by Ackroyd, 2001: 8), just as monstrous Satan for Milton ([1667] 2003: 230) in *Paradise Lost* (X, 530) was "engendered in the Pythian vale on slime". Dryden is also referring literally to the crocodiles that once lived there and figuratively to the seditious that live there. Alligators and crocodiles are the wetland's monsters par excellence (see Giblett, 2009: chapter 2). Dryden for Ackroyd (2001: 8) "recognized this now forgotten and invisible [wet]landscape of London." As Ackroyd (2011: 1) puts it, "the past is beneath us" down below the surface of the city in its depths. The past is also before us in the names of places. What is beneath and before us can and does resurface and re-present itself.

The repressed wetlands of the city return in the city as monster, "*la monstrueuse cite*," as Verlaine put it in the nineteenth century (cited by Ackroyd, 2001: 101). Like a monster, the city, as Ackroyd puts it, "consumes and excretes" with "greed and desire" (2). Or should that be gluttony? The city is an orally sadistic monster that consumes with greed and gluttony, and not with gratitude for generosity. "The Modern Age" for Sloterdijk (2012: 165 and 180) is "the era of the man-made monstrous" and "giant cities" are "typical contemporary products of the monstrous as an industry." The repressed

monstrous wetlands of the city also return in the monstrous city and in its mud. The depths of the mud on which the city was built resurface in mud on the surfaces of its streets. Ackroyd (2001: 100, 101) cites various writers from the seventeenth through the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries who complained about London's "soft and stinking mud," a London road that "resembled a stagnant lake of deep mud" and "the thick filth and muck of London."

John Gay ([1716] 2007: 180–181, ll.115–116), for instance, in "Trivia: or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London" published in 1716, invokes "Cloacina (Goddess of the Tides/Whose sable Streams beneath the City glide)" in "the nether World" (192, l.536) (taken up later by Gissing) and leads the reader/walker on a jaunt through the miry mud of London streets (also taken up later by Mayhew) to "the slimy shore" of the Thames (191, l.482). For Brant (2007: 110; see also Jenner, 2007) "mire is dirt" and for Mary Douglas (1966: 35) "dirt is matter out of place." Gay for Brant (2007: 109) "sees the waterways and streets as unclearly divided … Mud collapses a binary of earth and water." In Douglas's terms, in mud and with it, earth is in the place of water and water in the place of earth. Another name for this category and substance interpellated between the solid and the liquid is slime. The city is not like the God of Genesis 1:2 who clearly divided land from water. Mud is wet land that collapses the binary presence of earth (+1) into the lack and absence of water (0) and thereby collapses (literally) the relationship between them so that water becomes the presence/present and earth is absent and lacking.

A poem published in *Punch* in 1855 personified the river Thames lying in a bed of slime:

> King Thames was a rare old fellow,
> He lay in his bed of slime,
> And his face was disgustingly yellow,
> Except where 'twas black with slime.
> Hurrah! Hurrah! for the slush and slime! (Cited by Melosi, 2008: 37)

The wetland past of the city of London returns also in science fiction about the future, such as in Richard Jefferies's *After London* and J. G. Ballard's *Drowned World*. In both novels, London reverts to maternal marsh (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 4). Smith (2012: 327) argues that in *After London* "the largest

city in the world was not too big to be swallowed up by nature." Smith figures nature as an orally sadistic monster who can swallow a city. More precisely, in *After London* London is swamped by nature. As for Gay in the eighteenth century, and as Hunt (2007: 120) puts it, "London itself is figured as both feminine and dangerous," a femme fatale, rather than as the Great Mother or Goddess who is feminine, dangerous, and nurturing, as wetlands are.

Gay's poem *Trivia*, as Hunt (2007: 120) points out, "takes its name from a minor Roman goddess whom John Gay fancifully appoints to be patroness of streets and highways." Gay trivializes carnivalesquely the city, including the goddess Cloacina, to celebrate the grotesque lower bodily and urban strata. He does not slimily celebrate the city as founded in and on the monstrous Great Mother or Goddess of swamps (unlike Jefferies who does so later). Ballard's and Jefferies's visions of the past and future have present pertinence for without the Thames Barrier, as Smith (2012: 328) points out, "the Thames flood plain would revert to marshland" and "Nature would have finally reclaimed the [wet]land on which the once great city had been built." The wetland was reclaimed by the city and the city could be re-reclaimed by the wetland. The return of the geographical and historical repressed indeed.

Auguste Barbier's 1837 poem "London" figures the city both as a cathedral of industrial capitalism and as a monster:

> Long black chimneys, the steeples of industry,
> Open their mouths and exhale fumes
> From their hot bellies to the open air;
> Vast white domes and Gothic spires
> Float in the vapor above the heaps of bricks. (Cited by Benjamin, 1999a: 452)

"An ever swelling, unapproachable river" is also figured as a monster "rolling its muddy currents in sinuous onrush/Like the frightful stream of the underworld," the Styx. "Above the sky tormented, cloud upon cloud, / The sun, like a corpse, wears a shroud on its face." Just as "A great tide polluted and always unsettled / Recirculates the riches of the world," the sun is obscured by air pollution and becomes the figure of death. The black sun of mourning and melancholy is produced here, not by the black airs of the black waters of the wetland but by the polluted air of the city that took the wetland's place.

The repressed wetlands of the city return in tropes. For many late-nineteenth-century writers, such as Friedrich Engels, George Gissing, Jack London, and James Thomson, the modern, industrial city (principally London for these writers) has a dark underside figured as stagnant pool, bottomless abyss, nether world, or dreadful night. London for Smith (2012: 265 and 297) is "the first metropolis of the industrial age" and "the capital of the industrial world," certainly in the nineteenth century. The commonplace responses of dread and horror that were projected on to the native quaking zone of the swamp were displaced on to the industrial quaking zone of the urban underside. These writers are "placist" in that they ascribe the same pejorative characteristics to a ("man-made") place (the city) that was previously ascribed to a place not made with human hands (jungle, abyss, nether-land, stagnant pools, etc.). The pejorative characteristics that denigrate the native quaking zone are associated subsequently with the feral quaking zone and evoke the same negative connotations.

It is a commonplace of detective fiction that the modern city has a dark underside and that the role of the detective is to penetrate the darkness and bring it to light, and to the light. The first writers of the genre also construed the modern city as swamp and sewer and the detective as drainer and sanitary engineer. Conan Doyle (1981: 15) in *A Study in Scarlet*, his first Sherlock Holmes story published in 1887, figures London as "that great cesspool" into which the wastes and wasters of the British Empire ran. The role of the detective is to wade through this pool of shit and urine, and drain it. Doyle also figured the city as wilderness and the detective as pioneer who crosses the frontier between civilization and wilderness. In the same novel Conan Doyle refers to "the great wilderness of London" (16). The role of the private detective is to first cross the frontier between civilization and barbarism, enter the wilderness and then civilize and tame the wilderness. In one of his later Sherlock Holmes stories Conan Doyle refers to "the dark jungle of criminal London" (488). The role of the private detective is to slash through the tropical growth and penetrate the darkness of the modern city, and bring enlightenment to its benighted citizens.

In another of his Sherlock Holmes stories Conan Doyle (1981: 636) refers to "the opalescent London reek." Given the state of the air, it is hardly surprising then that Conan Doyle in *The Sign of Four* published in 1890 has

Watson describe an autumn evening in London in typical, if not clichéd, nineteenth-century terms:

> A dense drizzly fog lay low upon the great city. Mud-cultured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. There was, to my mind, something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light—sad faces and glad, haggard and merry. Like all humankind, they flitted from the gloom into the light and so back into the gloom once more. I am not subject to impressions, but the dull, heavy evening, with the strange business upon which we were engaged, combined to make me nervous and depressed. (98)

Conan Doyle was probably following in the foggy footsteps of Dickens in the famous opening passages of *Bleak House* first published in 1853 and of chapter 34 of *Our Mutual Friend* first published in 1865. This view of the modern city from St. Petersburg to London can be found from Dickens, through Conan Doyle and Bely to Eliot, especially with fog. As with many writers, Conan Doyle emphasizes the uncanniness of the modern city. Like Blake who in his archetypal poem "London" "mark[s] in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe," Doyle reads the physiognomy of faces in the street.

T. S. Eliot (1920: 1) called London "unreal city" and personifies, or more precisely felinofies, the fog as a cat in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes,
> The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
> Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
> Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains

Fog has a life of its own, a feline life that is made animal in Eliot's vision of the unreal city and thereby ceases to be human, though the fog of the microclimate of cities is human made.

Like Gay, Doyle invokes the mire, not of the city, but of the country in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with its "Great Grimpen Mire," the scene of crime and the site of melancholy, a kind of secular "Slough of Despond" into which

the detective plunges on his journey from London as the city of destruction, not to the celestial city, but to the city of earthly rationality in his imaginary (see Giblett, 1996: 170–172).

In the nineteenth century Nathaniel Hawthorne also referred to "the black heart of London" (cited by Ackroyd, 2001: 102). Darkness for Ackroyd is of "the city's essence … London is possessed by darkness" (103). London, to borrow from Joseph Conrad in his novella *Heart of Darkness*, is "the heart of darkness." The heart of darkness is not only in the rogue colonist Kurtz in Conrad's novella, nor only located in the deepest, darkest jungles of the "dark continent" of Africa, nor of female sexuality for European men as Freud thought, but in the heart of the colonial capital as Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* said of the Thames "this also has been one of the dark places of the earth" (cited by Ackroyd, 2001: 542). Ackroyd (2011: 65–87) goes on to suggest that "the derivation of its very name, pre-Celtic in origin, is *tamasa*, 'dark river.' " He uses Conrad's title of his novel for chapter 6 of *London Under* about London's sewers, the Thames beneath the city, the subterranean and underground rivers of shit. Some of these sewers have been rivers. For Long (2014: 9) London has many "lost rivers," "several of which are now little more than sewers."

Even the Thames River winding its way above ground through the city was not much better. The Thames for Long (2014: 60) is, or has been, "the city's great open sewer." Certainly it was in the mid-nineteenth century when Dickens in *Little Dorrit* observed that "through the heart of the town a deadly sewer ebbed and flowed in the place of a fine river" (cited by Hwang, 2013: 32). Similarly in Dickens's *Oliver Twist* the Thames is "that dark water" (cited by Hwang, 2013: 51). This is perhaps not quite what the original namers had in mind when they called the Thames the "dark water," though it has a certain ironic fitness when the dark waters became an open sewer and ceased to be fresh water. The Thames, as Hwang remarks, was "the incarnation of the sewer" (48). He concludes that "the Thames that snakes like a sewer through London, both defiling and purifying, evokes a sinister subterranean aura that lingers over the entire city" (201). The Thames also evokes a seductive aqua-terrestrial and submarine aura of the present presence of the lost swamps and marshes along its banks on which the city of London was founded along similar lines to Paris (as we saw in the previous chapter).

For other late-nineteenth-century writers the dark underside of the city looms large in slightly different, though similar, ways to Doyle, Hawthorne, and Conrad. For Jack London it is the abyss; for Rudyard Kipling and James Thomson it is "The City of Dreadful Night"; for George Gissing it is the nether world; and for Friedrich Engels it is a stagnant pool. This figuration and association persist into some of the most recent writing about the city, such as Antoine Picon's (2000) reading of the anxious landscape of the rusting city. How this dark underside is figured adumbrates the politics, pleasures, and fears of city places and urban spaces.

The darkness of the modern city is constituted not only by its immoral underside, its dens of thieves, its parade of prostitutes, its labyrinthine slums, but also by the physical and moralized underside of the open drains or closed sewers that service it and the swamps on which it may have, more than likely, been built. The latter is often employed to figure the former with the *demi-monde* of the slums figured as swamp, or sewer, or muddy shore. Mayhew's ([1861–1862] 1985: 41) aim for what he calls "the neglected class" is to try to "lift them out of the moral mire in which they are wallowing." His source for his miry metaphor is not only John Gay's ([1716] 2007: 210 and 209) *Trivia* but also his own description later of the "mud-larks" who "plash their way through the mire" and wade "through the mud left on the shore by the retiring tide" and whose "bodies are grimed with the foul soil of the river." Both sides of the figuration come together in the uncanny and the nether world (or nether lands).

Nether world

In *The Nether World*, George Gissing's 1889 novel, the slums of London nurture "a rank, evilly-fostered growth," like a poisonous swamp plant in contemporaneous representations of swamps and its vegetation. His narrator is not referring to a plant here though. He is comparing one of the working-class girl characters, "not to some piece of exuberant normal vegetation," but to a kind of festering vegetative sore on the backside of the body politic. Yet their labor is necessary for the functioning of the body politic, which could not survive without it.

The narrator offers the opinion that "the putrid soil of that nether world yields other forms besides the obviously blighted and sapless" (Gissing, [1889] 1992: 8). Indeed, it yields the bad smelling and the morally bad. This is hardly surprising when "filth, rottenness, evil odors, possessed these superfluous dens of mankind and made them gruesome to the peering imagination" (74). Into "the jaws of this black horror" the narrator, or at least his imagination, has peered. The nether world is figured as monster and the narrator as dentist who peers (albeit in imagination, not in reality) into its orally sadistic jaws. The nether world is a living creature to be shunned as an abomination. The narrator leaves us in no doubt about this when he describes "a disagreeable quarter, a street of squalid houses, swarming with yet more squalid children" (129). These swarms of children have developed from a "swarm of babies" (132). According to the Levitical interdiction, swarming creatures are an abomination and are to be abhorred (as we saw in the previous chapter on Paris).

The swarming nether world of the city with its vertiginous depths is worlds away from the pastoral upper world of the country with its flat horizons (though it too has its dark underside). This contrast comes into stark relief when making a journey by railway from the city to the country:

> Over the pest-stricken regions of East London, sweltering in sunshine which served only to reveal the intimacies of abomination; across miles of a city of the damned, such as thought never conceived before this age of ours; above streets swarming with a nameless populace, cruelly exposed by the unwonted light of heaven; stopping at stations which it crushes the heart to think should be the destination of any mortal; the train made its way at length beyond the outmost limits of dread, and entered upon a land of level meadows, of hedges and trees, of crops and cattle. (Gissing, [1889] 1992: 164)

The unhomely and unhealthy artificial wet land of the city for Gissing gives way to the homely and healthy natural dry land of the country:

> It is merely one of those quiet corners of flat, homely England, where man and beast seem on good terms with each other, where all green things grow in abundance, where from of old tilth and pasture-land are humbly observant of seasons and alternations, where the brown roads are familiar only

> with the tread of the labourer, with the light wheel of the farmer's gig, of the rumbling of the solid wain. (164–165)

This idealized, bucolic picture of an organic community with its preindustrial technologies living in pastoral harmony in accord with seasonal rhythms and where the growths are green and abundant, not rank and evilly festered, nor blighted and sapless, is straight out of Constable. It nevertheless has its dark underside as Gissing goes on to relate how, "here, as elsewhere, the evil of the times was pressing upon men and disheartening them from labor. Farms lying barren, ill-will between proprietor and tenant, between tenant and hind, departure of the tillers of the soil to rot in towns that have no need of them."

The normal, fertile country has been blighted and the symptoms of rural depopulation are blamed on the age rather than on its diagnosed causes in industrial capitalism. The country still has its consolations, though, as a salve for the deprivations of the city: "Danbury Hill, rising thick-wooded to the village church, which is visible for miles around, with stretches of heath about its lower slopes, with its far prospects over the sunny country, was the pleasant end of a pleasant drive" (Gissing, [1889] 1992: 165).

The church is a symbolic beacon on the hill in dark times, a symbol of the city of God on high, and a light at the end of the tunnel to which the traveler journeys and from which the viewer can command a pleasing prospect of the country. This pleasing prospect is unlike the displeasing prospects of the city where the traveler walks "through all the barren ways and phantom-haunted refuges of the nether world" (Gissing, [1889] 1992: 247). Both country and city have become barren but at least the country is not the city of the dammed and the dead. "Mad Jack" declares that "This place to which you are confined is Hell … This is Hell—Hell—Hell!" (345). Similarly in Morrison's ([1896] 1996: 2) *A Child of the Jago* the rejoinder to the stock epithet "go to hell" uttered by one character is "Hell? You're in it … there can be no hell after this" uttered by another character. Similarly for the semieponymous Shelley, "hell is a city much like London" (cited by Benjamin, 1973a: 59).

The pleasing prospect from Danbery Hill is worlds away from Shooter's Gardens whose "walls stood in perpetual black sweat; a mouldy reek came from the open doorways; the beings that passed in and out seemed soaked with grimy moisture, puffed into distortions, hung about with rotting

garments" (Gissing, [1889] 1992: 248). The verdant horizontal surface of what William Blake called "England's green and pleasant land" is contrasted with the vile, vertical walls of the Farrington Road buildings:

> Vast, sheer walls, unbroken by even an attempt at ornament; row above row of windows in the mud-cultured surface, upwards, upwards, lifeless eyes, murky openings that tell of bareness, disorder, comfortlessness within … An inner courtyard, asphalted, swept clean—looking up at the sky as from a prison. Acres of these edifices, the tinge of grime declaring the relative dates of their erection; millions of tons of brute brick and mortar, crushing the spirit as you gaze. (274)

This is not Benjamin's Berlin courtyard of his childhood "where the city opened itself to the child" but the prison house of modernity closed in upon itself, though both are full of intimate, physical possibilities. These possibilities are exciting, sexual ones for Benjamin, but distressing, disease-laden ones for Gissing for "the air was poisoned with the odour of an unclean crowd" (274). Gissing subscribed to the miasmatic theory of disease commonplace at the time in which bad air (literally "malaria") caused this and other diseases.

City conditions

Engels subscribed to the miasmatic theory too. In his 1892 "Preface to the English Edition" of his *Condition of the Working-Class in England* Engels ([1845] 1987: 42) quotes an article of his own in which he had said that the East End of London in 1845 was "an ever-spreading pool of stagnant misery and desolation." In short, it was an industrial quaking zone of misery and desolation. He is pleased to report 40 years later that "that immense haunt of misery is no longer the stagnant pool it was six years ago" (45). Misery has not ceased, but at least the East End is no longer the stagnant pool it was—due in his mind to unionism. Yet the "great towns" of industrial capitalism are stagnant pools not merely metaphorically and morally but also literally and materially as "the streets are generally unpaved, rough, dirty, filled with vegetable and animal refuse, without sewers or gutters, but supplied with stagnant pools instead" (71). These stagnant pools in cities are worlds away from

Thoreau's (1962, *VII*: 304) "stagnant ponds or pools in woods floored with leaves." From Engels's ([1845] 1987: 71) "filthy streets," as would be expected, arises "a horrible smell." The Aire River of Leeds, "thick, black, and foul, smelling of all possible refuse," "engenders miasmatic vapours" (81) according to a journal reporting the sanitary conditions of working people in cities from which Engels quotes. Similarly in Manchester

> at the bottom flows, or rather stagnates, the Irk, a narrow, coal-black, foul-smelling stream, full of debris and refuse, which it deposits on the lower right bank. In dry weather, a long string of the most disgusting blackish-green slime pools are left standing on the bank, from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic gas constantly arise and give forth a stench unendurable. (89)

Hardly surprisingly Engels concludes that Manchester is "this hell upon earth," which "arouses horror" (92).

Miasmatic gas is often described in short, and in a word, as effluvia that arise from "masses of refuse, offal and sickening filth [that] lie among standing pools in all directions" with the result that "the atmosphere is poisoned by the effluvia from these" (Engels, [1845] 1987: 98). Although Engels does not belabor the miasmatic theory of disease, he does not demur from repeatedly quoting the journal reporting the sanitary conditions of working people in cities to the effect that in such streets "a mass of dried filth and foul vapors are created, which not only offend the [senses of] sight and smell, but endanger the health of the inhabitants in the highest degree" (78). Later he more explicitly argues that "the filth and stagnant pools of the working people's quarters in the great cities have, therefore, the worst effect upon the public health, because they produce precisely those gases which engender disease; so, too, the exhalations from contaminated streams" (128–129). Certainly, as Engels says, "life in large cities is, in itself, injurious to health," but whether this can be attributed to what he calls "gases decidedly injurious to health" (128) is another question and more a matter of nineteenth-century misdiagnosis. Nevertheless, the city is a place of death for many nineteenth-century writers. For Thomson ([1880] 1993: 29) "the City was of Night—perchance of Death / But certainly of Night." Kipling (1899a: 49) cites these two lines as the epigraph for chapter 5 of his collection *The City of Dreadful Night* and concludes his short story "The City of Dreadful Night" with the emphatic assertion that "the city was of Death as well as Night" (Kipling, 1899b: 59).

The stagnant pool in the city made with human hands is a deadly place. The city often had its beginnings in the stagnant pools of swamps not made with human hands. Many modern cities, or areas in them like the East End of London, for Davis (2006: 82) "the Victorian world's greatest slum," were built on reclaimed marshes, or drained swamps. As Neuwirth (2006: 179) says, "all cities start in mud." Cities begin in mud and end in crud. Mud for Thoreau (1962, *V*: 499) writing in his journal in 1853 is "nature's womb." All cities start in nature's womb of mud and end up in culture's tomb of crud. Crud is culture's tomb. The city's end is in crud. The city is born from mud and dies in crud; it is born from nature's womb and dies in culture's tomb. The city made of mud bricks or concrete, a mixture of the three elements of water, earth, and air, or of clay bricks baked in fire, a mixture of four elements, ends up with the elements falling apart and returning to dust. Yet cultural crud is often figured as natural mud. The filled or drained swamp on which the city was built, its spatial, geographic, and historical repressed, returns in the fascination with the dark underside of the stagnant pools of the city as metaphors for the city. James Thomson ([1880] 1993: 29) describes in *The City of Dreadful Night* his meditation on the modern city (obviously based on London):

> A river girds the city west and south,
> The main north channel of a broad lagoon,
> Regurging with the salt tides from the mouth;
> Waste marshes shine and glisten in the moon
> For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;
> Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,
> Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

The river is a monster that girdles the city and regurgitates the black waters of waste wetlands.

London on London

The city makes a mark on the earth—in space—and marks a place in history—in time. Its dwellers, its citizens, make a mark on its streets. When Jack London ([1903] 2001: 39) was in London in 1902 he remarked repeatedly on "the slimy, spittle-drenched sidewalk." He contrasts "the solid walls

of bricks" with "the slimy pavements, and the screaming streets" (4), the solid and vertical contrasted with the becoming liquid and horizontal. In this spatial poetics, if not metaphysics, the solid and vertical is valorized over the slimy and horizontal.

London ([1903] 2001: 3–4) had just witnessed "a market [where] tottery old men and women were searching in the garbage thrown in the mud for rotten potatoes, beans, and vegetables, while little children clustered like flies around a festering mass of fruit, thrusting their shoulders into the liquid corruption, and drawing forth morsels but partially decayed which they devoured on the spot." This urban, industrial swamp of decomposing and stinking vegetable matter is for London "that wilderness" (4). Similarly for Morrison ([1896] 1996: 10) "the whole East End was a wilderness of slums." Perhaps it was not unlike the swamp of the wilderness itself with their similar smells to the undiscerning nose to which all bad smells are bad in the same way. "Filth and noisomeness" are coupled together for Mayhew ([1861–62] 1985: 109 and 177) too; bad matter and bad smells go together. Dirt as matter out of place is also noisome as the bad smell of a place. Whether that place was a slum or a swamp did not make much difference.

The slums of London (in two senses) are a site of horror as Jack London ([1903] 2001: 4) goes on to state that "for the first time in my life the fear of the crowd smote me. It was like the fear of the sea, and the miserable multitudes, street upon street, seemed so many waves of a vast and malodorous sea, lapping about me and threatening to well up and over me." This fear of engulfment by the liquid and horizontal is evinced not only by the sight, sound, and touch of the crowd and the city, but also by its smells. Yet London finds that "when at last I made into the East End, I was gratified to find that the fear of the crowd no longer haunted me. I had become a part of it. The vast and malodorous sea had welled up and over me, or I had slipped into it, and there was nothing fearsome about it" (7).

The crowd takes on some of the qualities of the urban swamp as a few pages later London ([1903] 2001: 13–14) describes "a woman of the finest grade of the English working-class, with numerous evidences of refinement, being slowly engulfed by that noisome and rotten tide of humanity which the powers that be are pouring eastward of London town." The "strange, vagrant odours" (122) are like the vagrants who frequent the vagrant space

of the slum. The human tide is flotsam and jetsam. The festering mass of fruit is ultimately indistinguishable from "the festering contents of slum, stews and ghetto." This human sewage "resemble[s] some vile spawn from underground" (87). This human sewage is not spawned so much from under*ground* but from what London calls "the under-world of London," the city, and the underworld of London, the writer, whose tropes give birth to the denizens of the slum (vii). London "went down into the underworld" of his eponymous city "with an attitude of mind which I may best liken to that of the explorer" (xiii). He penetrates into the urban underworld of the slum swamp just as the explorer in the colonies descended into the underworld of the swamp. Just as the romance hero emerged with his manhood vindicated through trial and tribulation, so does London (the writer) emerge to write his book about London (the city and himself) and preface it in Piedmont, California, literally at the foot of the mountain, a dry, elevated place thousands of miles away from, and thousands of feet above, the wet, low place of the urban underworld of the East End of London (the city). Like Dante, he descends into "the inferno" (1, 6) and "infernal regions" (52, 68) of "hell on earth" (68) and the inferno of London (159) to ascend into the paradise of heaven on earth of God's mountains in California as John Muir called them (see Giblett, 2011: 142–150).

Similarly Arthur Morrison ([1896] 1996: 1) begins *A Child of the Jago* with a description of

> the narrow street all the blacker for the lurid sky; for there was a fire in a farther part of Shoreditch, and the welkin was an infernal coppery glow. Below, the hot, heavy air lay a rank oppression on the contorted forms of those who made for sleep on the pavement; and in it, and through it all rose from the foul earth and the grimed walls a close, mingled stink—the odour of the Jago.

For Morrison, the Jago, "for one hundred years the blackest pit in London, lay and festered," like an open, infected wound inflicted on the body of the earth. In the center of the blackest pit was Jago Court, "the blackest hole in all that pit." This is the center of the inferno where Satan resides in Dante's Inferno with the denizens of the slum in this secular theology, a world where God is dead. The sublime is God in secular theology and slime is Satan.

Like Morrison, London, the urban and colonial explorer, the endo- and exo-colonist, the colony within at home and the colony without away from home,

is apt to find both decay and decomposition wherever he looks and treads. Although London and Morrison did not find miasma and malaria (unlike his colonial counterparts or previous urban explorers), Morrison ([1896] 1996: 2) noted "the stifling air" and London ([1903] 2001: 23 and 126) discovered "disease germs that fill the air of the East End" and "the effluvia and vile exhalations of overcrowded and rotten life." He also found that "rottenness is a slimy desecration of the sweetness and purity of nature" (87). The denizens of "city slime" (113) are slimy creatures of slimy pavements, "a fearful slime that quickened the pavement with life" (151). Human life has taken on a vegetable, animal, and liquid life of its own. Humans are not autochthonous creatures that spring from the earth, or swamp, but creatures that spring from the urban swamp, the slum—they are auto-ex-metropolis, self-generating from the city. For London "a spawn of children cluttered the slimy pavement, for all the world like tadpoles just turned frogs on the bottom of a dry pond" (28), or more precisely on the bottom of a dried-up industrial urban wet wasteland. The categories of solid and liquid, animal and vegetable, and the elements of earth, water, and air are all mixed up. "The place swarmed with vermin" (83), with "swarming children" (91), and with workers who swarm (113). In Morrison's ([1896] 1996: 1) *A Child of the Jago*, in Jago Court "the human population swarmed in thousands." Swarming creatures neither walk, nor swim, nor fly, but are hybrid creatures, or monsters, who do all three.

As swarming creatures, they are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl and they fall under the Levitical interdiction of being an abomination. For London ([1903] 2001: 152) "they are a new species, a breed of city savages … The slum is their jungle." This jungle is not a tropical rainforest where nature is green in leaf and branch, but an urban jungle where culture is red in tooth and claw. For London it would be "far better to be a people of the wilderness and desert … than to be a people of the machine and the Abyss" (153). Better to be creatures of the swamp and jungle than of that urban swamp and jungle called the slum; better to be creatures of the living waters of wetlands than to be minced to death in "the Abyss [which] is literally a huge man-killing machine" (23) just as the slimy trenches of World War I were later; better to be a living swamp creature than to be "the living deaths" (152) at "the bottom of the Abyss" (152); and better to be in the jungles of "Darkest Africa" (1) than in "the jungle of empire" (149) of the imperial capital city.

The landscape of urban slums is not only prescient of the landscape of trench warfare, but also the product of class warfare perpetrated by the military–industrial ruling capitalist upper class against the lower classes. For London ([1903] 2001: 135), "here, in the heart of peace, is where the blood is being shed." "In London the slaughter of the innocents goes on on a scale more stupendous than any before in the history of the world" (150), including Herod's in the wake of the birth of Jesus (135). This slaughter is perpetrated by "the men of England, masters of destruction, engineers of death … men of steel … war lords and world harnessers" who have "mastered matter and solved the secrets of the stars" (76). London also maintained that if the masses of the slums attempted revolt, they would perish "before the rapid-fire guns and the modern machinery of warfare" (123). Rather than revolting, they ended up as cannon fodder in the "meat-mincer" of the muddy fields of Flanders during World War I.

The denizens of the East End are monstrous like the city they inhabit (hardly live in). The city takes on a life of its own as it is what London ([1903] 2001: 14) calls "the monster city" with its own aberrant and peculiar anatomy. Night in the city is not merely the time of sunlessness but "the black night of London [which] settles down in a greasy pall" (14). London for James Thomson ([1880] 1993) is "the City of Dreadful Night," but not for Jack London. The East End is "often called," according to London ([1903] 2001: 113), "the City of Dreadful Monotony." Just as wilderness swamps were often called dreadful and monotonous, so the urban swamp is invoked in similar terms, though for London (114) "the East End does merit a worse title. It should be called 'The City of Degradation.' " It takes one lower into the depths and bowels, not of the good earth and wilderness swamp, but of the evil city and city swamp, "the perilous depths of the East End" as Morrison ([1896] 1996: 10) puts it. In this body politics of the city the park is not for London ([1903] 2001: 31) "a lung of London," which it should be in accordance with the dictates of the desirable Victorian body politic, but "an abscess, a great putrescent sore" on the bottom or backside of the body politic that should be treated and the patient cared for, not lanced in the gentrification of slum clearance as Haussmann did in Paris.

The ways in which various writers describe and figure the city play out their fears. James Thomson figured the dark underside of the late-nineteenth-century city as dreadful night and Engels as a haunt of misery. Antoine Picon

(2000) recently characterized the regions of ruin and rust of the late-twentieth/early-twenty-first-century city as an "anxious landscape." Picon contrasts Manhattan as "a magic city made of crystal" and as "the celestial Jerusalem" with "the hell, or purgatory" of Newark with its "creeping swamps" where everything is "rusted out" and "irreparably polluted yet somehow endowed with a strange beauty." In Yeatsian terms, a terrible beauty is born in the rusted city. The central business district with its sublime skyscrapers is heaven compared to the slimy hell of industrial swamps.

Picon is working in the tradition of Jerrold and Doré ([1872] 2005: 11) and their depiction of nineteenth-century London, in particular of "the dead shore" of the Thames River with "the muddy, melancholy bank" with "rust upon everything." As the marsh has traditionally between associated with melancholy, Jerrold and Doré's pilgrimage could have referred to the muddy, melancholy bank as "a slough of despond" to make an explicit connection with John Bunyan's ([1678, 1684] 2008) *Pilgrim's Progress*. Picon does not use such archaic language, but the implication or impression is that the Newark industrial swamps are depressing, though strangely beautiful, places.

Similarly when Jerrold and Doré ([1872] 2005: xxviii) went on their "travel[s] about London in search of the picturesque" they "discovered that it abounded … in picturesque scenes." The picturesque is neither an object, nor a feature of the object, but a point of view, or a modality that sets up a relation between the subject and object, the viewer and the scene and seen. If one goes in search of the picturesque, one will invariably find it because one carries the picturesque point of view with one. For Jerrold "the lesson which Doré's pictorial renderings of our mercantile center will teach … is that London, artistically regarded, is not, as the shallow have said so often, an ugly place, given up body and soul to money-grubbing" (4 and 5). Yet there are limits to the picturesque as Jerrold concedes that in the poverty of the poor "there is nothing picturesque" (15). Poverty cannot be depicted in picturesque terms because the picturesque is an impersonal point of view from a distance whereas poverty is personal (see Doré's illustration no. 119, "Wentworth St, Whitechapel"; 145). The poverty of the poor is conveyed much better in Jerrold's words used by Coolidge (1994: 53) as a caption to this illustration, than in Doré's drawing: "beat-up alleys with pools of water. Here, tattered young women … look at you sullenly, fiercely, what suffering, what hunger can be read in their meager

bodies, hungry since the day they were weaned." Jerrold does not reflect on the inability of the picturesque to convey the poverty of the poor and the ability of language to do so. The picturesque is also unable to convey the poverty of impoverished landscapes. Rusting industrial ruins and other wastelands have become an object of contemporary fascination and fashion.

Slums

The dark side of both the late-nineteenth-century and late-twentieth/early-twenty-first-century cities are invoked in terms of the swampy and uncanny and testify to a fascination with, and horror of, the urban nether world and the (in this case, artificial) quaking zone known otherwise and simply as "the slum" or "squatter communities" as Neuwirth (2006: 241) prefers to avoid the pejorative connotations of slum, or "squatter settlements" as Kotkin (2005: 132) prefers. Slums in the twentieth-first century are the habitat for one billion people, roughly a seventh of the world's population. For Davis (2006: 19) "instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay." Squats, in other words, in a "man-made" swamp, and not only squats physically on its haunches, but also illegally on land its residents do not own (Neuwirth, 2006: 12). Squatting today for Davis (2006: 39) "continues primarily in low-value urban land, usually in hazardous or extremely marginal locations, such as floodplains, hillsides, swamps or contaminated brownfields." The slum for Davis was "first and above all envisioned as a place where an incorrigible and feral social 'residuum' rots in immoral and often riotous splendour" (22). Vegetable decomposition figures moral decay and anarchic display. The slum is the arsehole or cloaca of the body politic, a festering wound inflicted on the body of the earth. Whether or not it can, or how it should, be treated is another matter.

For Davis (2006: 95) "urban inequality in the Third World is visible even from space: satellite reconnaissance of Nairobi in Kenya reveals that more than half of the population lives on just eighteen percent of the city area." This area includes Kibera, "Africa's largest mud hut metropolis" (Neuwirth, 2006: 70), or slum. The airline traveler coming into land at Nairobi airport

easily sees (as I did in 2007) Kibera and the nearby Nairobi National Park, the world's largest national park within the municipal bounds of a city. Two iconic and interdependent features of modernity sit cheek-by-jowl with each other: nationalism and landscape preservation and display in the national park side by side with the underbelly of urbanity in the slum; the national park with vast open areas populated sparsely by rangers and tourists with the slum crowded and overbuilt with rusting iron shanties and muddy, sewery paths; and the national park created by the dispossession and removal of its native owners and inhabitants into the slum.

The British for Davis (2006: 52) have the dubious distinction of being "the greatest slum builders of all time." They designed and built railways (or at least their laborers did) and the railways, in turn, for Coolidge (1994: 32) were "the greatest creators of London slums." British railways, at home and abroad, created the interstices between railway lines that were filled by slums. The communication and transportation technology of the railway excommunicated slum-dwellers between and beside its lines. Nairobi, for example, came into being in 1899 when the British wanted to span East Africa with a railway and used a small Masai settlement at the confluence of several small rivers as the staging point for the construction of the railway (Neuwirth, 2006: 91).

Railways created the slum during the period from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Road transport and satellite communication are the greatest creators of planetary slums today that excommunicate slum-dwellers between its highways and vectors. Yet the sanitary conditions are pretty much the same. Many slum-dwellers today live in what Davis (2006: 144) calls "the sanitary equivalent of the mud hell of World War I trench warfare." The slum is the product of class war fought against the lower classes. Intraurban class warfare produced a landscape very similar to that produced by international armed warfare. Thirty years before Davis, Fussell ([1975] 2000: 149) had noted the converse: "the similarity of the trench scene to modern, urban, industrial squalor." It is hardly surprising that both places end up looking and being the same as both were the product of class warfare fought against the earth, specifically against both the lower earthly and class strata.

One writer among many to portray graphically and poetically the horror of the "mud hell" of World War I trench warfare is Edward Thomas (for other writers, see Giblett, 2009: chapter 4). In his diary he writes that this landscape

is characterized by "filth" (Thomas, [1917] 1978: 461) and how it is a place of "death living" (not a place of living death, nor of the living dead (Zombies) but dead living) (461). It is a place of "dirt and depredation" (471) as it is "muddy" (471), which is either "stiff deep mud" (477) or "muddy and slippery" (481). It is an artificial, "man-made" wetland made out of marshes. It is also a place of ruins as buildings are ruined and occasionally "sordid ruin" (472).

The tone of the sky is perpetually, remarkably, and repeatedly "dull" (on just about every day). The sky above and the wet land below occasionally combine into "a dull muddy day" (Thomas, [1917] 1978: 471) and a "dull marsh" (476). Yet the sky is also a site of strange beauty as "enemy plane [is] like [a] pale moth beautiful among shrapnel bursts" (469) and there are "lovely white puffs of shrapnel round planes high up" (470). The overall impression and depiction, however, is of a waste land, a "snowy broken land with posts and wires and dead trees" (469) and "ghastly trees and ruins" (474). All in all, it is a ruined swamp with "skeletons of whole trees" (477) with "waste trenched ground" (477) and "shell holes full of blood stained water" (477). It is hell: "some day this will be one of the hottest places this side of Hell, if it is this side" (472).

The city founded in war, or at least of the preparations for it as Virilio (and Lotringer, 1983: 3) put it, becomes the landscape of warfare, whether it is the ruined wetlandscape of World War I trench warfare, or the ruined urban landscape of World War II aerial warfare. "The urban institution of war," as Mumford (1961: 42) puts it, makes the city into the landscape of warfare. This landscape is either the landscape of class and trench warfare as in World War I, or the landscape of international and aerial warfare as in World War II. What Mumford following Geddes calls "a living urban core, the polis, ends in a common graveyard of dust and bones, a Necropolis, or city of the dead: fire-scorched ruins, shattered buildings … heaps of meaningless refuse" (53)—in a word crud, as in the aftermath of the fire-bombing and fire-storms of Dresden, Hamburg, Wurzburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki using what Smith (2012: 182) calls "the new technology of urban mass destruction [of] aerial bombing." The city is our greatest creation, but also our greatest site of destruction by one of our greatest destructive technologies in bombs and bombers. The city begins in the natural mud of the wetland, goes through the cultural mud of the slum, and ends in the cultural crud of the wasteland.

Crystal Palace

Beside, or above, the nether world of the uncanny city of dreadful night, nineteenth-century London also had the upper or fore world of the sublime city of delightful light encapsulated in the Crystal Palace built in London for the Great Exhibition of 1851. As the arcades were for Benjamin the representative architectural mercantile space of modernity, so is the Crystal Palace for Dostoevsky, Berman, and Sloterdijk the representative architectural monument of modernity. The crystal palace for Dostoevsky's ([1864] 2009: 32) underground man represents a place where suffering is unthinkable and doubt is impossible as "suffering is doubt, negation—what kind of crystal palace would it be if one could doubt in it?" The crystal palace is a place of no suffering and no doubt partly because for Dostoevsky's underground man "the crystal edifice … is forever indestructible" (33). Crystal is hard, adamantine, and reflective, a symbol of certitude, the sublime, and sublimation.

Following on from Dostoevsky, the Crystal Palace for Berman (1988: 235 and 237) is both "fact and symbol" and "the most visionary and adventurous building of the whole nineteenth century. Only the Brooklyn Bridge and the Eiffel Tower, a generation later, will match its lyrical expression of the potentialities of an industrial age." For Berman "the most interesting and penetrating [contemporary] account of the Crystal Palace—the real one, that is [and not Dostoevsky's concocted, fantastic one] was written by … Lothar Bucher" (cited in 239–240), whose account concludes with a rapturous hymn to "the transept which dissolves into a distant background where all materiality is blended into the atmosphere." The Crystal Palace is a secular cathedral to, and of, modernity and industry.

Berman (1988: 240) notes that Bucher managed "to appropriate one of Marx's [and Engels's] richest images and ideas: 'all that is solid melts into air.' Like Marx, Bucher sees the tendency of solid material to decompose and melt as the basic fact of modern life." Yet this image and idea is precisely about both the sublime in which solid matter is transformed into a gas and as the basic fact of modern life. Decomposition occurs when solid matter breaks down into its constituent parts, not when it is blended into the atmosphere. Melting occurs when a frozen liquid thaws back into its liquid state, not when

solid matter is transformed into a gas. The sublime is the basic fact of modern life in which the solidities of traditional ways of life, cultures, modes of production and consumption, and so on are transformed into thin air. Around the name of the sublime, as Lyotard (1989: 199) said, modernity triumphed, not least over wetlands. The slime of swamps, in which the solid earth is desublimated into liquid water, is the counter to the sublime of the city in which the solid earth is sublimated into gaseous air. The sublime city fills or drains the slimy swamp in order to create solid earth that it then sublimates into the gaseous heights of its ethereal structures like the Crystal Palace. The slimy swamp precedes and resists the sublime city. The sublime city reverts to feral slimy swamp in major floods like New Orleans with hurricane Katrina.

More recently, the Crystal Palace for Sloterdijk (2013: 169) is an architectural archetype, or archetypal architecture, for modernity. Indeed, for Sloterdijk it is a more fitting and apt archetype of modernity than the arcades as propounded by Benjamin (Sloterdijk, 2013: 170 and 173–176). After Sloterdijk thinks of Dostoevsky's "reference to Western civilization as a 'crystal palace,' " he goes on to argue that "with its construction, the principle of the interior overstepped a critical boundary" as "it began to endow the outside world as a whole with a magical immanence transfigured by luxury and cosmopolitanism. Once it [the world] had been converted into a large hothouse and an imperial culture museum, it revealed the timely tendency to make both culture and nature indoor affairs" (169 and 170). It also revealed the timely tendency to make the earth and its atmosphere into an indoor affair inside the hothouse of "global warming" or "climate change." The Crystal Palace represents for Sloterdijk "comfort and convenience" and "self-fulfillment for the consumer." It also represents discomfort, inconvenience, and self-diminution for all beings (including the consumer) in the hothouse of "global warming" with hotter days and hotter bush and forest fires burning more frequently around the world, such as in 2004 when forest fires in Spain killed nineteen people. The global hothouse of carboniferous capitalism can be contrasted with the greenhouse of the swamp world in which London and other cities were founded.

5

Venice: "A Tropical Marshland, Steaming, Monstrous, Rank"

Unlike many cities whose swampy beginnings have been lost from memory and buried beneath their pavements, Venice's creation and ongoing life in a lagoon is still plain for all to see today and is perhaps its most distinctive and marketable feature to tourists. The Venetians made a virtue out of necessity by canalizing its wetlands, whereas other cities made a necessary vice by largely filling their wetlands. Venice is the wetland city par excellence, one of very few in the world, certainly in the Western world, whose wetland history is visible. Other cities, such as those discussed in the present book, are wetland cities, but this is invisible, a matter of memory and a fact of history whose traces are present to be read and retrieved from city blocks, streets, and parks, rather than a matter of present visibility as in Venice whose inscription of the city on its wetlands can be read in its canals. The fact that other cities were wetland cities is usually only apparent to the trained, historically informed eye that sees the absent wetlands before and/or below the present city, whereas Venice as a wetland city is plain to see for those who have the eyes to see it. Unlike all the other cities set in, or beside, wetlands that they drained and filled, Venice dredged canals and used the dredging to fill the wetlands in order to create the (is)lands on which the city was built (instead of just filling wetlands, the usual practice for the development of cities).

Venice's beginnings can easily be traced in its canals and urban islands. Venice, Lewis Mumford (1961: 321) relates, was

> the creation of a group of refugees from Padua in the fifth century A.D. [CE], fleeing across the lagoons from the invader. The shallow waters of the Adriatic took the place of the stone wall for protection, and the swamps and islands, connected only by water, suggested the dredging of canals to fill in the nearby land and to establish channels of transportation. The gondola (mentioned as early as 1094) was the perfect technological adaptation to these narrow, shallow waterways.

As von Clausewitz, the theorist of war, said, swamps are easy to defend and hard to attack. The Venetians not only dredged wetlands to create canals and channels of transportation, and used the dredging to fill in wetlands to create (is)lands, but they also developed a transportation technology in the gondola suited to the wetland city and its canals that were not only channels of transportation for people and goods, but also channels of communication for messages and messengers. These canals and channels were, and still are, the lifeblood of the body of the city of Venice that course through its arteries of commerce and through its veins of culture and everyday life. The former circulate commercial life from the financial heart of the city while the latter keep the body of the city going and return it to the heart to be repumped through the body of the city.

Venice was founded in a lagoon where fresh and salt water are mixed, where there were salt marshes and swamps, and where mud flats were exposed at low tide (Ackroyd, 2010: 3). Venice's watery beginnings have haunted and fascinated writers for ages. Thomas Mann ([1912] 1971: 5) in his novella, *Death in Venice*, for Ackroyd (2010: 402) "the most famous narrative to have emerged from the city," imagines the site for the city before it was founded. The protagonist, Gustave Aschenbach, has a vision of "a landscape, a tropical marshland, beneath a reeking sky, steaming, monstrous, rank—a kind of primeval wilderness-world of island, morasses and alluvial channels." These are the stock-in-trade pejorative descriptions of a wetland of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the lexicon of what I call "standard swamp-speak" (Giblett, 1996: 229). After citing this passage in part, Ackroyd (2010: 62) comments that "it is a vision of Venice itself in its original state. But it is a city that no one else will ever see." Why? Because it is in fact a vision of the site for the city before the city was built rather than of the city itself, before

the wetlands were canalized by dredging and the wetlands filled with dredging separating out land from water. Venice for Mann ([1912] 1971: 20) is "this most improbable of cities."

Venice is mainly improbable because of its site. The Venetian lagoon, like all wetlands, was for Ackroyd (2010: 4) "an ambiguous area that is neither land nor sea." The founders of Venice were confronted with the same problem that all builders of swamp cities and marsh metropolises face: how to build a settlement on what Ackroyd calls the "shifting ground" of "mud and water" (7)? Like many cities founded in or near a wetland, Venice was founded by "reclaiming earth from water" (10) as if water had no right or legitimate claim to earth, as if the city had every right to claim earth back from water and so "conquer the water" (14). Of course, the water can re-reclaim the city back as it did in New Orleans with hurricane Katrina and as it periodically does in Venice with the "*acqua alta*" or high tide, when "that sea of filthy black water swelled up from the very pavements," as Donna Leon (1996: 355) describes it in her detective novel of this title. *Acqua alta* is also invoked in terms of "the disgusting water" (355) that is not in the canals or the sea "where it belonged" (355–356), but in the city where it does not belong and where it turns Venice into "this filthy city" (356) with its "slimy waters" (377). Water here is dirt in Mary Douglas's (1966: 35) sense of "matter out of place."

The wetland is matter out of place par excellence. Wetlands have been seen as places of liquid and solid, air and water, heat and cool, light and dark, day and night, life and death with each taking the other's place. The wetland is matter out of place in all the major Western categories of matter: solid, gas, heat/light, and liquid. Wetlands mix all four Western elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Even with their living waters, wetlands have been constituted as dead matter. The typical response to the dirtiness of wetlands has been to try and put matter back in its proper place wherever possible, and where it is impossible to denigrate their deviation from the norm. Drainage, for instance, is putting the earth and water of the wetland back in their respective, and respectable, places. In the process wetlands are put in their subjugated place and drylands substituted in their place instead. Also in the process the "ecosystem services" that wetlands provide to human and nonhuman life are destroyed.

On this dryland surface, the city could then be inscribed. Venice had, as Ackroyd (2010: 16) puts it, "a fluid origin, indeed one written in water." Yet

cities in wetlands, like Venice, cannot write in, or on, water as it is impossible to make a mark in or on water, certainly a mark as hard and fixed as a city on something as soft and fluid as water. Writing on water is evanescent and ephemeral, the making and leaving of traces. The builders of Venice had to dredge the land from the water and drain the water from the land in order to make their mark on a dry horizontal surface by inscribing monuments and monumental buildings on that surface and erecting them in vertical space. It was not so much the case that, as Ackroyd puts it, "the city was built upon water" (17), as that the city was built upon land where water had once been and from which the land was wrested. Venice was the initial victor in the battle of the elements of earth against water, but it may lose the war with water with water re-reclaiming the city back from the earth through slow subsidence (400) and rising water levels brought about by climate change.

The relationship between Venice and water is an obvious feature of the city and is often noted by writers. Venice for Calvino ([1974] 1997: 79) is a "city of water," a hydropolis, though a Western city is always a city of land almost by definition and so for Ackroyd (2010: 18) the city of Venice is "half land and half water" as "the location of the city … is the union of water and earth" (91), an aquaterrapolis. The city-builders broke this union as they, like the God of Genesis (1:2, 6–7), divided land from water, disambiguated the wetland that is neither land nor water and built "the ambiguous city … on the water" (Ackroyd, 2010: 164). Depending on how you look at it, Venice is either or both a divine city in this sense that it divided land from water, and/or it is a sinful, satanic city that appropriates the divine power of dividing land from water. Ackroyd's subtitle of *Pure City* for his book about Venice seems to be a misnomer, unless by "pure" he means archetypal.

Venice is a divine and demonic city combining the best of both worlds and having a bet both ways. By the sixteenth century Venice was, as Maus (2008: 1111) puts it in her introduction to Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* "the richest city in Renaissance Europe" for the simple reason that "although it had no natural resources to speak of … it was located where the products of Asia could most conveniently be exchanged with those of western Europe." Venice for Cracknell (2000: 62–63) is "a great maritime and mercantile city," a "city for merchants," "a city, above all, for the adventurous and curious, like Marco Polo" or "like Galileo," as well as "the Serene

City" and "ultimately, too, the city of power." As such and in sum, Smith (2012: 221) calls Venice "the forerunner of the modern world city," such as London and New York. This was the case, partly because Venice was what Cosgrove (1982: 145) calls "a prototype of the mercantile city," and of mercantile capital(ism), a capital of mercantilism, and partly because it was the forerunner of, and prototype for, those later aquaterrapolises that drained and filled their wetlands. The Venetians did not do this in Venice, but did so in their possessions on the Italian mainland (as Cosgrove (1988) has discussed). Venice was the prototype for Venetian drainage and reclamation of its mainland territories, as it was for other cities.

Venice was the forerunner of the modern world city, such as London and New York, situated both as the terminus of trade routes between the east and the west, and as an aquaterrapolis between land and water. Situated on the littoral between land and water in the wetland, these mercantile capitals, maritime metropolises, and port cities located on rivers reaped the rewards of both the hinterland behind flowing downstream toward them and the overseas lands before them sailing toward them, and were a point of exchange between these lands. Without the wetland on which they were built, these cities would not have prospered as they did because of their location as trading and port cities on the littoral between land and sea, and, in the case of London and New York, at the "mouth" of a river. The wetland was the liminal zone between land and water (river and sea), inland and ocean.

By dividing the land from the water like God, the builders of Venice founded a low profile, human-scale city largely of horizontal surface, unlike the city of vertical height, such as Babel with its tower and later Chicago and New York with their towering and sublime skyscrapers. In an essay written in 1922, Georg Simmel (cited by Ackroyd, 2010: 38) described Venice as "the tragedy of a surface that has been left by its foundation." Ackroyd comments that Venice's attention to "surface without depth provokes a sense of mystery and unknowability" (38). Beneath the surface of the city of Venice lurks the depths of the wetlands in which it is located, the land on which it was founded and the water it dredged and the land it drained; beneath the surface of the present lie the depths of the past by which it is haunted in the present (376). For Ackroyd "beneath the waters of the city lie strata of mud and clay and sand" (261). Beneath the surface of what Ackroyd calls "the unreal city"

(93) of Venice for Dickens (cited by Ackroyd, 2010: 93) lies "dismal, awful, horrible stone cells," just as for him beneath the surface of genteel America lay the dismal, disease-ridden, horrifying swamps of the south (see Giblett, 1996: 188). Dickens for Ackroyd (2010: 96) "meditates upon scenes of dreadful night" beneath the aquaterrestrial city of Venice, just as James Thomson and Rudyard Kipling meditated on the terrestrial cities of dreadful night of London, Lahore, and Calcutta in a poem, a story, and a collection with the title of *The City of Dreadful Night*.

As a city of surface and as a city of water transportation, Venice for Ackroyd (2010: 49, 53, 68, 93) is, like Paris, "a city that seems almost to float" insisting later that it is "the floating city" and that "it floated upon the water." It provides both "firmness in a floating world" (180) and "a fixed point in a floating world" (181). Venice is the floating city, but the floating city is moored and cannot float free from its moorings, such as a gondola is able to do. Venice for Dibdin (1994: 333) is the "waterborne city," borne by water but also born out of water, born out of a watery womb of water as if the lagoon gave birth to the city and borne on water in its gondolas and other vessels. Venice for Ackroyd (2010: 52) is "like a mother … It was a womb of safety." For Ackroyd this mother was not "Mother Earth" as she "did not bear it or rear it" (332). It was not the Mother Earth of agriculture, both benign and malign, that bore and reared Venice, but the Great Mother or Goddess of the swamps, both creative and destructive, who enwombed and nurtured the city. In "the uterine embrace of the womb" (94), in "this watery and uterine landscape" (377) of primeval slime life began. Venice for Ackroyd is "a place of slime and ooze and mould" (403). Slime for Jean-Paul Sartre in his gendered construction of reality is a feminized substance associated with women's bodies that he fears and denigrates with misogynist horror (see Giblett, 1996: 39–47). Presumably he would have regarded Venice, or this aspect of it, in the same way. Slime for Sartre is neither desirable, nor pleasurable, nor a source of new life.

Venice is a site and a city where sexualized desires, fears, and pleasures, and the gendered construction of reality, are played out. Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (1987: 49) explores sexual desire and pleasure (both straight and lesbian) and ambiguous gender and speciation as, Villanelle, one of its central characters/narrators is a cross-dressing, bisexual, web-footed woman for "rumor has it that the inhabitants of this city [surrounded by water

with watery alleys for streets and roads] walk on water. That, more bizarre still, their feet are webbed. Not all feet, but the feet of the boatmen." When Villanelle is born with webbed feet, she has already crossed the gender and animal/human/divine divides, and she will cross-dress and alternate sexual preference too as a highly ambiguous and mobile figure. Venice is the fitting setting and locale for such a story as it is "the city of disguises" (56, 92, 100, 150), "the city of mazes" (49, 52, 109), "the city of uncertainty" (58), "a changeable city" where "new waterways force themselves over dry land" (97), the "watery city that is never the same" (99), the "enchanted city" in which "all things seem possible" (76), and finally there is "the city within the city" (53), a city that "enfolds upon itself" (113), an invaginated, feminized city, unlike Paris, "that tart of towns" (52).

Venice for Ackroyd (2010: 329) is "the city of Venus, the goddess [who] was born from the sea." For him, the sea is the mother of the city, but it is the Great Mother of the lagoon in which it is located and the swamp in which it is situated that gave birth to the city. Father Law drained the Great Mother of the swamp and the lagoon and gave birth out of its brain box to the city of Venice, like Zeus giving birth to Pallas Athene. Venice is thus also the city of Zeus or Jupiter. Father Law bore it and reared it. Daddy's girl grew up into a whore. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Venice, Ackroyd relates, was being "characterized as a whore" and as "a decrepit courtesan," just like Paris (as we saw in an earlier chapter) (342). Benjamin (1979: 173) relates how the well-known list of the seven deadly sins located each of the sins in an Italian city with "voluptuousness in Venice."

Writers have been divided on Venice, as they were on Paris. Along similar lines to Sartre on slime, D. H. Lawrence described Venice as the "abhorrent, green, slippery city," whereas Ruskin described is as "the paradise of cities" (cited by Ackroyd, 2010: 91). In other words, it is a slimy and sublime city, hellish and heavenly, monstrous and monumental at the same time and in the same place, just like Paris and London as we have seen. Venice is "the gate of heaven" (353) and "the holy city" as well as the gateway to hell and the sinful city. Venice in Jeanette Winterson's (1987: 104) *The Passion* is "the city of Satan." Venice is both divine and infernal, as the title of chapter 30 of Ackroyd's book about Venice suggests. "The city of earthly beauty" (Ackroyd, 2010: 92) below is the mirror image of the city of heavenly sublimity above.

Rather than rising Babel-like to heaven, Venice lies flat on the earth and reflects the heavenly city above in the mirror-like waters of the earthly swamp city below. But below and before the city are the wetlands on which it was built. Beneath the earthly city is the hellish and unhealthy underworld. For Ackroyd "the city represents in the most delicate and disquieting way the ambiguous domain between the natural and the artificial, suggesting that there may be some third entity" (67). Venice is the hybrid city of nature and culture, a city in which, as Hirst and Woolley (1982: 23) put it, "there is no hard and fast divide between nature and culture," a city of a culture of nature, or what I call for short "culnature" (see Giblett, 2011).

Venice is like national parks in that both are culnature in which nature is in the process of becoming culture through gradual accretion and incorporation, or the place where some sort of steady state, or homeostasis, between the two is ostensibly put on display. Both are instances of what Alexander Wilson (1992) calls "the culture of nature" as suggested in the title of his classic study, *The Culture of Nature*. Yet rather than one "culture of nature" as Wilson seemed to imply or suggest, a number of cultures of nature struggle for hegemony, including the first nature of the natural world of native peoples and the second nature of the human world of herding, tilling, mining, forging, and building, to which could be added dredging, draining, and filling of wetlands. Second nature works over first nature. Yet second nature is cultural, a "culture of nature." Venice was founded in and by the second culture of nature. This gave rise to the third culture of nature of modernity and industrial technologies, and the fourth culture of nature of hypermodernity and communication technologies (see Giblett, 2011: chapter 1) both of which have had their impact and left their mark on Venice.

Venice not only mixes and unmixes earth and water, but also mixes air and water. Noxious vapors circulate in the air above the city. These vapors emanate from its noxious waters. Jean Cocteau (cited by Ackroyd, 2010: 408) described Venice as "a sick and fevered city, floating on stagnant waters, discharging miasmal vapors." The miasmatic theory of disease was discredited in the 1890s, but the evocative and pejorative language of miasma and smell lives on, especially in recent detective fiction set in Venice. Michael Dibdin (1994: 46) in *Dead Lagoon* describes a Venetian canal where "the fetid odour of the disturbed mud hung heavy in the air, a noxious miasma so strong that

it was almost tangible." Nor has the moral hierarchy of places been discredited. Garrett (2001: 204) describes how the detective hero in *Dead Lagoon* "encounters layers of corruption" beneath the touristic surface of the city, just as there are layers of decay in the wetlands beneath the city and before its foundation.

Similarly Donna Leon (1994: 108) in *The Anonymous Venetian*, one of an entire series of detective novels set in Venice, describes "the penetrating stench of corruption that always lurked beneath the water." Ackroyd (2010: 409) comments that "the writers of crime are drawn to this noxious city where fugitive odors can be sensed beneath the beauties of the surface." The fugitive odors beneath the surface become a figure for the fugitives from justice beneath the surface of polite Venetian society. These fugitives hark back to Cain, the first builder of cities in the bible, and the first fugitive from God's wrath (see Ellul, 1970: 1). Fugitives and fugitive odors go together in Venice, just like "murky water" and "murky matters" do for Dibdin (1994: 15 and 17). Such writers are merely following in the muddy footprints of the Futurist Marinetti (cited by Garrett, 2001: 187) for whom Venice was "this putrefying city, magnificent sore from the past." The putrescent boil of Venice occasionally bursts to reveal its current and past darkness and rottenness.

Writers of crime stories, like Dibdin and Leon, are also drawn to this s(ub)lime city where the airy, superstructural world above is founded on the muddy, substructural world below. For Donna Leon ([1992] 2009: 54–55) in *Death at la Fenice* the Rialto Bridge is "typically Venetian … looking, from a distance, lofty and ethereal but revealing itself, upon closer reflection, to be firmly grounded in the mud of the city." Venice sublimates the solid into the ethereal above, but is founded on the transformation of the liquid below and before into the solid between the liquid and the ethereal. Venice for Leon in *Death at la Fenice* is also "the most beautiful city in the world" (218), but it is also the most sublimated city in the world because it transformed not only solid matter into ethereal structures, but also liquid water into a solid city. This process is mirrored in the mixing of air and water in "a thick fog" that Leon describes as "seeping up from the waters on which the city was built" and which "lay upon the waters like a curse" (304). The famous Venetian fogs have the effect for Dibdin (1994: 101) of "making the familiar strange and

unlikely" in a kind of architectural reprise of the kind of effect the Russian Formalists loved in literature of "making strange."

Donna Leon's *Death at la Fenice* for Ruth Cracknell (2000: 22) is "the perfect introduction to Venice. No one else captures so succinctly the everyday life of the Serene City; no one else captures that particular devotion of the Venetians to their city, nor the faint contempt felt by them towards any not similarly blessed." Yet this is not an introduction to Venice, nor the capturing of the everyday life of the Serene City that most Venetians are privy too, nor with which they might concur, as Leon's novels written and published in English have not, according to Salvatore Ciriacono (pers. comm.), a native Venetian, been translated into Italian as she is an American and regarded as an outsider. Perhaps she is also treated with the faint contempt that Venetians direct towards those who are not Venetian, and so she is in a good position to convey this contempt to her readers. Leon may capture that particular devotion of the Venetians to their city better than anyone else, but she also captures the dark underside of the city of Venice, if not better than anyone else, then certainly more extensively over the course of her entire detective series set there.

Venice was not really "a city built on water" (as Sennett (1994: 216) says), but more like Boston's Back Bay Fens, and as Dibdin (1994: 184) relates, "constructed on a subterranean forest of … piles … laid down centuries ago to stabilize the mud-banks of the lagoon and make them habitable." Venice was also built over septic tanks, or "black wells," into which, Dibdin writes, "flowed such effluvia as could not be directly discharged into the canals" (46). Effluvia are the liquid counterpart to gaseous miasma. Both are bad. Like miasma, as malaria is literally "bad air," so effluvia are "bad water."

Wetlands can be bad not only for physical health, but also for mental health. Venice's unique heritage and inheritance as a wetland city not only had physical and moral effects but also mental affects. "Living on water" for Ackroyd (2010: 377; see also 34) "opens the mind to the supernatural and to unconscious association." Why? For the simple reason that the wetland is, and has been used as, a figure for the unconscious (see Giblett, 1996: 37). With Venice situated in a dredged swamp this gave rise to a particular psychopathology, or more precisely psychogeopathology rising up from the unconscious and repressed wetlands. Ackroyd (2010: 52 and 407) refers to Venice's

"watery and melancholy nature" and to a melancholy "induced by the presence of water." Melancholy is the appropriate neurosis for a city founded by destroying wetlands and by creating canals and for a city driven by trade and the profit motive, the home of the merchant of Venice. The Venetian state for Ackroyd "represented the first great triumph of mercantilist capitalism in Europe" (123), not least over its precapitalist wetland location. Venice bears the melancholic psychological scars of its wetland destruction.

Melancholia in association with the city of Venice is played out in Vera Brittain's ([1933] 1978) autobiographical study, *Testament of Youth*. As she "glides smoothly" in a gondola "over the rippling grey silk of the Grand Canal" on her post–World War I tour of Europe, the view of Venice for Brittain is tinged with melancholy and mourning as she associates the Venetian waters with the death of her fiancé in France and of her brother in Italy during the war (479). The Grand Canal is associated not only with melancholy and mourning but also with magic as Brittain, "with melancholy possessiveness … looked upon those enchanted waters … those fairy lagoons, incredible as a gorgeous mirage in the muffled silence." These are the benign waters of the patriarchal mother earth. She imagines that her brother "had died saving this beauty from the fate of Ypres," in other words, saving the beauty of the city of Venice from the horror of trench warfare, in particular its mud.

Brittain read about the mud of trench warfare in the letters her brother and fiancé wrote to her and had immediate experience of it as a nurse in France and in the aftermath of the death of her fiancé. In one of his letters from the trenches Brittain's ([1933] 1978: 206) fiancé related that they were "very wet and muddy … The whole of one's world, at least one's visible and palpable world, is mud in various stages of solidity or stickiness." Mud mixes the elements of earth and water, whereas cities and roads separate them as a rule, or should do. Brittain experienced the mud firsthand when she arrived on the western front and found that "the roads were liquid with such mud as only wartime France could produce after a few days of rain." The solidity of earth was liquefied into mud.

The mud of trench warfare, especially its smell, is associated for Brittain ([1933] 1978) with death when she goes through the "kit" of her fiancé after his death. She wrote to her brother that everything was "simply caked with mud" and she felt "overwhelmed by the horror of war" as "the smell of those

clothes was the smell of graveyards and the Dead. The mud of France which covered them was not ordinary mud; it had not the usual clean pure smell of earth, but it was as though it were saturated with dead bodies—dead that had been dead a long, long time" (225). The mud of trench warfare had the smell of death in which earth, water, and dead bodies (and shit [though she does not mention this]) were mixed. It did have not the usual smell of mud in which earth and water were mixed. Brittain distinguishes the clean, pure smell of earth from the horrific, dirty smell of the mud of trench warfare.

Like many writers about World War I (see Giblett, 2009: chapter 4), Brittain ([1933] 1978: 355) associates the mud of trench warfare with swamps and marshes, such as when she describes how "the terrific gales and whipping rains of late autumn … turned the shell-gashed flats of Flanders into an ocean of marshy mud that made death by drowning almost as difficult to avoid as death from gun-fire." Yet the wetlandscape of trench warfare is an artificial marsh made by modern industrial warfare, not a native marsh made by hydrogeological processes and ancestral hands.

The wetlandscape of trench warfare is also melancholic for Brittain ([1933] 1978: 356), such as when she describes how "the Flanders offensive was subsiding dismally into the mud" and refers to "melancholy Flanders" on the next page. Brittain experiences mourning and melancholia during and after World War I, yet she also experiences these affects in Venice after the war in combination with the magic of the maternal waters of the wetlands—perhaps hardly surprising given her strong feminist beliefs, though she is unable to distinguish the canalized waters of the patriarchal city from the matrifocal waters of the wetlands that preceded the city and which the city destroyed. Although she distinguishes the dirty, impure smell of trench warfare from the clean pure smell of earth, she does not regard the former as the product of patriarchal and industrial trench warfare and the latter as the progeny of maternal marshes, nor does she distinguish the artificial "man-made" marshes of modern industrial warfare from the native marshes made by hydrogeological processes and ancestral hands.

In a recent discussion of melancholy in relation to Walter Benjamin's work on the German mourning play, and applicable also to Brittain's mourning and melancholia, Ferber (2013: 20) reiterates along Freudian lines that "the lost object continues to exist, now as part of the dejected subject." The lost

wetlands destroyed by cities continue to exist, now as part of the dejected subject of the citizen who maintains "a relationship with an absent lost object" (43), just as the subject maintains a relationship with absent lost wetlands by being oblivious to them or by retelling their stories, by remarking their presence in the past on maps and their absence in the present on maps too. The aim thereby is that "the relationship between subject and object is overturned" (46). Subject and object become what Kristeva (1982: 1–2) calls (the) abject, or what Nietzsche called the body (see Giblett, 2008a: 3–5). The subject and object return to the presubject and preobject phase in which both were abject. The abject precedes the subject and the object. It is the third party that made both possible. The dejected subject in no longer dejected, but abjected and is no longer subject, but abject.

This desubjectification, deobjectification, and abjectification contrasts with what Ferber (2013: 59) describes as "the destructive nature of the melancholic's response to loss" in which "the melancholic devours his lost love-object in order to retain it; in demonstrating his endless loyalty, he destroys it. Therein lies the paradox: the only way to retain the object is to destroy it." The melancholic devours his lost love-object of wetlands by using monstrous drainers and dredgers in order to retain them (literally behind retaining walls as in Venice) and retrain them and their aberrant water (as in Venice in canals), but in doing so kills the wetland as a living being, as a habitat for other living beings. He kills the thing he loves, rather than loving the thing he kills as indigenous cultures do (see Giblett, 2011: 215). For Ferber (2013: 73) "the melancholic's lost object is either dead (in the case of human loss) or absent (in the case of a more abstract loss)." In the case of the destruction and loss of a wetland, the melancholic's lost object is both dead (a case of nonhuman loss) *and* absent (a case of a concrete loss).

Moreover, for Ferber (2013: 73), "in both cases the pathology lies in the subject's inability to recognize the loss and the insistence of maintaining the dead object as 'half-alive' within the melancholic consciousness, thus rendering the boundary between life and death indefinite and thus indistinct." In the case of the destruction and loss of a wetland, the psychogeopathology lies not only within what Ferber outlines, but also within not recognizing the wetland as a place of both life and death in which life and death are mixed, but wherein the boundary between them is definite and

thus distinct. The melancholic's half-alive lost object for Ferber is "what is not yet dead but no longer alive" (102). This object is buried alive in a tomb when, Ferber goes on to relate, "the melancholic carves out an internal tomb for his lost object, engendering an internal topography in which the living ego and the dead object coexist" (102), just as in Venice the city goes on living above its entombed dead lagoons of once living wombs of wetlands.

In the concrete cases of the subject's relation to nonhuman living objects, such as animals and wetlands, the living ego and the dead object coexist by the living ego continuing to live by killing the object (see Giblett, 2008a: 119–120; Giblett and Tolonen, 2012: 41 and 45). They are entombed as dead object but they were once life-giving wombs. Death, as Ferber (2013: 104) concludes, "does not mark the end of life … the two states exist concomitantly," as they do in the wetland's ecology. Moreover, for Ferber "the dead are never completely dead, and the past can never be hermetically closed" (115). The lost wetlands are never completely dead, and the past is still an open book for all to see and read, as it is in Venice. Venice is the wetland city par excellence not only in terms of its past and its history as a city founded in a swamp, but also in the present and its current culture as a rich source of metaphor and of psychological travail in which the metaphors are symptomatic of its mournful and melancholic psychogeopathology.

6

Berlin: "A Dingy City in a Marsh"

Like many other cities, Berlin has a marshy beginning. Berlin, according to Otto Friedrich (1972: 5), was "born in the thirteenth century in the mud and swamps at the junction of the Spree and Havel rivers." Berlin was born in nature's womb of mud, and was and is dying (and being reborn) in culture's tomb of crud. Berlin in the 1920s was the site of and milieu for "the greatest renaissance" of the twentieth century (cited by Friedrich, 1972: 11). This history and process has been taking place out of the mud over seven centuries, culminating in the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. Berlin at the end of the nineteenth century was, according to Kotkin (2005: 102) "widely acknowledged as the most modern city in Europe." Eiland and Jennings (2014: 2) concur with Kotkin that "by 1900 Berlin was Europe's most modern city."

By contrast, or as well, for the Nazi Goebbels (cited by Kotkin, 2005: 103) Berlin was "that sink of iniquity." Modernity and iniquity went together as a couple in Berlin, and no doubt they do in other cities too as we have seen with Paris and London. Berlin in 1913 for Hans Flesch von Brünningen was "crazy, debauched, metropolitan, anonymous, gargantuan, futuristic … In short: an infernal cesspool and paradise in one" (cited by Hoffmann, 2003: 18). Similar sentiments were voiced about Paris, London, and Venice as we have seen in previous chapters. Perhaps Berlin was distinctive in that heaven and hell, modernity and iniquity went together with scientific and technological inquiry and pure intellectuality in a curious, potent, and fecund German brew. In the 1920s and 1930s Berlin for Smith (2012: 254) became "the intellectual capital of Europe." Berlin for Sloterdijk

(1987: 205 and 115) was "the principal city of the early twentieth century" as it "played its part in plunging the euphoria of the metropolis into a disenchanted light." Goebbels was certainly disenchanted with the city, as was Hitler, that "necromancer of the lower orders" as Otto Friedrich (1972: 227) so aptly calls him. By contrast, others, such as Walter Benjamin, especially as a child, were enchanted with, and euphoric about, Berlin (as we will see later). Similarly Berlin for Friedrich (1972: xvi) "has always reverberated in my mind as a city of magic and mystery and unexpected danger." Berlin encapsulates the paradox of modernity: iniquity and inquiry; enchanting and disenchanting; civilized and barbarian; light and dark; good and evil, all inextricably entangled in roughly equal, but inseparable measure.

Berlin for Sloterdijk (1987: 115) also "was—and is to the present day—the only German city, that as far as cheekiness goes, left no possibility unexhausted." These are all facets of the modern industrial city and its slimy location and history. Berlin (and later modern industrial cities built in swamps), in Sloterdijk's terms, is both cynical ("self-splitting in repression") and kynical ("self-embodiment in resistance") (218). The city and the majority of its citizens split themselves off from and repress their slimy beginnings; the city and the minority of its citizens embody themselves in resistance by way of "cheekiness," the carnivalesque, the grotesque, and the monstrous, perhaps embodied and expressed in the art and culture of Weimar Germany.

Other citizens sublimate in the sublime. For Berman (1988: 66) Goethe in the early nineteenth century "sees the modernization of the material world as a sublime spiritual achievement," but not the development of the modern metropolis that Goethe for Richie (1998: xv) "equates with the Devil's world." At the end of Goethe's *Faust*, Mephistopheles (regarded by Sloterdijk (1987: 177; emphasis in the original) as "a central figure of modern aesthetics" and also "a child of the idea of *development*") takes Faust to the top of a high mountain and tries to tempt him one last time by offering him a teeming city bustling with "activity and stench." Faust admits to having been tempted by Mephistopheles who describes

> a typical metropolis,
> At center, bourgeois stomach's gruesome bliss.
> Tight crooked alleys, pointed gables, mullions,
> Crabbed market stalls of roots and scallions . . .

Then boulevards and spacious squares
To flaunt aristocratic airs;
And lastly, with no gate to stop them,
The suburbs sprawl ad infinitum. (Cited by Richie, 1998: xv)

Goethe was an unlikely and early critic of suburban sprawl, of wide bourgeois boulevards, and of narrow lower class slums, all three the typical components of all modern cities locked in mutual dependence on each other. Goethe's "typical metropolis" for Richie is "a mythical place, but it could well have been based on Berlin—which Goethe loathed … and summed up in a single word: 'crude'" (xv). Richie cites Goethe as the epigraph to her history of Berlin and calls the city, and her book, *Faust's Metropolis*.

Yet the sublime spiritual achievement of the development of the modern city comes at the cost of the slimy shame of the draining of swamps. Goethe's (1969: 269) Faust recounts in his dying speech in the final act of *Faust* the Faustian project of discipline and drain:

A marshland flanks the mountain-side,
Infecting all that we have gained;
Our gain would reach its greatest pride
If all this noisome bog were drained.
I work that millions may possess this space,
If not secure, a free and active race.
Here man and beast, in green and fertile fields,
Will know the joys that new-won region yields,
Will settle on the firm slopes of a hill
Raised by a bold and zealous people's skill.
A paradise our closed-in land provides,
Though to its margin rage the blustering tides;
When they eat through, in fierce devouring flood,
All swiftly join to make the damage good.
Ay, in this thought I pledge my faith unswerving,
Here wisdom speaks its final word and true,
None is of freedom or life deserving
Unless he daily conquers it anew.

Faust (and Goethe) reject the modern city and embrace the bucolic country, but both involve the draining of wetlands. The Faustian metropolis and

Faustian agriculture are both based on drainage. "The legend of Faust" for Richie (1998: xviii) "can serve as a metaphor for the history of Berlin," including, I would add, its history as a city founded in marshes and swamps with both the draining of the wetlands to make the city possible and the erection of the city in the drained wetlands.

Both the Faustian metropolis and Faustian agriculture were part of what Blackbourn (2006: 11) refers to as "the conquest of nature," which was "a kind of Faustian bargain." New land was created and threatening waters tamed by draining wetlands on the North German plains in the eighteenth century (as Blackbourn documents). Yet, as the founding of Berlin and Hamburg in the thirteenth century shows, this process began before Frederick the Great came on the scene in the eighteenth century and "drained more marshland and fen than any other ruler of the time" (5). In doing so, he was merely participating in, acting upon, and culminating current thinking. For Blackbourn "on no other aspect of the natural world was there such agreement within enlightened opinion as there was on the need to drain marsh and swamp" (49). Yet the negative associations of wetlands did not begin in and with the Enlightenment, but go back to classical Greek times, such as in Plato's *Phaedo* and by Aristotle (see Giblett, 1996).

Nor did the negative associations of wetlands end there as Blackbourn (2006: 251–309) describes how the Nazis not only made racist associations with wetlands and associated reclamation with Aryan supremacy, but also figured other races in pejorative wetland terms. Blackbourn also relates how the Nazis failed to drain the Pripet Marshes in Eastern Europe that "covered some 100,000 square miles and formed (as they still do) the largest wetlands in Europe" (251). Difficult terrain, such as wetlands, is not only where the "conquest of nature" reaches its limits, but also where resistance to the conqueror finds a refuge and base. Wetlands were places of resistance against the conquerors, from the Britons against the Romans and Normans, to the Seminoles and Vietnamese against the Americans (see Giblett, 1996). The Pripet Marshes were no exception with resistance against the Nazis during World War II. In 1943 the marshes became what Blackbourn (2006: 309) calls "a site of resistance and survival" for tens of thousands of partisans as the marshes were "easy to defend and hard to conquer," as a German geographer put it in 1939 (cited by Blackbourn,

2006: 308), merely echoing von Clausewitz, the theorist of war, a century before (see Giblett, 1996: 205).

The founding of cities, especially capital cities, in wetlands, such as Berlin, was the first move in, and the headquarters for, the draining of wetlands in the country. Berlin is a city founded not merely in "the middle of all this sand" of the Mark Brandenburg as Stendhal (cited by Richie, 1998: 1) complained, but also in "a long sweeping plain dotted with pine forests, marshes and swamps" as Richie puts it on the same page. Berlin's location is striking for her as "Berlin seems to have come from nowhere, wrenched from the sandy soil [and wet land] by some hidden force" as if the city arose from underground and was thrust upward by a volcanic force, as if the city founders forcibly extracted the city from the earth and did not allow the earth to give birth to the city autochthonously, out of the earth, or more precisely, out of the water-earth (aquaterra). A similar comment or conclusion could also be made about some other swamp cities and marsh metropolises, such as Chicago, another endocolonial city in the middle of a national or continental landmass.

Berlin for Karl Scheffler (cited by Richie, 1998: 1) "developed 'artificially'" and was "a 'colonial city' made up of the dispossessed and uprooted." It was also a colonial city of the endocolonization of plains, forests, marshes, and swamps. This manifestation of a Faustian will to power is not merely linked to Berlin's beginnings but is for Richie linked to its history with "the longing to make something out of the flat, windswept landscape … still reflected in the remnants of Berlin's grimy brick slums" (xvi). The slums and the swamps are both considered as nothing or nowhere out of which the Faustian engineer and town planner can make something and somewhere. In doing so, he has not merely made a pact with the Devil and sold his soul but has become like God who makes something out of nothing ex nihilo.

Like Goethe, other nonresidents, such as Mark Twain visiting Berlin and writing about in 1892, were disappointed by it. For Twain Berlin was "the German Chicago," another swamp city, though he did not make the connection. As Twain ([1892] 2009: 191) described:

> I feel lost in Berlin. It has no resemblance to the city I had supposed it was. There was once a Berlin which I would have known, from descriptions

> in books—the Berlin of the last century and the beginning of the present one: a dingy city in a marsh, with rough streets, muddy and lantern-lighted, dividing straight rows of ugly houses all alike, compacted into blocks as square and plain and uniform and monotonous and serious as so many dry-goods boxes. But that Berlin has disappeared. It seems to have disappeared totally, and left no sign. The bulk of the Berlin of today has about it no suggestion of a former period. The site it stands on has traditions and a history, but the city itself has no traditions and no history. It is a new city; the newest I have ever seen. Chicago would seem venerable beside it; for there are many old-looking districts in Chicago, but not many in Berlin. The main mass of the city looks as if it had been built last week, the rest of it has a just perceptibly graver tone, and looks as if it might be six or even eight months old.

Yet, like Berlin, Chicago was "built in the midst of a great level swamp" (Herrick cited by Cronon, 1991: 14–15). Twain ([1892] 2009: 192) comments on "the absolutely level surface of the site of Berlin." Although Twain calls Berlin "the European Chicago" (192), never to my knowledge did he note the similarities between the two cities and make the connection between the two cities that both were swamp cities, nor with New Orleans as a swamp city about which he also wrote (as we will see in later chapters). If Berlin is the European Chicago, then Chicago is the American Berlin.

Perhaps it is no surprise that Bertolt Brecht, that quintessential Berlin playwright, was fascinated with what Otto Friedrich (1972: 246) calls "that fabulous land of Chicago gangsters," which he never visited, but in which he set such plays as *In the Jungle of the Cities* and *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*. Chicago for Brecht was a kind of distorted allegorical mirror in which he could reflect back Berlin to his fellow Berliners and by which he could mount a political critique of Nazism as gangster culture (most directly in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*). Upton Sinclair first published his novel about Chicago and its meat industry, *The Jungle*, in 1906 (to a discussion of which I return in Chapter 14) while Brecht set his play, *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, in the Chicago stockyards. Chicago was the epitome of the gangster city for Brecht and Germany under the Nazis for Fallada (2015: 70) was the epitome of what he called "gangster culture," who he regarded as "a right bunch of gangsters." Berlin, as the epicenter of gangster culture, grew out of its contradictions in

the nineteenth century. Berlin for Richie (1998: xix) was not only perhaps "the most militaristic city in Europe" but also "one of the greatest centres of intellectual life." Yet this potentially oxymoronic combination of the militaristic and the intellectual was not enough, or perhaps was the reason, for Walter Benjamin dubbing Paris "the capital of the nineteenth century," and not his native Berlin.

Benjamin certainly had affection for some aspects of Berlin, and he figured both Berlin and Paris as a woman's body. For the young Walter Benjamin (1979: 330–331; 1999b: 623) who chronicled on a couple of occasions his own childhood in Berlin around 1900 the city of Berlin is transformed into the body of servant girls. He relates how

> the dream ship that came to fetch us on those evenings must have rocked at our bedside on the waves of conversation, or under the spray of clattering plates, and in the early morning it set us down on the ebb of the carpet beating that came in at the window with the moist air on rainy days and engraved itself more indelibly in the child's memory than the voice of the beloved in that of the man—this carpet beating that was the language of the nether world of servant girls, the real grownups, a language that sometimes took its time, languid and muted under the grey sky, breaking at others into an inexplicable gallop, as if the servants were pursued by phantoms. The courtyard was one of the places where the city opened itself to the child.

The languid and muted language of the servant girls is not only their spoken language but also the sensuous body language of their carpet-beating that was vaguely arousing and sexually enticing for the young Walter with its overtones of sadism that he imputes to the servant girls and of masochism on Benjamin's part. The courtyard, rather than being an entry into the private domestic space of the home, was a passage going out into the public space of the city, and into the female body, and, as with Freud on his walk in an Italian town, into the uncanny.

Benjamin was a great admirer of the writing of Robert Walser, who, in 1910 in a short piece on "Berlin and the Artist," gendered Berlin as androgynously both masculine and feminine. For Walser ([1910] 2012: 61) "a city like Berlin is an ill-mannered, impertinent, intelligent scoundrel, constantly affirming the things that suit him and tossing aside everything he tires of. Here in the big

city you can definitely feel the waves of intellect washing over the life of Berlin society like a sort of bath." Walser goes on to reflect on the following page that, as well as intellectual stimulation, "the metropolis contains lonelinesses of the most frightful sort, and anyone who wishes to sample this exquisite dish can eat his fill of it here. He can experience what it means to live in deserts and wastes" (62). The city built in a swamp whose "bottom-most level of criminality," for Walser (2010: 50) (as we saw in Chapter 1), is "a sort of swamp" becomes, like Paris for Balzac and Hugo, a desert. Yet the two Parisians are referring to a physical place in Paris when they figure it as a desert, whereas Walser the Berliner by birth is referring to a personal space when he figures Berlin as a desert. The swamp has been drained physically and personally to leave a desert in its place. Yet "after approximately five or six years have passed, the artist … will feel at home in the metropolis" as if he had been born there. Furthermore, the artist for Walser ([1910] 2012: 63) "feels indebted, bound, and beholden to this strange rattling, clattering racket. All the scurrying and fluttering about now seems to him a sort of nebulous, beloved maternal figure." The great swamp mother becomes the great city mother.

Along similar lines to Walser, Benjamin in a radio talk remembers being read the stories of E. T. A. Hoffmann at a boarding school when he was fourteen years old. In another radio talk entitled "Demonic Berlin" presented in 1930 Benjamin recalled Hoffmann's penchant for what Benjamin (2014: 24) described as "the bizarre, the unconventional, the eerie, the inexplicable," all of which could be summed up in one word, "uncanny," and which he reiterates two pages later as "the eerie, spooky, uncanny" (26). Benjamin was following in the footsteps of Freud ([1919] 2003: 141) for whom Hoffmann "is the unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature." Hoffmann for Benjamin is specifically the unrivalled master of uncanny Berlin in German literature. In another radio talk presented later in 1930 Benjamin (2014: 50) referred to "the uncanny Berlin of a century ago". Hoffmann for Benjamin "could be called the father of the Berlin novel" (27) that "comes alive again [in] Doblin's *Alexanderplatz*" (27) and "the only writer who made Berlin famous abroad" (29). As with Baudelaire and Paris, Hoffmann for Benjamin is "a physiognomist of Berlin" (27) whose "physiognomic seeing" (29) traced the character of the city in its appearance, especially in such stories as "My Cousin's Corner Window" (Hoffmann, 2008: 377–400).

In another radio talk presented probably even later in 1930 Benjamin (2014: 57) highlighted that "Berlin has been a military city" since the fifteenth century. He goes on to argue that it was a product of "Prussian military culture [which] was so dreadfully inhumane." This culture gave rise to what Alfred Behne (cited by Benjamin, 2014: 61) called "rental barracks" with the result that for Benjamin "Berlin is the biggest tenement city on Earth" and "our misfortune" (56). Benjamin goes on to lay the blame for this collective misfortune squarely at the feet of Frederick the Great, who,

> unlike his father who enlarged the capital horizontally … extended it vertically up into the sky. He used Paris as a model, but this was unwarranted. Paris was a fortress; the city could not expand beyond its forts and bastions. And since its 150,000 citizens made it Europe's largest city, the Parisians had no choice but to construct buildings of many stories. Berlin in Frederick the Great's day, however, was even less of a fortress than it is now. Thus, the city could easily have been extended horizontally. When the Emperor of China at that time was shown images of buildings of such unusual height, he said disdainfully: "Europe must be a very small land indeed if the people have so little space on the ground that they must live in the air." (57–58)

The result of Frederick the Great's extension of the city vertically into boxes in the sky is that residents of the tenements did have very little space in which to live in the air.

Benjamin (2014: 61) goes on in his radio talk to critique "the egoism, short-sightedness and arrogance that gave rise to the rental barracks [which] was the order of the day almost everywhere in Berlin until the [First] World War." Furthermore, he goes on to contrast "how grim, severe, gloomy and military the rental barracks look in comparison to the peaceful houses of the garden plots, which are so amicably juxtaposed to one another" compared to the tenements so hostilely antagonistic to each other. He elaborates on Alfred Behne who calls "the rental barracks the last of the castle fortresses. Because, he says, they arose from a few landowners' egotistical, brutal struggle over the land that they would dismember and divide among themselves. And this is why rental barracks have the shape of fortified and warlike castles, with their walled-in courtyards" (61). The walled-in courtyards of the rental barracks contrast with the opening-out courtyard of the stand-alone

house of Benjamin's privileged youth in Berlin. Private landowners dismembered the living body of the earth, parceling it up into morsels that morcellated the earth and terrestrial space into commodified and edible chunks. This parceling out of space reached its apotheosis in what Benjamin goes on to call the "completely new form of American skyscraper" of "long tenement blocks … that are set on their short end so that they project upward" (61). Horizontal space is colonized and militarized in the draining of swamps and vertical space colonized and militarized in the erecting of tenements and skyscrapers (as we will see with Chicago and New York).

Berlin for the hero of Joseph Roth's 1927 novel *Flight without End* is "this city" that "does not draw its supplies form the land. It obtains nothing from the earth on which it is built. It converts this earth into asphalt, bricks and walls. It shades the plain with its houses … It is the very embodiment of a city" (cited by Hoffmann, 2003: 13). The city of Berlin for Roth is not even a parasite on the country surrounding it. The city is a killing machine for transforming living earth into dead matter. The city also transforms nature into commodity, pictures into views, sites into sights, things into representations. In an article first published in 1921 Roth (2003: 25–27) describes how,

> at the edge of the city, where I have been told nature is to be found, it isn't nature at all, but a sort of picture-book nature … On the outskirts of our cities, in place of nature, we are presented with a sort of idea of nature. A woman standing at edge of the woods, shielding her eyes with the umbrella she has brought just in case, scanning the horizon and seeing a spot that seems familiar from some painting, exclaims: "Isn't this just so picturesque!" It's the degradation of nature to a painter's model … Our relationship to nature has become warped … It no longer exists for its own sake. It exists to satisfy a function … We have Baedeker-ized nature … The day that nature became a site for recreation was the end.

The end of what? Of nature? Nature has become a tourist site, and sight, reduced to an entry in a tourist guidebook. Roland Barthes (1973: 74) was to make a similar critique of the *Blue Guide* in the 1950s.

Roth (2003) was primarily a journalist, a master of the feuilleton, an astute observer of the seamy side of Berlin city life and an unashamed technophile. He describes "a few scrawny [street] trees, sprung from the stones of a city

precinct" as "trees not by nature but by municipal decree" (65). On the same page he describes homeless people as "grotesque-looking figures, as though hauled from the lower depths of world literature." And made to illustrate it as what he later calls in the same article "a series of illustrations, say, to Dante's journey to the underworld" (70). This is all part of "the hidden side of the city, its anonymous misery" as he calls it in a later article (79). This dark underworld of death and decay contrasts with the visible side of the living upper world of modern technology. The triangular railway junction in Berlin epitomizes this as for Roth it is "an emblem and a focus, a living organism and the fantastic product of a futuristic force. It is a *center*. All the vital energies of its locus begin and end here, in the same way that the heart is both the point of departure and the destination of the blood as it flows through the body's veins and arteries" (105; emphasis in the original).

The triangular railway junction is the "body of a machine" as Roth calls it on the following page. The dead body of the machine has replaced the living human body. The latter only provides the trope to figure the former. The triangular railway junction for Roth (2003: 106) produces an "iron landscape," a "playground of machines," and a "magnificent temple of technology." The machine has been apotheosized into "the divine machine."

By contrast with Benjamin who critiqued the verticality of the "rental barracks" of tenements, skyscrapers sent Roth (2003: 111) into greater raptures for the word itself has "something of the assertive, revolutionary quality of the builders of Babel." Skyscrapers demonstrate for him "the omnipotence of human technology," of "man and nature becoming one," and "the conquest of vertical space" (113). They all do so over the horizontal space of the marshes on which Berlin was built. Berlin for Roth is, perhaps as a result, "a young and unhappy city-in-waiting" (125). Berliners, on the other hand, are habitués of "the waiting room" that has become "an anteroom to eternity." The city of Berlin is an unhappy adolescent city whereas Berliners are senescent waiting for death; the city is on the verge of adulthood, and aging Berliners are on the verge of oblivion.

Berlin culture in the 1920s was renascent. For Roth (2003: 213), Alfred Döblin was "the writer whose contribution to German literature was the character of the lower-class Berliner, one of the most original creations of the intellectual world." Roth is referring to Franz Biberkopf, the central

character of Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, first published in German in 1929. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is what Brady (2009: 338) calls "the classic Berlin novel" "embracing both small fictional lives and the monster-city." In his review of Döblin's novel Benjamin (1999b: 302) asks rhetorically "what is Alexanderplatz?" and answers that it is "the site … where the ground trembles" and "the innards of the metropolis." The site is what I call a feral quaking zone and the innards of the metropolis are what might be called, following and adapting Bakhtin ([1965] 1984b), the grotesque lower urban stratum.

Although Döblin ([1929] 1996: 64) does not mention the marsh-city of Berlin and its history, nor make a connection between the monster and the marsh—the monster who lives in the marsh (the marsh monster) and the marsh as monster—Döblin does figure the *Magazintplatz* in Frankfurt as "nothing but a filthy morass." A morass is invoked later in the novel when the biblical character of Job is addressed by "the voice" (ambiguously of God, or Devil, or somebody else) as "a living morass" (184). Perhaps no more a fitting cognate for a wetland could be found than as a living morass. Job is invoked as a figure of both wretchedness and its overcoming who is exemplary for Franz Biberkopf. Job is a living morass whereas the city is a filthy morass. Better to be a living morass than a filthy morass.

Wetlands, or their cognates, such as morasses, also occur later in the novel when Döblin employs black water as a figure for the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart. Döblin alludes again to the Bible, specifically to the book of Jeremiah (17:9) and the verse in which the prophet proclaims that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Döblin ([1929] 1996: 266) goes on to expostulate at length on

> water in the dense black forest, black and terrible waters, you lie so dumb. In terrible repose you lie. Your surface does not move, when there is a storm in the forest and the firs begin to bend, and the spider-webs are torn between the branches and there is a sound of splitting. Then you, black waters, lie there below in the hollow place and the branches fall.

Black waters are regarded as dumb, passive, and static. They do not hear, do not act, and do not move. Plants decay in them and animals move in them

but nothing else happens in them. For Döblin they are not even rightly a part of the black forest:

> The wind tears at the forest, to you the storm does not come. You have no dragons in your domain, the age of the mammoths is gone, nothing is there to frighten anyone; the plants decay in you; in you move fish and snails. Nothing more. Yet, though this is so, although you are but water, awesome you are, black waters, and terrible in repose. (266)

Black waters have ceased to be the domain of mythic and prehistoric creatures, in a word, of monsters, so they cease to frighten. They have also become the site only of plant decay and the habitat only for banal or common animals. Yet despite this double diminution, black waters are still "awesome" and terrible in their passivity. They are addressed in the second person, but according to this account the addresser does not enter into intersubjective dialogue with black waters as they cannot speak. Black waters are as highly communicative as all other lands and waters for those who have ears to hear.

Eleven pages later Döblin ([1929] 1996: 277) repeats the first of these paragraphs concluding with the addition that "the storm does not penetrate you." Black waters are feminized as virginal and inviolate, as lying still, passive, supine, uncommunicative, the addressee, but never an addresser. They are also reduced to surface, despite their depths, however shallow. Their functions are also reduced to decay, despite the new life that springs from decomposition. They are the habitat for only fish and snails (and all other animal species are ignored). The verse from Jeremiah is also repeated on this page.

Hans Fallada is probably the only real contender with Döblin for the title of the preeminent novelist of Berlin. For Fallada in his 1937 novel *Wolf among Wolves*, set in Weimar Germany, Berlin is "the unquiet city," the title of the first part of the novel. Unlike Döblin, Fallada ([1937] 2010) figures Weimar Berlin in terms of its swampy beginnings. The narrator reflects that in the country Germany "one might think that the *Deutsche Tageszeitung* exaggerated when it called Berlin a morass of infamy, a Babel of sin, a Sodom and Gomorrah. But when you'd had a sniff of it you realized that those remarks were an understatement" (66–67). Over six hundred pages later Berlin is invoked in the same terms as "the morass of the great city" (683). The odour of the city repeatedly assaults the sense of smell in the beginning of the novel

where "out of the dark well of the courtyard the smells from a hundred lodgings" produce "a dull vapor [that] hung over the city. The stench of an impoverished people did not so much rise to the skies, as cling sluggishly to the houses, creep through every street, and seep through windows into every mouth that breathed" (4–5). The smog of London and St. Petersburg were figured in similar terms by T. S. Eliot and Andrei Bely as we have seen in the case of London in Chapter 4 and as will see with St. Petersburg in Chapter 8. Other smells assault the nose, such as the margarine that "smelled rancid" (4) and "the foul stench" of the courtyard (7). Unlike Fallada, the odor of courtyards, and of Berlin in general, is a feature of the city that Benjamin does not register or comment on.

Smells are immediate and overcome distance and the barrier between inside and outside of the body in an often uninvited and unpleasant way. The smells of the city bring the city inside the city-dweller. The city-dweller smelling the city no longer dwells in the city as just his or her external environment, but the city dwells in him or her as part of his or her internal environment. Along similar lines to Walser and Doblin, for Fallada ([1937] 2010: 493) the morasses in the country are not much better than those of the city as with "an unfrequented part" of a forest called the Black Dale, which "looked gloomy and wild … The otherwise almost flat country was here all undulations, humps between which were dark little valleys where springs trickled just strongly enough to survive the summer and form a morass in which the wild boars had their almost inaccessible retreats."

The morass in the country figures and mirrors the morass of the city. The wildness of the morass figures the ferality of the city. Both are places of evil for the Black Dale in *Wolf among Wolves* is where the cache of weapons for the failed *Putsch* are buried, where Lieutenant Fritz shoots himself, and where Violet is abducted. Weimar Berlin in Fallada's ([1937] 2010) *Wolf among Wolves* is a place of evil of gambling, prostitution, and corruption. Chapter 2 entitled "Berlin Slumps" (both economically and morally) begins by relating graphically how "in 1923, to the dreariness of the faces, the evil smells, the misery of that barren stony desert, there was added a widespread shamelessness, the child of despair or indifference, lechery borne of the itch to heighten a sense of living in a world which, in a mad rush, was carrying everyone toward an obscure fate" (11).

Fallada (2010: 12) wrote *Wolf among Wolves* in 1937 when the Nazis were in power, and so he had the benefit of hindsight in diagnosing the evils of Weimar Germany and figuring Berlin as an "accursed city." The infamous morass of Berlin gradually infiltrates the country and nation to the point that Eva von Panckwitz, whose family sinks increasingly into financial and personal ruin, reflects that "something just had to be done to get out of this morass. But somehow everything one did mysteriously only sucked you deeper in" (603).

Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt for their sins, so was Berlin. The city, such as Berlin, and Hamburg, that begins in water, ends in fire; or more precisely, the city that is created in water is destroyed in fire; the city that is created in one element is destroyed by another; the city of earth created out of water and erected into the air is destroyed by fire in the air exacted by airplanes. Berlin was likened to "the fire city of Vulcan" by a late-nineteenth-century observer (cited by Kotkin, 2005: 102); in the mid-twentieth century it was a fire city. During the dying days of World War II Fallada (2015: 10) described in his prison diary of 1944 how "I've spent many hours in the air-raid shelter in Berlin, watching the windows turn red, and often enough, to put it plainly, I've been scared witless." Fallada also wrote in a letter to his sister about "the terror attacks, which were probably the worst thing I have ever experienced" (243, n.22). Later in his prison diary he describes the transition from the pre-war triumphal modernity of Berlin to the late-war ruination of Berlin when "we often looked out across the city, sparkling with light, while the nearby radio mast threw out its beams of light, like outstretched arms, into the night sky. Today it is all just a vast expanse of rubble, misery and ash" (75).

Similarly in Fallada's (2009: 563) last novel, *Alone in Berlin*, set during the war and published in 1947, he describes how "during the ever more terrible nights that the war brought upon the city of Berlin, when the sirens wail, the planes move over the city in ever denser swarms, the bombs fall, the high explosives howl as they detonate, fires burst out all over." The sense of hearing is assailed with the wailing sirens and howling bombs dropped from swarming planes. Swarming creatures are an abomination according to the Levitical interdiction as they are neither fish, nor flesh, nor fowl. Fallada uses the term here in relation to planes; three years earlier in his prison diary he used the term in relation to people, or more precisely inhabitants of overcrowded city

streets in Berlin "that are swarming with people like a beehive swarming in the summer" (Fallada, 2015: 90). The earth below in the modern city and the sky above in modern warfare are inhabited by abominable, artificial creatures.

The Berlin bombings, for Otto Friedrich (1972: 6), "363 raids in all—destroyed about ten square miles of central Berlin, wrecked about one-third of the city's 1.5 million buildings, [and] killed or seriously injured about 150,000 people. It was probably the most crushing attack ever inflicted on a major capital." It was not, of course, the most crushing attack ever inflicted on a major city as that dubious distinction would go to Hiroshima, the bombing of which wiped out 90 percent of the city and killed eighty thousand people immediately while tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure.

In 1938, the year after he published *Wolf among Wolves*, the prolific Fallada (2014) published another novel in which Berlin figures prominently. *Iron Gustav: A Berlin Family Chronicle* is set before, during, and after World War I. Before the war, the "great stone city of Berlin" (129) is the place in which Eva, one member of the family, "felt as if she were oppressed by a nightmare from which she ought to wake up and yet could not—a bad dream, ever darker, ever more desolate" (150). In Joycean terms, history is a nightmare from which the Berliner cannot awake. This sleeping nightmare is prescient as it becomes for Eva a waking day-mare later in the novel.

After the war the city of nightmares and day-mares becomes for her younger brother Heinz the natural habitat for the femme fatale, the mistress of his older brother Erich, "when he had fallen still deeper under her spell, for he became more and more her plaything, her minion, her slave. He gave way, at first, open-eyed, then closed his eyes and threw himself into the abyss" (Fallada, [1938] 2014: 288). Later when he escapes her clutches, the abyss of the femme fatale is figured in retrospect as "the swamp" in which he had "lived in an unhealthy, feverish atmosphere" in the clutches of "an almost sadistic woman" from which he "eventually found the strength to escape" (322).

The city-swamp, the feral quaking zone, is not only the natural habitat for the femme fatale, but also becomes a wasteland. In the post–World War I Weimar Germany of hyperinflation "Berlin had become a wasteland" during "gloomy days, black days" (Fallada, [1938] 2014: 448). Moreover, "Berlin

was in chaos" (484). As one character puts it to Heinz on the following page, "the world stinks like a big dung heap" with "your private pile of stench" (485). Berlin, set in the native quaking zone of the marshy morass of a wetland, becomes the feral quaking zone of a chaotic, stinking wasteland, the sad and sorry story of most cities located in or by wetlands.

7

Hamburg: "This Marshy, Watery City"

Like Berlin, Hamburg is a German city set in a swamp. Hamburg is Germany's second largest city after Berlin. Both were founded in the thirteenth century. The name "Hamburg" is a compound of "Ham," an old Saxon terms for "marshland," and "burg," meaning castle or fortress (Jefferies, 2011: 1). Hamburg is thus literally "marsh castle," castle in or of the marsh. Hamburg is similar to St. Petersburg as both cities were a fortress built in a marshland as we will see with St. Petersburg in the following chapter. Hamburg, as Lowe (2007: 3 and 5) puts it, "is situated on a fluvial plain, most of the ground is little better than a marsh, and it is prone to flooding." It is like a number of other modern cities built on wetlands, such as London, St. Petersburg, Boston, New York, and New Orleans. Hamburg is also like Venice in that it is "a city on water" and so it is an "amphibious city" (Jefferies, 2011: 59) as much at home, or at unhome, in the water as on the land. Unlike an amphibious creature like a frog which is at home on land and in water, Hamburg is an ambiguous city rather than an amphibious city as, like all European cities, it is not at home in the water.

Like all the cities mentioned above, the site for the city of Hamburg was not propitious for a city, but it was for a port and a fort. Kenneth Asch (1994: 32) describes how the site "was a swamp until the year 1250. At that time a dam was constructed across the sluggish Alster River where it flows into the broad Elbe. Thus was the impetus provided for changing a sleepy local port 62 miles from the open sea into the dynamic metropolis of today." London, Boston, Toronto, New York, and other port cities drained and filled their wetlands, whereas others, like Hamburg and Venice, built canals and

waterways and so, as Lowe (2007: 3) goes on to argue, "the element that most dominates the city is water," just like Venice.

Yet rather than water, the element that dominated Hamburg is fire when it destroyed its center on four occasions. Hamburg for Jefferies (2011: v, 59–96, 97–122) is both "a city on water" and "a city on fire." To both topics he devotes a chapter. The destruction of Hamburg by fire culminated during World War II. Grayling (2006: 18) describes how in July 1943 "the first ever firestorm caused by bombing" was created in Hamburg. Ironically the domination of water made the city more susceptible to fire bombing. Lowe (2007: 32) points out that "the soggy, waterlogged soil upon which Hamburg was built meant that whole districts were devoid of cellars—the high-water table of the Elbe floodplain would simply have swamped them." The very element of water that quenches fire made the city, or at least its citizens, more vulnerable to fire, or at least to firebombing from the air. Lowe says that the Hamburg firestorm was "one of the biggest man-made fires the world has ever seen" (182). Later he says that "no other large fire in recorded history has ever equaled it in intensity" and that it was "the greatest firestorm the world has ever seen" (185). These claims are contestable when considered in relation to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hans Erich Nossack (2004: 1–2) witnessed the destruction of Hamburg as a spectator from outside the city. Hamburg for Nossack was "the first big city to be annihilated" (32) in World War II. He bore witness to the destruction in his book called *The End*. The title refers not only to the end of the city as he knew it, but also to the end of the world in time and space in apocalyptic times and tones. What he calls "the ruin of Hamburg" (6) is also variously described in apocalyptic terms as "the abyss" (6), "the end" (8), and "the netherworld" (11), terms that have also been applied to the slummy underside of other cities, such as London as we saw in Chapter 4. Not merely "anti-city," the destruction of Hamburg by fire also pitted nature against nature for "even nature had risen up in hatred against herself" (11). The military strategy of modern aerial and naval warfare is antinature as two forces of nature (fire, storm) are both harnessed by militaristic men and unleashed against nature and the earth. All wars are fought against nature and the earth and produce a war-torn landscape of destruction and ruination. The result for Nossack is "the raging of the world against itself" and "the earth writhed in agony" (15).

These are the death throes of "raging destruction" (13) inflicted by the world and the earth upon itself by a world- and earth-hating military whose end (in two senses) is "the ruined world" (13). "The horror" of "the disaster" (16) was that it was both natural and cultural, the forces of nature directed against both nature and culture by natural and cultural human beings against other natural and cultural human beings.

Part of the horror for Nossack (2004: 17) was the fact that the refugees fleeing from the city "brought with them an uncanny silence. No one dared question these mute figures." They had ceased to be human, to be natural and cultural beings, because they were deprived of speech and had become speechless automatons who mimicked and mocked human behavior in an uncanny manner. The fact that this disastrous destruction of Hamburg was "the end" for its residents of 1943 meant "we no longer have a past" (23), only a present that was unbearable and an unthinkable future torn away from any connection with the past. Perhaps they did not even have a present and future as "we no longer had any time at all, we were outside of time." In other words, they transcended time into eternity (40). Space and time ceased to exist as they had been known to exist in the past.

Not only was the spatial landscape transformed, but also the temporal timescape as well: "the infinite behind man wafted unhindered in the endlessness before him and hallowed his countenance for the passage of what is beyond time" (Nossack, 2004: 29). Space and time are collapsed together into the landscape of eternity and infinity, into the sublime where space and time are collapsed. By mixing fire and air and sublimating solid matter into gaseous flame and smoke, the firebombing of cities in World War II was sublime (see Giblett, 2009: Chapter 5). The less, or more, than human figures who people this landscape are not only mute automatons but also icons with eyes "grown larger and transparent" (Nossack, 2004: 29) through witnessing the horrors of fiery destruction of their city and the (its, their) past.

Writing on the firebombing of German cities by Allied bombers, W. G. Sebald (2003b: 19) argues "the war in the air was war pure and undisguised." In this "pure air war" "the innermost principle of every war, which is to aim for a wholesale annihilation of the enemy with his dwellings, his history, and his natural environment as can possibly be achieved" was pursued and largely

achieved. This principle was exercised by war being taken to the new heights achievable by fighter and bomber planes that not only produced "a kind of mobile front line" as Sebald puts it moving to and fro across the horizontal dimension of space, but also up and down within its vertical dimension (17). Planes and balloons had been used in World War I but it was predominantly an earth-bound war that took place on, and in, the earth, in mud, the watery depths beneath the surface as we have seen in the chapter on London and to which I return in the chapter on Washington.

World War II was less earth-bound and took place on, and above, the surface of the earth. The results were different too with whole French towns and villages obliterated by artillery bombardment and their residents killed or displaced as refugees in World War I, whereas in World War II many German cities were ruined from firebombing and their residents burnt to death or displaced too. Both landscapes, however, were described as "lunar landscapes" as with World War I and as Sebald (2003b) remarks with World War II. The lunar landscapes of both World Wars I and II were produced by bombardment and both were wastelands (74) and products of modern industrial warfare (64), or more precisely "the machinery of annihilation operating on an industrial scale" (96) as Sebald puts it.

Yet the two world wars were different in that the lunar landscape of World War I was characterized by craters full of water on and below the surface of the earth whereas the lunar landscape of World War II was made up of "mounds of rubble" (Sebald, 2003b: 36 and 74) on and above the earth's surface. The former was wet and cold, and the latter dry and hot. The countryside of World War I trench warfare was a waste wetlandscape of artificial "swamps" whereas the bombed cities of World War II aerial warfare were "a landscape of ruins" (46). Although Blunden ([1928] 2000), Hurley (1917), and Thomas ([1917] 1978) comment repeatedly on the ruins of World War I, these ruins were of individual buildings and villages, not of large proportions of cities as in World War II. Sebald (2003b: 30) called some areas of Germany during World War II "that vast wilderness, perhaps the most horrifying expanse of ruins in the whole of Europe." From France as "swamp" to Germany as ruin marks a profound, elemental shift in the exercise of armament, in the deployment of firepower, and its destructive force and the experience of war for civilian and soldier citizens.

Walter Benjamin (1999: 732) argued that in what he called "positional warfare" of World War I "a generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body." Benjamin took his own life in 1940 before he could remark about the next generation that had gone to school in electric streetcars and steam railways, who in the strategic warfare of World War II now sat huddled in the closed air of bomb shelters amid a landscape of ruins in which they could not even see the clouds, but still at its center, in a force field of greater destructive torrents of fire and exploding bombs, was the still tiny, fragile human body. Yet whereas the tiny, fragile human body that Benjamin remarked upon in World War I trench warfare in the country was the soldier body, the tiny, fragile human body in World War II strategic bombing of the city was the civilian body.

These changes in the conduct of warfare mark a shift in the type of landscape produced: from feral swamp to ruined cities; and from human-made countryside remade into human-made swamp to human-made city remade into human-made ruin. A ruin is defined by Solnit (2005a: 88) as "a human construction abandoned to nature." A bombed city is an artificial ruin, a human construction destroyed by culture. A feral swamp is a native construction abandoned by humans. Both swamp and ruin stand as figures for the unconscious. Just as the swamp is a figure for the cultural unconscious (see Giblett, 1996), so ruins for Solnit (2005a: 89) "become the unconscious of the city." Out of both new life can spring as Solnit argues that "with ruin a city comes to death, but a generative death like the corpse that feeds flowers" (90), just as the corpses did in the battlefields of World War I.

Cities and citizens, generally located well away from troops fighting on the ground, became the front line in aerial warfare. In modern war, for Jörg Friedrich (2006: 357), "the difference between soldier and civilian no longer existed; everyone was a warrior." In the air war everyone was a combatant and a target. "Civilian warriors," as Friedrich calls them, "were defenceless; they had no weapons" (358). The front line was not merely mobile in time and space but also socially mobile across the distinction between soldier and civilian. Civilians for Pimlott (1988: 123) were "the new front line in total war" with devastating consequences for them and their cities and homes.

For Camus (2006: 40) writing during World War II, Germany was "resigned to the appalling destruction that is raining down on their cities." Camus later conjured up "an apocalyptic image" of "its cities [that had been] transformed into shapeless rubble" (229). What had rained down from the sky had destroyed cities on the ground. Camus visited occupied Germany shortly after the Armistice and what he saw "reinforced the premonition" as he found "the rubble and the barren fields ravaged by war and dotted with military cemeteries overshadowed by ungenerous skies." He concluded that "this indeed is the land of the dead." Resigned or not to the destruction, the fact remains that the sky above was no longer just the generous source of life-giving air and rain but also the greedy medium of terrifying, death-dealing, and fiery destruction on cities and citizens alike.

The deployment of what Virilio (2005: 15) calls "our aero-naval modernity" against cities such as Hamburg entailed what he also called "the 'aeropolitics' of a mass extermination of cities" (Virilio, 2007: 8). This mass extermination of cities destroyed buildings and their inhabitants in a kind of genocide of cities, a citi-cide, or what Helphand (2006: 246) calls "urbacide," "the willful destruction of cities." Just as World War I turned the country into a "desert," World War II turned the city into a "desert." For Virilio (2007: 7) "a human environment [was] turned into a desert through the annihilation brought about by air raids." Like the "desert" of World War I, the "desert" of World War II was not a living, "natural" ecosystem but a human-made wasteland. Whereas the "desert" of World War I was wet, muddy, and cold, the "desert" of World War II was dry, rubbly, and hot. This mass extermination of cities occurred at the tail end of World War II and on into the Cold War. For Virilio (2005: 15), "after Dresden, and especially after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this 'aeropolitics' turned into a cosmopolitics of nuclear terror with the *Anti-City* strategy."

The nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki heralded for Bourke (2005: 363) the inception of "The Age of Terrorism," which then thrived during the Cold War and continues to do so even today. This age with its anticity strategy, however, was by no means procountry but merely replaced and extended the anticountry strategy that had culminated in the landscape of trench warfare into the anticity strategy that culminated in the landscape of ruined cites. Our aero-naval hypermodernity is both anticity and anticountry.

The anticity strategy of World War II was carried out by the fire storming of strategic bombing, whereas the anticountry strategy of World War I was carried out by the earthmoving machinery of artillery bombardment and trench construction.

The ruination of European cities began in 1940 with the German Blitz of Coventry and London, increased with the Allied bombing of Hamburg in 1943 (Lowe, 2007), and culminated in the destruction of such cities as Dresden (Taylor, 2004) and Würzburg (Knell, 2003) in 1945. Goebbels evoked the bombing of London in 1940 in Dantesque terms as "an inferno of unimaginable extent. The city is coming to resemble a hell" (cited by Taylor, 2004: 100). Yet the bombing of London was limited and the resulting fire was half a square mile in extent. It was officially named a "conflagration." For Taylor it "was the nearest London came to what later would be called a firestorm" (108). For Grayling (2006: 18) (as we have seen), "the first ever firestorm caused by bombing" was in Hamburg in July 1943, and not in London in 1940.

Yet a recent, two-part BBC-TV documentary on the Blitz claims that London more than came close to a fire storm as it is subtitled *London's Firestorm*. Some of the interviewees describe the event as a firestorm. "Bomber" Harris, one of the architects of the allied firestorm, witnessed the London Blitz of December 1940 and remarked of the Germans that "they are sowing the wind" (cited by Taylor, 2004: 109; Grayling, 2006: 49). The rest of this biblical verse (Hosea 8:7) goes on to prophesy that they would reap the whirlwind—as indeed Germany did as one witness remarked of the firebombing of Dresden and the resulting firestorm (Taylor, 2004: 267). Yet as Jorg Friedrich (2006: unpag., "Afterword for American and British Readers") points out, "a characteristic of air wars is that those who sow the wind do not reap the whirlwind and those who reap the whirlwind did not sow the wind."

The landscape of trench warfare was a battlefield for military combatants pitted against each other in the country, whereas the landscape of fire-bombed cites was the result of military operations against civilians in the city. World War I was fought in the country and over the country; it was also fought on, in, and sometimes under the ground. The theatre of operations was the countryside with its fields, hills, valleys, villages, woods, and wetlands. The immediate strategic objectives were positions in the country: that ridge or salient

or village. Paris was a long-term and remote German objective. London was bombed in 1915 and 1917, and thirteen hundred people were killed as a result of 225 tons of bombs being dropped on it (Bourke, 2005: 224). This tonnage and these casualties pale into insignificance compared to World War II.

World War II was fought over (in two senses) the city; it was fought on and over the ground and sometimes above the city in the air. The theatre of operations was through the countryside to the cities and over the cities. Paris and Vienna were immediate and readily achieved German objectives, London and other British cities, targets; later Dresden and Hamburg, and many other German cities were immediate Allied objectives, and targets, as were Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. Most of the major battles of World War I were land battles; some of the major, if not decisive, battles of World War II were air battles, such as the Battle of Britain fought in the air. Indeed, for Camus (2006: 45) writing in 1944 four years after the Battle of Britain, "Germany lost the war when it lost the Battle of Britain," which rather spectacularly ignores the Russian front, a good, old-fashioned land war.

The transformation of the land in both wars had its effect on those who fought these wars and were affected by them. That reshaping took place at the fundamental level of the arrangements between the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water as we have seen. The reconfiguration of the elements in world warfare had implications for, and effects on, human sensory perception in the feral quaking zones of trench and aerial warfare (see Giblett, 2009: "Coda: The Elements and the Senses in World Warfare," 69–85). Warfare is not only an assault on the human body in general, but also on the senses in particular. The nature of this assault changed in the transition from the trench warfare of World War I to the aerial warfare in World War II. Soldiers for Helphand (2006: 33) in World War I "saw, heard, smelled, touched, and even tasted daily, hourly, what in a sane world would only ever be [a] fleeting assault on the senses by the horrific." Aerial bombers in World War II saw, heard, and may have smelled, but certainly did not touch and taste, daily what in the insane world of modern industrial warfare was a fleeting and limited assault on the senses by the horrific. What they saw, heard, and may have smelled would have been horrific, but they did not touch and taste the horrific, unlike the soldiers in the trenches of World War I. Bombers were also subject to the terrors of sublime aerial warfare, unlike soldiers in the previous world

war who were subjected to the horrors of slimy trench warfare (see Giblett, 2009). Bombers were sublimated up above the destruction on the earth below, whereas soldiers were slimed down in the muddy land. The sensory experience of the feral quaking zone of warfare differs also from that of the native quaking zone of wetlands. The swamp can look ugly, smell bad, feel slimy, taste muddy, and sound oozy, and produce horror and the uncanny, but its address to the senses can be pleasant, and it is certainly not as horrific nor as terrifying as the assault on the senses that warfare entails.

Yet in war, especially in modern industrial warfare, air and earth are elements of the dead and dying. They are elements of an antiaesthetics of ugly sights and cacophonous sounds. Fire-storms sucked oxygen out of the air until it ceased to be life-giving and became death-dealing. In the words of one eyewitness of the Hamburg firestorm, "the air was actually filled with fire" (cited by Grayling, 2006: 83). The bombers produced the sound of "the doom-laden drone in the heavens" (cited by Lowe, 2007: 161). The firestorm produced the sounds of "a shrill howling" that "grew into a hurricane" and "a sea of flames" (cited by Grayling, 2006: 83). Lowe (2007: 195) notes that "*Flammenmeer*, 'sea of flames,' comes up again and again in accounts of the firestorm" and he cites many instances of this usage. For Jorg Friedrich (2006: 84 and 167) "through heat, radiation, and toxic gases, the very air was being transformed into something unliveable … the air that life needs to thrive had been exchanged for something else. The firestorm simulated the atmosphere of another planet, one incompatible with life." Earth had ceased to be earth, and air, air.

The creative mixing of the elements of air, water, and earth in wetlands becomes artificially and industrially reconstituted in the sea of flames of World War II in which air, water, and fire were no longer mixed creatively but destructively. The sensual experience of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in a wetland becomes horrific in the industrial warfare of World Wars I and II. The surface of the body immersed in a wetland becomes in industrial warfare the site of assault not only on the senses, but also the entry point for an assault on inner organs, on the depths of the body.

Fire war is a war of radiation to the surface of the body and combustion of the surfaces of the body and the earth with burning flesh, buildings, and trees. The skin in fire war, Jorg Friedrich (2006: 440) says, "felt the

temperature and the blast of air, the build up of the blaze and the wind that carried it." Fire war also produced toxic gases. The flames, Friedrich says, "poisoned the air. Combustion generates heat and gases, the main agents that attack the body" (330). And not just the outside surfaces but also the inside surfaces. The nose, Friedrich says, "registered the fire and odorous gases" (440). Toxic gases generated by burning were the main cause of death. In Hamburg, for example, toxic gases caused 70–80 percent of the deaths (167). Hamburg is a city that had the misfortune of being located in a marsh, and so it could not provide shelter for its citizens in cellars and bomb shelters below the surface of the earth. Its citizens were therefore exposed to the air above the surface with deadly effect on them and their city built on a marsh.

8

St. Petersburg: "Marooned on the Neva's Marsh Delta"

St. Petersburg is another marsh metropolis and an icon of modernity. St. Petersburg for Amery and Curran (2006: 15) is "one of the most celebrated and legendary cities in all of Europe." Certainly it is one of the most celebrated and legendary cities in *modern* Europe, and is arguably the modern European city par excellence as most of the other major European cities had medieval or ancient beginnings as we have seen with Paris, Venice, and London. Founded in 1703, it achieved this status precisely because it was "situated unnaturally in a swamp," or "on inhospitable marshes," or "over swampland" as Lehan (1998: 125, 146, 147) variously puts it. St. Petersburg represents the triumph of a modern city over premodern wetland. Like Venice and Boston, St. Petersburg was built on piles. Even with its piles, Thoreau (1982: 276) relates in *Walden* how "it is said that a flood tide, with a westerly wind and ice in the Neva, would sweep St. Petersburg from the face of the earth." Or in the terms of Michel Serres (1995: 16) of the city as plaque, as excrescence on the face of the earth, this catastrophic conjunction of tide, wind, and ice, a disastrous combination of the elements of air and water, and of the solid, liquid, and gaseous, would flush the plaque of the city from the "mouth" of the river in the marsh, and from the body of earth. The very element of water that the city excluded in order to be created could come back to destroy it in a return of the geographical and historical repressed.

St. Petersburg for Amery and Curran (2006: 15) is also "Peter the Great's version of a European paradise forged from the swamps" in the delta of the Neva River. Amery and Curran are implying that swamps are not paradise,

but are a wasteland as they go on to suggest when out of "such wastes … where the saturated ground … [was] shrouded in the mists … a new Russia [was] born." St. Petersburg was "born fully grown" for Smith (2012: 44) as a monumental brainchild out of patriarchal Peter's brain box. St. Petersburg was also born out of the womb of the maternal and monstrous marsh with human labor and labor pains, all of which were largely ignored and forgotten. The union between patriarchal brain and maternal marsh womb produced a monument and a monster, a monumental and monstrous city.

St. Petersburg for Billington (1966: 181) was "the most impressive creation of his [Peter the Great's] turbulent reign … In 1703 Peter began building his new city at the point where the Neva ('Mud') River disgorges the water of Lake Ladoga out through swamps." In other words, the river vomits the water of the mud river up through its throat (one sense of "gorge") and out through its swampy mouth, hardly an auspicious place for a city and hardly a wetland-friendly metaphor for a swamp. Billington is implying that the land was regurgitating liquid and solid matter, rather than digesting and excreting dead matter and procreating new life through the fertile cloaca of its delta. Deltas are the most fertile of all ecosystems. They are at the bottom of the digestive and reproductive systems, not at the top. Deltas are not located at the "*mouth* of the river," but are to be found at the other end of the body, at the bottom of the river catchment whose head is at the top.

The conventional nomenclature of the mouth of a river is a misnomer as water and solid matter flow out at this point, and not in. This is a mistaken view of anatomy, and so it should be called by the name for the *other* end of the body. Seagoing and ocean-faring explorers always say that they entered the *mouth* of a river as it would not be gentlemanly to say that they entered the rectum of the river, let alone to use other more vernacular and vulgar terms. The mouth of a river is, in fact, at the opposite end of the earthly alimentary canal or digestive tract of the river in conventional nomenclature of the head of the catchment. The conventional nomenclature of the "mouth of the river" inverts the rectum and the mouth in order to occlude the excretory functions of the river and to hide the fact that the exploratory journey up the river is a journey up the rear and inner passage entering through the rectum rather than a journey down the upper and inner passage entering through the mouth (see Giblett, 2011: chapter 10).

More recent nomenclature of the head of the catchment is at odds with the traditional terminology of the mouth of the river as they are at opposite ends of the river but both are at the same end of the human body. These geographic metaphors of "the head of the catchment" and "the mouth of the river" continue to be used uncritically without considering the politics of language, the body, and the earth that they are engaged in and in which they engage their users. The founding father, such as Tsar Peter, of a city, such as St. Petersburg, in or at the mouth of a river, or at least at the point where a river, such as the Neva, disgorges (though this preserves the throat and mouth metaphor) and so more precisely defecates into the sea, such as the Baltic Sea, was in fact establishing the city at the opposite end of the digestive tract.

The beginnings of St. Petersburg as what Berman (1988: 176) calls "the city in the swamps" has grown up into what Amery and Curran (2006: 16) call "the mythology of St. Petersburg" and into what Volkov (1995: xiii) calls "the Petersburg mythos," which for him was "fully formed in the second half of the nineteenth century." The mythos "included the official legends of the miraculous appearance of the lovely city in a marsh" as if the city sprang fully formed out of the head of Tsar Peter, like Pallas Athene being born out of the head of Zeus. Just as Zeus swallowed the pregnant Metis in order to appropriate the maternal function of giving birth, so Peter consumed the labor of workers and the fertility of the maternal marsh "teaming [*sic*] with wildlife" according to Amery and Curran (2006: 16) in order to give birth to St. Petersburg out of his own brain box as both monumental and monstrous city, monumental not least for the monuments erected in it and monstrous for its greedy consumption of human labor and laborers and of the monstrous marsh.

The city did consume immense amounts of human labor befitting the despotic Tsar Peter. Dluhosch (1969: xxi) relates how, "within three years[,] the new city devoured an army of one hundred and fifty thousand workers." The human cost of building such a city in the swamp for Billington (1966: 181) was "probably greater than that involved in building any other major city in Europe." As Ellul (1970: 29; emphasis in the original) puts it, "*our* cities need no foundation sacrifice, for by their very existence they swallow up and destroy vital forces, both material and spiritual, of the millions of men sacrificed to them … The city devours men," not to mention women and children, marshes and swamps. The city is an orally sadistic, greedy monster.

St. Petersburg is monstrous, monumental, and grotesque. As such, it is a typical modern city like Paris, both monumental and monstrous (or grotesque) at the same time, and in the same place of the marsh. The monumental is erected on the grotesque lower earthly stratum of the marsh. The marsh makes both the monumental and monstrous possible. Without the marsh, there would be no monumental and monstrous city. The same modus operandi applies to Paris too as we have seen.

The Bronze Horseman

No greater or more fitting monument to the founding of the monumental city of St. Petersburg can be found than Falconet's statue unveiled in 1782 of Tsar Peter riding a horse (Volkov, 1995: xii and xxv). It only became known as "the bronze horseman" after the publication of Pushkin's poem of this title in 1837, half a century after the unveiling. Pushkin's poem for Berman (1988: 182) is "a kind of Petersburg Book of Genesis, beginning in the mind of the city's creator-God." Berman is alluding to the Judeo-Christian god of Yahweh who created land and water and divided them as Peter did, but his allusion also applies equally to the Grecian god of Zeus giving birth to his "brain-child" out of his brain box as Peter gave birth to St. Petersburg out of his brain box. The St. Petersburg myth was begun perhaps singlehandedly by Pushkin in the early nineteenth century with this poem, which for Volkov (1995: 4) is "still the greatest narrative poem written in Russian." Indeed, according to Berman (1988: 182) it is for many writers "the greatest Russian poem," period. It helped to found, and certainly to perpetuate, the "Petersburg mythos" of the city founded, in its own words, on "the moss-grown miry bank" (cited by Amery and Curran, 2006: 15) of the marshy Neva River.

The opening lines of *The Bronze Horseman* for Volkov (1995: 6) are "perhaps the most popular in Russian poetry." They depict Tsar Peter founding St. Petersburg in 1703, more than a century before Pushkin's poem was first published:

> There, by the billows desolate,
> He stood, with mighty thoughts elate,
> And gazed; but in the distance only

A sorry skiff on the broad spate
Of Neva drifted seaward, lonely.
The moss-grown miry banks with rare
Hovels were dotted here and there
Where wretched Finns for shelter crowded;
The murmuring woodlands had no share
Of sunshine, all in mist beshrouded. (Lednicki, 1955: 141)

The marshlands of the Neva were for Tsar Peter a tabula rasa on which he could inscribe his city, dispossess the native Finnish inhabitants, and colonize them and the marshlands in one fell swoop of feudal or despotic power. Pushkin (cited by Volkov, 1995: 5) relates in his poem that the tsar "founded the city beneath the sea" on what Volkov describes as "lowland, below sea level" (11). This marsh had to be filled to raise it to the same or higher level than the surrounding countryside to try to prevent flooding.

Pushkin's poem goes on to relate how:

that city young,
Gem of the Northern world, amazing,
From gloomy wood and swamp upsprung,
Had risen, in pride and splendor blazing.
Where once, by that low-lying shore,
In waters never known before
The Finnish fisherman, sole creature,
And left forlorn by stepdame Nature,
Cast ragged nets. (Lednicki, 1955: 141)

The marsh here is a harsh stepmother, not the great mother. The city of enlightenment is situated in, and brings light to, the dark swamp and its benighted and deprived people, though the city never successfully dispelled the mist and fog. The city of enlightenment could reimagine and engineer (reimagineer) the place, drain the marsh, convert it into canals, separate earth and water, and try to control water, but it could not control the atmosphere and the microclimate in which air and water were mixed in fog, mist, and murk (as Bely's *Petersburg* shows and as we will see later).

Volkov (1995: 7) perpetuates the St. Petersburg mythos himself into the late twentieth century as the location for the city of "a miserable swampy place" was "no place for the new capital of Russia or any large city." Generally

a swamp is no place for a city; specifically a swamp was no place for such cities as St. Petersburg and New Orleans (as we will see in Chapter 11). For Volkov the swampy site "would never have become the site of the future imperial capital if not for the will and vision of Tsar Peter." Yet will and vision alone do not build cities; human labor and an earthly (and watery in this instance) site are required too.

The monumental modality, rather than the monstrous, caught the imagination of many others writing in the following century after the foundation of the city and before Pushkin's definitive poem. One Prince exclaimed that:

> I see the city of Peter, wondrous and majestic,
> By the will of the Tsar erected from the marshes,
> The inherited monument of his mighty glory . . .
> Art here waged everywhere a battle with nature
> And everywhere blazoned its triumph. (Cited by Fanger, 1965: 104)

Marsh and monument are inimical to each other, just as swamp and city are, and so the former had to make way for the latter. Bruited as the triumph of art over nature, the building of the city in the swamp is also a triumph of despotism over the despicable, absolutism over the abject, monumentalism over the monstrous, the city over the swamp. But the oppressed lives on as the repressed, and the repressed returns not least in tropes, dreams, and slips of speech, no less and unsurprisingly so than in the work of Dostoevsky, St. Petersburg's premier native writer. Stefan Zweig ([1942] 2014: 357) encapsulates the paradox of St. Petersburg with its monumental upper side and its monstrous nether world as for him it is "a city planned by princes with audacious minds, a place of broad avenues and mighty palaces—yet at the same time still the oppressive St Petersburg" of Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg

The late nineteenth century saw not only the rise of this St. Petersburg myth but also the rise of the counter St. Petersburg myth in which for some writers, such as Dostoevsky, St. Petersburg was "that rotten, slimy city" (cited by Volkov, 1995: xv). Such a slimy city is the fitting habitat for Dostoevsky's "underground man." The slimy city is also the counterpoint to what

Norman O. Brown (1959: 281–283) calls "the city sublime." The sublime and slime come together in Zoë Sofoulis's (cited by Giblett, 1996: 27) parenthetical portmanteau word s(ub)lime in which slime counters and subverts the sublime as propounded by Bakhtin, rather than inverts it, or complements it as advocated by Hugo (as we saw in Chapter 3). St. Petersburg is the city s(ub)lime.

St. Petersburg has also been similarly called "the unreal city." Alluding to T. S. Eliot's description of London in "The Waste Land" as "unreal city," St. Petersburg for Berman (1988: 176) is "the archetypal 'unreal city' of the modern world." Berman is certainly drawing on Fanger (1965: 105) who argues that "at the heart of the myth of Petersburg is the image of an unreal city, an image countenanced historically by the fact of the city's founding as an arbitrary act of will (thus Dostoevsky's designation of it [in *Notes from the Underground*] as 'the most abstract and intentional city in the world') and countenanced … by the peculiar Petersburg situation" in a marsh. Boris Jakim's recent translation of Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* has "on the face of the earth" instead of "in the world" (Dostoevsky, 2009: 6). Jakim's translation evokes the idea of St. Petersburg being an excrescence, a grotesque protuberance, on the face of (the body of) the earth situated, in a word, in a swamp. Abstract and metaphysical city is posed against material (maternal) swamp and physical labor. Indeed, for Fanger (1965: 104) "against the abstract grandeur of the city is posed the concrete loss of humble lives." He is probably referring to the loss of humble human lives in the construction of the city, but his comment applies equally to the loss of humble nonhuman lives, such as plants and animals, in the destruction of the marsh.

Berman (1998: 183) also cites part of the same passage from Dostoevsky as Fanger in a slightly different translation in which St. Petersburg is "the most abstract and premeditated city in the world," but does not cite what Dostoevsky's underground man goes on to say in parentheses that "there are premeditated and unpremeditated cities." Cities located in marshes and swamps are, by necessity, premeditated cities as they entail deliberate acts of design and construction, whereas unpremeditated cities are not founded in swamps as they come to be willy-nilly, such as the result of old trade routes. St. Petersburg for Holquist (1972: 547; emphasis in the original) was "first of all a *made* city." All cities are made in the sense that they are built

by human hands, but some cities are more made than others as human brains designed them before human hands built them. Wetland cities are more made cities than other cities. Wetland cities are planned and planted in wetlands as the result of premeditation. They are not born organically, for example, at the intersection of terrestrial trade routes or in the location of a market, though they may grow organically as Paris and London as fellow swamp cities were to do at the intersection of riverine, oceanic, and terrestrial trade routes in the liminal wetland zone between these routes. Premeditated cities are abstract cities, whereas unpremeditated ones are concrete, material cities.

The peculiarity of St. Petersburg's situation in a marsh, Fanger (1965: 105) goes on to suggest, has "been remarked [upon] countless times, but perhaps most memorably by [the Marquis de] Custine":

> The slow melting of the tints of twilight, which appeared to perpetuate the day in struggling against an ever-increasing gloom, communicated to all nature a mysterious movement; the low lands of the city, with their structures a little raised above the banks of the Neva, seemed to oscillate betwixt the sky and water, which gave the impression of their being about to vanish in the void … That little spot of earth which seemed to detach itself from the water and to tremble upon it like the froth of an inundation, those small, dark, irregular points scarcely observable beneath the white of the sky and the white of the river, could they form the capital of a vast empire?—or rather, was it not all an optical illusion, a phantasmagoria?

Walter Benjamin notably explored phantasmagoria in his work on nineteenth-century Parisian passages, or arcades. Writing on Benjamin and phantasmagoria, Cohen (1993: 219) describes how, "in nineteenth century usage[,] this term designated both a form of magic lantern show [illustrated in Cohen, 1993: 216] and a psychological experience when the distinction between subject and object breaks down." As a result of this breakdown, the subject becomes object in the reified and alienated relationship between the worker and work, consumer and commodity, such as with the trawler of supermarket aisles confronted by a dazzling array of brand varieties. Cohen goes on to argue that in "the magic … of commodity fetishism … social relations … take on the phantasmagorical form of relations between things" (222). For Benjamin (1999a: 14) "reifying representations … enter the universe of

a phantasmagoria" in which the consumer is placed under what Benjamin (1973b: 233) called "the phony spell of a commodity."

The phantasmagoria for Benjamin has its representative human figures and manifest expressions. For him "the *flâneur* abandons himself to the phantasmagoria of the marketplace" and Haussmann is "the champion" of "the phantasmagoria of civilization" whose "manifest expression" is "his transformation of Paris" (Benjamin, 1999a: 14–15). An earlier expression and champion is Tsar Peter's transformation of St. Petersburg. In the case of both cities, an abject wetland in transformed into a phantasmagorical city in which the subject is objectified by commodity capitalism in modernity. For Benjamin "modernity" is "the world dominated by its phantasmagorias" that he saw exemplified in the arcades and the *flâneur* (26). This is no less so than in the founding and building of the cities of modernity, such as St. Petersburg, and in the capital of modernity in Paris, built in premodern and abject swamps and marshes. Here in the abject swamps and marshes the distinction between subject and object has not yet been constituted, a distinction in which the subject is placed over and defined against an object; here the phantasmagoria of commodity capitalism has not yet broken down the distinction between them in the reification of subject into object under the phony spell of a commodity; here the magical life of the Great Goddess of the marsh and swamp casts its binding spell over the body immersed in them before the city drains and fills them and creates its phantasmagorias, not least of itself, as Custine and other have seen, and critiqued, such as Benjamin and Dostoevsky have done.

In Dostoevsky's novel *The Adolescent* the narrator has a recurring dream or nightmare that St. Petersburg has reverted from a slimy and foggy city to a swamp:

> A hundred times amid the fog I had a strange but persistent dream: "What if, when this fog scatters and flies upward, the whole, rotten slimy city goes with it, rises with the fog and vanishes like smoke, leaving behind the old Finnish swamp, and in the middle of it, I suppose for beauty's sake, the bronze horseman on the panting, whipped horse?" (Cited by Amery and Curran, 2006: 112)

This kind of apocalyptic dream of the city rising up from the swamp recurs in Dostoevsky's short story "A Weak Heart" in which "a new city was forming

in the air" (cited by Berman, 1988: 192), a ghostly counterpart or sublimated version of the city in the swamps. For Berman this story evokes "most memorably" the reputation of St. Petersburg in Dostoevsky's time "as a strange, weird, spectral place" (192). St. Petersburg, in a word—Freud's word—is an uncanny place. The sublime city built in a swamp is doubly sublimated for Dostoevsky in rising from the swamp to leave behind, revert to, and be desublimated back into the uncanny swamp in which it was built.

Dostoevsky not only sublimated and desublimated the city, but also personified it in his first published feuilleton in which St. Petersburg stands in "the dismal Ingerman[n]land swamp" (cited by Fanger, 1965: 141). This is a fitting locale for a city characterized by Dostoevsky in the same piece as a sulking, discontented grumbler. Ingermannland is the ancient Finnish province in which St. Petersburg was located. St. Petersburg for Dostoevsky, as Fanger argues, not only has a character, but also *is* a character (26). The dismal swamp city in Dostoevsky's description lies also beneath a black sun of metropolitan melancholy as in his last feuilleton (cited by Fanger, 1965: 144). It also lies next to "the black water of the Fontanka," one of the tributaries of the Neva as Dostoevsky (cited by Fanger, 1965: 161) relates in *The Double*. Water, Fanger notes in citing this passage, is "the element on which the city is built" (161), though no European city has literally been built *on* water. Swamp cities, such as St. Petersburg and Venice, have to separate out the elements of land and water to create the surface on which the city can be erected.

Black water is a persistent trope of melancholia based on the Western philosophy of the four elements and humors. In the Western philosophical theory of the four elements going back to Aristotle and taken up in the Elizabethan "world picture" of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (see Giblett, 1996: 160), water is the element made from the mixing of the qualities of coldness and wetness. It gives rise to the humor of the phlegmatic. Earth is the element made from the mixing of the qualities of the coldness and dryness. It gives rise to the humor of the melancholic. This psychopathology is a fitting humor for a city set in drained swamps in northern climes that wrested and "reclaimed" earth from water by Tsar Peter's workers.

Bakhtin ([1963] 1984a: 75) notes how Dostoevsky observes both "the Petersburg slums and the monumental Petersburg" as integral parts of the same city. In the terms of Bakhtin's work on Rabelais and the carnivalesque,

the slums are grotesque and the monumental city is sublime. Moreover, the slums are the grotesque lower city strata, whereas the forts and prospects are the monumental upper city strata. St. Petersburg as a sublime and grotesque, monumental and monstrous city in the work of Dostoevsky is not only the offspring of this fruitful union but also, like Paris, the outcome of the fatal union of city and swamps in which the latter were destroyed to create the former.

As an aside here, Fanger (1965: 228) claims that "the grotesque … has received little attention in its own right" and goes on to cite and discuss Hugo's "Preface" to *Cromwell* as an exception (as discussed in Chapter 3). Naturally Fanger cites Bakhtin's ([1963] 1984a) work on Dostoevsky (in which the grotesque does not figure). Coincidentally and unfortunately for both, Bakhtin's work on the grotesque in which he also discusses Hugo's "Preface" (as we have seen in Chapter 3) was published in Russian in the same year as Fanger's study (Bakhtin, [1965] 1984b). Perhaps it is an unfortunate incidence of literary nonserendipity that neither writer had the benefit and support of the other's study, or a fortunate incidence of literary serendipity that both were on to the same thing at the same time. The grotesque has since received a lot of attention, not only in relation to the human body as one would expect following Bakhtin's ([1965] 1984b) discussion of the grotesque lower bodily stratum (Giblett, 2008a, chapter 4), but also in relation to what could be called the grotesque lower earthly stratum of swamps and marshes (see Giblett, 1996: 127).

Bakhtin's ([1965] 1984b: 26–27) work on the grotesque and the neoclassical bourgeois body is also applicable by analogy to the modern city, such as St. Petersburg, that "presents an entirely finished, completed, strictly limited body [and city], which is shown from the outside as something individual … strictly limited mass, the impenetrable façade." By contrast, for Bakhtin "the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body [and the city] and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's [and city's] limited space or into the body's [and city's] depths" (317–318). The grotesque image leads into the city's depths of what could be called the grotesque lower urban stratum of its slums and the swamps on which it was built.

The building of the city of St. Petersburg was also only possible "as a large scale exercise in absolute royal power," as Dluhosch (1969: xxiv and xxix) puts it, in "one of the most incredible feats in the history of city building," not least because of its swampy site. Yet rather than an exercise in "absolute royal power" of feudal times as Dluhosch suggests, Berman (1988: 178) argues that "Peter was closer to the Oriental despots of ancient times." The importance, as Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 21) put it following Wittfogel in his study of Oriental despotism, of "large-scale waterworks for an empire" applies to the draining and filling of swamps for the building of the city. St. Petersburg is no exception.

Bely's *Petersburg*

Yet St. Petersburg is also a modern city just as Tsar Peter was, as Maguire and Malmstad (1978: xv) put it, both "an 'eastern' despot" "in the single-minded tyranny with which he acted" and a "western" ruler with "his vision of a modern state." Peter, and St. Petersburg, straddled east and west, ancient and modern, sacred and secular. St. Petersburg was for Holquist (1972: 552) "a militantly secular city." In Bely's *Petersburg*, in which the city is "the main character" and "the real hero," "Petersburg represents the modern city generally," as Maguire and Malmstad (1978: ix, xv, xxiv), the translators of *Petersburg*, put it in their introduction. In *Petersburg* the fog is a minor character that makes a regular appearance with its sister mist and its brother murk (see, for instance: "the greenish murk" (Bely, [1916–1928] 1978: 9, 273); "the dingy fog" (9, 127, 170); "the dark greenish fog" (10); "swirling whorls of mist" (16); "the brain-chilling murk" (23); "dank mists" (51); "the malignant fog" (107); "the sky had become a solid mass of dirty slush. The fog had come down to the ground" (119); "the dingy murk" (131); "the grayish fog" (139); and "pale gray misty haze" (273).

St. Petersburg for Maguire and Malmstad (1978: xv) was "a planned city … built on a trackless bog." The wetland location for the city is described in the novel as "the mossy marshes" (Bely, [1916–1928] 1978: 10). Later in the novel one character states that "Petersburg in built on a swamp" (205) as an explanation for the bad climate. Maguire and Malmstad (1978: 346) have a note

at this point that "the Neva takes its name from the Finnish *newa* or *newo*, meaning swamp." It is a mystery then as to why Maguire and Malmstad say in their introduction that the Neva is a "trackless bog." Trackless is pejorative, though presumably the Finns knew their way around in it and through it, and bog, marsh, and swamp are not synonymous but are different types of wetlands. As Margaret Attwood (cited by Giblett, 1996: 3; emphases in the original) puts it, "*swamp* is when the water goes in one end and out the other, *bog* is when it goes in and stays in." Swamp is also when the water goes in, through, and comes out among trees; marsh is when the water goes in among, through, and comes out among grasses. Swamp is a wooded wetland; marsh is a grassy wetland; bog is a peaty wetland. In the case of the Neva, marsh is the most precise term, though various writers use other terms as we have seen.

The statue of the Bronze Horseman (and Pushkin's poem) haunts Bely's ([1916–1928] 1978: 213) *Petersburg* in which Peter and his horse uncannily come alive and bring the repressed past into the present so that time is figured as circular: "the bronze-headed giant had been galloping through periods of time right up to this very instant, coming full circle." Temporally the city of St. Petersburg for Holquist (1972: 548) "had its home in the chronos of political history, Moscow in the Kairos of eschatological time." Spatially the city of St. Petersburg had its home in the slime of a wetland, Moscow in dry grassland. Temporally the time of St. Petersburg set in a marsh had its home in the prehistory of matrifocal time and in the now-time,[1] or Kairos, of aquaterra time; the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow had their home in patriarchal history. St. Petersburg set in a marsh has its home in the cyclical now-time of birth–life–death–birth, whereas the cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow had their home in the linear time of birth–life–death.

Both cities were located in, and made sense of, what Bely's ([1916–1928] 1978: 53) *Petersburg* calls the "measureless immensity" of "the Empire of Russia" and of "the orphaned distances of the provinces." St. Petersburg represented what Holquist (1972: 548 and 552) calls "the triumph of reason over brute nature," and so for him it is the "most unnatural of cities." In Peter's own words, the "city was to be laid out 'in the manner of the Dutch' with regular blocks and straight canals penetrating the territory of the city at right angles to each other" (Dluhosch, 1969: xix; see also Billington, 1966: 181). It was to be an exemplar of the rectilinear grid plan town.

The rectilinear grid plan town was an instrument for penetrating "the virgin soil of the Neva delta" (Amery and Curran, 2006: 20). Drainage was the means for dividing the land from the water in a God-like gesture drawn from Genesis and for creating what Berman (1988: 177) calls "the clean slate" or tabula rasa on which "the inscriptions" of the grid and ultimately the city could be written. The city in the swamp first has to erase the swamp to create a full and smooth surface on which the city could then be inscribed. For Deleuze and Guattari (1977: 11), "some kind of full body, that of the earth or the despot, a recording surface, an apparent objective movement, a fetishistic, perverted, bewitched world are characteristic of all types of society as a constant of social reproduction." In the case of wetlands, the earth is constituted as full body to be drained or filled. In the case of St. Petersburg set in a marsh, the despot Peter and the earth were constituted as full body.

According to Egorov (1969: 23), it was "Peter's idea to drain the swamps of St. Petersburg by means of canals" just as the Dutch and Venetians had done. The grid plan town of St. Petersburg symbolizes for Egorov "man's conquest of formless nature by means of conceptual precision" (26). The formless chaos of the marsh had to be ordered in and by conceptual precision in another God-like gesture drawn from the biblical book of Genesis of creating order out of chaos.

Drainage and the grid plan town in the case of St. Petersburg not only brought order out of chaos and a city out of swamp but also was a means to exercise military might over the populace and the place and to produce an object for aesthetic appreciation. Volkov (1995: 11) relates how Tsar Peter "plotted the city" as a "system of islands, canals and broad, straight … prospects," literally meaning "to look into the distance." The most famous of these is Nevsky Prospect, nearly three miles long, built in 1715. The prospect has a military function of being a vantage point for seeing an approaching enemy from afar. Traditionally it applied to a castle or fortified village atop an eminence. In the eighteenth century the military function of surveillance was sublimated into aesthetic appreciation for the "pleasing prospect" of "the gentleman's park estate" (see Williams, 1973: 121). The castle, fortified village, and gentleman's house all had a commanding prospect of the country before and below them. Tsar Peter went one step further and constructed not only a city with its fortresses of Peter and Paul Fortress and Admiralty Fortress (see

Egorov, 1969: 7), but also a city *as* fortress with commanding prospects of the country (both land and water) around it. Yet what Berman (1988: 189 and 179) calls "the city's lower depths" "conceal festering slums" from the prying eyes on its "commanding heights." These commanding prospects were of the country surrounding the city from which a threat to the city could come, but not of the city itself from within which a threat to the city could also come, as indeed it did in 1905. Haussmann's boulevards in Paris had been the autocratic response to this problem by opening up to view the city's lower depths of the slums, creating prospects of the interior of the city and making the interior penetrable by the military and paramilitary forces of the monarch.

"Prospect" also has a double temporal meaning in English, and presumably in Russian too as Russian "Prospekt" is cognate with the English and also as the senator in Bely's ([1916–1928] 1978: 10) *Petersburg* "loved the rectilineal prospect" as "proportionality and symmetry soothed the senator's nerves" and "this prospect reminded him of the flow of time between the two points of life." The prospect is a way of colonizing and enclosing time and space, the measureless immensity of both territorial and historical Russia and the orphaned distances of its provinces. In Bely's *Petersburg* the central character states that "Petersburg is built on a swamp" and that "for the Russian Empire Petersburg is just a dot. Just look at the map" (205). The prospect colonizes space and time at the level and from the point of view of the city and the dweller, but the city at the level and from the point of view of empire and the map is just a dot.

The central character elaborates later to himself on the temporal and cosmic implications of his interlocutor's point: "Petersburg is the fourth dimension which is not indicated on maps, which is indicated merely by a dot. And this dot is the place where the plane of being is tangential to the surface of the sphere and the immense astral cosmos" (Bely, [1916–1928] 1978: 207). In other words, St. Petersburg is situated in time but is not indicated on maps that only show space and the city as a dot. And this dot is the place where the plane of the city is tangential to the surface of the sphere of the earth. The dot touches on the surface and slices past the earth and its wetlands. The city might represent the "triumph of reason over brute nature" in the form of the wetland and the "conquest of formless nature [also in the form of the wetland] by means of conceptual precision," but it is only a point on a tangent

that touches at one minuscule point on the surface of the earth and a point in time both of which are lost in the measureless immensity of Russia and the cosmos. Bely puts St. Petersburg and Peter's project into perspective.

Bely seems to be subscribing to the division in the Kantian sublime between the dynamical sublime in which "man" exercises power over "nature" and regards himself as superior to nature, and the mathematical sublime in which reason is more powerful than "man" and man is inferior to reason. St. Petersburg in relation to "nature" represents man's power over nature whereas St. Petersburg in relation to reason, or the cosmos and eternity, represents man's and St. Petersburg's inferiority.

In constructing a fortress city Tsar Peter, in the words of Volkov (1995: 12), "succeeded in building a unique monument" of "an entire city." St. Petersburg has its monuments, the most famous of which is the monument to Peter, the bronze horseman (as we have seen). Yet the city itself is also a monument, not least to Peter. His achievement in founding the city, or more precisely having "tens of thousands of workers from all over the country" do so, was heightened by the unsuitable location for a city of "the swampy ground" (11) in the Neva's marshy delta. The workers from the country made the city; without country workers, the city was not possible. The monumental capital was also what Volkov calls "the monster capital" (xvii) not least because of its tentacles attaching it to the country and on which it parasitically fed.

In Bely's *Petersburg* the sublime city in the swamp is not sublimated further into a spectral city (as with Dostoevsky) but is desublimated back (also as with Dostoevsky) into the swamp from which it came, and in and on which it was built. Nevsky Prospect becomes what Berman (1988: 265 and 264) calls in his reading of Bely's *Petersburg* "the Nevsky's swamp" of "a sort of primal ooze" in which in Bely's ([1916–1928] 1978: 178) words "all the shoulders [of the people in the street] formed a viscous and slowly flowing sediment. The shoulder of the senator stuck to the sediment, and was, so to speak, sucked in." Although Berman (1988: 264) notes Bely's vision of St. Petersburg in 1905 "as a primal swamp" and the fact that the city was built in a primal swamp, he does not make the connection between the two and the fact that Bely draws wittingly or unwittingly from the rich and fertile history of the city's past in order to figure its present.

Not so with W. G. Sebald (2003a: 48) for whom

> marooned on the Neva's marsh delta
> St. Petersburg under the fortress,
> the new Russian capital,
> uncanny to a stranger,
> no more than a chaos erupting,
> buildings that began to subside
> as soon as erected, and nowhere
> a vista quite straight. The streets
> and squares laid out according
> to the Golden Section, jetty walls and bridges,
> alignments, façades and rows of windows—
> these only slowly come towards us
> out of the future's resounding emptiness,
> so as to bring the plan of eternity into the city
> born of the terror of the vastness of space.

The city has a dark underside, and it was built on repressing that other side in order to keep at bay not only the sublime terror of the vastness of space outside its walls, gates, suburbs, and so on but also the slimy horror of places inside, beneath, and before it, under its streets, houses, buildings, and so on and in its sewers and slums. Presumably Sebald had read James Thomson ([1880] 1993: 64), as the latter refers to "vast wastes of horror-haunted time" in his *City of Dreadful Night*. The city of dreadful night is a bulwark, not only against the terror of space, against patriarchal and monumental abstraction, but also against the horror of time, against matrifocal and monstrous pre-history of the Great Goddess of the swamps and marshes. The city not only marks out a grid of allotments on the earth, but also marks a place in history. The sublime is as much a matter of time as it is of space. The quaking zone of the swamp, by contrast, mediates between time and space, place and history in the cyclical now-time of birth–life–death–birth.

Part Three

North American Cities and Wetlands

9

New York: A City Set in "a Mosquito-Infested Swamp"

New York is one of the oldest cities in North America. The Dutch founded New Amsterdam in 1626, so it is older than St. Petersburg, which was founded in 1703. Like St. Petersburg, New York is both an icon of modernity and a locus of urban phantasmagoria. New York for Sanderson (2009: 33) is "the quintessential modern city" and "the first megacity, a city of at least ten million inhabitants." It achieved this milestone before 1950. New York is also a quintessentially modern city like St. Petersburg as it was founded, like a number of other modern cities, in a wetland, specifically what Doctorow (1994: 156) calls "a mosquito-infested swamp" on the island of Manhattan.

This island (and swamp) became what Burrows and Wallace (1999: xv) in their monumental history of the city call "the most valuable piece of real estate in the world." Beneath and before this "piece of real estate" were what Burrows and Wallace also call "vast meadows of grass … forests with towering stands" of a variety of tree species, an abundance of wild fruits and wild animals, and last, but by no means least, "tidal marshlands" (3, 4). In *The Forests and Wetlands of New York City* Barlow (1971) tells the story of New York in relation to its wetlands. By presenting archival and recent maps of the city, Barlow also documents the presence of its wetlands in the past and the absence of its lost wetlands in the present (xxvi–xxix, 20–21, and endpapers).

Barlow (1971: 5) also relates how "the early Dutch settlers gravitated to the flat marsh-fringed lowlands reminiscent of the geography of Holland." Moreover, "the Indians were marsh men too" (6). This similarity between

invader and indigene as marsh men did not lead to much solidarity or commonality or fellow-feeling between them, nor did wetland reminisces lead to a desire by the colonizer starting with the Dutch to protect them with the result that "by 1900 the once extensive Manhattan marshes, with the exception of some fragments at the northern end totaling less than one square mile, had been filled in and built over" (36). New York for Barlow is "in its way as much of a water city as Venice" (144), perhaps as both are cities built in wetlands; but whereas one city canalized wetlands into means of watery ingress and egress, the other filled them in and built over them; whereas the water in one city is plain for all to see, the water in the other has gone.

Recently, along similar lines to Barlow, Eric Sanderson (2009) in *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City* shows the lost wetlands both by presenting archival maps and by digitally peeling away the city from Manhattan Island to create a three-dimensional model in an oblique view of Mannahatta in 1609. Sanderson describes how seeing the British Headquarters Map of circa 1782–83 (21, endpapers, and 50–51) changed his life. Archival maps provide a vertiginous view into the past in which the present slips away and one finds oneself floating above a fascinatingly familiar and yet strangely unfamiliar landscape for one can make out features that survive to this day, such as hills, and note ones that haven't, such as wetlands, the feature most vulnerable to destruction by urbanization. The British Headquarters Map shows wetlands and indicates that New York is a swamp city, a marsh metropolis, a city built on wetlands (as Sanderson notes [53], and his later map of ecological communities confirms this with seven different wetland communities shown [139]). Not only is New York, as it is for Kotkin (2005: 93), "the ultimate vertical city" of skyscrapers and "the Manhattan skyline … the perpetually acceptable face of capitalism," as it is for Pile (1992: 223), but it is also the anterior horizontal city of lost marshes and swamps and the unacceptable grotesque lower earthly and bodily stratum of the earthly foundation on which capitalism and the capitalist city is built and which the city suppressed.

New York, like London, is not only another marsh metropolis, but also "another maritime metropolis" as de Landa (2000: 93) puts it. Probably the writer to have most powerfully evoked New York as a maritime metropolis is Herman Melville. He is usually regarded, though, as what Sloterdijk (2013: 43; 2014: 811) calls "the greatest writer of the maritime world." Sloterdijk

is following in the footsteps of D. H. Lawrence ([1923] 1977: 168) who, ninety years before Sloterdijk, called *Moby Dick*, Melville's masterpiece of the maritime world, "the greatest book of the sea ever written." Joel Kovel (1970: 234 and 238) even goes so far as to claim that *Moby Dick* is "perhaps the greatest American novel." Many critics and scholars concur, even going further than Kovel to claim that it is perhaps the greatest novel in English. Yet it is a masterpiece not only of (American) literature and the maritime world, but also of the maritime metropolis of New York, the epicenter of the maritime world and the leading maritime metropolis of the day when Melville was writing.

Melville ([1851] 1992: 1) begins *Moby Dick* in the following famous fashion, both invoking the maritime world and evoking the leading maritime metropolis of his day:

> Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me. There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward. Its extreme downtown is the battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land. Look at the crowds of water-gazers there. Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What do you see?—Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the piles; some seated upon the pier-heads; some looking

> over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the rigging, as if striving to get a still better seaward peep. But these are all landsmen; of week days pent up in lath and plaster—tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here? But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand—miles of them—leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets and avenues—north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them thither?

The maritime metropolis is a liminal place between land and sea in which the siren call of the sea prevails over the pull of the heartstrings toward hearth and home. This call is probably exacerbated for New Yorkers by Manhattan being an island, and so already being halfway out to sea.

What a pity that Melville ([1857] 1990) did not also turn his pen to evoking the marsh metropolis of Manhattan Island and what effect it had on, and for, his fellow New Yorkers. What if he had given the same sardonic attention to New York as a marsh metropolis at the confluence of the East and Hudson Rivers as he had given to the swamp city and riverine metropolis of Cairo at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers in *The Confidence Man*, which he evokes in the following ironic miasmatic terms: "at Cairo, the old established firm of Fever and Ague is still settling up its unfinished business; that Creole grave-digger, Yellow Jack—his hand at the mattock and spade has not lost its cunning; while Don Saturnus Typhus, taking his constitutional with Death, Calvin Edison and three undertakers, in the morass, snuffs up the mephitic breeze with zest" (156).

The view of Melville's New Yorkers looking out to sea into the vastness of horizontal space in the nineteenth century contrasts with, and segues into, Michel de Certeau's vertical view from the 110th floor of the then World Trade Center in the 1980s. When de Certeau (1984: 91) viewed "the urban island" of Manhattan, he described the view as "a wave of verticals." What he did not see and what Melville and Sanderson (2009) enable us to see is that a wave of verticals fronts the waves of the horizontal ocean and is built upon a swamp

of horizontals. Manhattan was Mannahatta, the swamp island. When the terrorist attacks of 9/11 reduced the World Trade Center to a heap of rubble, they produced something between a swamp and a wave, between the vertical and the horizontal. For de Certeau (1984: 91) "the gigantic mass" of Manhattan was "immobilized before our eyes" in the view from the World Trade Center.

In the aftermath of 9/11 the gigantic and now grotesque mess of the ruins of the World Trade Center was "immobilized before our eyes" in the photographs of Joel Meyerowitz (2006; see Giblett, 2009: 165–173 for a discussion of the photography of 9/11). The grotesque marshes and statuesque forests of Mannahatta before Manhattan are also "immobilized before our eyes" in Sanderson virtual bird's eye view 3D digital modeling of the precontact island. What de Certeau (1984: 91) calls "a city composed of paroxysmal places in monumental reliefs" viewed from the World Trade Center was once upon a time a native quaking zone of pleasant places of hilly reliefs of maternal and supine swamps and marshes. In the aftermath of 9/11 the World Trade Center became a feral quaking zone and paroxysmal place of heaped ruins as depicted by Meyerowitz and others. The World Trade Center was for de Certeau "only the most monumental figure of Western urban development" (93). It was not only erected on the monstrous body of the swamp but also later demolished into the most terrifying figure of the destruction of Western urban development.

The city undertakes rituals of exclusion and repression involving what de Certeau (1984: 125) calls "an excommunication of territorial divinities, the deconsecration of places haunted by the story spirit." In the case of Manhattan Island, this involved the erasure of the Amerindigenous Lenape's stories and place names. For de Certeau, "every power is toponymical and initiates its order of places by naming them" (130), or perhaps more precisely by renaming them in the colonizer's terms as the places of Manhattan Island had Lenape names.

Unlike Venice, which made its wetlands into canals, New York made one of its wetland areas into Central Park, probably America's most famous park, certainly one of New York's premier attractions for visiting tourists and prime recreational facilities for local residents. Its location was "swampy," as Smith (2012: 286) puts it, as there were "bogs in Central Park" according to Sanderson (2009: 53). "The city," according to Rybczynski (2003: 166) "had

been able to acquire the rocky and swampy land for the park because it was unsuitable for normal real estate development. Vaux and Olmsted turned this liability to an advantage by exploiting the craggy outcrops and turning the lowlands into lakes." Certainly swamps are not suitable for normal real estate development, but it was also part of normal park development to turn swamps into lakes. It would have been abnormal not to have done so and to have left the swamps as swamps. Rybczynski goes on to relate how "a system of underground pipes would drain the swampy flats; the lowest areas would be excavated and turned into lakes" (174).

Similarly, Barlow (1972: 20) relates how, "by judiciously clearing away here and planting there, by moving earth to rearrange the land into more pleasing contours, by laying drains and converting swamps into ponds, there would emerge a landscape that was at once naturalistic and picturesque." Olmsted's role in this account was sculptural as it involved rearranging the "pleasing contours" of the feminized body of the pleasing prospects of the hidden park so that they could emerge smoothly from the inchoate lump of swamp and earth that he was given to work with. The wetland was subjected to the conventions and dictates of the European landscape aesthetic, especially of the picturesque, one of the three dominant modes with the sublime and the beautiful, and the one best suited to landscape architecture.

Mumford (1955: 88) gives Olmsted a more active role in the development of Central Park in which he transformed 800 acres, "chiefly rocks, swamps, [and] barren pasture," into "lakes and meadows." Mumford concludes by claiming that "by making nature urbane" Olmsted "naturalized the city." More precisely, he culturalized the city. By making nature move to an arranged design, as Raymond Williams (1973: 124) puts it in relation to the gentleman "improvers" in England, Olmsted not only culturalized the city but also mechanized the park. In a letter to his father Olmsted boasted that "I have got the park into a capital discipline, a perfect system, working like a machine" (cited by Rybczynski, 2003: 160). Olmsted belonged to the school (and caste) of gentleman farmers (or "improvers") of the park estate (see 31, 66, 79, and 81). Their catch-cry was "discipline and drain," discipline by drainage to produce the pastoro-technical idyll of the machine in the garden, the living, organic machine. Olmsted applied to the park the same

civil engineering and landscape aesthetic that he applied to the farm. Both were gentleman park estates. Parks, Schenker (2009: 5) argues, were "stylized representations of rural countryside" in both of which "marshes were drained." Olmsted was a serial swamp killer. Besides the swamps in Central Park in New York, he rearranged the Fens in Boston (as we will see in the following chapter) and drained the swamps in Buffalo and the marshland in Chicago (as we will see in Chapter 14; see also Sutton, "Introduction," Olmsted, 1997: 11).

Olmsted's naturalistic and picturesque landscape was a particular version of nature based largely on the conventions of the aesthetics of the English picturesque and landscape gardening of the pleasing prospect. There is a clear line of descent to Olmsted as the first American landscape architect (Barlow, 1972: 5), though he was unhappy with this title (Rybczynski, 2003: 261n.), from Humphry Repton as the first landscape gardener, if not landscape architect (and from William Gilpin's and Uvedale Price's aesthetics of the picturesque).[1] The aim in Central Park was to produce what Schenker (2009: 134) calls "a monumental, picturesque rendering of Nature" in a park, and not allow a monstrous, grotesque tendering of nature in a swamp to persist. Olmsted operated in the patriarchal paradigm of mechanized nature, and against the matrifocal paradigm of embodied knowledge (see Giblett, 2011: figure 1).

Olmsted could claim a biblical precedent in transforming the chaotic swamp into the Edenic garden. Dutch poet Jacob Steendham (cited by Burrows and Wallace, 1999: 3) exulted of Manhattan Island, "O this is Eden!" New York contended with Boston as the Eden of North America as we will see in the following chapter. English essayist Daniel Denton followed suit by calling this Eden "a terrestrial *Canaan*," a promised land, "where the Land floweth with milk and honey" (cited by Burrows and Wallace, 1999: 3). Along similar lines for F. Scott Fitzgerald's narrator Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* "the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailor's eyes [was] a fresh green breast of the new world" (cited by Barlow, 1971: 2; Berman, 1988: 298; Sanderson, 2009: 9). Perhaps needless to say this line did not make it into the recent Baz Luhrmann film production of *The Great Gatsby*. Perhaps Fitzgerald was alluding to the indigenous meaning of Mannahatta as "hilly island" (Homberger, 1994: 10 and 16).

By contrast, E. L. Doctorow's (1994: 156) narrator in *The Waterworks*, in a seeming rejoinder or rebuff to Denton and Fitzgerald, "envisages the first Dutch sailors giving up on the place as a mosquito-infested swamp." The island, in other words, is a good breast and the swamp is a bad breast. But both are the same place; the flowering island *is also* the mosquito-infested swamp. The mosquito-infested swamp *is* a fresh green breast. The good and bad breast of the Great Mother or Goddess of the flowering island of the matrifocal swamp was destroyed in becoming the city of New York. It was replaced by the good breast of the patriarchal Mother Earth of Olmsted's Central Park and its parkways (and by Robert Moses's Long Island parkways) and by the bad breast of Moses's Manhattan expressways. The good breast and the bad breast of the patriarchal city are both organic parts of patriarchal Mother Earth. Moses was "America's greatest builder," specifically "New York's master-builder" (Hall, 2014: 277 and 329).

Olmsted's Central Park and its parkways[2] were a pastoro-technical idyll of the machine in the garden[3] of the nineteenth century, whereas Robert Moses's parkways were a techno-pastoral ideal[4] of the garden in the machine[5] of the twentieth century. Both were "reimagineerings" (reimaginings and engineering) of the good breast in different centuries, in different registers of the relationship between technology and the pastoral, with different politics, ideologies, and locations but all involving the enclosure of the commons and the draining or filling of swamps. Olmsted's parks and parkways took place inside the city of New York, as did Moses's expressways, whereas Moses's parkways took place outside the city on Long Island. Berman (1988: 298 and 299) describes how Moses's "first Long Island roadscapes represent a modern attempt to recreate" the good breast in "a techno-pastoral garden." Moses's parkways were a techno-pastoral reimagineering of the nurturing wetland and good breast of Manhattan transplanted to Long Island, whereas his expressways blasted through the old neighborhoods of the city were the bad breast of a technicist hell giving new meaning to the idea of "expressway," and the fresh, green breast of mother Manhattan Island fed its indigenous inhabitants life-giving nourishment directly without any need to express it. "Of all the world's cities, New York" for Sennett (1994: 360) "has the most destroyed itself in order to grow." On this view, New York is a kind of self-parasitic

monster feeding on itself. It also fed on, and was nurtured by, the fresh green breast of mosquito-infested swamps.

As with other cities, the lost, forgotten, if not repressed, past of the city in the swamps returns in the figuring of its underside. In 1892 Count Harry Kessler arrived in New York by ship and related:

> What a wild phantasmagoria is such an entrance into a harbor at night! Our world, all that we otherwise see and feel, disappears, dissolves in the darkness, and its place is a world of dark shadowy forms, of sudden noises that abruptly cease, of fiery lights that consume themselves. Commands ring out through the darkness, hurried steps echo on the foredeck, the engines groan and crack, dark monsters race by with fiery red and green glowing eyes. From the shore shine blinking signals, long rows of glowing windows, the red flames of the forges leap into the night. In such moments we understand the medieval scholastics, the fear of the outside world, the shudder at the glimpse of nature, the horror of the hidden, demonic forces which, behind every appearance, lurk to destroy and swallow men. (Easton, 2011: 50)

Except that, unlike for the medieval scholastics, for the modern scholastics like Kessler "the hidden, demonic forces" are artificial forces of the modern, industrial city; the dark monsters racing by are mechanical demons produced by men and machines; they are metaphorical beings pressed into service to figure the dark and satanic underworld of the modern industrial city; they are not creatures of the marsh or swamp but creations of the "marshy" and "swampy" underside of the modern industrial city with its light and phantasmagorical overside (as we saw with St. Petersburg in the previous chapter and as Benjamin showed with Paris).

A couple of weeks later Kessler goes on to relate that in New York

> ramshackle wooden arcades cover the stoops and protect the wares in front to the doors for display [. . . including] unhealthy hunks of red flesh … piles of slimy clams in cozy proximity with oranges, apples, and half-rotten bananas. The smell that this creates is benumbing, a sort of compromise between fish, tar, and rotting fruit. The pavement consists of a row of deep holes in which half-melted, dirty snow, rusty pieces of iron [and] rotten banana peels close out [their] existence. Through this filth a swarm of men from all the countries of the world … wades and pushes. (Easton, 2011: 53)

The malodor of the city assaulting the sense of smell is a commonplace of city writing in the nineteenth century, as is the dirty and muddy city pavement, neither solid, nor liquid, nor clean. Swarming creatures are an abomination, according to Leviticus, as they are neither fish nor flesh nor fowl, as they inhabit neither land nor air nor water. They are slimy creatures of the swamp.

The slime goes hand in hand with the sublime in the modern city. At midday on the following day Kessler "spent a long time on the Brooklyn Bridge," that icon of modernity, and described how "the feeling of unlimited wealth, of bold, youthful energy, of the grandiose creations of millions of people, the sensation of immeasurable strength, creates the feeling of an almost painful *aesthetic* beauty, as is the case will all great natural spectacles, among the towering peaks of the Alps, on the storm-tossed sea" (Easton, 2011: 54; emphasis in the original). Except that the sublimity of the modern city is not a great natural spectacle but a great cultural one. Kessler is singing word-for-word from the hymn sheet of the Germanic romantic sublime. The modern city is also for Kessler the site of the technological sublime as "in the dusty, dark air, the thick network of telegraph wires span the space between the earth and the sky like gloomy prison bars threatening disaster" (55). Telegraphy is a sublime communication technology that sublimates the solid matter of the earth into air (see Giblett, 2008b: chapter 3).

Along similar lines to Kessler, and nearly thirty years later, Ernst Bloch (1998: 304 and 307–308) in his 1929 essay, "The Anxiety of the Engineer" argues that

> in the Americanized big city … technology has achieved an apparent victory over the limits of nature. For the coefficient of known and, more significantly, unknown danger has increased proportionately … The existence of the technologically advanced city is extremely dangerous and completely lacking in beneficent harmonies. There, natural correlations have been torn apart—as in New York or similar places where the world has become a scene of commercial activity and intercourse. The city of ever-increasing artificiality, in its detachment and distance from the natural landscape, is simultaneously so complex and so vulnerable that it is increasingly threatened by accidents to the same extent that it has rooted itself in midair—that is, the city is built upon roots that have grown more and more synthetic. This grandly suspended, inorganic metropolis

> must defend itself daily, hourly, against the elements as though against an enemy invasion. But most important, these elements are not of the old kind, made up of conventional modes of chance and accident. Instead, they dwell amid the complexities of mechanized existence itself; with respect to "nature," they inhabit nothingness: a nature consisting of nothing but calculations, a nature that arrived with the machine and that increasingly has taken up residence under less perceptible conditions, in ever more "mathematized" dimensions … the nothingness that stands behind the mechanized world, a world unmediated by humanity, is a mortuary in which people have been buried alive.

The city of New York mathematized space not only vertically in the skyscraper but also horizontally in the grid plan, plots, and streets north of Washington Square (Homberger, 2002: 26). New York for Sennett (1994: 359) is "a grid city par excellence" with "no fixed edge or center." Invoking William Blake's concept of "fearful symmetry," for Burrows and Wallace (1999: 420–421),

> there is nothing new about grids. City planners had relied on them for thousands of years, and they were deployed throughout the American [as well as Canadian and Australian] colonies … What was new about the Manhattan grid was its ruthless utilitarianism … Manhattan's ancient hills, dales, swamps, springs, streams, ponds, forests, and meadows—none were permitted to interrupt its fearful symmetry … The grid enshrined republican as well as realtor values.

The ruthless utilitarianism of the Manhattan grid is plain to see in the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 (264 and 421) and in the Viele Waterway Map of 1872 (Barlow, 1971, unp.) in which the fearful symmetry of the grid is superimposed over the fluid curvaceousness of the hills, dales, swamps, springs, streams, ponds, forests, and meadows of the British Headquarters Map of circa 1782–83. "New York's dominant commercial classes," as Burrows and Wallace (1999: 422) call them, not only "thus engraved their vision on the city," but also inscribed their vision for their city first on a blank sheet of paper and then on the tabula rasa of the drained and filled (wet)land.

The "city" for de Certeau (1984: 94; his scare quotation marks) "must repress all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it," including, in the case of Manhattan, the wetlands of Mannahatta. But

the repressed always returns, and the city is no exception as the marshy or swampy geographical and historical repressed of the city is never totally suppressed or destroyed. The mosquito-infested swamp *before* the city becomes the unsanitary conditions of the foul and stagnant waters *of* the city. New York by 1830 for Burrows and Wallace (1999: 588), "it was widely agreed, was the filthiest urban center in the United States . . . Great heaps of mud, garbage, and animal excrement piled up in the streets, forming a stinking mash labeled 'Corporation Pudding' by a disgusted citizenry," also described by Burrows and Wallace as "the vile stew" and "the awful offal." In accordance with prevailing miasmatic theory of disease of the time, "poisonous vapors rising from the streets [were seen] as major contributors to the plague" of cholera that swept New York in 1832 (594).

Perhaps it is hardly surprising then that the foul and stagnant waters of the sewers of New York are the habitat in urban legend for alligators. Yet for Bruce Hallenbeck (2013: 61) "the tales of alligators in the New York City sewers have much more than a grain of truth to them," and he goes on to present these loaves of truth. These tales date from newspaper accounts of the 1930s, were legitimized in the late 1950s with Robert Daley's (1959: 187–189) *The World Beneath the City* with a chapter on "Alligators in the Sewers," were fictionalized in the early 1960s with Thomas Pynchon's (1963) great postmodern novel *V*, and were filmed in 1980 with the horror film *Alligator*, albeit set in Chicago, but clearly based on these accounts. These stories first emerged in the 1930s when Teddy May was the superintendent of sewers, or the "King of the Sewers" as Daley (1959: 174) calls him in a chapter devoted to him, as "he reigned below ground like a king" (175). May deposed the alligators, the king of tropical swamps and marshes, as king of the sewers in an act of regicide. May was also "mayor under the streets of New York" and the Bruneseau of New York, like his nineteenth-century Parisian counterpart, as "he knew every turn and joint of New York's 560 miles of sewers" (174–175), just as Bruneseau did with the sewers of Paris. Both men mapped the sewers of their respective cities. Daley goes on to relate how May "also had the only topographical map of the original island, showing where the marsh ground had been" (175). This sounds suspiciously like the British Headquarters Map of circa 1782–83 that was so important for Sanderson (2009: endpapers and

50–51). As Bruneseau was Napoleon's inspector of sewers in Paris, it is fittingly ironic that May had a "Napoleonesque manner" (Daley, 1959: 175).

May was initially skeptical about alligators in the sewers until he saw them for himself when, like Bruneseau, he went on a journey of discovery as another "Columbus of the cloaca" of the new world beneath the city. A few alligators were hunted down and shot by May's inspectors armed with .22 rifles and pistols in what Daley (1959: 189) calls "possibly the most unusual hunting on earth, a veritable sewer safari." This urban myth or tall story is the basis for the episodes of Thomas Pynchon's (1963: 113) *V* in which Benny Profane is employed as an underground hunter on sewer safari armed with "a 12-gauge repeating shotgun." Pynchon satirizes May as Zeitsuss who "was aware that most hunters regard use of this weapon like anglers feel about dynamiting fish [*sic*]; but he was not looking for write-ups in *Field and Stream*" (113). The irony here is that this story did later get a write-up in *Field and Stream*, which took exception to Pynchon's understanding of firepower (see Reiger, 1978).

May's and his men's happy hunting ground was the battlefield against the alligators and streams of sewerage underground that they made their home. The story goes that alligators had got into the sewers when

> kids all over Nueva York bought these little alligators for pets. Macy's was selling them for fifty cents, every child, it seemed, had to have one. But soon the children got bored with them. Some set them loose in the streets, but most flushed them down the toilets. And these had grown and reproduced, had fed off rats and sewage, so that now they moved big, blind, albino, all over the sewer system. Down there, God knew how many there were. Some had turned cannibal because in their neighborhood the rats had all been eaten, or had fled in terror. (Pynchon, 1963: 43; compare with Daley, 1959: 188)

In Melville's *Moby Dick* the obsessive Captain Ahab hunts the white whale across the greatest ocean of the world; in Pynchon's (1963: 111) postmodern parodic reprise Benny Profane hunts a pinto alligator ("pale white, seaweed black") beneath the greatest city in the world in an inverted, if not subverted, carnivalesque play on the great American novel. Just as Melville captured the maritime metropolis of New York and evokes its affects for New Yorkers of his day, so Pynchon captures the subterranean metropolis of New York and

evokes its affects for New Yorkers of his day. Just as Melville's Ishmael made a myth out of whale hunting, so Pynchon's (1963: 142) Profane and Angel "added detail, color" to the story of the alligators in the sewers and together they "hammered together a myth." Like the myth of the white whale, the myth of the alligators in the sewers taps into unconscious fears and desires. *Moby Dick* is the great novel of "Man versus nature" across the oceans of the earth; *V* is the great novel of "Man versus cultural nature" inside the sewers of the city.

Profane pursues the pinto alligator and confronts it in "a wide space like the nave of a church" beneath the city that mirrors the churches above. "A phosphorescent light coming off the walls whose exact arrangement was indistinct" illuminates this underground nave. Profane is at a loss to explain the light. He speculates that "sea water shines in the dark sometimes; in the wake of ship you see the same uncomfortable radiance. But not here. The alligator had turned to him." Profane eventually kills the pinto alligator in a nave-like space, which is also "a bonecellar, a sepulcher." The killing of the alligator is a kind of secular mass or communion performed in a sepulchral nave in which "blood began to seep out amoebalike to form shifting patterns with the weak glow of the water" (Pynchon, 1963: 122–123) in a kind of milky, semenal discharge reminiscent of the sperm whales slaughtered for their blubber and oil in *Moby Dick*.

This episode haunts Profane who remembers it later and contemplates the inequitable exchange and the asymmetrical and nonreciprocal relationship between the hunter and the hunted (Pynchon, 1963: 146). The alligators give life because they give employment, but the hunting inspectors give death in exchange "tit for tat" (146). However, the hunted alligator can become the hunter and the hunting inspector can become the hunted as occurred "when a gator turned and attacked" and Profane has to shoot it. Rather than the amoebalike-sacrament of the pinto alligator's demise that gives light and life in the underground nave lit by an uncomfortable, bio-luminescent radiance, the death of this alligator in the dark results in Profane "standing by the headless corpse watching a steady stream of sewage wash its life blood out to one of the rivers" (147) in a secular and profane black mass in the sewers of the city. Profane is profane by name and nature and certainly not sacred in the secular city.

The New York sewer in *V*, as Brian Jarvis (1998: 58) puts it, is "portrayed allegorically as an underworld, vernacular geography of secret spaces and 'sewer stories' which go beyond truth, falsity and the rationalism of the alienating cityscape above."

Pynchon's countergeography of the world beneath the city in the sewers subverts the world of the city above and taps into the unconscious of the city. Unlike Bruneseau and May who were "a Columbus of the cloaca" of Paris and New York, respectively, Pynchon is the Columbus of the unconscious of the city who accepted Thoreau's (1982: 560) invitation in *Walden* to "be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought." Pynchon is the Columbus of the world beneath the city, the grotesque lower urban stratum.

Pynchon taps into and operates in the register of what Freud called the uncanny. For both writers, alligators (and crocodiles for Freud as well) are vehicles and vectors for the uncanny. The uncanny is not only a return to the past but also in quasi-Freudian terms "a return *to* the repressed," including the colonial and urban repressed. For Freud the uncanny is literally *unheimlich*, unhomely, but also homely, contradictory feelings that he found associated in the minds of adult males with the first home of the womb.

The uncanny for Freud was also applicable not only to the native quaking zone of the swamp but also to the artificial quaking zone of the dark underside of the city, which for him was an object, or more precisely abject, of horror and fascination (as we saw in Chapter 2). In Freud's "The Uncanny" the alligator and crocodile emerge as a figure for the colonial repressed to which he returns via the vehicle and vector of the artifacts of colonialism located in the imperial capital city, which bear the traces of other, alien, or exotic places and peoples (as alligators in the sewers do too). Perhaps no animal has been more deified/demonized than the alligator and crocodile, the "monarch of the marsh," and the "king of beasts" of the tropical swamp. The alligatorian and the crocodilian have been repressed for a long time, at least since Freud's time and it still persists. For Vollmar (1972: ix) "crocodiles, alligators and caimans both horrify and fascinate." In Freud's ([1919] 2003: 123) terms, they are uncanny as he defines the uncanny as that which "belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread," and I define the uncanny as both horrifying and fascinating (Giblett, 1996). Vollmar (1972: ix) suggests that

"lurid travellers' tales of evil reptiles lying loglike in tropical mud, ready to snatch and devour the unwary human, linger in the memory." Freud ([1919] 2003: 151) developed the uncanny from reading one such tale, L. G. Moberly's "Inexplicable" published in *The Strand Magazine* in 1917 (see also Moberly, [1917] 1991).

In *The Uncanny* Freud ([1919] 2003: 151) relates how

> I read a story about a young couple who move into a furnished flat in which there is a curiously shaped table with crocodiles carved in the wood. Towards evening the flat is regularly pervaded by an unbearable and highly characteristic smell, and in the dark the tenants stumble over things and fancy they see something undefinable gliding over the stairs. In short, one is led to surmise that, owing to the presence of this table, the house is haunted by ghostly crocodiles, or that the wooden monsters come to life in the dark, or something of the sort. It was quite a naïve story, but its effect was extraordinarily uncanny.

In his reading of Moberly's story Freud downplays the role of real alligators and ignores the swamp as the place par excellence of the uncanny (see Giblett, 1996). The home, or perhaps more precisely the "unhome," of the slimy, and the uncanny, is the wetland and the sewery vestiges of the marshes and swamps beneath and before the city. They are also the home, or unhome, for alligators and crocodiles, the "king" of the tropical wetland and of the sewer, the obverse of the temperate dry land of the city above, and the archetypal swamp monster par excellence.[6]

The city and the alligator come together in Pynchon's *V* (as we have seen); the city and the crocodile come together in Bruno Schulz's ([1934] 2008) short prose piece (hardly a story), "The Street of Crocodiles," in which prostitutes are figured as crocodiles. Implicitly the red-light district of the city is figured as swamp. The Street of Crocodiles, however, appears on "an old and beautiful map of our city" hanging on the narrator's father's wall as "the empty whiteness that usually marks polar regions or unexplored countries of which almost nothing is known" (63–64). This blank space is reminiscent of Thoreau's insistent and self-directed question in *Walden* that "is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered" (Thoreau, 1982: 560). The blank space on the map is also reminiscent of Melville's meditation on whiteness in *Moby Dick*, which is

simultaneously inviting and terrifying. It is also reminiscent of the heart of darkness of Conrad's eponymous novella marked in red on maps as part of the British Empire, an intriguing and inviting space awaiting exploration and colonization. These chromatic qualities only exacerbate "the equivocal and doubtful character of that peculiar area, so unlike the rest of the city. It was an industrial and commercial district" and "a parasitical quarter" attached to the host of the old city that "shot up here in a rich but empty and colorless vegetation of pretentious vulgarity. One could see there cheap jerry-built houses with grotesque facades, covered with a monstrous stucco of cracked plaster." The Street of Crocodiles is monstrous like its namesake, the grotesque lower urban stratum where "the scum, the lowest orders had settled" (Schulz, [1934] 2008: 64).

Like Freud venturing uncannily into the red-light district of a small Italian town, so some city-dwellers would "venture half by chance into that dubious district" of the Street of Crocodiles and there find "immersion in that shallow mud of companionship, of easy intimacy, of dirty intermingling" in the nether world of the uncanny city of dreadful night. Rather than the white space on the map, the red-light district was not red at all but a place where "everything was grey … as in black-and-white photographs" (Schulz, [1934] 2008: 65). These are not auratic photographs as Walter Benjamin put it in relation to early photographs (as we saw in Chapter 3). Rather, they are "like a photograph in an illustrated magazine, so grey, so one-dimensional" (67). These photographs are of a flat time and space of death as in Benjamin's reading of Atget's photographs of Paris in which the deserted streets are like the scene of a crime (as we also saw in Chapter 3). Interestingly, Benjamin and Schulz were both sons of Jewish parents and almost exact contemporaries as they were both born in the same year (1892) and died within two years of each other as victims of Nazism.

As in Freud's small Italian town, the denizens of the Street of Crocodiles are prostitutes "showily dress in long lace-trimmed gowns" who "advance with a quick rapacious step, each with some small flaw in her evil corrupted face; their eyes have a black, crooked squint, or they have harelips, or the tips of their noses are missing. The inhabitants of the city are quite proud of the odor of corruption emanating from the Street of Crocodiles" (Schulz, [1934] 2008: 70). The monstrous street is inhabited by monstrous creatures who are

a source of both fascination and horror among the good citizens. Like Freud's peripatetic and compulsive return to the red-light district provoking the mirth of the prostitutes at his discomfiture, the monstrous crocodiles of the Street of Crocodiles are bearers and embodiments of the monstrous uncanny in which the fascinating and horrific are projected onto, and embodied in, a monster.

On the Street of Crocodiles there is "a fermentation of desires, prematurely aroused and therefore impotent and empty" (Schulz, [1934] 2008: 71). The Street of Crocodiles is a Bachelor Machine for a Bachelor Birth (as discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to Paris). The city itself is a Bachelor Machine for a Bachelor Birth. The city sublime sublimates the slimy swamps into streets and skyscrapers, and desublimates streets and skyscrapers into sewers. As a Bachelor Machine for a Bachelor Birth, the Street of Crocodiles for Jerzy Ficowski (2003: 95) "in Schulz's stories became the symbol of the bewitching and pathological beauty of imitation which conceals seeds of a magical metamorphosis." A Bachelor Machine for a Bachelor Birth is a simulacrum whose seeds never reach fertile ground, such as a swamp, and propagate, and so conception and magical metamorphosis never occurs. It is a phantom, or phanstasmatic, pregnancy in which "a passing excitement swells into an empty parasitic growth" of the monstrous (Schulz, [1934] 2008: 71). This parasitic growth is hosted on and by the body politic, the body urban, urban nature that is not urbane. Like the bad air and smells, the urban miasma feared by nineteenth-century writers about the city, "over the whole area [of the Street of Crocodiles] … floats the lazy licentious smell of sin" (71). This immoral miasma is a threat more to propriety than to health. It certainly stifles creativity and originality for "in that city of cheap human material no instincts can flourish, no dark and unusual passions can be aroused" (71). Like the slums of other modern cities, "the Street of Crocodiles was a concession of our city to modernity and metropolitan corruption" (72). Does not every modern city make and have such a concession in two senses of the word, one in the sense of giving away reluctantly and the other in the business and legal sense of giving access to land and customers, denying and repressing the wetlands on which it was built, which nevertheless return in the very tropes for the grotesque lower stratum of the city and its denizens, the alligators and crocodiles, real or imagined? New York is a case in point.

10

Boston: "Tidal Flats and Marshes Once Surrounded the City"

Founded in 1630, Boston, like New York, is older than St. Petersburg founded in 1703 and one of the oldest cities in North America, certainly one of the oldest in the United States of America (Rawson, 2010: 15; Seasholes, 2003: 3; Teal and Teal, 1969: 241). As the "capital of New England," Boston had both a marshy and a divine beginning as an earthly and heavenly city founded on watery earth. On his voyage in 1630 to New England, John Winthrop, drawing on Matthew 5:14, proclaimed in a sermon that the Puritans in the new world would be "a city upon a hill" (cited by Hall, 2014: 1; Rawson, 2010: 13). Boston was founded as one such Puritan city. Yet Boston was also established in an area surrounded by marshes and tidal mud flats. Boston was both a city on a hill, thus mirroring what the later Puritan John Bunyan ([1678, 1684] 2008: 17–19) called the celestial city in paradise, and a city in a swamp, thus also mirroring Bunyan's Slough of Despond on the road from the city of destruction on earth. Boston was both a city upon a hill and a city in a swamp, a metropolis in a marsh. Both locations are redolent of Puritan and biblical associations, both of which were secularized with similar moralistic and nationalistic overtones, and both of which involved the destruction of wetlands.

In their justly famous and pioneering book on the salt marsh, John and Mildred Teal (1969: 240) begin the second paragraph of their chapter on "Human Destruction of Marshes" by relating how "old Boston set an example of marsh filling which was followed by many other cities as they grew up along the East Coast." Perhaps that should be "bad example." Other such

cities on the east coast of North America include New York and Washington. The Teals go on to relate the history of marsh filling in the Boston area in a marsh-by-marsh account spanning the next 250 years and over the following five pages until "all traces of the old marshes and mud flats were gone" by 1880 (245). The Teals' account of marsh filling in Boston is curiously not cited in recent histories of Boston who both prefer the euphemistic "land making" (Rawson, 2010; Seasholes, 2003).

Rawson (2010: 1, 2, 15, 23, 196, and 197; see also 206 and 220) in his recent study of "the making of Boston" as the "Eden on the Charles River," describes on the first page how Bostonians took down hills to "make new land by filling tidal flats" in a massive cut and fill engineering enterprise culminating in "the filling of the Back Bay" with its "shallow waters," thereby "converting water into land." Or in more Christian terms, converting pagan wetland into Christian dryland, early creation swamp into later Edenic garden. Rawson does not mention the destruction of the marshes as such, despite citing Edward Everett Hale who refers to "the marshes" of Boston (cited by Rawson, 2010: 1). Along similar lines to Hale in the 1820s, William Lawrence in the 1850s described the Back Bay as "water and marsh" (cited by Whitehill, 1968: 141). The Back Bay for Sam Warner (1999: 9) was "finished off by having its marshes converted into a handsome park (the Fenway)" by Frederick Law Olmsted in an act of both aquaterracide and landscape architecture, death and resurrection, the old life of the marsh converted into the new life of landscaping.

The process of marsh filling and destruction construed in evangelical Christian terms culminated with Frederick Law Olmsted, who, as we will see later and according to Whitehill (1968: 181), "converted the noxious flats of the Muddy River [to the west of the Charles River] into a healthy and decorative park known as the Back Bay Fens," a park that was no longer a fen as park and fen are inimical to each other, a park that was a fen in name only. In the meantime, before it was converted, and as the pretext for its conversion, the Muddy River became what Whitehill calls a "Stygian morass" (180), a marshy river of the underworld as in Dante's *Inferno* ([1314] 2006: 63; see also Giblett, 1996: 27–29). Boston wetlands went from underworld to overworld, from hell to Eden, and then to heaven, or at least the world of the blessed after death if David Gourlay had had his way. In Gourlay's 1844 proposal the Back Bay was to be dredged and kept filled with clear water for "health, cleanliness and

beauty" (cited by Whitehill, 1968: 149). The dredged mud would be used for the construction of an island to be known as the Elysian Fields, the place of the blessed after death. As both "Eden on the Charles" and Elysian Fields in the Back Bay, Boston would have been paradise at both the beginning and end of divine history and at both ends of chronological time.

Boston was not only "a city of hills" and a city in a marsh, but also a city that took down hills to fill wetlands in a great leveling of the land by cutting down the high places to fill the low places in order to produce a flat surface on which the inscription of the city could take place. Rawson (2010: 3) cites Henry Tappan for whom "life in a great city is, at best, a war with nature." The life of a great city set in swamps or marshes was, at birth, a war against wetlands, the kind of war that the Fascist Mussolini liked to fight because it was so easy to win (Giblett, 1996: 115). Rather than a city in a swamp, Boston, as Rawson (2010: 13) cites later, wanted to be "a city upon a hill" (as we have seen), before many were taken down or reduced (as graphically depicted by Rawson to fill marshes [198–199]). Boston also wanted to be the "Athens of America," the ersatz ancient Greek precursor to Washington, the Rome of America, the equally ersatz ancient Latin successor on the Tiber of the Potomac (as we will see in Chapter 13).

By focusing on tidal flats and neglecting the term "marsh" and preferring the euphemistic "making new land" and "landmaking" to marsh filling, Rawson is following in the muddy footsteps and repeating the conventional view of Seasholes (2003: 2), who, in her study of Boston entitled *Gaining Ground*, uses the term "landmaking" in which land is "created by filling in the tidal flats and marshes that once surrounded the city." Landmaking is wetland unmaking; gaining ground is at the expense of losing marshes; gaining dryland means losing wetland; making land means unmaking wetland; landmaking is a euphemism for marsh filling. Boston not only began the dire tradition of marsh filling among east coast cities, but also probably kept ahead of all such cities in doing so. Boston for Seasholes "probably has more made land than any other city in North America" (2). In other words, Boston has probably filled in and destroyed more wetlands than any other city in North America, a dubious distinction.

The single biggest area of tidal marsh in Boston to be filled was Back Bay. Newman and Holton (2006: xii) begin their study of the wetland filling of Back

Bay by claiming that "this is the largest landfill project ever undertaken in the United States for residential and commercial purposes" and conclude that it was "the most ambitious landfill project and urban development effort of the nineteenth century." Not just in the United States but in the whole world. Back Bay, according to Seasholes (2003: 154), "originally about 737.5 acres in extent, was a vast expanse of tidal flats interlaced with navigable creeks. It was divided into two unequal parts by a marshy … promontory." There is some dispute over this figure though. According to Newman and Holton (2006: vii; see also 11) "the original Back Bay tidal marsh … covered about 850 acres."

As Boston developed and expanded the backwater bay soon became blackwater bay as "sewage was discharged onto the [tidal] flats surrounding the city, most notably in Back Bay, which by [the] mid [nineteenth]-century was described [in a report for the city of Boston] as a 'great cesspool … [with] a greenish scum … while … the surface of the water … bubbl[es] like a cauldron with the noxious gases that are exploding from the corrupting mass below'" (Seasholes, 2003: 7 and 172; see also Whitehill, 1968: 145).

The same report for the city of Boston went on to say that into this "great cesspool is daily deposited all the filth of a large and constantly increasing population" (cited by Newman and Holton, 2006: 40). In accordance with the prevailing miasmatic theory of disease of the day, the cesspool of sewage breathed out "pestilential exhalations" that the west wind sent across the entire city. Newman and Holton conclude that "presumed health hazards caused by the pollution [of Back Bay wetlands] thus created a crisis that was one of the primary motivations for the filling of the Back Bay" wetlands (42–43). Instead of cleaning up the polluters at the top end of the pipe, the polluted wetland at the bottom end of the pipe was filled. This "bottom of the pipe" solution hardly solves the problem at the top end of the pipe. The health hazards posed by polluted wetland were misconceived in the mistaken view of the miasmatic theory of disease as being produced by the wetland.

As a result, the wetland became regarded as "a wasteland. And a wasteland it soon became" as the Teals (1969: 244) point out. Wetland to wasteland marks the sad and sorry history of many urban wetlands. This transformation took place in name and in fact. Yet as wetlands were often regarded as wastelands in name in the first place, the transformation of wetlands into wastelands in fact was a self-fulfilling and self-congratulatory prophecy with

wetlands being named as wastelands. If the wetland was wasteland, it was only natural that it became a wasteland. It was merely fulfilling its manifest or divine destiny.

The wet wasteland was unpleasant to both the eye and the nose, to the sense of sight and smell. "The mud flats on either side of the Charles" for Albert Matthews (cited by Whitehill, 1968: 156) were "an offense to the eye and a dire affront to the nose." The polluted Muddy River was described by E. W. Howe (180) as "the foulest marsh and muddy flats to be found anywhere in Massachusetts without a single attractive feature." The wetland was not only aesthetically displeasing but also olfactorily offensive, not in its natural, or precontact, state, but in its now cultural state. The polluted marshes of the Muddy River in the late nineteenth for Whitehill were "richly fragrant with sewage," not with the bouquet of living marsh (158).

The wetland became wasteland, which, like the mud flats, were so offensive "both to the eye and the nose" (cited by Zaitzevsky, 1982: 153) and potentially injurious to the health of Bostonians that it had to be filled, another step in the fulfillment of its manifest destiny. Yet the Bostonians in their wisdom, or lack of it, had created the unhealthy wetland in the first place as the Back Bay had become in the 1850s what William Lawrence described as "the city dump, where ashes and other refuse were thrown by tipcarts" (cited by Whitehill, 1968: 145). The Back Bay city dump in the 1850s was habituated by those denizens of the urban underworld, the rag pickers, or *chiffoniers*, beloved of Baudelaire and Benjamin in Paris and graphically depicted by Winslow Homer in Boston (155, figure 85; Seasholes, 2003: 185, figure 7.24).

By midcentury what Whitehill (1968: 150) calls "the unsanitary aspects of the Back Bay [including a common sewer entering it (145)] forced public action" with the filling of the Back Bay beginning in 1858 (Newman and Holton, 2006: 121). In the late nineteenth century, according to Whitehill (1968: 173), the city created "a new heart" in what "a few short decades before had been a stinking eyesore." In other words, the city created a new heart in its smelly nether regions, its grotesque lower earthly and urban stratum. It converted what Howe (cited by Whitehill, 1968: 180) went on to call "a body of water so foul that even clams and eels cannot live there," an uninhabitable place for nonhuman animals made into such by human animals, into a new heart for the city.

The Back Bay commissioners initially "envisioned the transformation of slime and sludge into 'a magnificent system of streets and squares' on solid land on one side of the Back Bay" (Mackin, 1999: 204), and the other side later into park and Fenway. City authorities welcomed the transformation. Seasholes (2003: 173) cites "an 1853 city report [that] stated, 'if the improvements [in Back Bay] are consummated, a putrid and worthless marsh will be changed to solid and wholesome dry land.'" In other words, wet land was unwholesome and useless; only dry land is useful and wholesome. But the putrid and worthless wetland had been made unwholesome by the discharge of sewage into it. Wetlands without the excessive discharge of sewage into them are perfectly wholesome and worthy of conservation, and neither ready nor ripe for "gaining ground" and "landmaking." The health hazards posed by the polluted wetland misconceived in the mistaken view of the miasmatic theory of disease were consummated in the use of the monstrous steam shovel and railroad to dredge, drain, and fill, or landscape in the case of the Back Bay Fens, the supine wetland (Newman and Holton, 2006: 79–92; Seasholes, 2003: 172–198; Whitehill, 1968: 152–153).

The transformation of the Back Bay marshes and tidal flats culminated in the 1880s when Frederick Law Olmsted, "the father of American landscape architecture" (Hall, 2014: 46) and "the nation's most eminent landscape architect" (Zaitzevsky, 1982: 52) designed what he called the "Back Bay." Seasholes (2003: 8; see also 215–216) emphasizes that the Back Bay Fens project, "which created the first park in Boston's new public park system, was undertaken not to create a recreational area but to deal with the sewage that had been carried into" it. This "wetland-remaking" project eventually created an area in total of 397 acres of dry land, more than half the original area of Back Bay (423). Rather than "landmaking," the Back Bay Fens project was more precisely wetland-remaking, or constructing an artificial wetland (perhaps the first in the world), as Olmsted designed "Back Bay Fens" (215 and 220; Zaitzevsky, 1982: 57). He did not design "Back Bay Park" as fens can't be parks, and parks aren't fens.

Without subscribing explicitly to the miasmatic theory of disease, Olmsted (1997: 226–277) wrote in 1881 that "the leading and only justifying purpose of the Back Bay Improvement, under the present design, is the abatement of a complicated nuisance, threatening soon to be a deadly peril to the whole city

as a propagating and breeding-ground of pestilential epidemics." Olmsted does not say whether miasma or other vectors conveyed these "pestilential epidemics." Yet the implication is clear that the Back Bay wetland itself was the breeding ground for "pestilential epidemics" and not that its now polluted waters were the breeding ground for "pestilential epidemics."

Olmsted for Beveridge and Rocheleau (1998: 83) "had not been comfortable with the idea of creating a highly finished and decorative park on the mudflats and marsh of the proposed Back Bay site." He was not comfortable with the idea of a park and came up with his own plan. Zaitzevsky (1982: 55–57; see also 186) argues:

> The rationale behind the plan was very far from what was commonly understood as a park, as Olmsted painstakingly explained; the design was primarily a sanitary improvement … A second aim was to restore the salt marsh to its original condition … He therefore designed the area so that it would *appear to be* a natural marsh *around which a city happened to grow.* (My emphases)

This design enacted a techno-pastoral idyll of a city growing accidentally around a marsh, instead of, as in just about every other case, a city destroying a marsh in order to grow. Olmsted's design amounted to nothing less than returning part of the city to its original state surrounded by tidal flats and marshes, except that the marsh surrounding the city was now surrounded by the city; the city that was contained originally by marshes now contained a rejuvenated artificial marsh.

Olmsted tried to have a bet both ways in the inimical relationship of city and marsh. To try to do so, he designed "a marsh *in* the city" as Zaitzevsky (1982: 57; my emphasis) precisely puts it. Zaitzevsky relates how "Olmsted decided, for both practical and aesthetic reasons, to keep the Fens a salt marsh" (154). For Rybczynski (2003: 342) "the problem, Olmsted quickly realized, was not how to design a park." That would have been easy for Olmsted as Central Park in New York demonstrates (as we saw in the previous chapter). The more perplexing problem was twofold, a sanitary and civil engineering problem of sewage and tides. To solve the sewage problem "in collaboration with the city engineer he devised a plan that diverted the sewage into underground conduits and solved the tidal problem by creating an

artificial salt-grass marsh. This was not scenic design … It was not intended to be a work of art" (342–343). Nor was it intended to be a work of wetland rehabilitation and restoration as those terms were not in the nineteenth-century landscape architect's lexicon. But it was intended to be an artificial wetland, and it may have been the first artificial wetland to be constructed. Olmsted's Back Bay Fens for Anne Whiston Spirn (1995: 104) were "the first attempt, so far as I know, to *construct* a wetland" (her emphasis). The result was not only "unparklike," as Zaitzevsky (1982: 57) puts it, but also "wetlandlike." Zaitzevsky relates how "this choice committed him to a planting program so innovative that it literally had no precedent" as he had to research and plant wetland plants (186).

Zaitzevsky (1982: 57) relates that "the salt marsh design survived" for only fifteen years after the Fens project was complete at the time of Olmsted's retirement in 1895. She concludes that "the marshes are, of course, gone" and "it is futile to regret the original salt marshes." It is not futile, though, to mourn their loss, to commemorate their passing in retelling their history, and to hope that a marsh in the city will become more prevalent in the future in other cities in keeping with Olmsted's visionary design for the Back Bay Fens.

Olmstead participated in a nineteenth-century movement of urban nature, or more precisely urbane nature (as we saw in the previous chapter with Central Park in New York), whose prophet, poet, priest, and philosopher was Boston-born Ralph Waldo Emerson for whom "Nature [invariably with a capital 'N'] is sanative, refining, elevating" (cited by Mackin, 1999: 212 [citing "Progress of Culture"]). In his lecture and poem on Boston (excerpted at the beginning of the lecture or used in part as an epigraph), Emerson ignores the Back Bay Fens. Emerson (1904a: 213; 1904b: 182) begins his poem about Boston by describing how it "looked eastward" toward the sea, and not westward toward the Back Bay, and how "twice each day the flowing sea / Took Boston in its arms." Some residents complained that twice each day the tides of flowing sewage took Boston in its arms. Emerson (1904a: 215) later describes how "Each street leads downward to the sea, / Or landward to the West." Some streets also lead downward to the west to marsh and flats, and so more precisely lead wetland-ward to the west. Emerson (1904a: 215) invokes

and lauds Boston as "O happy town beside the sea." Boston is not also a happy town beside the marsh and flats for Emerson.

In his lecture on Boston delivered there in 1861 and first published in 1892, ten years after his death, Boston for Emerson (1904b: 188) "commands attention as the town which was appointed in the destiny of nations to lead the civilization of North America." The manifest destiny of the United States to conquer the continent resides for Emerson not in the nation but in the city of Boston. Emerson regards Boston as a better location for the foundation of European civilization in North America than Plymouth. He later lauds Boston's situation on "our beautiful bay with its broad and deep waters" (190) and ignores the broad and shallow waters of the Back Bay marshes and flats. "The best point for a city was at the bottom of a deep and indented bay" for Emerson (190) "where a bold shore was bounded by a country of rich undulating woodland," but where in fact a bold shore on the seaward segued into the moving boundaries of the Back Bay fen of rich flat wetland.

Emerson's Boston Brahmin and urbane view of "Nature" as "sanative, refining, elevating" can be contrasted with the swampy view of his fellow-Concordian and ostensibly fellow-Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, and his view of nature as equally healing, but also unrefined and lowering. Thoreau also upsets the usual dissociation between swamp and city by seeing the city as swamp and so subverting the unfavorable connotations of the swamp as a place of darkness, disease, and even death. Rather than the swamp, Thoreau saw "society," "civilization," and the modern city as bearers of disease, or perhaps more precisely he saw the modern city as swamp in the conventional sense of an uncanny and unhomely place of disease and horror, and saw simultaneously the swamp as canny and homely, as postmodern dwelling in the unconventional sense of a homely, but also wild (homely *because* wild) place. Thoreau (1962) could "see less difference between a city and some dismallest swamp then formerly. It is a swamp too dismal and dreary, however, for me." Although he would prefer the swamp as swamp over the city as swamp, he nevertheless goes on to make a finer distinction: "I would prefer even a more cultivated place, free from miasma and crocodiles" (*II*, 47).

Perhaps Thoreau was wise to prefer "a more cultivated place" free of crocodiles, though this did not mean that he preferred the city to the swamp, especially as the former could be as dangerous in common parlance as the latter. The city as swamp for Thoreau (1982: 350; emphasis in the original) had its own diseases and horrors:

> Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place which we call *reality*.

Ironically or fortuitously, and probably unknown to Thoreau, the four cities he mentions were founded in, or next to, and expanded into swamps as we have seen. Thoreau's hometown of Concord had its surrounding swamps as the topographic maps of the area of his time show and as he mentions (as we will see shortly and as his most recent biographer reiterates[1]). Thoreau visited and wrote about these swamps, such as Gowing's Swamp as will see shortly. His homoerotic search for a hard or tight bottom (in a number of senses) has been remarked upon by a number of critics (see Michaels, 1977). What has been less remarked upon is the fact that the hard bottom is primarily at the bottom of a pond or swamp, though "there is a hard bottom everywhere," even "with the bogs and quicksands of society" (Thoreau, 1982: 568–589).

A deep- and hard-bottomed lake for Thoreau (1982) is symbolic of a kind of highly philosophical self-reflexivity, rather than of merely narcissistic self-contemplation. For him "a lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature" (435; see also 67, 339, 437, and 527). The swamp, by contrast, for Thoreau is shallow and soft, the first birth of nature:

> That central meadow and pool in Gowing's Swamp is its very navel, *omphalos*, where the umbilical cord was cut that bound it to creation's womb. Methinks every swamp tends to have or suggests such an interior tender spot. The sphagnous crust that surrounds the pool is pliant and quaking,

> like the skin or muscles of the abdomen; you seem to be slumping into the very bowels of the swamp. (524; and 1962: *IX*, 394)

The surface of the swamp is the soft spot of nature, even the breasts of the Great Mother or Goddess of the swamps when Thoreau (1962: *IX*, 38–39) refers to "the soft open sphagnous center of the swamp" as "these sphagnous breasts of the swamp–swamp pearls." The soft center of the swamp is also related to the human body for Thoreau as "the part of you that is wettest is fullest of life" (*X*, 262). Thoreau not only resists the dominant patriarchal cultural paradigm, but also supports the alternative matrifocal cultural paradigm (for the two cultural paradigms, see Giblett, 2011: chapter 1). Unlike many of his contemporaries, such as Harriett Beecher Stowe, who figured slavery as a swamp, slavery for Thoreau (1962: *VI*, 365) was the part of the body politic fullest of death: "slavery … has no life. It is only a constant decaying and a death, offensive to all healthy nostrils." Slavery, in other words, is the dead black waters of a polluted waste wetland, unlike the recurring decaying, death, and rebirth of the living black waters of a healthy wild wetland fragrant to Thoreau's healthy sense of smell important in the alternative cultural paradigm.

Thoreau refused the miasmatic theory of disease by stating how "miasma and infection are from within, not without" (Thoreau, 1980: 261; 1962: *V*, 394). He countered the theory by suggesting how "the steam which rises from swamps and pools is as dear and domestic as that of our own kettle" (Thoreau, 1982: 61). For Thoreau swamps and stagnant pools were not the antithesis of, nor a threat to, the homely, but of comparable value. He did not valorize the wetland over the homely but gave them equal value unlike those of his (and my) contemporaries who denigrated and feared the wetland (and accordingly valorized the canny over the uncanny).

Rather than seeing the airs of swamps as bearers of disease, Thoreau (1982: 66) made a crucial distinction between fog and miasma, and even saw fog as healing.

> The fog … in whose fenny labyrinth
> The bittern booms and heron wades;
> Fountain-head and source of rivers . . .
> Spirit of lakes and seas and rivers, . . .

Bear only perfumes and the scent
Of healing herbs to just men's fields!

In a poem devoted exclusively to the subject and entitled simply "Fog," Thoreau referred to it as "dull water spirit—and Protean god," as "incense of earth," "spirit of lakes and rivers," and as "night thoughts of earth" (237–238). Rather than a vector for disease and a cause of death like miasma, fog is a source of new life. Rather than regarding fog and mist as vapors bearing disease and death, why not see them as the visible manifestation of the exhalations of the earth, particularly of the trees, on which we are dependent for life? After all, we are in symbiosis with the oxygen-producing plants of the earth.

The swamp vapors were as equally homely for Thoreau as kettle steam because the swamp itself was better than a homely garden. Indeed, if Thoreau (1982: 612–613) had to choose between them he would have chosen the swamp every time: "yes, though you may think me perverse, if it were proposed to me to dwell in the neighborhood of the most beautiful garden that ever human art contrived, or else of a Dismal Swamp, I should certainly decide for the swamp." Thoreau prefers a dismal swamp to a beautiful garden because he says, "I derive more of my subsistence from the swamps which surround my native town than from the cultivated gardens in the village" (612). The swamps are "the wildest and richest gardens that we have. Such a depth of verdure into which you sink" (Thoreau, 1962: *IV*, 281). Thoreau was no mere walker by the wetland, but a wanderer in the wetland who was not afraid of sinking into it as long as he eventually found "a hard bottom."

Thoreau (1982: 613) makes his most memorable pronouncement on wetlands in his essay "Walking" in which he invokes and counters the dominant trope of "the Dismal Swamp": "when I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most impenetrable and to the citizen, most dismal, swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature." Thoreau is not merely alluding to, and countering, the Great Dismal Swamp on the border between Virginia and North Carolina, but refusing and inverting (if not subverting) the solid citizen's, and the dominant cultural paradigm's, view that all swamps are dismal

by regarding them as the most sacred of places, as the holy of holies as viewed by the alternative cultural paradigm.

Rather than the Garden of Eden, for Thoreau (1993: 198) "some rich withdrawn and untrodden swamp … is your real garden." Yet this preference for dismal swamps over town gardens was no mere nostalgia for a lost pastoral paradise as "hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps" (Thoreau, 1982: 611). Hope and the future for me are not only in the native quaking zone of swamps but also in the feral quaking zone of cities, including their slums and suburbs, and their regions of rust and ruin. Thoreau prefers the resources of hope cultivated by the alternative cultural paradigm in the swampy quaking zone to the monuments to the past enshrined by the dominant cultural paradigm in the horticultural, agricultural, and architectural zones. Thoreau's rhetorical tactic against the stratagems of standard swamp-speak within the dominant cultural paradigm was to displace and upset the usual or normative disjunction between swamp and garden by seeing the swamp as garden, and so exploit the favorable associations of the garden as a place of light and life.

For Thoreau (1962: *IV*, 449) "my temple is the swamp." He sought refuge and renewal in the swamp as a sacred place, indeed as the inner sanctum, the holy of holies (Thoreau, 1982: 613), into which, like the High Priest, he would "annually go on a pilgrimage" (Thoreau, 1993: 197). He would perform the ritual of life-giving, self-baptism in the swamp whose waters were not rank poison: "far from being poisoned in the strong water of the swamp, it is a sort of baptism for which I had waited" (Thoreau, 1962: *IX*, 376–377). Thoreau was a swamp self-Baptist. He upset the conventional view of the dominant cultural paradigm that swamps were poisonous by parodying it in his reference to the "rank and venomous luxuriance in this swamp" (*IX*, 60).

Rather than a reason for avoiding the black swamp of depression and melancholia, Thoreau (1962: *X*, 150) suggested that "if you are afflicted with melancholy … go to the swamp." He did not subscribe to the miasmatic theory of malaria, nor of melancholy unlike some of his contemporaries, nor to the theory of the humors in the dominant cultural paradigm. Even at the worst of times he could prescribe a swamp cure: "when life looks sandy and barren, is reduced to its lowest terms, we have no appetite, and it has no flavor, then

let me visit such a swamp as this, deep and impenetrable, where the earth quakes for a rod around you at every step, with its open water where swallows skim and twitter" (*IV*, 231). When desire is diminished and life is dissatisfying, both figured here orally, the quaking zone of the swamp has depths and softness that the shallowness of its waters belie, and which the depths of the lake cannot dream of. Thoreau values precisely those usual pejorative connotations in the dominant cultural paradigm that attach to the "depth," or horizontal extension, and impenetrability of the swamp.

For Thoreau (1982: 613), the swamp is "the strength, the marrow of Nature." The strength of nature, for him, lies not in the hard bones of the dry land, but in the soft marrow of the wetlands, what he also called the liquor of nature that feeds the earthly body, the body environmental: "the very sight of this half-stagnant pond-hole, drying up and leaving bare mud … is agreeable and encouraging to behold, as it if contained the seeds of life, the liquor rather, boiled down. The foulest water will bubble purely. They speak to our blood, even these stagnant, slimy pools" (Thoreau, 1962: *IV*, 102). They speak to our blood because they contain water, which for Thoreau is "the most living part of nature. This is the blood of the earth" (*XIII*, 163). Water for Thoreau is the life-blood of the body of the earth. Thoreau sees the earth as body.

Thoreau's (1982: 187) blood circulates with the blood of the earth and with the liquor and marrow of swamps in the body of the Earth: "surely one may as profitably be soaked in the juices of a swamp for one day as pick his way dryshod over sand." Thoreau would prefer the problems of travel wetshod through the wetland, the marrow of the Earth, to the ease of passage over the dry land, the bones. Yet the problems of travel across the wetland are seasonal anyway in the higher latitudes as "the deep, impenetrable marsh, where the heron waded and bittern squatted [in summer], is made pervious [in winter] to our swift shoes, as if a thousand railroads had been made into it" (71). Thoreau sees himself as part and parcel of nature, as circulating in the body of nature not via the circulatory system of rivers, but in the stagnant system of marrow through immersion in the swamp by a kind of secular baptism.

Without the wetland, without wetlands, the world would fall apart. The wetland feeds and holds together, nurtures and coheres, the skeleton of the body of nature. Without the wetland there would be nothing to replenish the skeletal system of the dry land, the backbones of mountain ranges,

the ribs of ridges, the limbs of peninsulas and capes, and the fingers of land reaching into the sea all of which (including the marrow of the wetlands) supply and make possible the fertile plains, prairies, and steppes on which agriculture takes place, on which the dominant cultural paradigm relies, on which industry depends, on which cities "live," or more precisely which they parasitically suck dry.

Instead of the standard rhetoric of swamp-speak in the dominant cultural paradigm in which the swamp is a place of death and disease, for Thoreau and the alternative cultural paradigm the swamp is the stuff of life and death. Indeed, for Thoreau (cited by Richardson, 1986: 114–115), "death is only the phenomenon of the individual or class. Nature does not recognize it … Death is 'a law and not an accident—It is as common as life … The law of their [flowers'] death is the law of new life." The swamp, as with nature generally, upsets the hard and fast distinction between life and death. Thoreau (1993: 100–101; and 1962: *XIV*, 109) inverts the morbid Christian orthodoxy of the line from the Anglican/Church of England *Book of Common Prayer* that "in the midst of life we are in death" by maintaining how "in the midst of death we are in life." In the midst of death in the swamp, we are in life. The swamp as marrow is constantly being renewed by the life-blood of the earth and constantly renews the bones of the body of the earth that give it structure.

One of the attractions of the swamp for Thoreau (1962: *VIII*, 99), especially in winter, was that here was a place on which no other "man" had left a trace, and so it was a place where he could leave his mark on a tabula rasa: "I love to wade and flounder through the swamp now, these bitter cold days when the snow lies deep on the ground … to wade through the swamps, all snowed up, untracked by man." Unlike the snow of field, pond, or road, the snow of the swamp could remain untracked for a time in order to allow Thoreau (1962: *VIII*, 160 and 167) to write his own message on its clean sheet, its "blank page," without fear of interruption or interference from fellow humans, especially citizens, those denizens of the city.

After wading around in a swamp Thoreau (1962: *IX*, 42) felt like an explorer: "I seemed to have reached a new world, so wild a place … far away from human society. What's the need of visiting far-off mountains and bogs, if a half-hour's walk will carry me into such wildness and novelty." Thoreau explored swamps not just physically but also metaphysically. Indeed, he did

not even need to go on a half-hour's walk visiting bogs to be carried into wildness: "it is in vain to dream of wildness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bogs in our brain and bowels, the primitive vigor of Nature in us, that inspires that dream. I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wildness than in some recess in Concord, that is, than I import into it" (*IX*, 43). Wild(er)ness is a cognitive, corporeal, and cultural experience, not a geographical category of (wet)land conservation or use, or lack of it, indigenous or industrial.

Thoreau (1982) saw the swamp explorer as a kind of Columbus of the new world of swamps not only without but also within. He asked rhetorically, "Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered." He then exhorts his readers also to "be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought" (560), and not of sewers. The interior is either a kind of swamp in winter, a frozen tabula rasa, to be explored, mapped, written upon, and so colonized or a swamp in summer with its quaking surface that could be decolonized and demapped.

For Thoreau (1982: 376) it is the screech owls, or more precisely "their dismal scream," that best express his view of wetlands as dialogic other

> I love to hear their wailing … as if it were the dark and tearful side of music … They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the variety and capacity of that nature which is our common dwelling.

Nature has just as much capacity for "evil" as it, or "she," has for "good." Nature is not all goodness and light for Thoreau but also has its dark and evil "side." Yet the owls are unlike the stymphalian birds of the Hercules myth in that they are not a monstrous deviation from nature that define and maintain the norm by contrast, but are a part of nature.

Nature for Thoreau (1982: 376) is both "our common dwelling," our homely setting of steam rising from kettle and swamp, and "this vast, savage, howling mother of ours" from whose breast "we are so early weaned … to society." Nature for Thoreau, unlike for his contemporaries and the dominant cultural

paradigm, is both homely and unhomely, both canny and uncanny. It is both a place of goodness and light perhaps exemplified by the clear "eyes" of the lake and pond, and a place of life and death, light and dark represented by the "marrow" of the swamp. Thoreau's double vision, arguably postmodern *avant la lettre*, embraces and entertains both at once without any sense of contradiction between them. The swamp is not a place of melancholy and madness for Thoreau, but a place where melancholy and madness are mediated and alleviated.

The screech owls function for Thoreau (1982: 377) as a kind of post-Christian "scapegoat" (or more precisely scape-screech owls), which instead of being driven off into the premodern wilderness to bear the sins of "men" away from civilization and the city, are part and parcel of the postmodern wilderness (or in this case more precisely the scape-wetland of the wetlandscape), in which "men" can find the sacred and solace, and refuge and sanctuary from the rigors and stresses of modern city life:

> I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have. All day the sun has shone on the surface of some savage swamp … but now a dismal and fitting day dawns, and a different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there.

The owls suggest a premodern, matrifocal wetland that has not yet been subject to a patriarchal, developmental, and industrial technological imperative, yet which is now subjected to that imperative in the very act of naming it as "vast and undeveloped" with its meanings expressed by owls.

The postmodern wetland is worlds away from the melancholic marshes and the slough of despond: "there can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still" (Thoreau, 1982: 382). The place par excellence in which to live literally in the midst of Nature, even up to one's chin, is the swamp. Given the difficulties the swamp poses for travel, especially by modern, Western means of transportation, it is the perfect place to still the senses, and the limbs, and allow the swamp to write on them, not as a tabula rasa, but as a responsive surface. As for dwellings,

Thoreau enjoins us to "bring your sills up to the very edge of the swamp, then (though it may not be the best place for a dry cellar)" (612). The slimy edge of the swamp for Thoreau is not the place from which to flee for the bright and sublimed city lights, but the place to live for the bright swamp lights of ignited marsh gases that do not lead to madness, but could even lead to Thoreau's ultimate goal: "unto a life which I call natural I would gladly follow even a will-o'-the-wisp through bogs and sloughs unimaginable, but no man nor firefly has shown me the causeway to it" (625).

Thoreau (1962: *X*, 252) seems to be developing a conservation language within the alternative cultural paradigm that would counter the standard Romantic perception that "unless Nature sympathizes with and speaks to us, as it were, the most fertile and blooming regions are barren and dreary," in other words, are a modern wasteland. The postmodern wetland, by contrast, is where Nature does not necessarily sympathize with us, nor we with it, but speaks to us, as the screech owls do, in the most fertile and blooming regions of the swamp. The swamp may be bare, but certainly not barren: "in swamps where there is only here and there an evergreen tree amid the quaking moss and cranberry beds, the bareness does not suggest poverty" (Thoreau, 1982: 195). The bareness does not suggest barrenness but fertility. Swamp water is living.

The postmodern wetland may not be beautiful in the conventional sense of possessing appropriate qualities of form, texture, color, depth of field, and point of view. Perhaps that is why it has been regarded in and by the dominant cultural paradigm as barren and dreary. If the wetland had been regarded as beautiful, perhaps its perceived uselessness would not have been held so badly against it. Perhaps if the wetland could now be regarded as beautiful, the fact that it is "useless" as its stands for agriculture or urban development would not matter so much. For Thoreau (1993: 144), "whatever we have perceived to be in the slightest degree beautiful is of infinitely more value to us than what we have only as yet discovered to be useful and to serve our purpose." The trouble with wetlands is that they have been regarded in and by the dominant cultural paradigm as lacking both beauty *and* utility. This lack has been held against them.

The swamp may lack the typical characteristics of beauty, but it does possess gradation, which Thoreau saw as one of the fundamental aesthetic and

ecological hallmarks of nature: "nature loves gradation … the swamp was variously shaded, or painted even, like a rug, with the sober colors running gradually into each other" (cited by Richardson, 1986: 360). Rather than subjecting wetlands to an aesthetic and utilitarian, even capitalist, imperative, perhaps it would be preferable to see wetlands as fulfilling vital, ecological functions necessary for life on earth to be sustained. Nature not only loves gradation in color, but also gradation between land and water, life and death, light and darkness—living black waters of its wetlands.

11

New Orleans: "The Swamp is No Place for a City"

New Orleans is one of a number of infamous swamp cities—cities built in swamps, near them, or on land "reclaimed" from them, such as London, Paris, Venice, Boston, Chicago, Washington, St. Petersburg, and Perth. New Orleans seemed to be winning the war against the swamps until hurricane Katrina of 2005, or at least participating in an uneasy truce between its unviable location and the forces of the weather to the point that the former was forgotten until the latter intruded as a stark reminder of its history and geography, and it lost this particular battle. A whole series of events and images congregate around the name "Katrina," including those of photographer Robert Polidori (2006) in his monumental book, *After the Flood*. Katrina, as well as the exacerbating factors of global warming and drained wetlands, and their impacts, especially on the city of New Orleans (both its infrastructure and residents), point to the cultural construction and production of the disaster.

This suite of occurrences is a salutary instance of the difficulties of trying to maintain a hard and fast divide between nature and culture (Hirst and Woolley, 1982: 23; Giblett, 2008a: 16–17) and a timely reminder of the need to think and live them together (Giblett, 2011: chapter 1). A hurricane is in some sense a natural event, but in the age of global warming and climate change it is also a cultural occurrence; a flood produced by a river breaking its banks is a natural event, but a flood caused by breeched levees and drained wetlands is a cultural occurrence; people dying is a natural event, but people dying by drowning in a large and iconic American city created by drainage of wetlands is a cultural disaster of urban planning and relief logistics; and a city set in

a swamp is natural and cultural, with the cultural usually antithetical to the natural.

New Orleans is not only "the nation's quintessential river city," as Kelman ([2003] 2006: 199) puts it, sitting "at the bottom of the Mississippi drainage of the interior of North American continent," as Solnit and Snedeker (2013: v) put it, but also one of a number of infamous swamp cities "resting on the pillowy softness of river-delivered muck [and] mud" and "at the center of the American unconscious" (as they also put it). In his post-Katrina preface to his study of New Orleans as what he calls "an unnatural metropolis," Colten ([2005] 2006: 5) notes that

> while other cities have occupied wetlands, few have the combination of poorly-drained and flood-susceptible territory of New Orleans. Portions of Washington, D.C., occupied wetlands, but there was ample solid ground above the reach of the Potomac [River's] worst floods. Chicago's founders platted their city on a wetland site, but the sluggish Chicago River did not drain the massive territory of the Mississippi.

"Occupied" is arguably a euphemism for dredging, draining, filling, and reclaiming wetlands. Occupation also conjures up visions of an occupying army, which may be appropriate in the case of New Orleans as the Army Corps of Engineers have spearheaded much of the militarization by dredging and draining of wetlands in New Orleans and elsewhere in the United States.

The location for the city was not propitious. Powell (2012: 2) says "the site was dreadful," which is fitting as it goes with the central character of Dred in Harriett Beecher Stowe eponymously entitled novel of that name set in the Great Dismal Swamp. Swampy sites are dreadful and dismal in standard swamp speak and not just confined or limited to nineteenth-century novels. Wilson (2006: 86) describes how "the city itself was constructed on an uneven patch of relatively high ground in the midst of a vast swamp." Not surprisingly, New Orleans for Solnit and Snedeker (2013: 1) is "a city of amorphous boundaries, where land is forever turning into water, water devours land, and a thousand degrees of marshy, muddy, oozing in-between exist." As a result, for them, "all that is solid dissolves into water," much of which "seems to exist in an amorphous state of muddiness and murkiness" (2). This is the process

of desublimation, the counter to sublimation in which all that is solid melts into air.

Along similar lines to Solnit and Snedeker, New Orleans for Kelman ([2003] 2006: 22) "is surrounded by a wet world composed of terrain that is not quite land" with the Mississippi River delta on one side and Lake Pontchartrain and the "backswamps" on the other, though the latter were later drained. The Mississippi River for Kelman is "the continent's most famed and largest watercourse" (199). Perhaps it is also the continent's most tamed and leveed watercourse. For Powell (2012: 3 and 58) it is "North America's mightiest river" and "one of history's great arteries of commerce." Earlier Kelman (79) related how a prominent local commentator in 1847 "personified the Mississippi as a nurturing mother" because the river "hugged New Orleans to its 'broad bosom.' " Supposedly this mother was the benign and malign patriarchal Mother Nature of the leveed river and not the recalcitrant, matrifocal Great Goddess or Mother of the swamps that threatened to break the levees and flood the city (see Giblett, 1996; 2011: especially chapter 1).

The Mississippi as the mother of all American rivers gave birth to the city of New Orleans at her "mouth," or more precisely at the other end of her anatomy in the wetland delta of her cloaca. In his history of New Orleans, Powell (2012) repeatedly uses the cliché of "the mouth" of the Mississippi seemingly oblivious to the fact that he is talking about the other end of animal anatomy, even when describing how bad weather kept the Spaniard La Salle from "entering the mouth." As noted in the chapter on Petersburg, this is a misnomer (as water and solid matter flow out at this point and do not enter in here as they do with the mouth) and so is a mistaken view of anatomy.

Because of its location at the "mouth" of the Mississippi River, New Orleans for Flint (2006: 230) was "historically the most important port in the United States." Yet by the late 1860s the river was seen by New Orleaners, Kelman ([2003] 2006: 124) argues, only as "an alimentary canal, filled with raw waste and decaying animal carcasses." This is a very depleted and poverty-stricken view of the river and of the body of the earth. The river and the body of the earth need the other internal organs of the kidneys or liver of wetlands in order to be viable and vital. By viewing the river as an alimentary canal for the import of nutrients and export of wastes, the "mouth" of the river had ceased to be womb and had become anus; the delta had ceased to be womb and had

become bowel. The living body of the earth was dying. The river, Kelman, concludes was "not sublime" and had become "an interstate highway" (146). Solnit and Snedeker (2013: 82) are less coy than Kelman and Powell when they state that "way down where all the effluvia of the continent drains out, all the toxins and manure and muck of a great river system flowing through agricultural and industrial lands, way down there underneath in the softness of the alluvial soil, is the cloaca or pudendum of the continent … 'Pudendum' a word for the female genitalia, comes from a Latin word for shame." Rather than the swamp being shameful in its native and precontact state, it is the polluted river and swamp cloaca that is shameful in its present feral state.

The Angel of Geography sees the single catastrophe of drained, dredged, or filled wetlands enacted in the ways in which the earth is figured in a politics of spaces and places. Ascribing the qualities of one place to another to valorize one place and denigrate another and to figure one pejoratively or euphemistically (as in this case) is "placist" (Giblett, 2009: 8 and 36). Deconstructing and decolonizing placism and its use of such figures can lead to a more ecofriendly figuration of spaces and places.

New Orleans is one place to do so and Solnit and Snedeker also provide one way of doing so. Rather than the mouth (or the anus) of the body of North America, Solnit and Snedeker (2013: 2)

> think of New Orleans as a liver, an expanse of soggy land doing some of what a liver does, filtering poisons, keeping the body going, necessary to survival and infinitely fragile, hard to pull out of context, and nowadays deteriorating from more poisons than it can absorb, including the ongoing toxins of the petroleum industry and the colossal overdose delivered by the 2010 BP blowout.

The liver "is delicate, spongy tissue" and it can "shred" when it is operated on and "rip" when it is stitched (2). Similarly around New Orleans "the land is soft and marshy" and industry is "ripping and shredding the land into nonexistence."

This ripping and shredding has been going on since the beginnings of the city. Early New Orleans for Powell (2012: 60) "may have been one of the most deliberately planned towns in all of colonial North America." Quebec City would certainly be a rival contender for this appellation, whereas Washington

may have been one of the most deliberately planned towns in all of post-colonial North America. The first French Quarter of New Orleans was laid out in 1721 in a rectilinear grid in order to enact what Powell (2012: 61) calls "the Renaissance ideal of the city as an emblem of imperial power, set apart from the countryside by geometry and pageantry." More precisely, the grid was the instrument for dividing city from swamp. This was the case not only with New Orleans but also with all the other swamp cities and marsh metropolises discussed in the present book.

The urban form, as Powell (2012: 63) goes on to argue, was also the instrument for "the colonization of the Americas," and of nature and its swamps, which are in fact one and the same thing as Franz Fanon (1967: 201), the pioneer theorist of decolonization, saw that

> hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes [from swamps], natives and fever [from mosquito bites], and colonization is a success when all this indocile nature has finally been tamed. Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps and a native population which is non-existent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing.

In the era of so-called postcolonialism, it is necessary to ask the question: what process of decolonization has been carried out in relation to the colonization of spaces and places, like wetlands, by maps (from which they are absent or on which they are present, reduced to surface and frozen in time), by settlers, and by urban development? Decolonization will not be fully achieved until space and places are decolonized, and not only external, terrestrial, and extraterrestrial space and places, but also internal, corporeal space and places, especially those regions of the human body—the "nether regions"—associated with the dark and dank regions of the earth—the nether(wet)lands.

The grid-plan town was not only the instrument for dividing city from swamp but also inscribed on the tabula rasa of the drained and/or filled swamp, or on what Powell (2012: 62) calls "the veritable clean slate" of "the wilderness." Arguably the masculinist concept/metaphor of wilderness is the instrument for rendering the space beyond frontiers as a clean slate on which the city could be inscribed on the surface of the body of the earth and

in its depths of swamps of the Great Mother of the earth. "The urban development history of New Orleans" is what Richard Campanella (in Solnit and Snedeker, 2013: 13) calls "essentially the story of overlaying orderly orthogonality on unruly curvaceousness" of what he calls the "dynamic, fluid, soft, warm, humid [and] tempestuous" Mississippi Delta. Alternatively it is the story of inscribing the static, solid, hard, dry, and rationalist masculine grid-plan city on unruly maternal swamps. For Campanella (in Solnit and Snedeker, 2013: 16) "hard lines and orthogonal angles introduced order to disorder, civilization to wilderness, godliness to the heathen," and cleanliness to dirtiness, healthiness to unhealthiness, I would add, though these distinctions were easy to maintain in theory but not so easy to maintain in practice.

The distinction between the living and the dead was the hardest to maintain. "Just as New Orleans is a place of unclear boundaries between land and water," for Solnit and Snedeker (2013: 34), "so it is a place where the boundaries between life and death are thin." As a result for them, it is "a city of the living that is also a city of the dead." Historically New Orleans acquired a bad reputation for what James Alexander (1833: 28) in the early nineteenth century called "the insalubrity of the climate." In the then current miasmatic theory of disease this led to residents "inhal[ing] deadly vapours" that arose from "a greenish scum of vegetable matter" floating on pools of water as well as breathing in "pestilential effluvia from the slimy banks of the river, and from the creeks and cypress swamps, the haunts of loathsome alligators and snakes." As a result, "New Orleans is called the 'Wet Grave' " (29–30). In 1853 approximately 10,000 people died of yellow fever and some quarters of New Orleans had become known as a "wet graveyard" (Kelman, [2003] 2006: 88). New Orleans, the haunt of monstrous alligators, what Colten ([2005] 2006: 171) calls "the emblematic megafauna of the Louisiana wetlands" (and of other southern American wetlands one might add) in the nineteenth century became the haunt of what Colten also calls "the monstrous 1853 yellow fever epidemic" (47) and in the twentieth-first century of the monstrous 2005 hurricane Katrina; New Orleans was a wet grave in both periods and the grim reaper in both cases was depicted as monstrous. In between, drainage took place to make New Orleans a more salubrious place and to try to keep the monsters at bay.

In 1883 Mark Twain (1985: 304), for Powell (2012: 5) the river's "most illustrious biographer," observed at the end of chapter 41 of *Life on the Mississippi* entitled "The Metropolis of the South" that the people of New Orleans cannot have wells, "neither can they conveniently have cellars, [n]or graves … the town being built upon 'made' ground; so they do without both, and few of the living complain, and none of the others." Ground is made out of swamp as with a number of other "swamp cities." In the following chapter Twain (1985: 306) goes on to discuss the cemeteries and then tries to get off the topic of graveyards as it is "grotesque, ghastly, horrible." Indeed graveyards are grotesque, not least because the grotesque relates to death and the lower bodily stratum as Bakhtin called it, and swamps are the grotesque lower earthly stratum (Giblett, 1996). Rather than the marsh metropolis of the south, for Kelman ([2003] 2006: title of chapter 3 and 104) New Orleans was "the necropolis of the South" with its cemeteries, "the so-called cities of the dead." The cemeteries were located in what Colten ([2005] 2006: 66 and 70) coyly calls "the rear of the city—the zone of discard" so that New Orleans earned the reputation of being "the death hole of Dixie." "The back of town" for Powell (2012: 99) is what "New Orleans's netherworld of poverty and poor drainage has always been called," just like London with its nether world as we saw in a previous chapter.

What Colten ([2005] 2006: 46) calls "the swampy mire behind New Orleans" was drained in the first 40 years of the twentieth century. Colten relates that "by the 1930s, drainage and landfilling efforts had successfully reclaimed wetland between the city and the lake, and in the post-war years similar campaigns dewatered marshlands for tract housing eastward and westward from the city" (140–141). For Wilson (2006: 86) "much of New Orleans's history can be seen as a continuing battle with the swamp." New Orleans was a frontline in the modern war against wetlands, the kind of war that Fascists such as Mussolini liked to fight because they were so easy to win in the short term (see Giblett, 1996: 115). Many campaigns were fought against wetlands using the modern weapons of monstrous dredgers. The city had struck what Kelman ([2005] 2006: 168) calls "a Faustian bargain with the levees-only policy." In other words, it had sold its soul to the devil of modern industrial technology in exchange for temporary power over water. New Orleans tried to dominate water and wetlands with the ironic result that not

only "efforts to drain the city dominate early New Orleans history into the present day" as Wilson (2006: 86) puts it, but also these efforts occasionally failed with devastating results as with Katrina. The city became dominated by the waters it had sought to dominate in an irony of history and geography not lost on students of wetlands. The waters the city had repressed returned in a flood in an irony of culture not lost on psychoanalytic ecologists.

Nor are these ironies lost on novelists such as Dave Eggers (2009: 94) in his best-selling *Zeitoun* (pronounced "zay-toon") in which he has his eponymous central character describe the aftermath of Katrina: "as far as he could see in any direction the city was under water. Though every resident of New Orleans imagines great floods, knows that such a thing is possible in a city surrounded by water and ill-conceived levees, the sight … was beyond anything he had imagined. He could only think of Judgment Day, of Noah and forty days of rain." Katrina was divine punishment for the sins of the levees, not the sins of the city. The leveed waters returned with a vengeance. In "this sort of apocalypse" (95) Zeitoun is a kind of Noah with his trusty canoe serving as latter-day ark saving people and animals from the great flood.

Katrina was the means that reversed the domination of wetlands by the city. Flint (2006: 232–233) argues that "Katrina's wake-up call made it unconscionable to keep building on fragile coastlines … and in floodplains." And in swamps, I would add. Colten ([2005] 2006: 163) "traces the public's abandonment of the belief that the city is no place for a swamp." The city is also no place for the artificial swamp of the aftermath of Katrina depicted photographically by Robert Polidori (2006). As the history of New Orleans attests, the swamp is no place for a city in the first place when it is being built, and the city is no place for a swamp in the second place when it is being ravaged by a hurricane and storm surges. The city is antithetical and inimical to the swamp. They are mutually exclusive. New Orleans for Wilson (2006: 90; my emphasis) is "a city *on* a swamp." In the 1927 flood, for Kelman ([2003] 2006: 157) "one of the worst flood years in history," and in the 2005 hurricane, the worst flood year so far in its history, New Orleans was transformed into a city *of* a swamp (Wilson, 2006: 111). The 1927 flood was at the time, and as Kelman ([2003] 2006: 161) puts it, "the worst 'natural' disaster in U.S. history" to date only to be surpassed by the 2005 flood in New Orleans and the 2012 floods in northeastern United States in the wake of Superstorm "Sandy" in

which the drained marshlands of New York and New Jersey returned with a vengeance and wreaked havoc. In all these cases the swamp outside the city, or before the city, in the past, came into the city, became now, present in the present. The swamp in the past returned in the present; the absent swamp asserted its presence. The historical and geographical barriers between city and swamp were removed.

In all these cases the swamp outside the city, or before the city, came into the city, became now. The swamp in the past returned in the present; the absent swamp asserted its presence. The natural, historical barriers between city and swamp were removed. "Cypress wetlands used to act as reservoir for floodwater, but no longer" (Kelman, [2003] 2006: xvi) as they had been drained. The Cypress swamp for Longfellow ([1895] 2004: 65) in his nineteenth-century tale of Evangeline was like an ancient cathedral. Draining the cypress swamp was tantamount to destroying the cathedral, in particular, destroying the natural bulwark and buttresses that the cathedral provided against the waters without. Cathedral destruction is a cultural disaster as the bombing of cathedrals, such as Coventry Cathedral, in World War II shows. The destruction of the cypress swamp was a cultural disaster that led to the disaster of the aftermath of Katrina.

Katrina for Kelman ([2003] 2006: xviii) was not a natural disaster. Katrina produced "water … out of place" (x). In other words, and in Mary Douglas's (1966: 2) terms, for whom dirt is matter out of place, this water was dirt. It was not merely that the water was dirty in color or composition but that the water was in the wrong place, in the buildings and streets, and not behind levees, as Polidori (2006) graphically illustrates in his photographs. Bodies were also out of place with "corpses floating in dirty water" (Kelman, [2003] 2006: x) (though Polidori does not photograph these, unlike Dean Sewell in Aceh in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami in what I call an Orientalist pornography of death [Giblett, 2009: 158]). Dead bodies became dirt: visible, smelly, waterlogged. Colten ([2005] 2006: xix) argues that "human actions … make an extreme event into a disaster … The extreme event that became a disaster was not just the result of Katrina but the product of three centuries of urbanization in a precarious site." Yet Katrina was not only the product of three centuries of urbanization of New Orleans' precarious and precious watershed, but also the product of three centuries of American urbanization of the precarious and precious airshed through pollution with greenhouse gases.

The watery geographical location of New Orleans, its history of drainage and levee-building, the fossil-fuel dependence of modern industrial capitalist economies, poor relief efforts, and the storm combined to produce the "perfect" disaster of Katrina. Land, water, and air were mixed in an artificial quaking zone of elements not in their normal places, a feral quaking zone of the elements of air, earth, and water that had been in the native quaking zone of swamps now ran amok in a watery wasteland (see Giblett, 2009: especially chapter 1). Water was on the land and in the air. In the beginning as recounted in the biblical book of Genesis (1:1–2) when God created the heavens and the earth darkness and chaos moved over the face of the waters and the earth was without form and void in the geographical location and catastrophe of a native quaking zone. In the end when humans are re-creating the heavens and the earth darkness and chaos move over the face of the waters and the earth is without form and void in the geographical location and catastrophe of a feral quaking zone. Humans were thrown into this maelstrom where they quaked in fear and survived or died. Humans are now re-creating the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of "Katrina." In the beginning of the history of the city humans created the city; from the disastrous destruction of some cities, humans are re-creating the city.

It is difficult to make sense of "Katrina." Smith (2012: 303; see also Flint, 2006: 230) relates that, "as well as killing some 1500 people, the bill for the devastation wrought by hurricane Katrina on New Orleans … was US$200 billion, making it the most costly disaster in American history," more than "9/11." Around the name "Katrina" a whole series of events and images congregate, including those of photographer Robert Polidori (2006) in his book of photographs, *After the Flood*, with its overtones of divine punishment for human sin as with the biblical flood and as related in the book of Genesis (6–7). The flood returns the earth to the beginning when God created heaven and earth, when "the earth was without form and darkness moved … upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2), God's first, and arguably best, work (Giblett, 1996: 142–143; 2014, "Preface"). The single catastrophe of history and geography begins here and now in the act of creation on the first day and in dividing land from water as God also did on the second day (Gen. 1:7), God's second, and arguably second best, work. New Orleans began in the chaos of land and water. This chaos recurs in later disasters, such as "Katrina," which

merely repeat the creation and catastrophe of the beginning in the eternal recurrence of the same. New Orleans developed by dividing land from water and is periodically flooded by the breaching of the division. The city is returned to its, and the, beginning, but this time inflected as a human-made "swamp," a feral quaking zone. Catastrophe and creativity are locked together from the beginning. The creation of the world as wetland and the separation of land and water was a catastrophic action on God's part. Its repetition in the draining or filling of wetlands is a catastrophic event for the heavens and earth, and humans, as is the unseparation of land and water in floods.

What Muecke (2007: 259 and 263) calls the rhetoric of "natural disaster" looms large in accounts of "Katrina." In an ascending and escalating scale of hyperbole, "Katrina" for Brinkley (2006: 5, 60, 77), for instance, was a "natural disaster," "the worst natural disaster in modern U.S. history" (62), "the biggest natural disaster in recent American history" (273), and "the worst natural disaster in modern American history" (331). Yet a hurricane in and by itself is not necessarily a disaster. It is a natural event. Perhaps all that could simply be said is that "Katrina was one of the most powerful storms ever recorded in U.S. history" (73). Yet to be recorded in US history "Katrina" had to be more than just a storm. It had also to be more than merely what Muecke (2007: 259) calls an "oceanic disaster" out to sea. It had to have made landfall and it had to have had human impact. It was not merely an event in the history of weather patterns in the United States. For Brinkley (2006: 249) "the hurricane disaster was followed by the flood disaster, which was followed by human disasters." These three disasters for Brinkley add up to "the overall disaster, the sinking of New Orleans, [which] was a man-made disaster, resulting from poorly designed and managed levees and floodwalls" (426). The result was that for Brinkley "the man-made misery was worse than the storm" (597). The flood and the misery amounts to what Brinkley calls "the Great Deluge [which] was a disaster that the country brought on itself" (619).

The storm could also be seen as a disaster that the country brought on itself through the use of fossil fuels. The overall disaster comprising the hurricane, the flood disaster, and the "man-made" disaster of the sinking city and its drowning or displaced inhabitants was preceded by the disasters of dredging wetlands and of global warming. Brinkley (2006: 74) cites the work of Kerry Emanuel and concludes that "global warming makes bad hurricanes worse."

Global warming is the result of the use of fossil fuels. Draining wetlands also makes bad hurricanes worse as "miles of coastal wetlands could reduce hurricane storm surges by over three or four feet" (10). Miles of coastal wetlands, however, had been destroyed. Brinkley relates that "nearly one million acres of buffering wetlands in southern Louisiana disappeared between 1990 and 2005" (9). They "disappeared" as the result, not of some sort of mega-conjuring trick, nor of erosion from sea-intrusion (though that contributed), but of deliberate human action and practices of filling wetlands. Brinkley relates how "too many Americans saw these swamps and coastal wetlands as wastelands" (9). Wastelands needed to be redeemed into enclave estates of condos and strip developments. In a historical and geographical irony that is not lost on students of wetlands and their geography and history, destroying wetlands can create the wasteland of flooded cities and a single catastrophe of history and geography, such as New Orleans in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina.

In searching for a trope to explain these events Brinkley (2006) turns to the tried and true figure of the monster, usually feminized, and "Katrina" is no exception given its feminine name to begin with (though, of course, hurricanes (and cyclones) are also given masculine names). For him, "hurricane Katrina had been a palpable monster, an alien beast" (xiv), "a monstrous hurricane" (72), "a monster hurricane" (115), and "the monster storm" (453; and Flint, 2006: 230). A monster, according to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Allen, 1990: 768), is: "a) an imaginary creature, usually large and frightening, composed of incongruous elements; or b) a large or ugly or misshapen animal or thing." Katrina was not imaginary, though it, or she, was, and has been, imagined in a number of ways, including as a monster. "She" was certainly large and frightening. "She" was composed of the elements of air and water, and earth (and other solid matter). These may be incongruous elements in the normal course of events but not for a hurricane. "She" certainly caused ugliness and misshapenness to those caught in her wake of havoc, but aerial photographs show her to be a perfectly shaped hurricane, albeit with a deep and destructive throat imaginable as an orally sadistic monster.

Katrina for Brinkley (2006) was not just any monster in general but also an orally sadistic monster in particular. For him "Katrina was gargantuan in sheer size, 460 miles in diameter" (132). Drawing on chapters 7 and 44 of

Rabelais's *Gargantua*, Mikhail Bakhtin ([1965] 1984b: 459–460) traced how the word "gargantua" "in Spanish … means the throat. The Provencal tongue has the word 'gargantuan' meaning a glutton." He goes on to argue that "gargantua" "symbolize[s] the gullet, not as a neutral anatomical term but as an abusive-laudatory image: gluttony, swallowing, devouring, banqueting. This is the gaping mouth, the grave-womb, swallowing and generating." Katrina for Brinkley is thus an orally sadistic monster who destroys, who takes life, rather than the monstrous-maternal that both gives and takes life like a wetland.

For others Katrina was more like Thor. For Dara Adano "Katrina obliterated the landscape. Roads were torn up like they were sheets of paper and buildings looked like a huge hammer had pounded them into rubble. It was a wasteland" (cited by Brinkley, 2006: 163). Buffering wetlands that were regarded as wastelands were filled only to have a hurricane turn the landscape into a wet wasteland by an acute irony of history and reversal of fortunes. Not only the landscape but also the cityscape was turned into an artificial swamp. The Superdome for Marty Bahamode "cascaded into a cesspool of human waste and filth" (cited by Brinkley, 2006: 239). "The most hellish image in New Orleans" for Solnit (2005b: online "Postscript") was "the forgotten thousands crammed into the fetid depths of the Superdome." The human-made swamp, the feral quaking zone inside the Superdome, had worse conditions of air, water, and sanitation than any swamp outside not made with human hands, any native quaking zone, had ever had.

Whereas Adano turned to Norse mythology and Brinkley to Rabelais, Christian fundamentalist bloggers turned to the Bible and quoted Hosea (8:7): "For they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind" (cited by Brinkley, 2006: 204), already pressed into service in relation to the firebombing of cities as we saw in Chapter 7. In more recent terms, "they" (the engineers in the case of New Orleans) have dredged the wetland, and they (some of the residents of New Orleans) shall drown in the wet wasteland. Or in even more recent terms, they (the citizens of modern industrial countries) have seeded the clouds with greenhouse gases, and they shall reap the whirlwind and storm surge of Katrina and other extreme weather events.

New Orleans, as Kelman ([2003] 2006: xii) writes in his post-Katrina preface, "has a horrible disaster history" in the sense that it has a history of

horrible disasters. It also has a horrible history of the single disaster of its swampy location. Rather than "a chain of events that appears before us," "the Angel of History" for Benjamin ([1940] 2003: 392) "sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage." Rather than a series of disasters of the founding, drainage, disease, death, floods, hurricanes, and so on that mark the history of New Orleans, the Angel of History sees a single, catastrophic history, not just of New Orleans but preceding and postdating it. This catastrophic history and geography began in the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, darkness and chaos moved over the face of the waters, the earth was without form and void, and when God divided the land from the water, and is ending in industrial capitalism and its technologies, weather, climate, cities, floods, rivers and wetlands intertwining and interrelating together as entities and agents. Rather than a series of acts and sites of creativity and destruction that appear before us, the Angel of Geography sees one single process and place that keeps (re)creating order out of chaos and chaos out of order. This geography and history began at the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, and the wetland, and divided land from water, and continues when and as humans drain(ed) wetlands, create(d) cities, destroy(ed) cites, rebuilt/d cities, and rehabilitate(d) wetlands. "Katrina" is a salutary instance of the cultural and natural operating together in the one single catastrophe and creativity of divine and human history and geography.

12

Toronto: A City "Set in Malarial Lakeside Swamps"

The city of Toronto was founded and built next to Ashbridge's Bay Marsh. The marsh was filled over the next 150 years for reasons of public health and industrial development. Toronto is situated in the Don River catchment that once flowed through Ashbridge's Bay Marsh into Lake Ontario. It is also located close to the Holland River catchment that flows through Holland Marsh into Lake Simcoe. This marsh was drained so that its fertile soils could grow and supply much of Toronto's fresh produce (see Giblett, 2014: chapter 6). In a typical gesture for the modern city, one marsh close to the center of the city was filled to create solid ground for urban development while another on the margins of the city was drained so that its fertile soils could grow and supply fresh produce to sustain the city.

The city of Toronto had a marshy and swampy beginning that has largely been forgotten by the majority of its residents. As with a number of other "swamp cities" or marsh metropolises built on, or in, or next to a wetland, Toronto was founded and built adjacent to Ashbridge's Bay Marsh. This marsh may have afforded some early military advantages, but these were outweighed by its myriad disadvantages. These disadvantages included that it was malarial, melancholic, monstrous, and uncanny in keeping with the dominant modern European tradition of the pejorative perception and devaluation of wetlands (see Giblett, 1996). In keeping with the same tradition it was later treated as a sink for industrial and urban wastes, and so became degraded into a wasteland. Cumulatively these perceptions and factors sounded the death knell of the marsh and were the impetus for "reclaiming" the wasteland

to create industrial lands by filling the marsh over a forty-year period. The result is that today Toronto has, as Wickson (2002: 159) puts it, "lost virtually all of its pre-settlement wetlands, particularly the former Ashbridge's Bay Marsh." For historians of Toronto harbor, such as Wickson, the loss of the marsh is merely a fact of history to note and pass over to the next one.

Of course, it is churlish to critique the mistakes of the past from the privileged vantage point of the present. Yet rather than merely bemoan the acts of the past and the facts of history, the point is that some of the mistakes of the past are perpetuated into the present with the continued destruction of wetlands close to Canadian urban centers. A recent government report on biodiversity in Canada calculated that "up to 98% of the wetlands near Canada's urban centres have either been lost or degraded" (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Governments of Canada, 2010). The mistaken perception in the miasmatic theory of malaria that wetlands cause disease persists in the perception that wetlands are unhealthy without acknowledging that industrial and urban wastes have polluted the wetland in the meantime and that these pollutants cause disease, rather than the wetland itself. There is an irony here that the wetland regarded as wilderness, as land ripe for settlement and development, is degraded into wasteland, as a sink for wastes, which becomes the rationale for filling it.

The further irony here is that pioneering settlers regarded wilderness as wasteland in the first place (see Cronon, 1996a, b). The wetland went from wasteland to wilderness and back to wasteland, but the definition and constitution of the wasteland had changed in the meantime. From the point of view of urban sanitation, the question arises of why alternatives to draining or filling Ashbridge's Bay Marsh were not considered, such as constructing a trunk sewer to bypass the Don River (instead of treating it as an open sewer), and so either conserving the marsh before it became polluted, or restoring it after it was polluted. From wilderness to wasteland summarizes the sad and sorry story of the destruction of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh.

This story is of no mere historical interest but has been one of recent note and discussion in Toronto with the publication of a volume about the history of its waterfront, including its beginnings adjacent to Ashbridge's Bay Marsh and subsequent history of polluting, draining, and filling (see Desfor and Laidley, 2011a; Jackson, 2011; Moir, 2011). This coincided roughly with the release of the mayor's vision for the waterfront and with exception being taken by some

Torontans, including the editors of this volume, to what they see as in actual fact the mayor's plans to sell off the waterfront as a cash cow to retire city debt. This expression of exception spilt out into the op-ed pages of the *Toronto Star* in September 2011 in an article by the volume's editors. They conclude by calling on city councilors to "ensure that our waterfront's future isn't compromised by repeating the mistakes of the past" (Desfor and Laidley, 2011b, A27). They are referring to what they call "developer-driven, uncoordinated development" on the waterfront whose wetland has been destroyed, but it could refer to any wetland on the urban fringe that has not yet been destroyed by development.

The city of Toronto began life as the fort and town of York founded by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in 1793. The choice of site, however, was not Simcoe's prerogative but that of Lord Dorchester (Sir Guy Carleton), the governor-in-chief, who overruled Simcoe's initial preference for London on the Thames River, both of which Simcoe had renamed in anticipation of it becoming the capital of Upper Canada in keeping with its English namesake as duly noted by Mrs Simcoe in her diary (Innis, [1965] 2007: 121; see also Jameson, [1838] 2008: 269). Instead, Dorchester "directed Simcoe to fix the new capital at Toronto Bay" according to Story (1967: 764; see also 799; and Robinson, 1965: 185).

Simcoe chose the specific location at the swampy eastern end of the bay. It was not an auspicious beginning, or location, for, in the words of Mulvany (1885: 117), Simcoe, in keeping with Dorchester's wishes or orders "fixed upon a site at the mouth of a swampy stream called the Don … The ground was low and marshy, but it had the best harbor on the north shore of Lake Ontario, and was comparatively remote from the frontier of the United States. The Governor christened the place York." The site may have had another transportational advantage besides the harbor: it was also the "Toronto Carrying-Place" at the southern end of the portage from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe (see Robinson, 1965: 85). Yet the Carrying Place along the Humber River is at the far western end of the current center of the city—a considerable distance from Simcoe's original town plot. This was thus only one of a number of regional considerations and by no means paramount. Glazebrook (1971: 11) concludes that "how far Dorchester or Simcoe was influenced by the Toronto portage … is impossible to say. Toronto was not selected for that reason alone or primarily." It was one of a number of reasons among which the harbor and the distance from the United States were uppermost.

Among these reasons were the fact that "Simcoe mainly viewed the village as a commanding position" (*The History of Toronto Ontario Canada*) and founded the capital of the English settlement there where a French fort had been located from 1750 to 1757. Simcoe's view of the "commanding position" of the site with its military overtones became the prevailing orthodoxy as propounded by his wife. Mrs Simcoe (Innis, [1965] 2007: 137–138) relates how "The Gov. [her husband] thinks from the Manner in which the sandbanks [of the Bay] are formed, they are capable of being fortified so as to be impregnable … though the land is low." Yet there were some early dissenting views. For Collins (cited by Scadding, 1873: 17), the deputy surveyor-general, reported in 1788 that "in regard to this place as a military post, I do not see any very striking features to recommend it in that view." After visiting York in 1816 Lieutenant Francis Hall (1818: 215) wrote that that it was "wholly useless, either as a port, or military post."

The "commanding position" is the stock-in-trade of the landscape aesthetics of "the pleasing prospect" so extensively examined by Raymond Williams in a chapter of this title in *The Country and the City*. In fact, the commanding position constitutes and makes possible the pleasing prospect. Williams (1973: 121 and 125) notes how "castles and fortified villages had long commanded 'prospects' of the country below them." Colonial settlements, if Toronto and its founder in Simcoe are anything to go by, also commanded prospects of the land and waters below them. The country is a threat, or at least a potential source of threat; the settlement a military command post against possible invasion. For Simcoe, the primary concern was military, but the commanding position may also have had an aesthetic pay-off in producing a pleasing prospect. The landscape aesthetic of the pleasing prospect is based on the military consideration of the commanding position. The aesthetic and the military are not two separate categories but are imbricated with each other.

Along similar lines to Hall, Anna Brownell Jameson ([1838] 2008: 14) in her *Winter Studies in Canada* considers the geographical factors of the site for Toronto and dismisses the military one:

> The choice of this site for the capital of the Upper Province [of Canada] was decided by the fine harbor … [though] from its low situation, and the want

> of any commanding height in the neighborhood, it is nearly defenceless … But the same reasons which rendered the place indefensible to us, rendered it untenable for the enemy [in the American invasion of 1813] and it was immediately evacuated.

She acknowledges the transportational advantages of the harbor and dismisses any possible military advantages for the site. By then, though, the town, and the military orthodoxy, were well established and the latter has been repeated ever since. For Firth (1962: lxi) "the establishment of a town and its choice as capital were subordinate to its military importance." Following in Mrs Simcoe's footsteps, Martyn (1982: 8) relates how "a defensible site for a capital had to be chosen" and York provided it in the form of "a very fine harbor protected by a sandy peninsula" to its south. Benn (1993: 11) insists categorically that "the founding of modern urban Toronto was a military event."

Besides its harbor and peninsula to its south and rivers on either side, all of which were touted as militarily advantageous but were not in fact, the site for York/Toronto may have had a military advantage as it was protected to some extent by Ashbridge's Bay Marsh, a low, swampy marsh to its east of "almost 525 hectares" (Moir, 2011: 25). One wonders to what extent the size and position of the marsh entered into Simcoe's or Dorchester's thinking about the military advantages of the location. Did Simcoe or Dorchester consider Ashbridge's Bay Marsh on the eastern flank of the site as protection from, or a deterrent to, a land-borne American attack from this direction? Mrs Simcoe is not illuminating on this point. Perhaps "the Gov." did not divulge anything to her regarding this. Perhaps they were not students of the theory of war and of the role of marshes in military history where they have long played a role as easy sites to defend and hard ones to attack as theorized by von Clausewitz (see Giblett, 1996: 205). This was the case from the time of the ancient Romans in Britain to the very recent example for them of Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox," in the American War of Independence in which Simcoe had fought on the British side (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 9).

When the Americans did attack York/Toronto in 1813 from across Lake Ontario and through this lacustrine border, or frontier, they landed to, and attacked from, the west. They did not do so from the southeast across or through Ashbridge's Bay Marsh so this feature of the location did provide

protection in this quarter and perhaps it did enter into Simcoe's choice of site as a factor. In his recent monumental and award-winning history of the 1812–1814 war Latimer (2007: 130) describes how both "a good beach to the west of town made a landing difficult to defend against and a western battery" that was inadequate contributed generally to what he calls the "woeful" state of the defenses of York/Toronto. Latimer does not mention a "bad" marsh to the east of town that would have made a landing there difficult and easy to defend against. There seems to have been no eastern battery to defend York/Toronto as no attack was expected in and from this quarter. Despite the good landing beach to the west, both the bad landing marsh to the east and the good harbor and sandy peninsula to the south of York/Toronto seems to vindicate in hindsight somewhat Simcoe's choice of the site for gaining some military advantage for the capital of Upper Canada, or at least reducing the military disadvantages of Niagara as the capital in such close proximity to the United States.

In the most recent book on Toronto and its waterfront, Gene Desfor and Jennifer Laidley (2011a: 11) concur with its "military origins" relating how "the city began as a military outpost, its location chosen in the mid-eighteenth century largely for its harbor, protected by a sandy pit and buttressed by rivers on two sides." One of these rivers, the Don, debouched into Lake Ontario in and through the delta of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh, a fact that Desfor and Laidley neglect to mention here but do so on the following page when they refer to "the harbor's extensive marshes" (12). Perhaps they do not regard the marsh as providing protection or buttressing. As the Americans quickly and decisively proved in 1813, Toronto may not have been a very good site for military purposes and it was certainly not defensible from attack from a superior waterborne force. Yet the site did have some redeeming features when the Americans did attack in 1813 as they did not attack through Ashbridge's Bay Marsh. Thus the marsh did have some military advantages as a defensive position by virtue of being hard to attack and easy to defend. The point, though, is that however much the site did not fulfill these expectations as an aid in defense, it was founded with military considerations in mind, however misjudged they may have proven to be in practice. The city in general, as Virilio (and Lotringer, 1983: 3) says, was founded in war, or at least in the preparations for war, and Toronto is no exception.

Yet rather than its military or transportational advantages or the disadvantages of any of the features of the site for the settlement, its marshy and swampy location seemed to stick in the mind of early visitors. In 1796 François Alexandre Frédéric Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt (cited by Smith, 1849: 244) focused on the location (and overlooked the advantages Mulvany later outlined) when he described York "as being a mere swamp." This became a cliché for Jameson ([1838] 2008: 15) when she repeats his dismissal of the site as being "a mere swamp" without acknowledging her source, though she cites Rochefoucauld's description of the town on the same page.

Despite the positive qualities of the harbor, but because of its position on the other side of the riverine frontier (of the Niagara River and Peninsula), or border with the United States, and of its negative location in a marsh, the site for the settlement was, in a word, wilderness. In 1836 Jameson ([1838] 2008: 7) began her memoirs of Canada by remembering how Toronto, "such is now the sonorous name of this our sublime capital—was, thirty years ago, a wilderness, the haunt of the bear and deer, with a little, ugly, inefficient fort … five years ago it became a city." The sublime capital city arose from, and was founded in, the barbarous and untamed wilderness. The wilderness of swamp and marsh was regarded as barbarous and untamed in order to constitute by contradistinction the colonial settlement as civilized and domesticated. Without the former, the latter was not possible—in theory and in practice (see Giblett, 2011: chapter 5).

The site for Jameson ([1838] 2008: 15) was both swampy and a wilderness for "when the engineer, Bouchette, was sent by General Simcoe to survey the site, (in 1793) it was a mere swamp, a tangled wilderness." The founding and construction of a grid-plan town, as Jameson observed it to be without using this term, in the swampy wilderness was a means of bringing order to chaos, rationality to irrationality, light into darkness, civilization to barbarity, drainage to damplands (15). For Morton (1983: 31) the lots and roads were laid out in a "gridiron," an appropriate term, "through swamp and bush." To constitute the land as wilderness was to regard it as ripe for invasion and settlement; the grid-plan and town was the instrument to transform barbarous wilderness into civilized city; and the map was the blueprint for doing so. The English settlement of Upper Canada for Mulvany (1885: 116) was "a compact and organized invasion of the wilderness by an army of agricultural

settlers." Simcoe was a member of the landed gentry that led this army of agricultural infantry, of farmer foot soldiers (Martyn, 1982: 9).

The sublime city of Toronto was founded for Jameson not only in a swampy wilderness, but also in a melancholy marsh. In summer, Jameson ([1838] 2008: 7) relates how "they say it [Toronto] is a pretty place" but in winter "its appearance to me, a stranger, is most strangely mean and melancholy." This was partly because of its location as Toronto for Jameson was "a little ill-built town on low land" so no wonder it was "mean and melancholy" (7–8) in keeping with the association of marshes with melancholia (and with mourning as we saw with Venice in a previous chapter; see also Giblett, 1996: chapter 7). She goes on to describe how Toronto was located "at the bottom of a frozen bay," on the shores of "the grey, sullen, wintry lake" and backed by "the dark gloom of the pine forest bounding the prospect … This is all very dismal." In the landscape lexicon of nineteenth-century European culture and its diaspora, marshes were melancholy, swamps dismal, and forests gloomy for settlers in the new Europes of North America and Australia. Jameson invokes a number of clichés of the European landscape aesthetic, such as the city in, and versus, the wilderness of melancholic marshes, dismal swamps, gloomy forests, displeasing prospects, and despondent sloughs. The cultured city fought, and invariably won, the war, or at least the opening battle, against these natural foes.

In keeping with the melancholic marsh, Jameson ([1838] 2008: 11, 316) invokes specifically the cliché of "the slough of despond" taken from John Bunyan's seventeenth-century Puritan classic *Pilgrim's Progress*, the second most published book in the English language (see Giblett, 1996: 166–167). When she travels to Chatham she passes through a "rank swamp" with "deep holes and pools of rotted vegetable matter, mixed with water, black, bottomless sloughs of despond!" Her own pilgrim's progress is through this hellish slough of despond to the heavenly, sublime city of Toronto. She is fearful of "plunging downwards" into these "mud-gulfs." She constructs a spatial, hierarchical devaluation of what could be called the grotesque lower earthly stratum and reenacts an epic descent into the slimy, swampy underworld from which she emerges heroically and ascends triumphantly into the heavenly, sublime upper world of the city (see Giblett, 1996).

Besides the military advantages and psychological drawbacks associated with the swampy site, the health of the inhabitants and the healthiness (or

unhealthiness of the situation) was a consideration, though both have been in dispute ever since the founding of York/Toronto. For Firth (1962: lxxx-iii), "although Simcoe described the site of Toronto as particularly healthy [Simcoe's own adverb is 'exceedingly' (Innis, [1965] 2007: 61)], it was found that fevers and agues resulted from the miasma arising from the Don marshes." Mrs Simcoe concurred with her husband when she wrote of Toronto that "this place is very healthy" compared to Niagara "where there has been a fever" (Innis, [1965] 2007: 138). The Simcoes, perhaps unsurprisingly, as founding residents seemed to be boosters for the site, whereas Jameson ([1838] 2008: 15; see also 18 and 22; emphasis in the original) as a visitor took a more sanguine view that "another objection [to the choice of this site for the capital] was, and *is*, the unhealthiness of its situation—in a low swamp not yet wholly drained." As did Lord Selkirk who concurred with Jameson when he stated in 1803 that "the situation is found to be unhealthy from the neighborhood of a marsh of 1000 acres formed by the mouth of the Don … A party of soldiers stationed in the Block House last summer were constantly affected by Fever & Ague … The prevalence of Easterly winds last summer blowing off the marsh rendered the Town more than usually unhealthy" (Firth, 1962: 253). "Ague" is an archaic term that was used to refer to malaria (and fevers in general). In accordance with the prevailing miasmatic theory of disease of the time, diseases such as malaria (literally "bad air") were thought to be caused by the "bad air" or miasma arising from marshes and swamps that were regarded as unhealthy places per se (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 5; Jackson, 2011: 78, 80, 82, 86; Bonnell, 2011: 130; Desfor and Bonnell, 2011: 311).

The view persisted that, as William Davies noted in a letter of 1855, "the East end of the city is a great place for the ague, there is no one scarcely living there but what has it" (Fox 1945: 44). Fox notes here that "the part of Toronto bordering on the marshes as the mouth of the Don River has this same reputation for more than half a century" (44, n. 20). They were to continue to have this reputation for over a century after that as a recent historian of Canada describes how "the muddy little village of York [was] set in malarial lakeside swamps" (Morton, 1983: 31), despite Ross's discovery in the 1890s that the anopheles mosquito is the vector for malaria (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 5). Swamps per se are not malarial, or unhealthy for that matter, though of course they are the habitat for anopheles mosquitoes. Swamps were

only malarial or unhealthy places in the mistaken view of the miasmatic theory of disease. Malaria could equally be conveyed by anopheles mosquitoes in the "good air" of lakes, forests, and rivers, as Jameson ([1838] 2008: 480–481) relates elsewhere.

From the period of Jameson's visit in 1836 the unhealthiness of the marsh became a cause for concern and a pretext for filling it. Desfor (1988: 79) argues that "as early as 1835 there had been suggestions that the marsh lands of Ashbridge's Bay should be reclaimed. That year Captain R. H. Bonnycastle … suggested 'reclaiming the great marsh of upwards of a thousand acres in extent, which is at present a fertile source of unhealthiness to the city.'" As Fairfield (1998: 4) notes, "reclaim" is a common euphemism for the destruction of wetlands; "unhealthiness" was also a common rationale. Whether this unhealthiness was conveyed through the miasma of airborne diseases or through the germs of animal- or water-borne diseases is not clear. Bonnell (2010; see also Moir, 2011: 35; Desfor, Vesalon, and Laidley, 2011: 58; Jackson, 2011: 86) relates that "by the 1880s, and even before, the marsh was horribly polluted with human sewage and liquid cattle manure, gasoline from nearby oil refineries, and animal offal from slaughter houses." The unhealthiness of the city was ascribed to the unhealthiness of the marsh without distinguishing between the miasmatic theory of disease that mistakenly constituted the marsh as malarial or unhealthy and the germ theory of disease in which the impacts of urban and industrial development had progressively made the marsh unhealthy. During the 1880s, Whillans (cited by Fairfield, 1998: 17; see also Jackson, 2011: 90) relates how "the River Don was … practically an open sewer for human waste."

The unhealthiness of the marsh, or more precisely of the unhealthy impact of the city on the marsh and then of the marsh on the residents of the city, increasingly needed to be addressed. During what Desfor (1988: 77) calls "Canada's industrial era" of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Wickson (2002: 13 and 36) insists that "the need to clean up and develop Ashbridge's Bay" and "to remedy the unhealthy conditions of the marsh" became more pressing. The miasmatic theory of disease was discredited in the 1890s, and this should have led to a reversal of the view that marshes and other wetlands were malarial or unhealthy per se, but this view persisted, even into the twenty-first century as Wickson indicates. Yet the unhealthiness

of the marsh and the city was due to the marsh becoming a sink for modern human-generated wastes, not to it being a marsh. The marsh had indeed become unhealthy, but the city founded in the swampy wilderness had made the marsh unhealthy. What Desfor (1988: 78) calls "the logic of classical industrial location theory" espoused by Toronto's industrialists meant the marsh became a wasteland that was then filled to create industrial land in a convenient location next to the harbor.

Historically and ironically the modern culture of nature of the city founded in, on, or by using the materials of the premodern culture of nature of the wetland became the hypermodern culture of nature of the city floundering in its own wastes deposited in the wetland. The hypermodern city then fills or drains the marsh. For Wickson (2002: 13–14) "for decades, its [Toronto's] marshes had served as a catch basin for animal wastes … and raw human sewage. By the end of the nineteenth century, the foul conditions of the bay had long been linked to the city's rising death toll from typhoid and cholera." In other words, the foul conditions of the bay had "long been linked" to the city's rising death toll from water- and food-borne diseases. Before the beginning of the nineteenth century the city's rising death toll from malaria had been linked to "the foul conditions of the bay." The two major theories of disease in Western medicine contended for supremacy throughout Toronto's history: the miasmatic theory of disease in which malaria is an airborne disease; and the medical germ theory of disease in which malaria is an animal-borne disease and in which cholera and typhus are water- and food-borne diseases, respectively (on cholera and Toronto, see Jackson, 2011: 76). The shift from the former to the latter and the contemporaneous pollution of the wetland signed the death sentence of the wetland. This condemnation was signaled in its being constituted as wilderness ripe for settlement and development, proclaimed in the miasmatic theory of disease, signed in the unsanitary conditions of modern human urban and industrial waste disposal, and then executed under the germ theory of disease.

Besides being adjacent to human habitation, Ashbridge's Bay Marsh was the habitat for native nonhuman animals. Not surprisingly as well as being "the haunt of the bear and deer" as Jameson ([1838] 2008: 7 and 190) put it, the tangled, untamed wilderness of the "mere swamp" of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh, "intersected by inlets and covered with reeds, is the haunt of thousands of

wild fowl." Nearly forty years after surveying the site for Simcoe, Joseph Bouchette in 1831 could

> still distinctly recollect the untamed aspect which the country exhibited when first I entered the beautiful basin … The bay and the neighbouring marshes were the hitherto uninvaded haunts of immense coveys of wild fowl [see Innis, [1965] 2007: 35 where "coveys" is cited as "conveys"]. Indeed they were so abundant as in some measure to annoy us during the night. (Cited by Robinson, 1965: 185)

In 1794 Mrs Simcoe concurred with him that in that period the "low lands covered with Rushes [were] abounding with wild ducks & swamp black birds with red wings" (Innis, [1965] 2007: 138). In her introduction to Mrs Simcoe's diary, Mary Quayle Innis waxes lyrical that "loons floated on the bay uttering their uncanny cry" (37). Uncanny cry indeed, as the marsh and swamp is arguably the uncanny place par excellence as it is, by turns, and in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic terms, fascinating and horrifying, and a return *to* the repressed. Yet the uncanniness of the wetland, rather than being a pretext for abhorring or demonizing it, for a psychoanalytic ecology is a reason for conserving and valuing it (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 2; 2009: chapter 2).

Mrs Simcoe similarly places the cry of loons in the lower psychopathological register as she says, "They make a noise like a Man hollowing [*sic*] in a tone of distress" (Innis, [1965] 2007: 137). Over two years later she notes that "we heard a wild kind of shriek several times in the night, we thought it was Loons which scream in that way" (233). The uncanny for Freud addresses the subordinate and intimate senses of hearing and smell rather than the dominant, dominating, and distancing sense of sight (see Giblett, 1996: chapter 2). In both Innis's and Mrs Simcoe's account, the cry, noise, or scream of the loon telecommunicates invisibly across the space between them and the loons. This sound affects the hearer more viscerally than the sight of the loons as the sense of hearing is more immediate and intimate than the distancing sense of sight. This cry or noise also conveys a minimal message that is evocative either of the uncanny or distress. Both writers resort to figural speech to describe or evoke the affective qualities of the cry or noise. The cry of the loon evokes for Innis the sound of crying, perhaps in distress like the man in Mrs Simcoe's account. The noise of the loon is interference in the communication

channel between the woman writer and the Canadian landscape for it places a man hallooing or hollering in distress in the middle between the two. This noise is the black semantic noise that arises from the black waters of wetlands, rather than the white engineering noise of modern industrial communication technologies (see Giblett, 2008b: chapter 1). The hallooing or hollering man is, in Kristeva's term, abject between the subject (of Simcoe) and the object (of the Canadian land). The wetland is arguably the site of the abject as the subject is immersed in something not yet an object and so ceases to be subject (see Kristeva, 1982: chapter 1).

The abjectness of the wetland is congruent with the fact that the marsh had a liminal existence on the margins of the city in what Thoreau called the "quaking zone" between land and water (as discussed in Chapters 1 and 10). Wetlands are neither strictly land nor water, but both land and water. Ashbridge's Bay Marsh was a case in point as it was not really a part of the city, nor inside the city limits. Before filling could take place the issue of land tenure in relation to Ashbridge's Bay Marsh had to be settled. In 1911 a provincial statute transferred the Bay to the Board of the Toronto Harbor Commissioners (Glazebrook, 1971: 194). Glazebrook goes on to relate that "the Board drew up sweeping plans … designed both to improve the old harbor and to make use of undeveloped land. The largest undertaking was the conversion of a thousand acres of marsh in Ashbridge's Bay to shipping and industrial purposes." In other words, the marsh was considered as undeveloped land, an impediment to progress, and ripe for development and conversion, like some heathen savage, to the secular gospel of industrial capitalism. Dredge, discipline, drain or fill, and reclaim the recalcitrant marsh was the catch cry. The role of the marsh as a habitat for its native birds and other inhabitants was not considered in the days before environmental impact statements. In 1912 plans were drawn up for the filling of "about 1300 acres of mostly marshlands and disease-infested waters of Ashbridge's Bay," as Wickson (2002: 41) puts it. World War I delayed the implementation of the plans, but filling was largely completed in 1921 (51).

Draining to extend the Toronto Harbor was completed in the 1920s, but filling of the marsh continued and "was virtually complete by the 1930s" (Fairfield, 1998: 6) when, as Baillie puts it, "the city demanded its destruction" (69). One of the agents of this destruction was a sewage treatment plant,

another historical irony for the practitioner of environmental cultural studies that such a plant could be built on the very site that "the city" had converted from a healthy wetland into an unhealthy wasteland and now had to convert back into healthy land to mitigate or alleviate the threat to health that it had created in the first place. In 1935, as Devitt goes on to relate, "the city had decided to build a sewage disposal plant at Ashbridge's Bay and thus destroy it as a bird refuge" (71), though it was not quite destroyed as a habitat for birds as that took almost another two decades.

Twenty years later in 1954 Burton (Fairfield, 1998: 92) pronounced "the death of Ashbridge's" by filling with garbage, another agent of destruction, though this ironically and briefly created an "excellent habitat" for a few shorebirds (93). It was a long and slow death drawn out over a decade and a half as "the last vestiges of the marshland disappeared in the 1960s" (6). In 1969 Fred Bodsworth, a prominent Toronto journalist and birdwatcher, wrote an article for the *Toronto Star* entitled "Me and my Garbage Dump" as part of a series of articles by prominent residents about their favorite place in Toronto (13). He related how "one of my favorite haunts every spring and summer is the string of fetid and stagnant pools created by the Ashbridge's Bay sewage treatment plant and the landfill project at the foot of Leslie Street. Oozing with slime and littered with refuse, the ponds are a revolting affront to the eye." Presumably the slimy ponds were also a revolting affront to the nose, as Baillie in the 1930s commented upon "the smells which emit from the ooze and garbage" (68). Ashbridge's Bay Marsh had become an industrial wasteland, or what I call, developing Thoreau, a feral quaking zone as distinct from the native quaking zone of the wetland. Ashbridge's Marsh for Bodsworth "was once Toronto's most famous natural history landmark, a home for thousands of ducks and shore birds" (15). He concludes his article by bemoaning how "the destruction of Ashbridge's Marsh is a sorry symbol of urban planners' blindness to natural features that give a region its distinctive qualities" (15). Urban planners in those days were committed to the health of human populations, not to wetland conservation, nor to the biodiversity of the ecosystems of the city, nor to appreciating and conserving the bioregion, nor to the health of the marsh. As the health of the human population was threatened by the marsh, as the marsh had become unhealthy due to urban

and industrial pollution, and as the marsh became an opportunity for industrial development, the marsh had to be filled.

Bird-watchers and wetland conservationists were not blind to the value of the marsh and its role in the Toronto bioregion. George Fairfield's anthology of writings by Bodsworth, and other ornithologists, including himself, about Ashbridge's Bay Marsh mourns its death and the death of something important and vital to them, a common response to the loss of wetlands. Mourning and melancholy are linked but different as Freud theorized in his famous essay of this title. Mourning for the loss of the wetland is distinct from the melancholy associated with the wetland for in the former the subject mourns the loss of the object, or the abject, outside oneself, whereas in the latter the subject mourns the loss of the object of oneself within the abject such as the wetland. As a result, the subject experiences itself as loss in relation to the lost object of oneself and the lost abject of the wetland.

Fairfield (1998: 1) begins by relating how "Ashbridge's Bay was one of the greatest freshwater marshes in Canada. It provided a home for untold numbers of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and birds. It was an important stopover and feeding place for a myriad of migrating water birds." He concludes in his "Afterword" that "no part of Canada's natural environment was been more thoroughly stamped out of existence than the magnificent marsh that was known as Ashbridge's Bay" (124). Monstrous dredging, draining, and filling machines were the agents of the modern industrial "stamping out of existence" of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh and other wetlands around the world.

The destruction of the marsh can be traced, and has left a trace, in the maps of the city as it has developed and changed over time. Historians of the city of Toronto (most recently Hayes, 2008) note the marshy location for the original settlement and trace the filling of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh (especially graphically in maps). The map is an instrument of colonization as it subjects the earth to the grid of longitude and latitude, reduces the heights and depths of the earth to surface, and freezes the diachronic processes of the earth in one synchronic moment of time. The maps of the marsh are no exception. Reading the maps of the present area in terms of the absences of wetlands that were mapped in the past is a means of decolonizing the map, and the wetland, and retrieving its buried history. Retelling the stories of the

wetland is also a means of decolonizing the colonization and destruction of the wetland by the city.

The process of destruction of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh can be readily traced through maps, as can the history of York/Toronto and the plans for "development" of the marsh. Ashbridge's Bay Marsh has been "stamped out of existence," but the life of the marsh and the process of stamping it out of existence have left a trace in maps. These maps can be used to walk the city relocating its traces in drains and streets. Bouchette's map (undated) reproduced by Hayes (2008: map 48 and 33) and Wickson (2002: 16) shows the "Town of York" as a grid-plan town with square city blocks (for the grid-plan town and mapping as instruments of colonization, see Giblett, 1996: chapter 3). Bouchette's map also shows the large area of a yet unnamed and undescribed "Marsh" to the southeast of the town. The Royal Engineers' (Firth, 1966; Hayes, 2008: map 63 and 44) map of 1833 describes "a deep swamp full of intricate channels and extensive ponds," an enticing and intriguing counterpoint to Jameson's "mere swamp" and "tangled wilderness," and one of the few instances of positive press for Ashbridge's Bay Marsh in the nineteenth century.

Wetlands pose a problem for mapping as maps generally distinguish land from water, but wetlands can be inundated tidally or seasonally, or intermittently by flooding, so their extent fluctuates and varies over time. Maps are synchronic and static as they record and freeze the configuration of a place at a particular moment in time, whereas wetlands are diachronic and dynamic as they change their configuration of land and water from day to day, season to season, sometimes hour by hour depending on tides, and other inflows and outflows, rising and falling water levels, such as those produced by rivers, or floods, or droughts. In her PhD thesis completed at the University of Toronto in 2010, Jennifer Bonnell (2010) highlighted these problems with mapping Ashbridge's Bay Marsh in a section on "Mapping the Marsh." Many maps of York/Toronto show a putative clear boundary between the bay and the marsh, and depict various configurations of land and water and watercourses of the River Don (see Hayes, 2008), whereas the marsh was much more dynamic, as Bonnell argues and as maps generally don't show, in a defiant act of recalcitrance, if not resistance on the part of the marsh.

The Toronto Harbor Commissioners' map of the Toronto Waterfront in 1912 shows Ashbridge's Bay as an open body of water with "marsh lands" between

it and "Toronto Bay" to the west (Wickson, 2002: 40). The Commissioners in the same year also produced a plan for the future development of Ashbridge's Bay transformed into the "Port Industrial District." This plan was also "drawn over existing conditions" (in other words, over the previous map and over the marsh) (41; Hayes 2008: map 189, 124–125). The development plan was for a new grid-plan town of industrial lots and shipping berths imposed over the fluid, irregular, and irrational shapes of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh. Of the 316 maps in total in Hayes's *Historical Atlas of Toronto*, over 50 depict and/or name Ashbridge's Bay Marsh in whole or in part.

As part of the research for her PhD thesis on the Don River Valley, Jennifer Bonnell (2010) codirected a project with University of Toronto Map and GIS Librarian Marcel Fortin to assemble archival maps of the valley that show the historical diminution and ultimate destruction of Ashbridge's Bay Marsh. These are available online (*Don Valley Historical Mapping Project*, 2009). Ashbridge's Bay Marsh has been stamped out of existence, but it lives on virtually and has an uncanny afterlife in cyberspace, a poor substitute for the once living wetland itself. Ashbridge's Bay Marsh for ornithologists and wetland conservationists "is gone, but not forgotten" (Fairfield, 1998: 62). That remembering takes place in maps in space and in cyberspace, through walking the city and retracing the life (and death) of the marsh in drains and streets, and through retelling the stories across time of the fraught relationships between culture and nature, city and wetland, past and present, of this place and its people in the competing cultures of natures. Yet rather than bemoan the acts of the past and the facts of history, and mourn the loss of the melancholic marsh, the point for, and contribution of, environmental cultural studies, or ecocultural studies, is to change attitudes and behaviors in the present toward wetlands and other habitats in order to try to prevent the repetition of past mistakes of wetland destruction, to promote wetland conservation in the present and future, and to nurture among residents of Toronto bio- and psychosymbiotic livelihoods in their bioregional home habitat of the living earth.

13

Washington: "A Discouraging Site Bordered by a Swamp"

The history of the capital city of the United States has often been told and is part of schoolbook mythology that Washington and the White House, the Presidential residence, were built in a swamp. The designers of Washington, as Sennett (1994: 265) puts it, had "to transform a near-tropical swamp into a national capital." Building the city, as Dickey (2014: 25) elaborates, meant that it was "rising on one of the marshiest and swampiest tracts in the region—and the lowest point of a huge drainage basin stretching miles north of the city"—hardly an ideal location for a city. Nor was the location for the White House any better as it "sat in an unhealthy location prone to pollution and flooding." In the 1860s the site was described in terms typical of the time and the prevailing theory of disease as marshy, swampy, and unhealthy. In 1861 Anthony Trollope ([1862] 1951: 316) remarked that "the President's House … is built on marshy ground … and is very unhealthy … all who live there become subject to fever and ague," or malaria. An 1864 engineering report concurred that the site is "a dangerous miasmatic swamp" emanating "noxious exhalations" thus making "the Presidential mansion so notoriously unhealthy as a place of residence" (cited by Dickey, 2014: 212).

So entrenched and intractable is what Bowling (1991: 238) calls "the swamp myth" about the history of the national capital that he devotes several pages of an epilogue to trying to counter it. "Early Washington" for him is "popularly believed to have been a swamp. Dozens of observers of the young town … indicate otherwise. Almost all agreed that … it had a stunning natural setting" (237). Bowling implies that a swamp would have not been a stunning natural setting

thus repeating some dictates of conventional landscape aesthetics and landscape architecture, especially when it comes to swamps. Early Washington may not have been a swamp, but the birthplace of Washington was indisputably in or by a swamp. Civil War and post–Civil War Washington was also metaphorically a swamp for some observers of the developing town (as we will see later).

Bowling (191) is a revisionist historian who tries to correct the schoolbook mythology and "talk up" the location. He is at pains to point out that

> no part of the well-drained city supported a swamp, a wetland where trees stand in water … Even given the loose definition of the word "swamp" in the late eighteenth century—it could mean swamp, marsh, fen, bog, brushy area of just river bottom land—only a few of the dozens of descriptions of the early federal city mention swamps in this area. (238)

Taking "swamp" in this loose eighteenth-century definition, it would include "the reed tidal marshes" along some of the local rivers and "smaller inlets and creeks" that Bowling describes on the previous page (237). Despite conceding the loose eighteenth-century definition of swamp, Bowling uses the twentieth-century definition of swamp as "a wetland where trees stand in water" and insists that Washington did not have "trees in standing water." Certainly it had swamps in the eighteenth-century definition, including marshes as the few early descriptions and he attest, and it had wetlands in the twentieth-century definition.

Bowling (1991: 237) concludes with his most compelling argument against the "swamp myth." He argues that "most importantly, George Washington, whose eye for good land had few rivals, would never have selected swampy lowlands for the seat of an empire which he expected to perpetuate his name and reputation. The swamp myth simply lacks credibility whether one reads the landscape or the documents." Bowling implies that "swampy lowlands" are not "good land." Documents already cited, observers to be cited, and readers of the documents and landscape (both before and after Bowling) indicate that the "swamp myth" has credibility. Like the "alligator-in-the-sewers" of New York myth, the "Washington-and-White-House-in-a-swamp" myth has more than a grain of truth.

Washington was bitten by both the "Potomac Fever" bug, "the delusion-inducing obsession with the grandeur and commercial future of the Potomac

River" as Bowling (1988: 39; see also 1991: 13) defines it, and by the "pleasing prospect" bug (as we will see later). The combination of both bugs may have led him to overlook the downside of swampy land as a suitable site for Washington as the seat of empire. The swamp myth lends credibility to the "seat of empire" myth of an empire rising out of a swamp, of the empire triumphing over the swamp as a display of its power, a myth that had its prototype in St. Petersburg and its ultimate expression in Fascist Italy. The lower the point from which the empire started, the higher it could and would rise out of the swamp. Locating the city on the Potomac would mean that it would become what the hyperbolic Irish pamphleteer John O'Connor (cited by Bowling, 1988: 56) called "a center without parallel on the terraqeuous globe," a wetland central city for a wetland world—wetland central.

As with a number of other cities, such as Perth, Western Australia, for Dickey (2014: 45) "the key reason for locating the capital so far upstream [was] wartime defense." As with Perth and Toronto and their adjacent swamps or marshes, the swamps behind Washington may also have been envisaged as a means of defense from an attack from the rear. Yet, as with Toronto, the location of Washington was not a defense as the British took it in 1814 as revenge for the American taking of Toronto (York). All three cities are linked by the 1812 War during which James Stirling, the founder of Perth, fought as the commander of a gun sloop and also by the fact that they were located where they were in preparation for war.

The history of Washington has not so far been told linking it to these and other swamp cities and other seats of power sitting in swamps, such as St. Petersburg, the sometime capital of imperial Russia. Perhaps the comparisons might end at this point as St. Petersburg was a monument to autocratic power, whereas Washington is a monument to republican and democratic power. What is unquestionable is that both are monuments to power (irrespective of the type of political power), not least to power over wetlands. Capital cities are like that. The design for both cities was baroque in style and the setting for both was in a swamp. The similarity in baroque style between the two cities attests to the power of style to mould a city; the similarity in site between the two cites attests to the power of the city to modify its site, and be modified by it. Baroque style was adaptable to, and usable by, both autocratic and democratic power.

Despite its baroque beginnings, Berg (2007: 112) argues that the city of Washington combined "all the sophistication of the European baroque … with a good dose of [President] Washington's republican sensibilities." In other words, the city of Washington tried to combine the best of both worlds, to marry together both types of politics (autocratic and democratic) and both sorts of style (baroque and demotic), and be paradoxically both autocratic baroque and democratic republic. Despite their differences, both types of politics and style involved draining and filling wetlands as a defining feature of modernity and urban development. The city of Washington for Bordewitch (2008: 6) was "the first national capital to be established by a republic in modern times." By contrast, St. Petersburg was the first national capital to be established by an autocracy in modern times. Both cities are iconic not only because they are baroque but also because they are modern cities set in premodern swamps; in and with them modernity clashes with and overcomes premodernity found in the swamp. Both cities mark their modernity by distinguishing themselves from, and dredging and draining, their wetland sites. Despite the ostensible differences between the nations and their polity, both cities enacted the same modern politics—both autocratic and democratic (and later fascistic)—of wetland destruction.

Washington himself thought the national capital was to be "the seat of Empire" (cited by Bordewitch, 2008: 60), though for Anthony Trollope ([1862] 1951: 454) during the American Civil War the city of Washington was "under the empire of King Mud." The seat of empire, the American empire, was set in a swamp and reverted to swamp. "Empire," of either the republican or autocratic sort, cannot abide unruly water and must regulate it, or try to or risk being inundated by it. Land and water dispute empire in the swamp, as John Muir (cited by Giblett, 2014: 157) suggested, but empire had to win land from water or risk being destroyed by flooding or engulfed in the mud of its own making. The importance, as Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 21) put it following Wittfogel, of "large-scale waterworks for an empire" applies not only to aqueducts and dams needed and used to supply domestic water to the imperial city, but also to the draining and filling of swamps for the building of the city in the first place and for the development of the agriculture to sustain it. Rome, St. Petersburg, and Washington (the city) as the seats of empire are exemplars.

Yet, rather than looking to St. Petersburg as a modern national capital designed in baroque style set in a swamp, the boosters, backers, and builders of

Washington looked to imperial Rome as their model and exemplar, for Rome was "the so-called eternal city" (Harrison, 1992: 46) and what Bordewitch (2008: 6) calls "a sacred repository of republican values" that would reside and find concrete expression in the "new Rome" of Washington (see also Berg, 2007: 108–109). Dickey (2014: xv) argues that Washington was "imagined as a massive neo-classical metropolis with giant radial avenues and boulevards." Washington may have been imagined as neoclassical, but its designer Pierre Charles L'Enfant imagined and constructed it as baroque (as Dickey says later [19]), two quite different styles that derive from two different periods of European history.

The similarities between Washington and Rome did not end in the imagination or its possible design as part of the Potomac River was renamed the new Tiber, though "the American 'Tiber River' " was, as Sennett (1994: 265) points out, "a mosquito-infested creek running through swampland." Moreover, whereas the Pontine Marshes would not be drained successfully until Mussolini did so in the 1930s in the kind of war Fascists liked to fight (because it could be won so easily), the Potomac swamps had to be drained so the city could be built in the first place.

When the site for a new national capital was being considered away from the pernicious atmosphere of New York as the leading commercial city and away from the patrician associations of Philadelphia as the birthplace of the nation, the swampy valley of the Potomac was proposed as one possible site. Although the Potomac valley may not have been, as Bordewitch (2008: 5) suggests, "the wilderness or swamp that legend has sometimes suggested," it certainly was swampy. Similarly, Berg (2007: 77) agrees that "the core of the federal district had never been the swamp that schoolbook history made it out to be, but it did contain patches of soggy land." Schoolbook history subscribed to, and perpetuated, the nationalist and imperial mythology of a city rising out of a swamp and conquering it along similar lines to the St. Petersburg myth. Both autocratic and democratic power were exercised over and against wetlands.

On the founding of the capital city of the United States, Mumford (1961: 405) relates how its designer L'Enfant had

> no single big city, not even St Petersburg, available to serve him as model, L'Enfant had nevertheless succeed in envisaging what a great capital,

> conceived in baroque terms, might be … And he had even made the most of what was, before the hand of man touched it, a discouraging site: bottom land, bordered by a swamp on the Potomac side, and dissected by a small river, ironically called the Tiber, which soon became a sewer.

Had he had St. Petersburg as a model he might have taken heart from knowing that a Czar had also founded a baroque capital in a swamp, or at least in a marsh.

Like St. Petersburg with its designers Joseph-Gaspard Lambert de Guerin and Alexandre Jean-Baptiste LeBlond, Washington also had a French designer in L'Enfant for whom, as a former Parisian, Paris rather than Rome and St. Petersburg were models. Or perhaps more precisely, as Berg (2007: 14) puts it, Washington would be "a Paris reborn as a Republican Rome" in "the American Paris, but better than Paris, a seat of wisdom and power on display for the rest of the world"—albeit set in a drained swamp like Paris and implying that Paris was not a seat of wisdom and power, and not on display for the rest of the world.

Like St. Petersburg with its prospects, Washington in L'Enfant's design schema incorporated a desire to take advantage of those points or "spots" in the site for the city that in his own words "commanded the most extensive prospect of the water" (cited by Berg, 2007: 74). For him "the gradual rising of the ground" of upper levels of the site "present a situation most advantageous to run streets and prolong them on a grand and far distant point of view. The remainder part of the ground … is more broken—it may afford pleasant seats [. . . and] can command as grand a prospect as any of the other spots."

Not only had L'Enfant been bitten by the pleasing prospect bug, but also he was using Paris as his model for Washington, for, as Berg (2007: 13–14) puts it, "the former Parisian had seen his native city opening new and dramatic corridors during his childhood and knew firsthand the value of monumental view in juxtaposition with intimate spaces, of streets running straight to create vistas or subtly shifting to corral one's line of sight, or experiencing both awe and small delights in the same casual walk across town." L'Enfant had seen Paris transformed by Haussmann blasting boulevards through working-class areas in order to provide access for troops to quell rebellion. L'Enfant was successful in part in realizing his vision of creating in Washington what

Berg (2007: 162) calls "a shining city of monumental spaces," though not perhaps in emulating Parisian intimate spaces of a walkable city with its arcades. Washington was what Dickey (2014: xv) calls a "the city of angles," rather than the city of angels like Los Angeles, or the city of light like Paris.

The city of Washington became in Berg's (2007: 105; see also 128) words "a city full of grand avenues," the grandest of which became known as "the National Mall … the largest governmentally administered green place in America until the designation of land for New York's Central Park in 1853," another gentleman's park estate in the city built partially in a swamp. The pastoro-technical idyll brought the country into the city.

President Washington's own estate of Mount Vernon reproduced all the conventions of the pleasing prospect in the form of the gentleman's park estate built in the country (see Berg, 2007: 94), whereas the city of Washington reproduced similar conventions of slopes, vistas, and avenues in the form of the gentleman's park city—albeit built in a swamp. The ambiguity of the very word "avenue" as either a tree-lined approach to a country house or a wide city street lined with trees attests to the metaphorical transformation of the former into the latter and the way in which country and city could be mutually reinforcing with similar aesthetic conventions, political power, and class connotations.

The repressed swamp before and beneath the city invariably returns. Dickey (2014: 19) relates how "what looked so elegant on L'Enfant's blueprint—a web of radial baroque avenues overlapping a rectangular street grid—in practice became a confusing network of ragged and rutted strips of mud." The seat of empire became stuck in mud; the city of angles became the city of mud. After Anthony Trollope ([1862] 1951: 454) had described how Washington during the Civil War was submerged "under the empire of King Mud" he went on to wonder

> how the elite of a nation—for the inhabitants of Washington consider themselves to be the elite—can consent to live in such a state of thraldom, a foreigner cannot understand. Were I to say that it was intended to be typical of the condition of the government, I might be considered cynical; but undoubtedly the sloughs of despond which were deepest in their despondency were to be found in localities which gave an appearance of truth to such a surmise.

The sloughs of despond in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* were encountered by Christian on his progress from "this world to that which is to come," from the earthly city of destruction to the heavenly city of creation, and so perhaps it was only appropriate that Washingtonians struggled through such a slough on their journey from this world to the new world of the republican United States with Washington as what James Greenleaf called "the 'New Jerusalem,' a veritable City of God" (cited by Dickey, 2014: 6). The American "New Jerusalem" was set for Greenleaf, like William Blake's "Jerusalem" in England's "green and pleasant land," in New England's, or at least America's, "green and pleasant land," or more precisely wetland.

In the same lower psychopathological register as the slough of despond and in accordance with the prevailing theory of the elements and the humors, marshes for Trollope ([1862] 1951) are not only bad for physical health as in the miasmatic theory of disease, but also bad for mental health. He repeatedly describes Washington as "a melancholy place," especially in winter, but as "the saddest spot of earth" in summer (309; see also 325). Later he describes the site of the Washington obelisk as "a sad and saddening spot was that marsh" (318).

The city of Washington as a whole may have been the City of God, but one infamous area in the backblocks and slums of Washington was known as "Hell's Bottom," which, according to Dickey (2014: 198), sat on "low-lying marshy ground that bred malaria and other waterborne diseases" (though marshy ground does not breed malaria (marshy ground is the habitat for anopheles mosquitoes that are the vector for malaria) and malaria is not a waterborne disease, but an animal-borne disease). Another area of Washington known as "Foggy Bottom" is described by Dickey as "the capital's own disease central" (169). The grotesque lower bodily and earthly strata are used to figure the grotesque lower urban stratum.

Trollope ([1862] 1951: 455) switches register from Christian piety to Greek mythology in his call for a new Hercules to cleanse the Augean stables: "of dirt of all kinds it behoves Washington and those concerned in Washington to make themselves free. It is the Augean stables through which some American Hercules must turn a purifying river before the American people can justly boast either of their capital or of their government." Such a Hercules was not forthcoming immediately after the Civil War if Mark Twain and Charles

Warner are anything to go by in their satirical novel *The Gilded Age* (in turn satirized by Dickey (2014: chapter 11) as "The Gilded Cage") set in and about post–Civil War Washington.

Twain and Warner ([1873] 2001: 171) were much more disparaging than Trollope about the city and "the mud and slush deep and all-pervading." They describe how

> you stand at the back of the capitol to treat yourself to a view, and it is a very noble one. You understand, the capitol stands upon the verge of a high piece of table land, a fine commanding position, and its front looks out over this noble situation for a city—but it don't see it, for the reason that when the capitol extension was decided upon, the property owners at once advanced their prices to such inhuman figures the people went down and built the city in the muddy low marsh *behind* the temple of liberty.

Similarly they describe how "the Monument to the Father of his Country towers out of the mud—sacred soil is the customary term" (172) and wonder why "the city fathers … did not dilute the mud a little more and use them for canals" (173). What Twain and Warner did not know is that the city fathers did construct canals for a short period in the early days of the city (Dickey, 2014: chapter 2).

Mud provides Twain (just as we saw in his case with New Orleans and we will see with Chicago) and Warner with the opportunity for satirical mirth rather than pause for reflection on the vexed relationship historically and geographically between cities and wetlands, on the monumental and muddy (such as in St. Petersburg), on birth metaphors and cities as brain-children, on secular phallic monuments, and on sacred maternal marshes. If the mud had been diluted and the canals viable, Washington would have been a canal city like Venice, rather than a city with pretensions to be the Rome or Paris of the new world as the location of the city in a swamp was not viable as a canal city (as Dickey (2014: chapter 2) discusses with regard to its trenches [50]).

With its mud and its trenches, Washington, like London (as we saw in Chapter 4), was a precursor to the landscape of World War I trench warfare. By an irony of history lost on most historians, the urban landscape of the slum and the muddy and sewery street ended up becoming, and looking like, the

military landscape of trench warfare. With its canal trenches before the Civil War and its muddy streets in the aftermath of the Civil War, Washington was a precursor to the mud of World War I battlefields and its trenches. Washington as Trollope's "empire of King Mud" was transformed into western Europe's, or at least the western front's, empire of mud in which "King Mud" reigned supreme for much of the temporal duration and geographical extent of World War I, a fact remarked upon at length by many of its writers and a product of it being fought in an artificial swamp and feral quaking zone (see Giblett, 2009: chapters 1 and 4), just as Trollope, Twain, and Warner remarked upon Washington's mud, a product of it being set in a swamp and a native quaking zone.

14

Chicago: "Built in the Midst of a Great Level Swamp"

Chicago is an iconic city of modernity because its combines many archetypal aspects of modernity, such as the place of birth of both the skyscraper and the American garden suburb. Chicago is not only a swamp city and marsh metropolis but also an industrial city whose activities and location spawned an extensive literature from among its local observers, principally Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle*, and from European writers, such as Bertolt Brecht who never visited the city but created an imaginary Chicago of the mind on the shores of Lake Michigan. Chicago is also the birthplace of the American garden suburb fathered by Frederick Law Olmsted following in the grandfatherly footsteps of Ebenezer Howard's garden city.

The founding site of Chicago for Robert Herrick in his 1898 novel *The Gospel of Freedom* "had none of the natural advantages found in great cities elsewhere around the world: built in the midst of a great level swamp, it had no fertile valleys, no great harbors, no broad rivers" (cited by Cronon, 1991: 14–15). The great level swamp was, in fact, a decided disadvantage. Yet many of the great cities built elsewhere around the world were built in the middle of a marsh or beside a swamp. Indeed, Berlin, for instance, was also built in the middle of a great level swamp. Chicago is the American Berlin.

Chicago did, however, have the national and geographical advantage of being "on the boundary between East and West," as Cronon (1991: xviii) puts it, of the continental United States of America. For Cronon this is largely a political and cultural boundary, whereas for Pacyga (2009: 8) the area was botanically transitional as "to the east lay vast woodlands and to the west

almost endless grasslands." The boundary between east and west is not only political but also botanical. The boundary was also aquaterrestrial as it lay between the two botanical provinces and was marked in the Chicago area, as Pacyga puts it, by "a swamp on the shore of an enormous lake where a small, sluggish, foul-smelling river wound its way across the flat prairie and through the small forests." More precisely, as Pacyga goes on to relate, Chicago "rose haphazardly on the mud flat near the intersection of the river and the lake" (20). For Pacyga it seems that there was not even a confluence of the river and the lake where the former flowed into the latter. For him they seem to merely intersect. Not surprisingly, given the location, mud as Pacyga saw it was "a perennial problem" and inevitably "sanitation presented a problem" as it did for many cities set in swamps (21).

Chicago was thus located and founded on "a boundary between open and flowing waters," as Cronon (1991: 23) puts it, between Lake Michigan and the Chicago River. It was also located on a boundary between the still and closed waters of the lakeside and riverine wetlands, as well as the open waters of the lake, and the flowing waters of the river, which was described by a visitor in 1848 as "a sluggish, slimy stream" (cited by Cronon, 1991: 33). Pacyga perpetuates the sluggishness of the stream, though dropping the pejorative slimy. Platt (2005: 92) repeats "a sluggish, slimy stream," but also goes on to quote the same visitor further that the city is situated "upon a level piece of ground, half dry and half wet, resembling a salt marsh." In other words, the city was situated in a wetland. The same visitor also described the site as "a hopeless swamp" (cited by Platt, 2005: 93). He may as well have called it "a dismal swamp" or "a slough of despond" in keeping with what I have called nineteenth-century standard "swamp-speak" (see Giblett, 1996).

The city was founded in 1830. In contrast with the ideal "city upon a hill" like the heavenly Jerusalem and to which Boston attained, Chicago was what Platt (2005: 95) calls "a city upon a marsh" like a hellish necropolis. By 1840 the booster Joseph Balestier could relate how "the miserable waste of sand and fens which lay unconscious of its glory on the shore of the Lake was suddenly elevated into a mighty city" (cited by Cronon, 1991: 32). On the one hand, the unconscious of the slime was sublimated into the city of the sublime; on the other, the slimy wetlands of river and fens were desublimated into the solid city. Like a number of other cities set on the shores of the Great Lakes, such as

Toronto, Chicago was not only erected "out of swampy air" as Cronon puts it, but also erected on and out of swampy land and water (34; see also 47). The city sublime sublimated slimy wetland into the gaseous heights of abstraction and intellection and desublimated slimy air into solid matter. Chicago for Pacyga (2009: 4) was the first city of the skyscraper, for Flint (2006: 28) "the home of the skyscraper," and by the 1890s for de Landa (2000: 92) "the world capital of the skyscraper," "an original urban form unique to the United States," but later exported around the world. The skyscraper began as masonry structures before morphing into steel-framed and later reinforced-concrete structures. Not surprisingly, "the highest masonry structure ever built," the sixteen-story Monadnock Building (1889–92) was, as Smith (2012: 193) says, "so heavy that it began to sink into Chicago's boggy ground." The sublime skyscraper was being consumed by, and returning to, the slimy swamp in which it was built; the sublimated and desublimated was being resublimated and slimed.

The boundary between east and west in the continental United States is obviously an arbitrary point. More precisely, when it was founded Chicago was the frontier between metropolis and wilderness, city and country. Rather than the city being where the frontier ended as in Frederick Jackson Turner's famous "frontier thesis," it was where the frontier began according to Cronon (1991: 32). Either way, both revolved around Chicago as "the city that had arisen out of the swamp" as Cronon puts it (47). The frontier city of Chicago, like the baroque cities of St. Petersburg and Washington, was founded in a swamp. The modern city is a swamp city. Frontier and wilderness for Cronon "turn out to be two sides of the same coin" and "city and country are inextricably connected" (51) around what Raymond Williams called livelihood. Frontier and wilderness are two sides of the same coin not least in the modern colonial city often founded in a swamp. City and country are connected in their bioregion and should be interconnected in bio- and psycho-symbiotic livelihoods in bioregional home habitats of the living earth.

In the case of Chicago, its bioregion is what Cronon (1991: 57) calls "poorly drained … marshland and wet prairie threaded by meandering rivers." This was hardly an auspicious location for a city as "the location was [not only] poorly drained … [but also] disease ridden," as Pacyga (2009: 42–43) puts it. Whether a location per se can be disease ridden is a moot point. A marshland may house water-borne pathogens or air-borne vectors of pathogens. More to the point,

as Pacyga goes on to indicate on the same page, "the young city, situated on a marshy flood plain suffering from poor drainage" meant that water-borne diseases, such as cholera, struck Chicago. A cholera epidemic swept through Chicago in 1854 killing 1549 people "to say nothing of those lost to concurrent plagues of smallpox, scarlet fever typhus and typhoid," as Platt (2005: 80) goes on to relate, "making the town the unhealthiest place in the United States."

Chicago not only "suffered" passively from poor drainage because of its location but also actively created poor drainage itself as it did not improve drainage until it was forced to do so by what Pacyga (2009: 44–45) calls "the awful mix of human and industrial waste" in "the fouled" and "the stinking" river. The marshy floodplain on which the city was founded was not only "poorly drained," but so also was the city itself with the result that "the Chicago River became the city's giant sewer," as Pacyga (2009: 46) goes on to relate and ultimately the "River of Death" (Platt, 2005: 144), the Styx, the river of the underworld, and a slimy marsh for Dante ([1314] 2006: 63; see also Giblett, 1996: 27–29) in *The Inferno* (VII, 103–130). For Upton Sinclair ([1906] 2003: 28) in his novel *The Jungle* the cattle streaming into the slaughterhouses of Chicago were also "a very river of death." From the chimneys of these slaughterhouses "the river of smoke [was] streaming away to the end of the world" (25). Chicago was an apocalyptic cityscape and timescape, and not just a landscape, of the end of life and the end of the world.

Apocalyptic Chicago was made from the mixing of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. Fire and air were mixed in smoke, and earth and water were mixed in mud. The elements were not in their own proper place but mixed improperly with another element. Chicago's streets in the 1840s for Cronon (1991: 57) were "turned into morasses during wet seasons of the year" whereas "at other seasons they were little less than quagmires." Similarly Chicago's streets for Platt (2005: 98) in similar vein were "a foul-smelling quagmire of mud, urine, manure and trash." During "the reign of mud" in "the mud season" wagons were "mired," horses struggled knee-deep in mud, visitors from the country avoided coming to Chicago, and residents paved "the morass" with planks "beneath which lay an untold depth of black mud" (Cronon, 1991: 57–58; Platt, 2005: 101; see also Pacyga, 2009: 22–23). The swamp on which the city was founded resurfaced onto city streets, a phenomenon we have seen previously in Paris. Chicago was known as the "Paris of

the Midwest" (Pacyga, 2009: 1), but presumably not for these reasons. Beneath the pavement and planks was the black mud, to rephrase the Situationists in relation to Chicago. Beneath the surfaces of the city, the depths of the swamp lived on (for a time, and still live on in metaphor as we will see later). Chicago also wanted to be known as the "Venice of the West" "because of the canal-like branches of the river that ran through it" (Platt, 2005: 104, 107, and 117). Chicago was like Venice as it was founded in a swamp, which made it possible to canalize the swamp successfully.

Moreover, as with Paris, the city streets of Chicago became open sewers. A visitor in 1848 described how "under these planks, the water was standing on the surface over three-fourths of the city, and as the sewers from the houses were emptied under them, a frightful odour was emitted in summer, causing fevers and other diseases" (cited by Cronon, 1991: 58). This visitor, in keeping with the times, subscribed to the miasmatic theory of disease in which, as Platt (2005: 110) simply and baldly puts it, "if it smelled rotten, it was bad for your health." Rotten smells equal disease. Chicago's solution to the problem of its "bad drainage" was to "raise the city" as Cronon (1991: 58) puts it, or more precisely, raise the city higher as the city had already been raised out of the swamp. It was a matter of raising the city higher both out of its own "man"-made or artificial swamp and out of the "natural" swamp in which it had already been raised. In slightly different terms, it was a matter of raising the feral quaking zone of disease-ridden sewers, raised out of the native quaking zone of a slimy swamp, into a clean, shiny, and sublime city. The effect, as Cronon puts it, was "to lift the city a dozen or more feet out of the mud" (58). This was a truly Herculean labor to cleanse the Chicagoan streets of rottenness and to kill the monstrous morass. This was just like heroic Hercules who cleansed the Augean Stables of manure and killed the anally sadistic and monstrous Stymphalian swamp birds for defecating on fields.

Sinclair's Chicago

Chicago for Platt (2005: 15), using a term of Asa Briggs's, is "a shock city" that provokes "horror and fascination," precisely the terms in which I following Freud define the uncanny. A shock city is also an uncanny city. Chicago is an

uncanny city, like London and St. Petersburg, as they all have a dark underside that enacts a return of and to the repressed. Upton Sinclair ([1906] 2003: 23, 28) in his classic novel of Chicago, *The Jungle*, repeatedly uses "uncanny" both as an adjective and as a noun. This seems an appropriate term, as the uncanny for Freud primarily addressed the sense of smell (as we have seen in Chapter 9) and the city of Chicago in the nineteenth century assailed this sense (as we have seen) as *The Jungle* notes (as we will see shortly).

The garden city and suburb built in a swamp returned to the swamp as a rich source of metaphor to figure its dark underside, its industrial slums. As with a number of other "swamp cities," Chicago was not only founded in a swamp, but writers about the city also figured the dark underside of the city in pejorative and cognate terms, most famously in the trope of the jungle as in Upton Sinclair's ([1906] 2003) socialist realist novel of that title. More precisely and pointedly, "the sewers" under the city and over which the inhabitants live are figured as "the cess-pools and fens of the jungle" (152). Pacyga (2009: 2 and 4) calls Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* an "epic novel" and says that it is about "the city's slaughterhouses" and their surrounding districts, in which the hero, or antihero in this case, makes an obligatory descent into the underworld, but from which he does not emerge triumphant, unlike his heroic epic counterpart, even in the novel, such as Hugo's *Les Miserables*. *The Jungle* depicts what Pacyga goes on to call "the horrors of American industrial capitalism and a Social Darwinian reality on muddy streets" that "Sinclair exaggerated to make his point." Pacyga does not provide any evidence drawn from nonexaggerated sources against which to assess Sinclair's exaggerations. Pacyga even concurs with Sinclair at one point. The commonplace that Pacyga (2009: 22) and others repeat that Chicago's streets in the spring were turned into bogs and the mud would be so deep that the wagons would sink up to hubs is to be found in *The Jungle* (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 93).

The Jungle, according to Earl Lee in his "Foreword" to the "uncensored version," uses "the plot of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as its model" (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 1). In keeping with its model, *The Jungle* is complete with a slough of despond—that is, of the slums and streets of Chicago into which the pilgrim is sucked while on his pilgrimage. Yet unlike Bunyan's Pilgrim, Sinclair's pilgrim never makes it from the city of destruction to the celestial city. Also by contrast, Bunyan's slough of despond is a native quaking zone

used to figure sin and despondency whereas Sinclair's Chicago is a feral quaking zone of urban and industrial destruction. *The Jungle* describes "great hollows full of stinking green water" in the "roadway," "the mud of the streets," "the swarms of flies [. . .] blackening the air, and the strange, fetid odor which assailed one's nostrils, a ghastly odor, of all the dead things of the universe." This odor was described previously as "a strange, pungent odor … Some might have called it sickening … You could literally taste it, as well as smell it … It was an elemental odor, raw and crude; it was rich, almost rancid, sensual and strong" (20). Later the odor is described as "a sickening stench" (32) that was "almost overpowering" (36). Still later "the stench was [strong] enough to knock a man down" (93). Finally "the fetid, sickening stench smelt like craters of hell" (255). The sense of smell and the "sickening stench" rendered the city uncanny, both horrifying and fascinating at the same time, in the same place. Like the soldiers traveling to the western front in World War I, the pilgrims traveling to Chicago could smell the city before they saw it (20). The sense of smell can convey sensations across a longer distance than the sense of sight. The swarming flies (93) and the swarming people (160) in Sinclair's *The Jungle* are an abomination in terms of the Levitical interdiction (as we saw in Chapter 3). Swarming flies belong to the mixing of the elements in the Chicagoan slaughterhouses and slums.

The urban odor in *The Jungle* is constituted as "it," as a thing with a life of its own. The "Thing" for Kristeva (1989: 13) is "the real that does not lend itself to signification, the center of attraction and repulsion, the seat of sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated … The Thing is an imagined sun, bright and black at the same time." The Thing is monstrous; it is what she called "signifiant"—that which defies and resists signification. "Signifiance" is her term for embodied, nonsensical, and playful processes of cultural production (see Kristeva, 1984: 17). It does not make sense; it does not make meanings. As *The Jungle* puts it, "it was a thing as tremendous as the universe" (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 35).

The sun of Chicago in *The Jungle* was not only signifiant but also what Nerval (cited by Kristeva, 1989: 140) called "the black sun of melancholia" as "the river of smoke" rising from the chimneys of the slaughterhouses was "black and brown and grey and purple in the sunset light. All the sordid suggestions of the place were gone—in the twilight it was a vision of power …

While the darkness swallowed it up it seemed a land of wonder, with its tale of human energy, of things being done" (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 25).

The "it" or "thing" of the sickening stench of the city of destruction is consumed by the orally sadistic and monstrous darkness and sublimated into the celestial city in the pilgrim's imaginary, whereas in reality "a black shadow hung" over Jurgis, the central character, as he struggled in the slough of despond of Chicago where "it was rotten, rotten as hell—everything was rotten" and where he was "working in the steaming pit of hell" that "smelt like craters of hell" (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 30, 49, 128, and 255). The elements of air, water, and fire were mixed in this hell. The "black volcanoes of smoke" and "the river of smoke" blackened the sun over the city and "the streets were sewers of inky blackness" (160). Darkness was upon the face of the earth, the water, and the sky. In this regard, Chicago was the wetlandscape of primordial chaos of Genesis 1:2 created in the beginning by godlike city fathers, whereas the city sanitarians were the god of Genesis 1:4–7 who divided the land from the water, night from day.

Chicago's sickening stench was hardly surprising as the land on which the city was built was what Chicagoans called "made" land (Sinclair's scare quotation marks), "made," as the narrator of *The Jungle* goes on to relate, by "using it as a dumping ground for the city garbage," what came to be euphemistically called "sanitary landfill," which was invariably unsanitary wetland filling. This "'made' ground was in the process of making" (Sinclair, [1906] 2003: 24). Sinclair seems to have been unaware of the swampy beginnings of the city, only of its swampy aftermath. "Gaining ground," as Seasholes put it in relation to Boston by building a city in a swamp and by draining the swamp, was followed by "making land" by filling the land with garbage with the result that "the great sore of a city … spread itself over the surface of the prairie" (23).

The ultimate slough of despond into which Sinclair's ([1906] 2003: 152) pilgrim descends is the city jail where he encounters "the drainage of the great festering ulcer of society" in which "all life had turned to rottenness and stench" and where "humanity was festering and stewing and wallowing in its own corruption" and "in this wild beast tangle." The prisoners embody the worst features of the city that *The Jungle* had enumerated previously. They are the drained pus of the great sore of the city, and they smell like the city for they are the embodiment of the city. Sinclair's pilgrim descends into the underworld of

the belly of the beast of the orally sadistic and monstrous city itself. Although Sinclair's pilgrim is discharged from jail, unlike the epic hero who kills the monster and emerges triumphant and Bunyan's pilgrim who escapes the slough of despond and travels on to the celestial city, he never escapes the city of destruction despite his conversion to the gospel of socialism.

Brecht's Chicago

Brecht never visited Chicago but created the "gigantic city Chicago" out of his imagination from reading Sinclair's *The Jungle* and gangster novels of the 1920s set in what his friend Walter Benjamin (2014: 142) called "the infamous and storied underworld of Chicago." Brecht (1966: 9; 1991: x) also created his imaginary city from reading Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell* and Schiller's *The Robber*. Two of Brecht's plays, *Jungle of Cities* and *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, are obviously indebted to Sinclair's *The Jungle* and include many of the same concerns and tropes as *The Jungle*. In the former play one character refers to "that stench" (Brecht, 1966: 15) and in the latter another character describes "the familiar contaminated air" (Brecht, 1991: 11). The "meat king" describes how he "produced the biggest stink in the world" (85). Later in *Jungle of Cities* another character describes how "they've drained a river from below here, and at night the place is swarming with the ghosts of all the rats that drowned" (Brecht, 1966: 30). This pronouncement indicates that Brecht not only had some knowledge of the history of Chicago but also had a fascination with its dark and slimy physical and metaphysical underside.

Yet another character in *Jungle of Cities* sums up the general feeling when she comes to the conclusion, "what a terrible city this is!" (Brecht, 1966: 39). The gigantic city is also an orally sadistic monster when one character warns another, "Don't let that great maw devour you" (54). The poor residents of Chicago live in "this state of abject misery" (76). The jungle city of Chicago is a place not only of stench, but also of noise, of "the everlasting roar of Chicago" (81) and of "the black addiction of this planet" (81) of hating others. "Hell is other people," as Sartre (1989: 145) said, and as Brecht seemed to be saying a long time before him. Brecht wrote most of this play when he was living in Augsburg and took long walks by the "black water" (10) of its moat. The two

places of blackness seem to have coalesced in his imagination into the black water of the swamp on which Chicago was built and into the black addiction of hatred he saw manifested in novels set there. The white noise of the everlasting roar of modern cities replaces the black noise of the eternal murmuring of premodern swamps. The white light of cities overcomes the blackness of black waters and the darkness of the heart of darkness. Chicago was known as "the magical White City" (Hall, 2014: 203). The white magical city is founded in black magical marshes. The feral quaking zone of the modern city replaces the native quaking zone of the premodern swamp. One character in *Jungle of Cities* accuses another of having "lost the ground from under your feet" (Brecht, 1966: 87) just as Chicago lost the swamp from under its feet.

Saint Joan of the Stockyards follows suit in similar vein. One of the workers in one of "the big [meat-] packing plants" describes how "this plant has been a hell to us and only / The cold terrors of Chicago / Have kept us here" (Brecht, 1991: 5). Saint Joan is a modern Dantean Marxist epic hero and secular Joan of Arc who undertakes a "descent into the depths" of "the misery of the stockyards." Chicago for Brecht is not only the city of stockyards and slaughterhouse but also the city as stockyard and slaughterhouse in which the slaughterhouse is a trope for the city, and indeed the world. For Joan "in our cities the turmoil never ceases" and "such a world" resembles a slaughterhouse (7). Joan descends into "the lowest depths" (12) of this modern urban hell. Her Christian colleagues warn her against "striving downward" and that if she does so she will "vanish in the muck" (13) not only of the physical city but also of the metaphysical city. For Joan, she is descending into "the thickets of baseness" (23) and into "the dark and hidden places" (37) of the city, into the stockyards, whereas for the broker "the people of the stockyards" are "the scum of the earth" (23) and "cities like this … are burning underneath" (44). For the "meat king," "in these burning / Cities … the headlong streams of people / [are] Bellowing [like cattle in a slaughterhouse] as they tumble down to hell" (44). Joan goes missing in the belly of this beast, and the broker states that "it's as though / Black, bellowing Chicago had swallowed her up" (58). Chicago is an orally sadistic, monstrous, and terrified beast. Joan is indeed "in the swamp / Of the stockyards, going down / Lower and lower, hoping to transfigure the muck" but ending up being "engulfed by the swamp" (83). The native swamp on which Chicago was built is transformed into the feral

swamp of its dark underside. The repressed history and geography of the city set and founded in a swamp returns in tropes for the city.

One of the meat-packers accuses "the meat king" of being "the monster" "making merchandise / Of nature itself, selling the air we breathe" (Brecht, 1991: 15). The capitalist commodifies nature. Chicago is not merely "nature's metropolis" as Cronon suggests but also commodified nature's metropolis. The meat-packer goes on to state of the meat king that "so consuming is his greed" that "his unnatural passion" has become "second nature" to him (15). The commodification of nature in and by the city of Chicago applied not only to its foundation and industry, but also to its later suburbs, such as South Park, and their town planning and architectural landscaping.

Olmsted's Chicago

Platt (2005: 41) describes "the twin birth of the industrial slum and the garden suburb" in Manchester, but it applies equally to Chicago with Frederick Law Olmsted (as we will see later and as Platt neglects to mention). One is not possible without the other; the industrial slum is the repressed of the garden suburb; and the swamp is the repressed of both. Platt relates how

> the speculators who chose the swampy ground at the southern end of Lake Michigan as the up-and-coming place perfectly expressed this bold optimism [of erecting a profitable city on a landscape of natural abundance] in the official seal of their local government: "*Urbs in Horto*," the Garden City. To make their dream real, Chicagoans would have to find a way to lift their budding metropolis out of the mud. (77)

The garden city and suburb had to be lifted out of the swamp. Chicago was "the garden city" built in what Platt calls the "mudhole in the prairie" (78).

Chicago for Flint (2006: 28) was "a model for American city-building a century ago" as it was "home to the skyscraper and the central business district and, at the same time, to some of the country's first pastoral suburbs," such as South Park. Flint does not point out that all of these icons of modernity in Chicago were built in swamps. Chicago was an American model for building a modern city in a swamp; South Park in Chicago was an American

model for building a pastoral suburb in a swamp. Olmsted (1997: 50, 292; also cited by Rybczynski, 2003: 328) described South Park as "a flat alluvial site" part of what he also called "the low, flat, miry and forlorn character of the greater part of the country immediately about Chicago." No wonder that Beveridge and Rocheleau (1998: 72) conclude that Olmsted found "the soggy, windblown prairie section of the site [of South Park] unappealing and later referred to the marshy area behind the lakeshore dunes as 'a swamp without beauty.' " A swamp may have beauty, but not this one so it had to be beautified, or perhaps more precisely pastoralized.

As "the land beside the lake was low-lying and marshy," as Rybczynski (2003: 300) puts it, "the unifying motif of South Park was water. Olmsted (1997: 166) and his partner Vaux proposed dredging the swampy land next to Lake Michigan to create an intricate system of lagoons and waterways for boating and swimming." In accordance with the dictates of landscape architecture, swampy land could not be left as it was; it had to be dredged or drained and made into something else, a park (as in Central Park in New York), or lagoons (as in Boston and Chicago), or a garden suburb (such as South Park in Chicago so that it might then become the Venice of the West).

Olmsted was following in the footsteps of Ebenezer Howard who is for Hall (2014: 91) "the single most important character in this entire tale" of the intellectual history of urban planning and design since 1880. In Howard's garden city there was no room for swamps and other wetlands, just as there had not been for Olmsted in his design for Central Park, New York, though there had been for his design of the Back Bay Fens in Boston. For his garden city Howard envisaged a flat, dry site, a tabula rasa, on which to inscribe his bucolic vision of a pastoro-technical utopia, and he did not envisage the flat or hilly swampy sites on which most cities took place. Howard (1902: 2) saw the garden city as combining the best of the country and the city in what he called "a healthy, natural and economic combination of town and country life," though the country for him was construed in narrow terms as "the bosom of our kindly mother earth" (unp.). There was no room in Howard's country for the womb of our great mother earth of wetlands, who sometimes kindly creates and sometimes unkindly destroys.

Howard's mother earth fed a land flowing with white milk and golden honey and was not a wetland stagnating with fertile and fecund black

water. Although Howard (1902: 4) acknowledged on his diagram of the "Ward and Centre Garden-City" that the "plan must depend upon the site selected," the concentric circles of the street layouts embrace "allotments" and "dairy farms" and are ringed by "larger farms." The site selected would not be a wetland. The garden city combines the city with the agricultural country and not with the wild country of marsh and swamp. What Howard called "the general plan of concentric rings" (5) does not mention wetlands, nor any other natural feature for that matter. The garden city would enable the city-dweller to experience what Howard calls "the fresh delights of the country—field, hedgerow, and woodland—not trim parks and gardens merely" (95), nor presumably fen, marsh, and swamp and their fresh and decaying delights. The garden city and the country swamp are antithetical to each other.

Part Four

More Beginnings

15

Conclusion: The City as Body, the Earth as Body, and the Body as Earth

The city has been figured in a variety of ways as we have seen in many of the preceding chapters. These have ranged from abyss to jungle, nether world to hell, sublime heights to swampy depths, and so on. The ways in which the city is figured say much about the politics of the periods in which the figuration was made. Yet these historical shifts say a lot not only about those periods, but also about the city, how it has been thought from the past into the present and how it will be thought in the future. In this concluding chapter I look at one of the central ways in which the city has been figured, the city as body, and variations on this theme. I also relate this trope to a much older one of the earth as body and the body as earth and argue for a rapprochement between them in such a way that the city can become more "sustainable," in other words, live in greater psycho- and biosymbiosis in its bioregion and with the living earth.

In the seventeenth century John Donne in his first *Satrye* evokes "the sinewes of a cities mistique bodie" (cited by Smith, 2012: 170). In two hundred years the city went from a mystical body to a disease of the body politic. For some early-nineteenth-century writers, such as William Cobbett, London is a wen, "a swelling sore that simultaneously drained and corrupted the surrounding countryside" (as Graeme Davison (1983: 366) defined it). A wen is a grotesque excrescence on the surface of the body politic (as Mikhail Bakhtin might have put it). For later writers in the same century London is "a tumour, an elephantiasis sucking into its gorged system half the life" of the country (Lord Roseberry cited by Howard, 1902: unp). London is a parasitic cancer in the depths of the body politic. For Howard in the early twentieth century

"crowded, ill-ventilated, unplanned, unwieldy, unhealthy cities" were "ulcers on the very face of our beautiful island" (98). For some early-twentieth-century writers, such as Benjamin and Freud (as we saw in the earlier chapter on Berlin), the underside of the city is both fascinating and horrifying, and figured in bodily terms. Recently for some early-twenty-first-century writers the back blocks and slums of the hypermodern city—characterized as regions of rust and ruin, or of decay and decomposition steeped in feral swamps—are fascinating. These twenty-first-century writers express anxiety or dread about the city like their nineteenth-century counterparts.

Rather than this fraught figuration, I propose seeing the city as a body, not only with parks as lungs as in the nineteenth-century cliché of the city, but also with its twentieth-century skyscrapers as the head and brain, the water supply and sewerage systems as the esophagus and intestines, the rivers as arteries, the wetlands as kidneys, liver, and placenta, the "mouth" and the estuary of the river as the anus and bowels, slums as a sore to be treated and cared for, not bled or lanced in the gentrification of slum clearance, and so on. Rather than figuring slums as swamps in pejorative terms as places of disease and horror, I propose seeing them as artificial wetlands whose livability for their residents would be improved by improving their ecological functionality as kidneys, liver, and placenta, as places of hope and new life.

Manuel de Landa (2000: 20; see also 106) sees "cities as ecosystems" and as "parasitic entities." He goes on to point out

> the error of comparing cities to organisms, especially when the metaphor is meant to imply (as it has in the past) that both exist in a state of internal equilibrium, or homeostasis. Rather, urban centers and living creatures must be seen as *different* dynamical systems operating far from equilibrium, that is, traversed by more or less intense flows of matter-energy that provoke their unique metamorphoses … From this point of view cities arise from the flow of matter-energy. (28; emphasis in the original)

So do bodies and lands in the Taoist view of the body and the earth arise from, or *are*, the flow of matter-energy, or *chi* (see Giblett, 2008a: chapter 10). Arguably the body is not in a state of internal equilibrium, or homeostasis, either, except in the static view of modern Western European mechanical medicine (see Giblett, 2008a: chapter 2). Similarly wetland cities, or formerly

wetland cities, arise from the dynamic flow of matter-energy in the wetlands and by the rivers on or by which they were founded. Forests, wetlands, cities, and bodies are all dynamic flows of matter-energy.

Richard Sennett (1994) in *Flesh and Stone* extensively explores the city as body, in particular the trope of the body politic. Early on in his study he cites John of Salisbury who, in 1159, in *Polticraticus* thought of "the city's palace or cathedral … as its head, the central market as its stomach, the city's hands and feet as its houses" (23). Sennett later reprises his discussion of John of Salisbury with specifically "the merchants" as "the stomach of society. It was the greedy organ of the body, as of the body politic" (156). Typically for the Middle Ages, in *Polticraticus* John associates what le Goff (1989: 18) calls "the ignoble convolutions of the belly and the intestines … which contain a ferment of illnesses and vices" with "the economy and, more precisely, money handling." The intestines were what le Goff describes as "cast *down,* below the belt, to the region occupied by the shameful parts of the body" (16; his emphasis). In Bakhtin's terms, the digestive, excretory, and sexual organs comprised the grotesque lower bodily stratum. They were associated with the grotesque lower earthly stratum of swamps and marshes.

Following in Sennett's footsteps, Peter Ackroyd (2001: 1) begins his biography of London with a prologue on "The City as Body." In it he notes that "the byways of the city resemble thin veins and its parks are like lungs." Likening parks to lungs was a cliché of nineteenth-century writing about cities. It was also used by le Corbusier ([1929] 1987: vi) in the twentieth century, albeit within scare quotation marks. According to Melosi (2008: 1), Olmsted is "credited with calling trees 'the lungs of the city.'" Yet by no means was Olmsted the first person to do so as William Windham (cited by Smith, 2012: 285) stated in the House of Commons in 1808 that "the parks are the lungs of London" and in 1883 the Select Committee on Public Walks figured what Smith calls "urban green spaces" as the "lungs of the city" (285).

Figuring parks as lungs was the justification and founding trope for "public open space" as a means for breathing fresher air than the bad air found in the closed and fetid courts of slums in particular. Likening the byways of the city to thin veins harks back to another cliché: that of roads and rivers, and later canals and railways as the arteries of commerce of the city and of the body politic, the nation, more generally. In the early twentieth century for

Berliner Herbert Jhering (cited by Smith, 2012: 253) "the stage was a respiratory organ for the city, a part of its very body." At the time Berlin had many parks, three opera houses, fifty theatres, and umpteen music halls. All of them helped to keep the city alive and breathing. Without them the city may have died, like the wetlands on which it was built. In this regard, these "lungs" of the city were an artificial and mechanical respiratory system. For Smith "the city is a machine" despite his use of bodily metaphors (297). For him, the dead machine is "brought to life by our needs and desires," a bit like Frankenstein's monster or d'Lisle Adam's cyborg Hadaly.

Similarly the body is a machine for Descartes (see Giblett, 2008a: 23–24) in the seventeenth century and for Mumford (1934: 32) in the twentieth century, for whom the body is "a sort of microcosm of the machine: the arms are levers, the lungs are bellows, the eyes are lenses, the heart is a pump, the fist is a hammer, the nerves are a telegraph system with a central station." The city is a body and its machines are organs for Walter Rathenau writing in 1912:

> In their structure and mechanics, all larger cities of the white world are identical. Situated at the midpoint of a web of rails, they shoot their petrified street-threads over the countryside. Visible and invisible networks of rolling traffic crisscross and undermine the vehicular ravines and twice daily pump human bodies from the limbs to the heart. A second, third, fourth network distributes water, heat and power, an electrical bundle of nerves carries the resonances of the spirit. (Cited by Sloterdijk, 1987: 436)

One hundred years later, for Smith (2012: 301) telecommunications are the "central nervous system" of the body, or machine, or cyborg, of the city designed, in the case of New Songdo in South Korea, to combine the elements of the city into "a single urban organism, a sentient city" capable of thinking, feeling, and suffering electronically.

For Smith (2012: 46), streets are "the vital human arteries of the city" whereas for Brooks Atkinson (2012: 80) "roads have become arteries—hardened arteries—of traffic." The street is for people whereas the road is now for traffic and not people. Moreover, streets for Smith (2012: 86, 194, and 293) are "channels for the city's life blood [of] its people" whereas "electricity is the life blood of the vertical city" and "technological networks" are "subterranean veins and arteries that sustain life in the urban body." These networks

include arteries of the lifeblood of water and veins of the wastes of sewerage and its nervous system of telecommunications and electricity. Under the sidewalks or footpaths of New York for Daley (1959: 11) lie "the city's veins and arteries," "the unseen roots," to switch metaphor, of "incredible complexity and awesome power," which "nourish New York. Without them the city could not exist."

Electricity sublimates the life of the horizontal and slimy streets into the vertical and sublime skyscraper. "The architecture of the vertical city," as Smith (2012: 196) puts it, "inspired the kind of sublime awe previously only experienced in mountains or canyons." Skyscrapers were indeed "man-made" mountains with "man-made" canyons between them. They were the artificial analogue of the wilderness sublime. Electricity makes it possible to transcend the messy life of the people in the streets into the clean and ethereal extraterrestrial world of the skyscraper rising above what is below. The Woolworth Building, "New York's paradigmatic skyscraper of the early twentieth century," was for A. G. Gardiner (cited by Smith, 2012: 197 and 198) a vertical street "miraculously turned skyward by some violent geological 'fault.'" New York's skyscrapers also rose from swamps. Smith later recycles Gardiner's figure when he discusses how Venice "rises almost miraculously from the swamps" (220). Electricity was the magical substance that made the miracle possible. Electricity was also sublime (see Giblett, 2008b; 2013: chapter 19).

Skyscrapers are a "man-made" plate tectonics and the vertical manifestation of what Michel Serres (1995: 16) calls "plaque tectonics" in which cities and their populations clash against each other in the great conurbations of the world. These plaques of humanity are reshaping the globe, like plate tectonics. They are also superseding any simplistic notion of an individual subject acting alone in relation to nature, as well as problematizing a hard and fast divide between nature and culture. Plate tectonics are natural, but plaque tectonics are a cultural reconstruction of nature. They are the urban landscape on the surface of the earth.

This plaque, this excrescence on the face, or more precisely in the mouth (which cannot be spat out because it sticks so much, though it may be sloughed off), of the earth, these plates of humanity are not just cities but megalopolises: New York–Philadelphia–Washington; Europe as city;

Newcastle–Sydney–Wollongong; Yanchep–Perth–Mandurah. Cities are not merely malignant cancers on and in the body of the earth, but also artificially constructed benign residential zones for their citizens. They provide shelter and comfort for those able to afford them, but increasingly they are "heat islands" with polluted air in the age of global warming. Cities are the child of the marriage between patriarchal culture, the Law of the Father, and the benign and malignant Mother Nature, in many cases founded on the Great Goddess or Mother of the swamps and marshes.

Ackroyd (2001: 1) relates that when William Harvey, who discovered that the heart is a pump, "walked through the streets he noticed that the hoses of the fire engines spouted water like blood from a cut artery." Rather than the city, it is the technology of the city that is likened here to the body, or one aspect of it. Perhaps Harvey's observation was an early step that eventually led him to the discovery that the heart is a pump, which he made from observing pumps at work (see Giblett, 2008: 19). Along similar lines and dealing with unsavory waste, sanitary services for Melosi (2008: 1) are "the circulatory system of the city." Yet sanitary systems don't circulate water as the lifeblood of the body of the city. Rather they dispose of solid and liquid waste. Sanitary services are the excretory and urinary disposal systems of the body. They are the artificial waste disposal system that replicates the natural functions of wetlands. They are the colostomy bag for the city from which the bowels of the earth have been removed.

The body as earth and the earth as body are persistent tropes in traditional cultures (see Giblett, 2008a). In previous chapters we have seen how the nineteenth-century city, or at least its slums, were likened to swamps and the city was figured as body. In this chapter I want to conclude by unraveling this tangled figuration. I do so by examining some recent instances beginning with a brochure regarding wetlands in which it says that "wetlands are the heart of our country. They beat to an erratic ancient rhythm and when they fill, a burst of life pulses out into the surrounding landscape. Rivers are the arteries of our landscapes. They nourish a vast country and drive the cycle of life even in areas far away from permanent surface water" (Inland Rivers Network, nd). Elsewhere I have considered wetlands as kidneys, liver, placenta, and uterus for the functions they perform and services they provide in purifying blood and water and giving new life (Giblett, 1996;

2008a: chapter 11; 2009: chapter 11). Considering wetlands as the heart of the earth-body, as this brochure does, presses them into another service as the central pumping organ of water as the lifeblood of the earth and puts another burden on them to perform that service and give that good. Wetlands, however, are not a pump that circulates water from a central station.

Perhaps wetlands are the lymphatic system of the earth-body. Lymph, unlike blood, does not have a pump to circulate fluid around the body. Likening wetlands to the heart can be problematic as there is only one heart in the human body whereas there are many wetlands in the body of the earth. The Murray–Darling system in Australia, for instance, does flow with new lifeblood of water when there are sudden downpours, but these big flows are intermittent and this system is by no means the whole of Australia. Lymph relies on muscular action to circulate and water in wetlands circulates because of the action of rain and morphology of land. Lymph can also stagnate in lymphedema as water can stagnate in wetlands. At a seminar on lymphedema that I attended at a public hospital in 2007 the presenter figured lymphedema as a "stagnant swamp" that is "soggy, boggy and sounds horrible." A stagnant swamp may sound horrible, but it can be a fully functioning native wetland with no actual or potential land pathology unlike lymphedema. It would be more apposite ecologically to figure lymphedema as a dysfunctional wetland modified by human activity, such as surgery akin to landscape engineering, to the point where it becomes a stagnant feral wetland, not a vital native one at all. As the lymph system is "a one-way drainage system cleansing the body by transporting waste from tissue to the bloodstream" and "lymph vessels drain into nodes and then into veins and is filtered by the kidneys," the lymph system is part of the wetlands of the body.

Just as the human body relies on, and takes in, food, air, and water, and is affected by the qualities of those substances, so is analogously the earth affected by the quality of its air and water. Greenhouse gases are adversely affecting the earth today, have been for some time, and will continue to do so into the future. Greenhouse gases for Phillip Adams (2009: 3) are to earth as cigarette smoking is to the lungs. Adams uses this heuristic trope to liken climate change skeptics or deniers to cigarette companies and smokers who denied the evidence of links between smoking and cancer. Smoke stacks and vehicle exhaust systems emit the "carcinogens" that are giving the lungs of the

earth (and not just the parks of the city) the "cancer" of droughts, floods, and heat. Adams calls for "the planet to give up smoking" as "the planet has lung cancer." He draws parallels between the cigarette and coal companies in their tactics to deflect blame and not change their ways. Parks may be the lungs of the city, but all bush lands, forests, tundra, and other areas of vegetation are the lungs of the earth.

Thinking the earth as body and the city as part of that body with a range of organs and processes can enable urban earth dwellers to live in a more symbiotic relationship with the earth. Nabokov said tropes are the dreams of speech, and Freud said dreams are the royal road to the unconscious. Tropes lead to the unconscious of culture and the city. Deconstructing and decolonizing the pejorative tropes of the city and the earth (as this book tries to do) and figuring both otherwise in more symbiotic terms may enable city and country dwellers to respect and care for the earth and its wetlands more than we do at the moment. Long live the wetlands!

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I am grateful to Emily Potter for pointing out the pertinence of Dave Eggers's *Zeitoun*.

Forrestdale 2009–2014
Coburg 2015

Notes

Chapter 1

1 I am grateful to Glenn Albrecht for the concept of the symbiocene.

Chapter 2

1 Drawing on the work of Leo Marx (see note 3 in Chapter 9), I coined the term "pastoro-technical idyll" in contrast to Berman's (see note 4 in Chapter 9) techno-pastoral ideal to describe the way in which, principally in the nineteenth century, modern, industrial technology and nature (or at least, the second, or worked, nature of pastoralism and agriculture) are shown to be ostensibly living together organically in harmony (Giblett, 2008b: 22; 2011: 60).

Chapter 3

1 This is one of the most poorly referenced books that I ever recall reading. Page numbers are incorrect and references that I wanted to follow up on are missing from the bibliography.
2 Harvey (2006: 37) cites in part this passage from this translation, but omits the references to Lutetia, both in Balzac and in the explanation of the term in the footnote by this English translator. Unlike Benjamin, Harvey seems to have a blind spot, or no curiosity, about the premodern history of Paris and how that persists in modernity as this passage from Balzac attests. Although Benjamin does not cite the passages from Balzac that I cite, he does discuss Lutetia as we will see.
3 The "abject" is Julia Kristeva's (1982: 1–2) term for what precedes and makes possible the subject and the object (a topic to which I return in relation to mourning and melancholy in Chapter 5).

Chapter 8

1 Now-time (a translation of the German *Jeztzeit*) is a concept developed by Walter Benjamin ([1940] 2003: 395) coming out of traditional Judeo-Christian theology (with its concept of Kairos) and combined with Marxist eschatology to indicate a messianic irruption in the present that blasts open the continuum of history (that is, revolution). Benjamin first developed the concept of now-time in the fourteenth thesis of his essay "On the Concept of History."

Chapter 9

1 See Barlow (1972: 10–13); Beveridge and Rocheleau (1998: 14 and 33); Burrows and Wallace (1999: 790–795); Olmsted (1997: 81 and 180–182); Richardson (1986: 262); Rybczynski (2003: 29, 65, 86–87, 180–181); and Zaitzevsky (1982: 25–26).
2 Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux coined the term "parkway" in 1868 and Beveridge and Rocheleau (1998: 6; see also 44) define it as "a landscaped drive for pleasure vehicles." See also Barlow (1972: 35) and Rybczynski (2003: 282).
3 Leo Marx (1964) coined the term "the machine in the garden" in a book of this title in order to describe the ideal organic relationship between industrial technology and the pastoral idyll in nineteenth-century America, hence what I call the "pastoro-technical idyll."
4 Berman (1988: 26–27, 164–171, 299) coined the term "techno-pastoral ideal" to describe the "machine aesthetic" of modernist architecture.
5 Kasson ([1976] 1999: 165) coined the term "the garden in the machine." Elsewhere I have elaborated it to describe the way in which, principally in the twentieth century, industrial technology is given pastoral qualities of organic harmony and humans graze in its manufactured streetscape paddocks and are put to bed in apartment pens like so many docile sheep in the techno-pastoral ideal (see Giblett, 2008b: 22)
6 If I were Freud, I would no doubt psychoanalyze some long-lost and repressed memories to do with his father and the phallus as the crocodile must be some sort of phallic symbol in Freud's lexicon of symbols, and to do with his mother and the swamp as a maternal place. Yet, rather than psychoanalyzing Freud's psychopathology, elsewhere I analyze the psychogeopathology that portrays the alligator and the crocodile as an orally sadistic monster, engage in the talking cure of a psychoanalytic ecology that would regard them and the swamp in less demonic and more sacral terms, and promote ecomental health that would mean

that these psychogeopathological symptoms did not arise in the first place (see Giblett, 1996; 2009: chapter 2).

Chapter 10

1 See Richardson (1986: 17, 148, and 412, n.1): "George H. P. Walling's 1852 map … shows clearly what parts of Concord were wooded and what parts swampy at that time." See also the recent map of Concord and its surrounds in Thoreau's (1993: 18) day that also shows clearly a number of swamps that he visited often and wrote about.

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Index