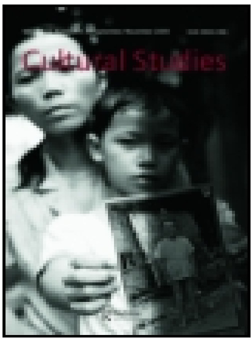

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Place, people and processes in waste theory: a global South critique

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ABSTRACT
Scholars across the humanities and social sciences have long sought to theorize waste, and more particularly the relationship between humans – their history, society, culture, art and thought – and their discards. My contention, though, is that these theories, since Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (1966) and Thompson's *Rubbish Theory* (1979), have been predominantly based in and on global North contexts and, concomitantly, have taken as their axiom the distance between our cultures, lives, experiences and our material rejects. By intersecting existing cultural theories of waste with two important emerging schools of thought – environmental justice and new materialism – I argue that the exclusion or side-lining of places, notably in the global South where countless people live on a day-to-day basis with, on, and off waste, leads to certain imbalances, biases and gaps. Most notably, the livingness and agency of material rejects is often overlooked in theories that oppose humans and other-than-human waste. By way of conclusion, I propose the notion of 'living waste' – a more literal and material take on Bauman's well-known concept 'wasted lives' – as a new point of departure for a reconceptualization of waste that might escape the prevailing dualisms and account simultaneously for 'full-belly' and 'empty-belly' contexts, human (wasted) lives and other-than-human waste materials, and understandings of lived experiences of waste.

KEYWORDS Waste theory; environmental justice; new materialism; global South; decoloniality; cultural studies

Introduction

In 'The Death of Nature and the Apotheosis of Trash; or, Rubbish Ecology', Patricia Yaeger argues that the former nature/culture binary has been displaced in postmodern art by a prevailing concern with trash (2008). Yaeger does not claim that the preoccupation with waste is new. As she points out, one need only look to the work of Charles Dickens and T.S. Eliot to see that this is not the case. Her argument, though, is that 'postmodern detritus has unexpectedly taken on the sublimity that was once associated with nature' (Yaeger 2008, p. 327). Working with a vast array of examples by photographers, sculptors, architects, writers and film directors – Jeff Wall, Mark Doty,

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Vik Muniz, Mark Dion, Robert Smithson, Don DeLillo, Karen Tei Yamashita, Ridley Scott and Steven Spielberg among many others – Yaeger suggests that, since the Second World War, detritus has replaced nature as a 'means of exploring change, mutability, depth, and the thrill of metaphysical quest' (Yaeger 2008, p. 332). She offers six main reasons for this aesthetic turn towards trash: the inescapable intermingling of trash and nature at a point in our history in which no stone has been left unturned; the post-war shift from a culture of maintenance to one of discards and (planned) obsolescence; the fact that detritus is the 'opposite' of the commodified object, and thus our cultural obsession with the commodity is mirrored in a preoccupation with its remains; the attractiveness of trash as a rebellion against Enlightenment dialectics (nature/culture, chaos/order, irrationality/reason); the mutability of objects from commodity to trash and back to commodity (as demonstrated by the figure of the junk man); and finally, the epistemological shift from one binary (nature/culture) to another (culture/trash), and our consequent embrace of the toxic.

These inter-related hypotheses bear a strong relation to arguments put forward in a body of work which will be referred to in this article as waste theory. Emerging in parallel with, and sometimes in dialogue with, the trash aesthetic identified by Yaeger is a set of cultural theories of trash, from Michael Thompson's 1979 *Rubbish Theory* to Sarah Harrison's *Waste Matters* (2016). Strikingly, however, though waste aesthetics and trash anti-canons abound in many cultural contexts – not only in Europe and the U.S., but also, notably, in many parts of Latin America, Africa, India, and elsewhere, in the works of well-known artists from Antonio Berni (Argentina) and Vik Muniz (Brazil) to El Anatsui (Ghana), Mbongeni Buthelezi (South Africa) and Pascale Marthine Tayou (Cameroon), but also, notably, in popular, craft and community manifestations like waste-picking publishers (*editoriales cartoneras*) in Latin America (Bell 2017a, 2017b) – the predominant theories of waste remain Euro- and U.S.- centric. Historically and culturally, therefore, these theories are situated within rich-nation contexts, euro-modernity (and the stories that characterize and constitute it) (Grossberg 2010, pp. 57–100), and – since 'there is no modernity without coloniality' – are underpinned by the 'logic of coloniality' (Mignolo 2011, p. xviii). In response to this theoretical bias, the present article aims to answer the following question: how does the relative absence of the global South from emerging cultural theories of trash impact on the kinds of people, processes and actors represented in this theory, and the ways in which those people, processes and actors are conceptualized?

It should be noted that the term 'global South' is not used in this essay as an exclusively, or strictly, geographical category. Instead, I align myself with David Naguib Pellow, mobilizing the term as a social indicator encompassing politically, environmentally and economically vulnerable communities (2007,

p. 3). As such, the term includes socio-economically underprivileged communities in rich-nation contexts, just as 'global North' encompasses privileged communities in poor-nation contexts. Furthermore, the term 'cultural theory' is proposed here to encompass these 'humanities' perspectives on waste not *in opposition* with other valuable theoretical angles on waste, whether economic, environmental or scientific. In fact, many of the authors discussed here – within and across disciplines ranging from anthropology and cultural history to media and communication studies, literary and cultural studies, and philosophy – engage productively with said scholarship. Instead, 'cultural theory' is used to define a set of works that take as their concern the cultural practices, everyday behaviours, material relations, and aesthetic, affective and/or ethical responses that characterize the relationships between humans and their waste in different cultural contexts (historical, social, economic, political, and/or geographical).

In order to expose and explain waste theory's cultural biases and absences – and to analyse and situate recent shifts that challenge some of these biases – I will focus on a corpus of key texts that have emerged since the 1990s, and particularly since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Though the first scholar to have attempted to theorize distributions of value and social hierarchies around the central theme of waste is Michael Thompson (*Rubbish Theory*, 1979), the text that has perhaps had most impact on waste theory to this day is Mary Douglas's seminal 1966 publication *Purity and Danger*.[1] As we shall see, though, both of these early studies of waste and dirt remain points of reference, dialogue and debate in many the texts examined below: William Rathje and Cullen Murphy's *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage* (1992); Susan Strasser's *Waste and Want* (2000); Stephen Muecke's 'Devastation' (2003); John Scanlan's *On Garbage* (2004); Gay Hawkins's *Ethics of Waste* (2005); Wang Min'an's 'On Rubbish' (2011); Sarah Harrison's *Waste Matters* (2016) and recent works in cultural geography (Gille 2010, Gregson and Crang 2010, Davies 2012). These texts are not presented as an exhaustive corpus of waste theories.[2] Rather, they have been selected to illustrate key trends – whether prevailing attitudes or important shifts – in cultural theories of waste.

In turn, these theories will be intersected by concepts from two emerging, interdisciplinary research subfields: environmental justice and new materialism. I will engage theoretically with environmental justice literature, including recent works by David Naguib Pellow, Julian Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy, Timmons Roberts and Bradley Parks, and Rob Nixon, as well as texts that explore some of the specific contemporary problems that are intersected with issues of environmental (in)justice, including the explosion of informal settlements (Mike Davis), national and transnational waste dumping (Pellow) and climate change (Naomi Klein). Mobilizing these theories, I will argue that, by focusing on certain locations and excluding

others – namely the global South – the majority of trash thinkers have focused on certain people (consumers) at the expense of others (those who live on, off, or with waste). This, in turn, has led to certain processes being understated, cast aside and unaccounted for, particularly the socio-material interactions between people, waste and wasted environments in what Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier refer to as 'empty-belly' contexts (Guha and Alier 1997).

As I shall argue, it is only recently that scholars like Hawkins, Harrison, Gille and Davies have begun to turn to the material liveliness of waste – a turn that, as we shall see, cannot be separated from the emergence of new materialist theories by the likes of Jane Bennett, Karen Barad and Stacy Alaimo. In spite of these marked shifts, though, these studies are still largely rooted in the global North, thus reflecting and contributing to what Grossberg denounces as the 'frustratingly euro-centric and euro-modern inheritances and tendencies' of cultural studies (2010, p. 3). My argument is that this perspective needs to be expanded by exploring the repercussions of such material agencies and interactions in contexts in which people are living and working, on a day-to-day basis, alongside, with, on, and under waste. In what follows, I will suggest that an altogether different theory of waste might emerge if we turn our attention towards the experience of those whose existences are marked principally not by the production or disposal of waste, but rather by experiences, livelihoods and lives in/with/of waste.

This paper thus forms part of a larger project which contributes to the decentring and decolonization not only of waste theory, but also of cultural studies and knowledge more broadly. It thus responds, in the specific context of waste theory, to the call by Rafael Sebastián Guillén (now Subcomandante Marcos) to 'open up problematics that might produce new theoretical and practical intentions … assume a political position that makes possible an "other" discursive strategy, "other" philosophical work, and opens "other" spaces of theoretical production' (1980, p. 100). In order to open up 'other' spaces in waste theory, my argument will be framed by some of the recent thinking that challenges colonial knowledge production and Western philosophy on which cultural theories of waste are arguably founded, including that of Walter Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Catherine Walsh, and, in the context of architecture and urban development, Rahul Mehrotra.

Absent places and people

Waste theory is often based on the axiom of our distance from waste, on what Thompson (1979, p. 20) refers to as our constant striving to 'deny its existence' and what Scanlan (2004, p. 13) sees as Western culture's 'galloping retreat from garbage'. Strikingly absent, or hauntingly absent–present, in waste

theories are the individuals and communities who live and work with waste around the world. Instead, waste workers occupy a small space in the sociological work on 'dirty work' (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, 2014, Drew *et al.* 2007), which is quite separate from cultural studies on waste, with no apparent dialogue between the two areas of study. A similar point is made by Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox who, in a fascinating volume on dirt and cleaning practices, note that 'theoretical work on dirt has in the main remained distinct from literature on its materialities and on cleaning practices' (2007, p. 7). By revisiting cultural theories of trash that have emerged since Douglas's and Thompson's cornerstone texts, I will argue that, because they are principally written in and about the global North and affluent societies, and therefore take affluent consumers as a yardstick and conceptual point of departure, the predominant theory is premised on a physical and ideological distance from waste.

Working on the premise that 'we are what we discard', Rathje and Murphy analyse refuse from 11 excavations of municipal landfills in the U.S., which they see as representative of 'our society', by which they mean that of the U.S., or perhaps the 'developed' world (1992, p. 27). Mexico only appears briefly as part of a comparative study of consumer demographics, with some rather strange and unhelpful findings, like the rather dubious 'fact' that affluent Mexicans not only use twice as much toilet paper as poor Mexicans, but also 'six times as much as affluent *Americans*' (Rathje and Murphy 1992, p. 149). The italicization implies surprise at this finding, in spite of the explanation offered, namely, that Mexicans use toilet paper as a 'substitute' for other paper products. The more likely reason, in fact, is surely that in Mexico toilet paper is thrown in the rubbish bin rather than down the toilet to avoid clogging up fragile drain systems, and therefore ends up in landfill sites rather than sewer systems. Aside from this possible misreading of the Mexican context, moreover, this surprise implies a misconception: that it is the U.S. and, by extension, the global North that are worst affected, or affected on the greatest scale, by the accumulation of waste.

The problem with this conception is that it does not take into account the huge socio-economic inequalities that prevail in the global South – the fact that, in those countries, although there are far more people living below the poverty line who do indeed produce less waste, the countries' elites enjoy levels of consumerism that are equal to, and indeed more excessive than, those of more 'developed' countries. World Bank figures from 2012 suggest that, while in the OECD, waste generation varies between an average 1.1 and 3.7 kilograms per capita per day, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the variation is between 0.11 (the lowest in the world apart from in Africa) and 5.5 (the highest in the world with the exception of the Middle East and North Africa) (Hoornweg and Bhada-Tata 2012). Furthermore, the world's poorest (and therefore those who consume the least) are

disproportionately affected by waste, among other environmental problems (Agyeman *et al*. 2003, Pellow 2007, Nixon 2011). As Agyeman, Bullard and Evans explain, socio-economic inequalities are invariably compounded by environmental inequalities:

> while the rich can ensure that their children breathe cleaner air, that they are warm and well housed and that they do not suffer from polluted water supplies, those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are less able to avoid the consequences of motor vehicle exhausts, polluting industry and power generation or the poor distribution of essential facilities. This unequal distribution of environmental 'bads' is, of course, compounded by the fact that globally and nationally the poor are not the major polluters. (2003, p. 2)

These socio-environmental inequalities occur on local, national and global scales. As Pellow explains in the context of national and transnational waste dumping practices, 'the intersection of social inequalities with ecological harm produces environmental inequality both domestically (within nations) and on a transnational scale (between northern and southern nations)' (2007, p. 5). In Mexico, for example, not only are rubbish dumps placed within its poorest communities, but the country's *maquiladora* region (along the Mexico–U.S. border) is also receiving millions of tonnes of unregulated e-waste from the U.S., as well as suffering from the effects of the *maquiladora* electronics industry itself, whose foreign firms reap financial benefits while leaving local populations to deal with the environmental damage, such as elevated deposits of heavy metals like lead and mercury (2007, p. 201). This is a clear example of the way in which, to borrow the words of Roberts and Parks, 'waste flows downhill in the social structural sense, while benefits flow up' (2007, p. 33).

Though Strasser's social history of trash is explicitly U.S.-focused, she does hint at such issues of global environmental (in)justice in her passing comment about landfills being located 'in places that are out of the way of all but the poorest citizens', and the more recent habit of exporting toxic waste to underdeveloped countries, gesturing towards the phenomenon of 'garbage imperialism' (Strasser 2000, p. 7, Pellow 2007). What she does not mention is that the poorest citizens, and those most affected by socio-environmental injustices, are often people of colour. As Faber and McCarthy explain, it is principally low-income workers and communities of colour that face the greatest exposure to harmful waste because their less-privileged neighbourhoods are characterized by a greater concentration of polluting industrial facilities, power plants, hazardous waste sites and disposal facilities, and by a lack of environmental enforcement and clean-up facilities (2003, p. 47). In turn, as Pellow argues, the phenomenon of environmental racism is deeply rooted in a history of colonization, and the corresponding strategies of co-optation, social stratification and the devaluation of people of colour (2002, p. 80).

This is illustrated by means of a Chicago-based case in the 1990s in which for several years, the company Krisjon illegally dumped waste in the African American and Latino neighbourhoods of Lawndale and Austin without having to face any fines or jail time, a scandal enabled by the bribing of various community members, the co-optation of one of the community's strongest institutions – the church – and the cooperation of the city, the state and federal governments.

In spite of acknowledging these wider environmental contexts, though, Strasser falls into the same trap as Rathje and Murphy, underplaying the scale of the waste problem in the global South in her assertion that 'we *of the developed nations* at the turn of the millennium have additional reasons to throw things out', and that, 'more often than people in less developed countries, we discard stuff simply because we do not want it' (Strasser 2000, p. 4, my emphasis). Again, this does not take into account the vast variations of waste disposal in countries most affected by socio-economic inequality, demonstrated in the above World Bank figures.

Another seemingly misguided perspective adopted in waste theory is that there is no such thing as a 'waste crisis'. Notably, Rathje and Murphy conclude their book by insisting that 'our garbage is not about to overwhelm us' (1992, p. 238). In making this claim, they unwittingly deny the existence of the many communities that have been very literally overwhelmed (in the sense of completely submerged) by waste. This has been the case in informal settlements and work places in the global South, like the hundreds of slum dwellers living next to a dumpsite in the outskirts of Manila in the Philippines who lost their lives in a waste landslide in 2000; and the dozens of waste pickers who have lost their lives in landslides on giant rubbish dumps in Guatemala City in 2008 and 2016, and in Addis Ababa in 2017 (Bankoff 2003, Hernández 2008, Associated Press in Guatemala City 2016, Agence France-Presse 2017). It is an assumed safe distance from these situations that allows Rathje and Murphy to conclude that

> the worst thing to do would be to blow the problem out of proportion, as if garbage were some meteor hurtling toward the planet. The term 'crisis' seems to demand immediate, drastic action […] A more rational thinking would consist of muddling along […] and then turning our minds to other things. There is, after all, a country to run. (1992, p. 238)

By proposing not to view garbage problems in terms of a crisis, they downplay the urgency of the global waste problem and, by the same token, of the broader problems with which it is connected, from pollution and disease to climate change – problems that, as Klein has so powerfully argued, demand immediate action that involves simultaneously tackling the global climate change crisis and the issue of extreme poverty and social inequality in the context of a market-driven, neoliberal global economy. 'With many of the

biggest pools of untapped carbon on lands controlled by some of the poorest people on the planet', Klein insists, 'and with emissions rising most rapidly in what were, until recently, some of the poorest parts of the world, there is simply no credible way forward that does not involve redressing the real roots of poverty' (Klein 2015, p. 238). Rathje and Murphy's seemingly flippant statement that there 'is a country to run' unhelpfully severs waste management – and broader environmental matters – from the arena of national and global politics to which it belongs, and downplays structural, historical issues of environmental injustice and racism. Indeed, as Pellow argues, the very project of nation-building and its perpetuation through the 'running of the country' is predicated not only on 'the manipulation of the natural environment' but also 'the devaluation of people of color, indigenous peoples, and the poor' (2007, p. 5).

This distancing rhetoric is also a salient feature of Scanlan's garbage theory, which proposes that our cleansing and discarding rituals have enabled and partially effected the separation of modern society from nature. This, however, is based on a false opposition between 'pre-modern living […] dictated by the spectre and practicalities of decay' due to humans' proximity to their own waste, and modern life, in which technological developments in hygiene 'effected a gradual separation of the human body from (its own) nature' (Scanlan 2004, p. 123). What is perplexing here is the notion that being 'modern' – a notion that, as Mignolo argues, is inextricable from our history of colonialism (2011) – means that we are always 'one step removed from the consequences of our own waste in that we need never see it' (Scanlan 2004, p. 127). This assumption disregards the fact that, as Davis puts it in *Planet of Slums*, 'shit still sickeningly mantles the lives of the urban poor'; that, in poor mega-cities from Nairobi to Bombay, 'constant intimacy with other people's waste […] is one of the most profound of social divides' (Davis 2007, p. 138). The Eurocentric, rich-nation angle of Scanlan's theory leads to a disregard for what Mignolo (2011) terms the 'darker side of Western modernity' (coloniality), and in particular the global sanitation crisis that is rooted in the eminently modern phenomenon of the mega-city and a long history of colonialism and imperialism (Davis 2007).

Indeed, the city as depicted by Scanlan is overtly rooted in the global North: 'the topography of the city represents an ideal of order, and is actually impossible to conceive of as anything but a consequence and form of order that overcomes spectres of degeneration' (2004, p. 154). Viewing the city as an ordered utopia seems to exclude any city characterized – like so many mega-cities in the global South – by informal settlements, where 'non-places' are not only the fleeting, temporary 'sites' of modes of transport and commerce (Auge 2009, p. 155), but also the fluid configuration of the 'perpetually unfinished city' (Luebkeman 2015, p. 102). Borrowing Rahul Mehrotra's terms, the 'kinetic' cities of Latin America, Asia and Africa are characterized by

flow, instability and indeterminacy, in contrast with the permanence, design and order that belong to the 'static city': 'the processions, festivals, street vendors and dwellers, all result in an ever-transforming streetscape – a city in constant motion whose very physical fabric is characterised by this kinetic quality'; 'it is temporary in nature and often built with recycled materials: plastic sheets, scrap metal and waste wood – it constantly modifies and reinvents itself' (Mehrotra 2010, xi). 'Kinetic' cities as theorized by Mehrotra in fact belie any separation between waste and non-waste, order and disorder. Waste, in these global South contexts, is creatively transformed into useful materials through processes of imaginative recycling, and networks, services and infrastructure are created in non-spaces that are beyond the parameters of the ordered, 'formal' city.

Moreover, it is a rich-nation context that leads Scanlan to make the assertion that

> it is likely that we rarely see the full effects of garbage because our personal involvement in the mucky details of its disposal is replaced by the objective and impersonal direction of municipal government in the form of the cleansing department. (2004, p. 157)

This, of course, excludes many countries in the global South in which a large proportion of waste is *not* managed by municipal governments, and in which thousands of people live and work with waste on a day-to-day basis. In most cities in the global South, municipalities collect only 50 to 80 percent of the refuse generated, and sometimes less, as in Karachi (Pakistan) and Yangon (Myanmar), where the figure is between 30 percent and 40 percent (Medina 2007, p. 56). In such contexts, informal refuse collectors account for much of the handling and recycling of waste, as in the low-income areas of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, Chalco and Ixtapaluca, near Mexico City, where hundreds of informal waste pickers collect and recycle waste in areas not served by municipal authorities (Medina 2007, p. 56). These waste pickers, in addition, operate in rich, socio-economically privileged areas (what Pellow calls 'the North of the South'), thus disrupting the illusion of an orderly, 'static' city, moving between its poor peripheries and centres of wealth and high consumption, providing disposal services whilst surviving, participating in the kinesis of the 'city in motion' (Mehrotra 2010, xi).

The exclusion or silencing of waste workers in cultural theories of waste reflects and exacerbates their distancing rhetoric. In Rathje and Murphy's account, a waste worker appears only briefly and by way of hypothesis:

> If a worker from the local department of sanitation were invited over to the garbage museum at DeKorte State Park and asked to point out to visitors how the garbage he has to deal with every day differs from the garbage displayed […], he might note that there is no construction and demolition debris, and no food and yard waste. (1992, p. 83)

Though they point to some of the materials encountered and experienced in sanitation jobs, the workers themselves remain spectral figures. As for female garbage collectors, admittedly thought to represent less than 1 percent of the global community of waste pickers, they are condemned to non-existence (WIEGO 2017). Later, waste workers are further eclipsed through the authors' depiction of the daily working of the landfill as 'an orchestrated mechanical pavane', featuring not human operators but 'big mother-hen packer trucks or rigs' depositing their cargoes, alongside bulldozers and compactors crushing the garbage (Rathje and Murphy 1992, p. 89). The eclipsing of humans by machines points to the same rationalization of waste collection that underlies their study and predetermines its conclusions.

In Scanlan's account, waste workers are not mentioned in their own right, but by way of analogy: 'much like the work that is undertaken to clear away our rubbish on a day-to-day level, the intellectual cleansing goes largely unnoticed' (2004, p. 67). Even in the short section about muckraking as a means of encountering garbage in all its materiality, the people he refers to are the journalists at the beginning of the twentieth century who first earned the label 'muckrakers', the Arizona garbologists (led by Murphy), and the contemporary dumpster divers who have gained celebrity status from their transgressive activities (Scanlan 2004, pp. 136–145). The experiences of, and relations with, waste lived by these figures are far removed from those of the people who either find in garbage a means of making a living or those whose work, for various reasons, exposes them to toxic pollution or hazardous chemicals. Indeed, environmental justice research demonstrates that in most cases, as well as being exposed to more environmental hazards within their communities, 'people of color, the poor, and immigrants tend to confront similar hazards at work as well' (Pellow 2007, p. 11).[3]

When Scanlan does refer to a 'garbage community' living off, and next to, a dumpsite in the outskirts of Manila, where a landslide caused hundreds to lose their lives (see above), this is still interpreted from a distinctly rich-nation perspective:

> Whilst these events – and people – are presented in a way that significantly distances them from us, the recognition of the mere fact that they exist on the familiar and well-used objects we all discard upsets our ability to sustain the repression of the fact. (2004, p. 72)

Rather than recounting this story from the perspective of those who have lived on or died under waste, Scanlan refers to a fleeting news flash, a tragedy from which we (affluent consumers) have the luxury of keeping ourselves geographically, temporally and emotionally distanced. Moreover, this example points to the problematic fact that the existence of countless numbers of individuals and communities living on and off people's rubbish around the world – from the Philippines, India and Egypt to Argentina,

Bolivia and Mexico (Medina 2007) – remains off the radar of global media until this combination of environmental and living conditions leads to a dramatic event. This event-centred or shock-oriented gaze – and concurrently the non-eventness of waste and waste(d) communities – is critiqued by Nixon, who argues that our 'spectacle-driven corporate media' lead us to ignore the 'slow violence' of environmental injustice that is less visible, less fast-paced, and less immediate in impact than spectacular 'newsworthy' events, but no less socially and physically damaging (Nixon 2011). The exclusion of the slow violence experienced by such 'waste(d) communities' from waste theory is characteristic of the effacement or erasure of marginalized or subalternized populations from the narrative of euro-modernity (Grossberg 2010, p. 75) – an exclusion that needs to be continually exposed and contested, since it continues to limit not only our understanding of the past and present, but also our ability to imagine alternative futures (Mignolo 2011).

This distancing from waste, waste workers and the corresponding violences inflicted upon wasted communities is even present in studies produced in the global South. Wang Min'an's 'On Rubbish' (2011), for example, must be understood in the context of China in/from which the author writes, which has experienced drastic rural–urban migration over the last forty years, has become the world's largest producer of waste since 2004, and has consequently seen a marked rise in scavenger families and communities (Damin *et al*. 2017). However, even when he does acknowledge the existence of rubbish collectors in a final paragraph, he presents them rather uncritically as silent social rejects, reflecting and taking on the properties of waste:

> Rubbish collectors retire from the commotion of society; they wander in remote corners of society, like the rubbish abandoned on street corners. Rubbish and rubbish collectors meet in this isolated land, attracting one another. […] Every day, silent rubbish collectors converse with silent rubbish. (Min'an 2011, p. 353)

These reductive, essentializing analogies stem from a dualistic view of the commodity–rubbish relation that characterizes Min'an's theory, and thus are epistemically rooted in the economic framework of capitalism, which is in turn 'an integral, entangled and constitutive part of the broad entangled "package" called the European modern/ colonial capitalist/ patriarchal world-system' (Grosfoguel 2007, p. 217). First, he opposes the 'modern' city to the backward one and to the 'primitive' countryside: 'the more intolerant [of rubbish] the city, the more modern and vice versa' (2011, p. 352). Second, he contrasts the pristine interior of the city to its dump-lined outer fringes: 'rubbish creates a rope between the inside and the outside of the city' (2011, p. 351). Third, he polarizes the commodity-filled shops contained by the city and the waste-infested dumps that line its outskirts: 'superstores and rubbish mountains are the two extreme ends of modern cities', 'one accompanied by flickering human heads, the other encircled by

animals and birds; one so glorious and abundant, the other so lonely and sad' (2011, p. 346). Yet this commodity–rubbish opposition is not a universal fact but rather a product of capitalism, which, as Mignolo powerfully argues, 'is not only a domain of economic transactions and exploitation of labor, but also of control and management of knowledge and subjectivities' (2011, p. 33). It is a system that privileges the central over the peripheral, new over the old, the human over the animal, and the rich over the poor. It is one that not only generates endless quantities of waste (or commodities that have lost their use-value or simply their shine) but also, as Bauman points out, produces a staggering number of human rejects or 'wasted lives': job-seekers, asylum seekers, beggars, migrants, and so on, who are seen to be excessive to the capitalist system and therefore become marginalized from society, inheriting the properties of waste materials, of things deemed 'useless' and disposable (2003). In this way, it is not rubbish itself that 'creates a rope between the inside and the outside' as Min'an suggests, but rather the capitalist system which creates its own excess.

Socio-material processes

The waste theories examined above thus illustrate how, as Catherine Walsh argues, 'to speak of the geopolitics of knowledge and the geopolitical locations of critical thought is to recognize the persistence of a Western hegemony that positions Eurocentric thought as "universal", while localizing other forms of thought as at best folkloric' (2007, p. 225) – a fact that leads to imbalances, biases, assumptions, misrepresentations, and exclusions. Even in waste theories produced in the global South, like that of Min'an, the concepts tend to be rooted in Western frameworks of modernity and capitalism, lending further weight to Grosfoguel's argument that being 'socially located in the oppressed side of power relations [… .] does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location' (2007, p. 213). As we have seen in the context of critical thought on waste, these colonial, Eurocentric epistemic perspectives tend to lead ironically to the exclusion of those subjects most affected by the ill-effects of waste and least responsible for its production, in some of the most environmentally hazardous communities and workplaces in the world.

In this final section, I will begin by arguing that the places and people upon which the above scholars develop their theories of waste has a knock-on effect on the kinds of processes they acknowledge – or cast aside – before turning to look at the more recent material turn in cultural theories of waste. My contention is that some of the lines of thinking explored above, which take as their axiom the distinct separation between humans and their discards, pre-determine and limit their findings regarding the ways in which waste impacts and impresses upon humans,

and vice versa. Notably, waste is treated in the dualist theories of Thompson, Rathje and Murphy, and Scanlan as a self-contained or inert by-product of our human activities, which we are able to cast away, or, depending on the whims of fashion, reintegrate into our lives. Furthermore, this view of waste as a hazard or a resource, an eyesore or a potential commodity – which arguably stems from the spatialization or territorialization of waste inherent in Douglas's 1960s 'matter out of place' thesis – creates a physical and symbolic distance between human activities/actors and their (passive) by-products, underplaying the interactions between humans and more-than-human waste matters.[4]

Scanlan views the creation of waste, through the acts of separating (physically) and differentiating (symbolically) the valuable from the worthless, as an inherently human activity:

> Differentiation is what establishes culture. We only acquire or understand the valuable (or develop ideas of the relationship between the self and the object world) as the result of a galloping retreat from an *undifferentiated* mass of things (which may also be called 'nature') that could otherwise swamp us. (Scanlan 2004, p. 13)

This 'galloping retreat', for Scanlan, is embedded in the logic of Western philosophy since Descartes' 'cogito, ergo sum' (which affirmed the autonomy of human reason, and therefore a subject/object dualism) and the Enlightenment that was founded on this construct, as encapsulated by Kant's separation of reason from speculation about 'things-in-themselves' which 'results in a more determined separation of the human (the will to order) from nature (natural necessity)', turning nature into a 'derelict wasteland and potential rubbish tip' (2004, pp. 75–76). Scanlan overlooks what Quijano calls the 'decisive weight of coloniality in the constitution of the European paradigm of modernity/rationality' (2007, 172). In other words, this fundamental chasm between the natural and the cultural, the human and the non-human/subhuman is inseparable from the colonization of knowledge and culture on which the colonial empires were founded. The nature–culture binary, as Mignolo argues, is a Western notion rooted in Christian European cosmology that was used as means of domination (Mignolo 2011, pp. 10–12). As Mignolo illustrates in the context of South America,

> For Aymaras and Quechuas, more-than-human phenomena (as well as human beings) were conceived as Pachamama; and in this conception, there was not, and there is not today, a distinction between 'nature' and 'culture'. Aymaras and Quechuas saw themselves *in* it, not separated *from* it. […] Thus the initial moment of the colonial revolution was to implant the Western concept of nature and to rule out the Aymara and Quechua concept of Pachamama. (2011, p. 11)

As Mignolo points out, this reorganization of knowledge went hand in hand with the economy of brutal resource extraction (principally gold and silver) that was implemented for an emerging global market. The concept of nature as a resource to be exported or a force to be dominated by Man, which as Scanlan points out opens the door for the transformation of the environment into a wasteland or a rubbish heap, is therefore inextricable from colonial narratives and epistemologies.

Whereas Scanlan does devote a chapter to the materialities of waste, Rathje and Murphy go some way towards denying them in a chapter on the 'myth of biodegradation'. Their argument is that, 'biologically and chemically, a landfill is a much more static structure than is commonly supposed': 'well designed and managed landfills', they argue, 'seem to be far more apt to preserve their contents for posterity than to transform them into humus or mulch' (Rathje and Murphy 1992, p. 112). In turn, constructing the landfill site as a static structure rather than a dynamic set of processes enables Rathje and Murphy to reach one of their principal, ideologically laden conclusions: that, 'perhaps for the first time since human beings left their hunter-gatherer life-style behind them, it is now possible to imagine a truly rational garbage regime', one that will enable 'us' (affluent consumers) to 'maintain the core character of our way of life' (1992, p. 238). However, a number of (false) assumptions pre-determine this conclusion. The notion of 'well designed and managed landfills' is an ultimately idealistic one that ignores much of the evidence about global waste mismanagement and the humanitarian-environmental hazards of open-dumping, including the releases of toxic gases and leachates, the starting of uncontrolled fires and the proliferation of disease-spreading animals like birds, rats, flies and mosquitoes (Medina 2007, pp. 51–52). In addition, by positing landfill waste as largely passive, inactive, inert, and 'dead' – a manageable object – Rathje and Murphy simultaneously underplay the power of material forces and overstate human control, constructing an erroneous misconception of the sustainability of the high-consumerist status quo that has been powerfully debunked by scholars like Naomi Klein, who demonstrates that our current way of life is utterly unsustainable and that our entire economic system must be overhauled as a matter of urgency if we are to arrest the world-altering effects of climate change (2015). In more recent geographies of waste, moreover, scholars have overturned the notion of waste as stagnant or passive. Gabrys's exploration of sinks and spills is a powerful example:

> Wastes migrate through environments, changing the contours of those systems along the way. The stowing away of wastes never proves to be a permanent solution. […] Just as environments are in flux, so, too, are the waste materials that move through them […] Cities spill into oceans, landfills slump into rivers, groundwater leaks into bodies, and atmospheres reshape landscapes. (Gabrys 2009, pp. 671–672)

Furthermore, in the context of the current ecological crisis, climate change, and carbon 'budgets', Gabrys argues, these material movements across so-called sinks go beyond the sphere of the environment, impacting markets and policy, politics and international relations.

Without detracting from the value of the above studies within their respective geographical and historical contexts, my contention is that their overwhelming focus on socio-economic, cultural or philosophical constructions of waste by human beings in places where humans are able to separate themselves (albeit partially and artificially) from trash leads to the neglect of waste itself as a complex set of material agencies, and of the physical processes involved in the attempted disposal and retrieval of waste objects, which in turn shape these social constructs. Over the last decade, a shift has been taking place in a variety of fields, from biology and human geography to literary studies and philosophy, that belies such dualist philosophies or sociologies and engages more relational theories that account for the mutual interactions between humans and waste (Gabrys 2009, Gille 2010, Gregson and Crang 2010, Davies 2012). Indeed, scholars have begun to demonstrate that waste plays an active part in the generation of new systems – systems that constitute complex combinations of the natural and the cultural, the non-human and the human. Gabrys, for example, argues that the fluidity and mobilities of human discards call for a shift in our conceptualization of waste, pollution and emissions. Taking an important step away from Douglas's theory of dirt, she argues that carbon waste can no longer be seen as an externality, as a 'side effect to be managed and controlled', nor as a merely spatial category applied to different geographical sites Gabrys 2009, pp. 676–677). The exchanges between wastes, environments, and humans must rather be drawn across time, as dynamic, ever-shifting, uncertain processes bound up in complex techno-scientific and political systems.

Related to this sea-change in waste theory is an emerging line of thought known as new materialism, a body of work that calls for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the human and non-human, and for an acknowledgement of the agency of matter – that is, physical substance, whether 'naturally' occurring or man-made. In fact, waste features prominently in two key new materialist works: Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* (2010) and Alaimo's *Bodily Natures* (2010). In the former, waste is used as a case study of 'thing-power', through a description of the author's encounter with a pile of litter on the street in Baltimore, which makes her aware of the singularity and force of discards, of their 'ability to make things happen, to produce effects' independently of human intervention (Bennett 2010, pp. 4–5). In the latter, waste matters are considered within a chapter that foregrounds the material and corporeal aspects of environmental justice movements. Toxic waste constitutes, in Alaimo's account, an ominous case of 'trans-corporeality', a term used to rethink agency beyond the sphere of the human

and to understand 'the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors' – the often invisible actions and flows between people, places, and economic/political systems (Alaimo 2010, pp. 2, 9). In this final section, then, I will demonstrate how more recent theories of waste, notably those of Hawkins, Muecke, Rose and Harrison have begun to dialogue explicitly and implicitly with this emerging relational, socio-materialist thought. My contention, however, is that their theorizations of the lively interactions between humans and other-than-human discards could be further enriched through a more in-depth engagement with cases, places and lived experiences from the global South.

Hawkins' *Ethics of Waste* (2005) marks a crucial turning point in waste theory, insofar as it examines discards in terms of the ways in which they are *experienced* by human beings through our senses, emotions and affective relations. Hawkins explores the ways in which waste not only threatens the self as a self-contained entity, but also '*constitutes* the self in the habits and embodied practices through which we decide what is connected to us and what is not' (2005, p. 4). Drawing on the work of Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze, Bill Brown and Jane Bennett, she critiques the 'disenchantment stories' redolent of mainstream environmentalist discourse in which both humans and nature are posited as the sites of loss – where nature is the passive victim of man's extractivist, exploitative and contaminating actions, and man is alienated from the natural world (Hawkins 2005, p. 8). In the context of the global 'waste crisis', Hawkins explains, 'the capacity of humans to destroy nature with their waste renders them morally bankrupt, and the capacity of nature to function as a dumping ground renders it passive and denatured' (2005, p. 9). These stories, she argues, polarize human culture and nonhuman nature, limiting how new relations might be envisaged and enacted. Moving away from nature-culture dualities rooted in colonial knowledge systems, she foregrounds person–thing relations and the material force of other-than-human (waste) objects, which she argues have the power to 'disrupt habits and precipitate new sensations and perceptions' (2005, p. 15). In this way, she implicitly critiques the above theories that accentuate the opposition between humans, agency and power on the one hand, and non-human waste, passivity and vulnerability on the other hand – a polarization that perpetuates wasteful, ecologically destructive beliefs and practices.

However, a predominantly global North perspective still characterizes her ethical take on waste which, in spite of situating itself explicitly in a global framework, still largely side-lines 'empty-belly' contexts. Examples from the global South seldom appear, and if they do, they serve mainly contrastive functions. The three pages dedicated to the toilet festivals in Mumbai, notably, are depicted by Hawkins as a 'very different example of the politics

of shit' to Australia's People Opposed to Ocean Outfall protests for uncontaminated oceans (2005, pp. 68–70).[5] Hawkins does touch on certain contexts in which slum dwellers and scavengers, by force of necessity, are brought into close contact with the rejects of others: in relation to Varda's documentary she recognizes that 'desperate need is the most compelling motivation for gleaning'; and in the case of Mumbai's slum dwellers, she echoes Appadurai in his observation that having to shit in public denies them the ability to 'establish distance from their own waste' and consequently 'the most basic sense of dignity and status' (2005, pp. 82, 66). Yet an underlying rich-nation perspective, and the consequent distance between humans and their discards, is implied by her research questions:

> How exactly do the habits that distance us from wasted things become implicated in particular forms of embodiment? What sort of self do these habits shape? And in what ways could an ethos of distance, denial, and disposability be challenged? (Hawkins 2005, p. 16)

In spite of the presence of slum dwellers and gleaners in her book, what she does not address in her compelling argument is the inverse form of her questions: How do the practices, activities and living or working conditions that *bring people close to wasted things* become implicated in particular forms of embodiment? What sort of self do these conditions shape? How do lived experiences of proximity to waste challenge the prevailing ethos of distance, denial and disposability? These questions, as seen above, cannot be separated from issues of socio-economic status and race, since it is so often the least privileged communities and people of colour who live by waste dumps or off waste collection. In turn, the 'wasted lives' produced by the symbolic conflation of such communities with the waste with which they live or work are rooted in modernity/capitalism and its 'darker side' (Bauman 2003, Mignolo 2011). As Mignolo explains in relation to the emergence of the slave trade in the seventeenth century, 'hidden behind the rhetoric of modernity, economic practices dispensed with human lives, and knowledge justified racism and the inferiority of human lives that were naturally considered dispensable' (2011, p. 6). The logic that separates humans into different categories of value and 'disposability' thus has its origins in colonialism and in the project of modernity that was founded not only on economic control but also on geo- and body-politics, on forms of power linked to gender, religion, class, ethnicity and language (Mignolo 2011, p. 9).

As a result of the global North bias of waste theory, very few scholars have theorized waste from an explicitly decolonial cultural perspective. The most significant contributions in this respect are by key Australian scholars like Stephen Muecke and Deborah Bird Rose, whose work – which bridges cultural studies, anthropology and the environmental humanities – takes an overtly decolonial, indigenous perspective on waste matters. In an important

volume edited by Hawkins and Muecke (*Culture and Waste*, 2003), Muecke and Rose present alternative theories of waste that depart from a radically different set of knowledges and values: that of Aboriginal peoples. Though space does not permit me to do justice to this important emerging strand of waste theory (which is in turn connected to broader questions regarding death, nature, environment, religion and the sacred in indigenous cultures), I will look at one strand of waste – the act of littering – that is given a distinctly different flavour through indigenous perspectives. As demonstrated in the accounts of Muecke and Rose, the very notion of 'littering' is deeply rooted in a Western, dualist system of thought that opposes people and places/objects, humans and non-humans, and is thus rooted in what Mignolo calls the 'logic of coloniality'. In his highly thought-provoking essay entitled 'Devastation', Muecke tells the story of his friend, the late indigenous elder Paddy Roe (to whom the essay is dedicated), throwing a can out of the car window:

> Why are whitefella sensibilities shocked when blackfellas throw stuff out of car windows? Maybe these blackfellas are just dispersing the rubbish, as they go, so that it can reintegrate, while it seems whitefellas want their rubbish to accumulate in a rubbish tip. They want to gather it all together to make a really big stink. Well, they don't want to, but the demand for economic growth means the growth of the population and its inevitable waste accumulation. (2003, p. 122)

This anecdotal account demonstrates how moral judgements on waste and littering are deeply rooted in a cultural context – and how the prevailing discourse of waste is linked to euro-modern value-systems dictated by capitalism, economic growth, and accumulation (of commodities and their discarded bodies), which are in turn based on the idea of nature as resource for the use or profit of humans. Conversely, the notion of 'dispersing' or 'scattering' residues, so that they are reintegrated into the environment, emerges from an interactionist view of the relationship between people and places, humans and non-humans. As Rose explains, her aboriginal teachers rarely pick up after themselves because 'they do not seek to erase themselves' (2003, p. 62). Indeed, within Australian indigenous cultures, self-erasure is a harmful act, and self-inscription is a means of telling a story of 'knowledgeable action', an action that invokes the mutual relationship between land, people and things: 'the remains of the dinner camps tell the stories of how they went to that place and called out to the country, and how the country fed them' (Rose 2003, p. 62). In a culture which understands the relationship between people, animals, objects and places as part of what Muecke terms a broader 'network of mutual benefit', in which 'something may be useful to humans or to birds, or both, in different ways' (2003, p. 125), the co-existence of people and their material traces (residues) on the (living) landscape is part of a broader narrative and world view that stands in radical opposition to the

story of Western modernity told by Scanlan – a story premised on the nature/culture divide, and the corresponding distance between man and man-made waste.

These two accounts offer a different perspective from the global South – that of indigenous cultures – that further complicates prevailing cultural theories of waste. They also problematize the very notion of 'new materialism', by rooting concepts of interactionism and mutuality in ancient, pre-modern, pre-colonial cultural practices. Indeed, some of the concepts belonging to new materialism – from 'thing-power' and 'vibrant matter' (Bennett) to 'trans-corporeality' (Alaimo) – might in fact be seen as distinctly old, rooted as they are in what Colin Scott, in the context of a discussion of Cree Indians, terms the 'communicative, reciprocative network' that sustains all life on/of the planet (1996, p. 81). Waste theory thus has a key part to play in anthropological debates around perspectivism, defined by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro as 'the conception […] according to which the world is inhabited by different sorts of subjects or persons, human and non-human, which apprehend reality from distinct points of view' (1998, p. 469). Since our relationships with, and definitions of, waste are deeply connected with our sets of value (and corresponding social, economic and cultural systems), it follows that, in order to imagine alternative modernities (Grossberg 2010, p. 90) or decolonial options (Mignolo 2011) – waste theory must also be broadened, challenged, and decentred.

More recently, Harrison (2016) contributes to this decentring process through a post-colonial reading of literary texts and visual art works ranging from Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco* (1997) to the documentaries *Waste Land* (2010) and *Trash Dance* (2013), and spanning locations as wide-ranging as Fort-de-France (Martinique), Lagos, Washington D.C., Mumbai and Rio de Janeiro. This study reconceptualizes urban margins, focusing on the ways in which urban waste and wastelands are represented by contemporary authors and artists in its various connected forms: discarded things, degraded environments and devalued humans. In doing so, Harrison critiques the discourses of waste that have been used by colonial powers to legitimate and bolster imperial racism, as well as the construction of the colonial city as a site of simultaneous demarcation and assimilation. While resisting naïve optimism about the possibilities of art and literature as instruments for socio-political reform in economically deprived contexts, her analyses embrace its potential in facilitating social, political and environmental justice and imagine new spaces for transnational cooperation. Though the intersections traced between the texts and theoretical contexts (particularly new materialism) are somewhat underdeveloped (Bell 2018), this study represents another important shift in waste theory that, I suggest, needs to be developed in and between different historical, geographical, political, economic and cultural contexts across the world.

Living waste

In conclusion, this article constitutes a response to the call for a shift in perspective by Carol Wolkowitz: 'rather than highlighting the symbolic construction of dirt in culture, we should focus instead on how the powers, strategies and constraints available to different social groups underpin lived experiences of dirt' (2007, p. 16). As has been argued, lived experiences of waste – like lived experiences of dirt – are vastly different for those who live in waste-ridden slums or collect waste as a mode of survival to those who discard (or recycle) it without further thought. For countless individuals and communities in the global South, living with waste is a day-to-day reality connected with physical and social precariousness, degrading living conditions and economic constraints, but also strategies of empowerment (Bell 2017b). For other, indigenous communities, the very notion of 'waste' is problematic since it is premised upon a human/non-human, person/place divide that is rooted in Western modernism and Enlightenment rationality. Only by rooting concepts and theories of waste within these radically different contexts can we gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between humans and the waste they generate, repurpose and reimagine.

The concept of 'living waste', I propose, is a useful point of departure for a reconceptualization of waste that might simultaneously root itself in lived experiences of waste; in 'empty-belly' and/or peripheral contexts; in human lives and other-than-human life forms; and in understandings of waste in all its materiality and agency. Of course, this concept at once interacts with and intervenes on Bauman's concept of 'wasted lives' (2003), and the corresponding notion that modernity, in its attempt to organize, order and categorize, has produced a global community of socio-economic outcasts. 'Living waste' furthers and disrupts Bauman's analogy: it takes it literally, foregrounding the mucky, socio-material entanglements between humans and their discards; and, importantly, it takes it beyond Western modernity, opening it up to multiple alternative modernities and decolonial options. Indeed, waste thought and theory must engage further, in different contexts, with materialisms of various kinds (corporeal, energetic, social) that, as Sarah Whatmore argues, 'put the onus on "livingness" as a modality of connection between bodies (including human bodies) and (geo-physical) worlds' (2006, p. 603).

Finally, I propose that, following on from works by the likes of Yaegar, Hawkins and Harrison, waste theory should be gleaned from diverse cultural texts – whether literature, art, film, installations, performances or social movements. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin suggest in relation to postcolonial studies, theory has in fact been produced

> in all societies into which the imperial force of Europe has intruded, though not always in the formal guise of theoretical texts. But this might not be so clear

> today given the privileging of theory produced in metropolitan centres and the publishing networks that perpetuate this process. (2005, p. 2)

The theory located in 'creative' texts, as they put it, is therefore an important ground from which to develop future, multiple, contingent and context-specific cultural theories of waste that, rather than generating further global outcasts, might begin to bring into the picture the places, people and processes that continue to be excluded or side-lined by and within contemporary thought.

Notes

1. See Foote and Mazzolini (2012, pp. 8–9). Though Douglas's book is not about waste as such – indeed some of the bodily fluids she analyses, like breast milk and blood, are not waste products or excrement, but rather substances generated by the body for particular purposes – its exploration of the connection between matter considered to be 'dirty' and social systems, between bodies and cultures, is crucial to much of the rubbish theory that ensues. Her idea that 'there is no such thing as absolute dirt', that 'it exists in the eye of the beholder' and her definition of dirt as 'matter out of place' have been quoted and explored by too many scholars to name here (Douglas 2002, pp. 2, 44).
2. A number of important works are left out for reasons of space. These include Edensor 2005, Campkin and Cox 2007, Pye 2010, Bardini 2014, and Viney 2014.
3. In fact, one of the strands of environmental justice literature arose from concerns, in the 1970s, about the large number of farm workers – the vast majority of whom are people of colour and immigrants – dying and becoming ill every year from pesticide poisoning (Pellow 2007, p. 11).
4. For an excellent, comprehensive account of the conceptual frameworks ranging from dualism to relationality in new geographies of waste, see Moore 2012.
5. A similar imbalance is apparent in Campkin and Cox's *Dirt*, in which they acknowledge that, though 'there are important contributions from South America and Asia' (a chapter on Brazil and one on Thailand), 'the majority of the book's contributing authors are concerned with dirt and cleanliness in a contemporary setting in the global North' (2007, p. 7).

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