

## [11-Rewriting the Unthinkable: \(In\)Visibility and the Nuclear Sublime in Gerald Vizenor's Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57 \(2003\) and Lindsey A. Freeman's This Atom Bomb in Me \(2019\)](#)

écrit par Lombard David

After identifying some of the aesthetic, rhetorical, and ontological pitfalls of the nuclear or atomic sublime (the over-aestheticization of nuclear risks and the resulting absence of any sense of responsibility) this essay undertakes narratological and rhetorical analyses of one novel, Gerald Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57* (2003), and one creative memoir, Lindsey A. Freeman's *This Atom Bomb in Me* (2019). As this article shows, the two works offer alternate ways of representing and critiquing the beguiling but dangerous nuclear sublime while shedding light on a wide array of notions that are intimately associated with atomic culture but have yet remained understudied from this perspective, at least in the fields of (American) literary studies, ecocriticism, and the environmental humanities. These include the dichotomies invisibility/visibility (or absence/presence) and whiteness/color, and the related trope of silence. By engaging with non-dominant traditions and cultures (Anishinaabe; Japanese) and elaborating complex metaphors in the case of Vizenor, or in multisensorial experiences which draw on theories from new materialisms in Freeman's, the two works converge to suggest that experimentation in the contemporary novel and memoir can lead to an ecocritical revision of the dominant and ocularcentric nuclear sublime, and of the risks it aestheticizes and conceals.

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## [6-A Martial Meteorology: Carceral Ecology in Jesmyn Ward's Sing, Unburied, Sing](#)

écrit par Lombard David

During a discussion of her novel, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, on National Public Radio (NPR), Jesmyn Ward recalls her experience of Hurricane Katrina: "I sat on the porch, barefoot and shaking. The sky turned orange and the wind sounded like fighter jets. So that's what my mother meant: I understood then how that hurricane, that Camille, had unmade the world, tree by water by house by person." The "weight of history in the South of slavery and Jim Crow makes it hard to bear up," she continues. The future is full of worry, "about climate change and more devastating storms like Katrina and Harvey." In Ward's depiction of the wind as fighter jets, she imbues the violent elements of the hurricane with a martial quality that demonstrates how weather and, in particular, storms, hold the capacity to unmake the world. Her words reveal the fungible nature of *oikos*, or home, and a methodological process of undoing—waters that uproot trees that uproot houses that displace persons. And the details of the aftermath left unsaid—the racism laid bare by the storm, those attempts at unmaking, human by human.

Yet it is the history of the US South, of slavery and Jim Crow, that Ward uses as the preface to her concern about a future full of storms wrought by climate change. In doing so, she foregrounds the racial dimensions of the Anthropocene by placing the carceral in conversation with the environment. *Sing, Unburied, Sing* also explores this much overlooked connection. By examining *Sing, Unburied, Sing*'s spectral twinning of racial and ecological violence, this essay traces what I call carceral ecology. Crafted from Ward's imagining of a martial meteorology, carceral ecology transforms climatic phenomena like heat, rain, and storms into tools of western power. The novel thus unearths a southern history in which environmental design and manipulation have been used to maintain a carceral state of control. Looking to *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, allows us to sift through the different evolutions of carceral ecology—from its toxic presence in the communities of the US South, to its early stages on the plantation, and ending, finally, with the worldly arena of the Anthropocene.