Pest Control and Overgrowth: From Rachel Carson to Margaret Atwood

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Gemma Curto is a PhD student in English Literature at the University of Sheffield. Her PhD thesis is entitled Chaotics of time in econarratives: from Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) to Richard McGuire's *Here* (2014).

This project draws on Rachel Carson's warnings in relation to DDT in her seminal book Silent Spring (1962) and aims to update ecocritical approaches to pesticides in the works of Margaret Atwood as a response to the current threat to biodiversity pointed by environmental scientists (Sánchez-Bayo and Wyckhuys, 2018). Rachel Carson was Atwood's 'first choice' (Atwood, 2012) and she is beatified, while Robert Burns of Mice is a Saint in relation to saving the species in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009).

If given the opportunity to visit the Rachel Carson Center for Environmental and Society, I would make the most of it, and feedback from researchers and academics would be immensely helpful for my developing project, which comes from work on a new chapter. Furthermore, my proposal echoes the Rachel Carson Center's theme, which is 'transformations in environment and society', as I intend to explore how pesticides and vegetation growth were seen in Rachel Carson's work and how this is reflected in Margaret Atwood's works, from *Surfacing and Survival* (1972) to *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and the *Year of the Flood* (2009). Climate change, together with a man-made mass extinction in that threatens human and nonhuman animals, which appear in the first two books of the Maddaddam Trilogy, offers a scenario where pesticide free coffee and vegetables are favoured. I argue that this was anticipated in Surfacing, where urbanization is a threat and is equated to an illness. This is reflects the way in which the narrator and her friends try to keep overgrown nature under control. A rethinking of current agricultural practices and literary responses to pesticide use is urgently needed to raise consciousness regarding declining nonhuman animal populations and global warming.