

# *The limits of the figuration of death and the being-rhizome existence in the Swamp Thing, by Alan Moore*

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## **Abstract:**

This study investigates the figuration of death, as well as the notion of rhizome in the Swamp Thing comic books, written by Alan Moore. To this end, we carried out a critical reading of the first five editions written by Alan Moore, analyzing how the figuration of death occurs, based on the concepts of death-rebirth and double and, taking these concepts into consideration, we seek to demonstrate how this figuration is outdated by the notion of rhizome that seems to permeate Swamp Thing's entire existence, as well as its connection with green, in which the transmitted memory and the absolved conscience play an important role in this narrative, reaching the point where it can be said that the Swamp Monster, when (re)born, became a rhizome. It is worth mentioning that we opted for a comparativist approach, of an intertextual and transdisciplinary nature, based on texts written by authors such as Edgar Morin, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Maurice Halbwachs, among others.

## **Key words:**

Alan Moore. Swamp Thing. Figuration of death and Rhizome.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this research, we will address the first arc scripted by Alan Moore in Swamp Thing (1986). In this arc, we have a range of concepts inserted and redefinitions in the character's narrative, such as even the origin of the Monster being reformulated. The editions written by Moore in the 80s had a great impact on the comic book market in general and, coming out at a time when the Comics Code Authority was in force, it was one of the first magazines to break with this code. It may be interesting to understand how this British writer, anarchist and worshiper of an Egyptian serpent god called Glycon, revolutionized the comics market in the final two decades of the twentieth century. His career began somewhat timidly as a writer and illustrator of an almost obscure comic strip: Maxwell, the black cat (1979), but it was as a screenwriter that his career really took off, it should be noted that, almost at the same time, some of the most iconic comic books on the market, V for Vendetta (1988), Big Numbers (1990), Marvelman (1985), – later called Miracleman – and The Killing Joke (1988), as well as a very intense series of publications in the independent market in England, as his biographers, such as Lance Parkin (2016), attest. In this sense, the pages of Swamp Thing contained a much more sophisticated script than expected at that time and addressed themes of a social, political and ecological nature that until then had no place in the pages of mainstream North American and British comics. Not to mention the dense philosophical baggage diluted there. It was the initial step towards the launch of the revolutionary Vertigo label that would give fruit to lasting stories such as – in the same wake of high-powered literary narratives – Sandman (1989), Hellblazer (1988) and Fables (2002).

If we look at the way the major North American comic book publishers, especially Marvel and DC comics, worked, sometimes combining text (linguistic code) and image (iconographic code) in such a way that written language was almost always in the foreground in purely descriptive frames in terms of image, that is, the image would remain in the background in semiological terms of decomposition of frames and frames, sometimes causing the images to practice a kind of cinematographic mimicry, something like a simple storyboard of cinema, this didn't really excite authors like Alan Moore, coming from the punk scene in England and with a new perspective on comics. In this sense, it is not difficult to see that the bard of comics was looking for another path, whether in the combination of several paintings without text, as in V for Vendetta (1988) or even in the almost baroque relationship of poetic texts combined with densely detailed images by the designer. Stephen Bissette in the title of Swamp Thing, the fact is that Alan Moore was looking for exactly the opposite of what was practiced in the American comic book market.

For the author, it was important to seek what only the language of comics would be able to offer the reader, something that could not be found in cinema or literature, thus, there was no

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by: Gérson Bruno Forgiarini de Quadros.

overlapping of one code over the other, in other words, the text was not separated from the image, as both are perceived and read simultaneously in the broad amalgam of signs that make up frames and frames in a comic book board in an uninterrupted manner. In this sense, French theorist Thierry Groensteen (2015, p. 21) postulates the predominance of images as narratives capable of making language, especially writing, disappear, and in its place a new possibility emerges, no longer mediated by a logocentric vision, but rather, an indecomposable form of sign layers, thus creating other possibilities for telling a story, without the need to mimic other narrative forms such as literature or cinema.

The scope of our research is limited to the initial arc of *Swamp Thing* (1986) written by Alan Moore, under which we investigated two aspects that we recognize in the narrative, the first is the figuration of death existing there under the lenses of anthropological concepts of death-rebirth and the double, widely explored by Edgar Morin in his book *Man and Death* (1970), as well as the historical basis of behaviors and attitudes towards death worked on by historian Phillipe Ariès in his book *History of Death in the West* (2012). The second aspect, to which we decided to point our lenses, is the notion of Rhizome, worked on by Giles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri (1995), on which we consider it possible to point to the Swamp Monster as a rhizome, as well as the collective consciousness of green and all the connection between these rhizomatic points.

With this, the *Swamp Thing* can be understood as part of a kind of collective and conscious memory of green, an elemental ghost of nature, as can be seen in the editions: *Loose Ends*, *The Anatomy Lesson*, *Empantanado*, *The Other Green World* and *Roots*. That said, we seek to demonstrate the limits of the figuration of death in *Swamp Monster* and how – once this limit has been exceeded – the notion of rhizome is present. We consider that these editions can compose the analysis of the article based on the death-rebirth and double process worked by Edgar Morin, the notion of rhizome used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and the idea of collective memory exposed by Maurice Halbwachs that permeates the sections of this article.

## 1 THE LIMITS OF THE FIGURATION OF DEATH IN SWAMP THING

*Death is all that matters.*

Alan Moore

We can consider the existence of two important anthropological concepts related to death that are present in the figuration of death in *Swamp Thing* and that, in a way, constitute the focus of our analysis, just as they constitute the discovery and transition of Alec Holland to *Swamp Thing*, even if – as we will see later – this transition is not the continuity of the human subject's life. Therefore, we consider it necessary to highlight, even if briefly, these concepts so that, after that, we can observe their existence in the narrative scripted by Alan Moore.

The first concept can be called death-rebirth, and fits into what Morin (1970) calls “fundamental myths”, in which he combines the concept already mentioned with another concept – equally relevant and observable in the narrative chosen here. – double. Death-rebirth and the double are transmutations, phantasmal and “noological” projections of biological structures of reproduction (Morin, 1970). We can consider that these concepts reproduce “the two ways in which life survives and is reborn: duplication and fertilization” (Morin, 1970, p. 17).

Even so, it is necessary to clarify, in the field of their individualities, the conceptual implications of both. Death-rebirth, by definition, is “the primitive cosmomorphic concept of death” in which the “human dead, immediately afterwards or later, is reborn into a new living

person, child or animal” (Morin, 1970, p. 103). It constitutes this reappearance in a new form of life, in which the individuality of before is not maintained, it constitutes a new form of existence, therefore, a new individuality, so that there is no continuity of the previous life.

The concept of the double follows another path, it is “individual survival” (Morin, 1970, p. 105), it tends to hinder and, in a certain way, deny the rebirth of a dead person into a new living person (Morin, 1970). Here we will use the archaic concept of double, since:

“[...] belief in personal survival in the form of a specter is a breach in the system of cosmomorphic analogies of death-rebirth, but a fundamental original breach, through which the individual expresses his tendency to save his integrity beyond decomposition” (Morin, 1970, p. 103).

The double, then, is configured as a survival of a certain individuality, a denial of rebirth that results in the maintenance of an individuality that is lost in the fields of death-rebirth. Both concepts are inserted in the narrative written by Alan Moore during his time as the Swamp character, what we find interesting to point out – and which we will demonstrate later – is that Swamp Thing is inserted within a kind of conceptual mix that fits him within of the limits of death-rebirth and the double, while demonstrating itself incapable of being imprisoned within these definitions – as well as others –, it breaks the shackles and manifests itself as a different form, outside the anthropological limits of death and brings it closer. It is based on the idea of rhizome and plateau which, in turn, seem to better accommodate its geographical formats and its capacity as a narrative and as a character.

## 1.1 Death-rebirth and the double in Swamp Thing

We begin our journey within the narrative with issue number 20, the first written by Alan Moore in character and which was drawn by Dan Day, this issue is called Pontas Soltas. Run, by Alan Moore, by the Swamp Thing begins with the Monster searching for the fallen ship of his mortal enemy Arcane, there we already see that some reflections are made about the finitude which we can observe in the words of the Swamp Thing: “I It had to come, Arcane. / I had to be sure”, and continues: “Yes, I saw your ship crashing and burning... I know I saw it... falling like a wounded sun... exploding beyond the mountains... I know you had no way survive” Day (Moore, 2012, p. 16). Initially, we noticed an almost morbid need to check the scene of the accident, but what was the reason for this? Swamp Thing continues: “But I didn't hear... the popping of his windpipe. I didn't see... the shine draining from his eyes. I didn't see his body, Arcane” Day (Moore, 2012, p. 16). And he ends his statements with the following conclusion: “And I found that... when you can't see the body... / The rot keeps coming back” Day (Moore, 2012, p. 17).

Decomposition is the central theme of these pages, the Monster does not believe in death until he sees Arcane's deformed body in his ship, and points out that, if he did not see him, the dead man could return. This rot that he speaks of is directly related to decomposition, the Monster needs a kind of funeral rite that consists of the sighting of the corpse, as if to guarantee its death so that, in this way, it does not return. Furthermore, there seems to be an idea in the Monster that “the evil specter, linked to the rotting corpse, pursues the living” (Morin, 1970, p. 28).

Which makes sense if we consider that “the morbid state in which the ‘spectre’ finds itself at the moment of decomposition is nothing more than the fantastic transference of the morbid state of the living” (Morin, 1970, p. 28). This “mortuary rite” that the Swamp Thing uses is nothing more than the human need to care for their dead, which consists in a large part of the funerary practices that exist, in which the need to protect the dead and the of protecting oneself from one's own dead, since “the decomposition of others is resented as contagious” (Morin, 1970, p. 28), after all “decomposition is the sign of man's failure, and at this point lies, without a doubt, the sense of

the macabre” (Aries, 2012, p. 59). It is also a way to guarantee the negation of both death-rebirth and the double to Arcane.

This edition ends with an attack on the swamp by private military forces, which results in what bears the name of the edition, a cutting of loose ends, a “burning of files”, there the Swamp Thing is wounded with bullets all over his body and presumed dead, his body is taken to the facilities of Sunderland, an eccentric and ignorant billionaire who wants to make advances with the technology that could be discovered with the Monster's body. Thus begins Anatomy Lesson.

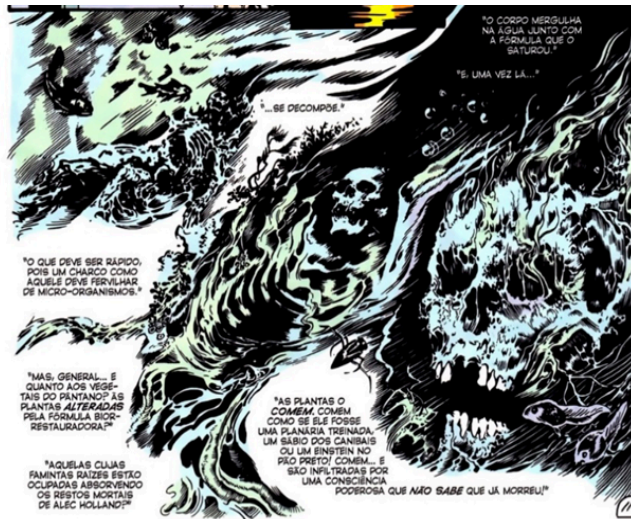
Until then, the Monster was dead and in fact that was what his body indicated. This edition is narrated by doctor Jason Woodrue, known as the floronic man, a kind of hybrid between vegetable and animal, when faced with the Monster, in a freezing chamber, he says: “There it was... gray, brittle, tattooed with frost, quite dead” Bissette and Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 42). Initially, it is said that Alec Holland fell into a chemical mixture generated by his formula, this would have occurred because of a criminal explosion that took place in his laboratory, this mixture would have transformed him into the Swamp Monster, since then he has sought to regain his humanity. However, the question raised was that the formula made by Alec did not act on human cells, only on plant cells, which would, in itself, make this explanation invalid. It is then up to Woodrue to find out what really happened.

It is in the necropsy that we notice something important in relation to the notion of finitude, as Woodrue notices in the “other” a possibility of learning much more about his own individuality, it is there that a dialectic of the “self” and the “other” is inserted. According to Woodrue: “Ever since the happy biochemical accident that transformed me, I longed for the chance to examine another human-plant hybrid, I could learn a lot”, and ends: “a lot about myself” Bissette e Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 45). It is in the face of this dialectic of “self” and “other” that the human dynamics of recognizing death is constructed, since it is in the death of the other that we constitute the reference for the extinction of individuals (Silva, 2013).

The necropsy presents a body with inoperative organs – “organs”, as far as that word can be used –, merely figurative ones that would not have the capacity to perform real life-sustaining functions, after all, “they were not made to function” Bissette and Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 47). The solution to this enigma reveals itself to Woodrue through research into planarians. Briefly, the experiment consisted of making a planarian go through a maze, having learned the way, it was chopped and served to other planarians, who, when consuming it, were able to go through the maze perfectly, in a way that Woodrue states: “Consciousness and memory can be passed on like food!” Bissette and Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 49).

It is from this premise that the explanation of the new origin of the Swamp Thing is created. Alec Holland died in the explosion, what fell into the swamp was his lifeless body, and what happened was something similar to what happens to planarians:

**Figure 1 – Alec’s death and the birth of the Monster**



Source: Bissette and Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 50).

This process of consumption of consciousness, which eventually results in the transmission of memory, is similar to what is called endocannibalism – this is funerary cannibalism – this specific form of consumption of human flesh is based on the “magical meaning: appropriation of the virtues of the dead” (Morin, 1970, p. 62). It is necessary to note that cannibalism, in some cases, is actually an act of recognition of the personal individuality of a being, since the body is consumed to obtain the best from the no longer living being, this is the dead recognized as “individual, that is, as 'value'”. (Morin, 1970, p. 63).

Continuing, this is the origin of the Monster. We thus have a shell devoid of humanity and filled with memory, which is transmitted by chemical processes and absolved together with a conscience. It is worth noting that this consciousness is no longer Alec Holland, nor is it merely a copy of him. From this information, the plant begins to regenerate, transforming itself into something it never was before, hence the process of mimicking inoperative organs, hence the humanoid form of the swamp creature. Woodrue adds: “It was a plant that thought it was Alec Holland / A plant that tried its hardest to be Alec Holland” Bissette and Veitch (Moore, 2012, p. 51).

Regarding death and memory, Maurice Halbwachs (1990, p. 74) states that “death, which puts an end to a physiological life, does not abruptly interrupt the chain of thoughts, so that they develop within the circle of the one whose body has disappeared”. Therefore, there is no humanity in the Monster, as he was never human and death does not seem to be the limit for a chain of thoughts that constitutes the consciousness transmitted and absolved by the swamp.

The concept of double understands this form of life as the idea of individual survival, since the memories transmitted there through the almost anthropophagic process constitute exactly what the double operates: the maintenance of individuality and integrity even as a spectrum. That is, Swamp Thing, by thinking he is Alec and using his memories to exist in the world as a transformed man, acts as a kind of double, even if a double reconstituted based on the archaic concept already established here.

On the other hand, death-rebirth is also present in this elemental being. Since, upon discovering a new creature, that is, a plant that had never been anything other than that, the Monster must face its reality as a “new being” and that, therefore, has a new individuality that does not present continuity – perhaps just merely virtual – from a previous life. It is not without reason that he faces this news with tremendous aggression and that, after that, he suffers a psychological setback that can be observed in the following editions in which the Monster isolates himself in the green world and fights a battle against his own conscience, in which he no longer knows whether or

not he has some humanity to preserve, we will deal with that later.

Considering the modern attitude towards death, the Monster, imbued with a consciousness that was not his, never stopped to consider the possibility that it was not Alec, never thought that Alec had died. This demonstrates a characteristic behavior of the human species in contemporary times, in which we live as if “neither I nor those dear to me were no longer mortal” (Ariès, 2012, p. 100). Technically, we can even admit to dying, as “we take out life insurance to protect our own from misery. But, really, deep down within ourselves, we feel non-mortal” (Ariès, 2012, p. 100). This behavior can be called “death blindness”, and can be understood and recognized in countless moments in literature, cinema and in everyday life, in which “as an ineluctable law: at the same time that he claims to be immortal, man he will designate himself as mortal” (Morin, 1970, p. 26). We must also consider the forgetfulness that occurs, since Swamp Thing does not seem to remember the beginning of his life and the death of Alec Holland. In this regard, the idea of altered memory is present, since:

“[...] memory is to a large extent a reconstruction of the past with the help of data borrowed from the present, and furthermore, prepared by other reconstructions made in previous times and from which the image of the past has already manifested itself quite altered” (Hallbwachs, 1990, p. 71).

What happens after the Monster's “birth” is, in fact, a filling of fissures, under which the Monster thinks he is Alec. This is explained by the fact that “an empty picture cannot fill itself; it is abstract knowledge that would intervene, and not memory” (Hallbwachs, 1990, p. 72). What we consider is that this abstract knowledge, combined with a memory transmitted through decomposition, forms this recreation of the memory, making the Monster think it is Alec. As it is necessary to establish the place of Swamp Monster (1986) within a conceptualization that involves studies of death, we think that – regarding the concepts established here – it can be seen as follows:

**Figure 02** - Organizational chart of the figuration of death in Swamp Monster



**Source:** prepared by the authors (2024).

Therefore, the Monster fits – even if partially – within the notion of death-rebirth and the double, but goes beyond them and, however, to the extent that the concepts cannot completely

understand it, they still provide a panorama of what can be done. -it would be called a figuration of death in Swamp Thing (1986). The anger he feels upon discovering that he is a plant is due to the discovery of the loss of his past individuality. The Monster loses an individuality that he never had, this trauma is too big for his mind, and ends up overwhelming him: “all pain, terror and obsession have a common denominator: the loss of individuality” (Morin, 1970, p. 31), this trauma will only be completely overcome after the Monster finds Alec's skeleton and buries it in the edition called: The Burial.

## 2 THE NOTION OF RHIZOME AND THE CONNECTION WITH THE SWAMP MONSTER

*One measures a circle, beginning anywhere.*

Charles Fort in *Lo!* (1931)

The Swamp Monster is a vegetable, a plant, has tree-like characteristics and has primary roots, as can be seen in Empantanado. However, we believe that it is possible to place both Alan Moore's passage through the character and the character himself within a category exactly dissimilar to arboreal categories, that is, what we propose here is the following: Swamp Thing is a rhizome - or at least it fits into a -, as well as green. Therefore, we consider it necessary to score the characters of a rhizome, in accordance with the definitions given by Deleuze and Guattari (1995) in *Mil Platôs*.

Let us make some initial comments about what can be considered a rhizome. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1995), a rhizome can be understood as an underground stem, which can be distinguished from roots and radicles (see arboreal representations), so that bulbs and tubers – such as those generated by the Swamp Monster – are rhizomes. These rhizomes are governed by some principles that can define them. The first and second principles are, respectively, connection and heterogeneity: “any point on a rhizome can be connected to any other and must be so” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 14), it is natural to say that in a rhizome there is no starting point and not even an end point, as it makes use of connection and heterogeneity since “semiotic chains of all nature are connected to very diverse coding modes, biological, political, economic chains [...]” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 14).

The third principle is called the principle of multiplicity. In short, he states that “there are no points or positions in a rhizome as found in a structure, in a tree, in a root. There are only lines” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 16). The fourth principle is called a-signifying rupture, it makes it clear that a rhizome can be “ruptured, broken in any place, and also resumes according to one or another of its lines and according to other lines” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 17). Regarding this, the authors exemplify:

It is impossible to exterminate ants, because they form an animal rhizome, the majority of which can be destroyed without it failing to rebuild itself. Every rhizome comprises lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, given meaning, attributed, etc.; but it also comprises lines of deterritorialization through which it runs without stopping (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 17).

There are also a fifth and sixth principle, that of cartography and decalomania, but these will not have space in our analysis, at least not in the arc proposed here. With the principles mentioned, we believe it is possible to establish a relationship between the rhizome and the character Swamp Thing and the connection with the green established there, so that it can be said



that, just like the bulbs and tubers, the Swamp Thing is rhizome, thus forming a kind of “being-rhizome” or “making-it-rhizome”.

## 2.1 Rhizome: elemental beings and the connection with green

Firstly, a rhizome differs from trees and the like, since “the rhizome connects any point with any other point and each of its features does not necessarily refer to features of the same nature” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 31). Here, we will work differently than before, insofar as it is not possible to detail the details of the editions, we would like to highlight – in close proximity – “the key moments” that demonstrate this unique ability presented in Swamp Monster, that elemental beings can form a rhizome.

The moment we would like to refer to takes place at the end of issue 22. Briefly, Doctor Woodrue locates the place in Louisiana where the Swamp Thing withdrew and closed himself in a state of deep “stiffness”. The Monster, withdrawn into his dreamlike and existential illusions, experiences a profound crisis made up of nightmares in which he questions his reality as a being, and deals with the new notion of individuality he possesses, as well as fighting to maintain his humanity – represented in the form of a skeleton (dry death) – in which the more he fights to keep the bones close to him, the more he shatters them in the heat of the battle with dreamlike and hideous worms. Meanwhile, Woodrue continues his research looking for some kind of connection with the green world to which the Monster is deeply connected: “I took readings of the creature, I took readings of the surrounding vegetation... / ... And the lines are identical” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 74). This deep connection with the world around them urges Woodrue to have the same kind of connection: “What will this be like? What it will be like to be spread out in a relentless suffocating network, to know the dark dreams of epiphytic bromeliads” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 74).

Woodrue then eats a tuber that sprouted from the Monster's body, a tuber generated from this deep connection with green, intertwined in this complex mesh of consciousness and collective memory. Let us remember that, according to Maurice Halbwachs (1990), collective memory derives its strength and duration from the fact that it is supported by a group of individuals who remember, as members of a group. So the green represents this group to which other individuals are added, such as, for example, the sequoias, or the parliament of trees in future arches.

By eating the tuber, Woodrue constitutes itself as a rhizome, taking part in connecting a point with any other point in the green network which, as stated before, does not necessarily refer to traits of the same nature. This rhizome characteristic is obtained by Woodrue, a being composed of plant fibers, but with a human mind, the result is catastrophic. However, initially the connection is fantastic: “my roots drink from thirsty filaments... The torrential magmatic taste of phosphates, the languid dance of capillary action... / I... / ...I am... / The plant ...” Bissette (Moore, 2012. p. 84).

This connection experienced by Woodrue is similar to the one that Swamp Thing has with green, a deep imbrication of green: “[...] the trees! I... Am... The trees” and continues “I feel the intricate genius of the lianas... The immense immemorial wisdom... / ...Of the sequoias?” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 84).

And his consciousness continues to extend throughout the planet, in a convulsive network of information, but as new threads of this elemental network are perceived by Woodrue, his human mind collapses. In an urge to stop the negative information reaching him, Woodrue understands that something needs to be done to stop the human drive for destruction, and while he becomes aware of this, he also loses his humanity: “Everything that was ever human is consumed from him. / Swallowed. / Swamped” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 86).

This connection through all points is a rhizome. This idea of connectivity that destroys the edges of what was once just one and which is now not one, but is not all is also a rhizome: “The rhizome does not allow itself to be led back to either the One or the Multiple. He is not the One that becomes two, nor even that would directly become three, four or five, etc.” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 31). We believe that the best definition of green is found in the following statement made by Deleuze and Guattari about the rhizome:

[...] against centered (and even polycentric) systems, of hierarchical communication and pre-established connections, the rhizome is a non-hierarchical and non-significant a-centered system, without General, without organizing memory or central automaton, solely defined by a circulation of states (1995, p. 31).

Green would come close to this, it is not a centralized or polycentric system of hierarchical communication and pre-established connections, these connections are established randomly, in a complex mesh without apparent hierarchy, there is a transmitting memory of knowledge contained there, but it cannot be said that it is an organizer.

In a way, the Woodrue makes up the rhizome just like the Swamp Monster, however, although their connections are similar, their perceptions are very different from that mesh, this becomes clear in issue 23, called: The other green world, there the Monster do Pântano - in deep contrast with Woodrue - classifies green as a “calm place... an immemorial green place” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 91). Words such as mysterious and beautiful appear to classify the place and he continues: “My consciousness expands... Through the forgotten root systems” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 91), and makes it clear: “Am I at peace? I am happy? / I am” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 91). Even the way he is represented in that realm demonstrates an almost embryonic lightness:

**Figure 03** – The peaceful and ancestral connection with green



**Fonte:** Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 90).

However, this happiness is hindered by the presence of Woodrue's mind, represented in the work by a red mass with a shape similar to that of a human brain, a figuration of his human mind embedded in the green like a tick looking for blood. In fact, its presence is compared to the presence of cancer, a malformed cell that in modern societies means death (Ariès, 2012). The Swamp Monster notes: “There is another mind in the green... / That crawls. / That crawls like cancer...” Bissette (Moore, 2012, p. 95).

After this, Woodrue begins his project of mass destruction which consists of ending human life on earth and, with that, “saving” the plant life that exists here, taking the city of Lacroix under siege. Woodrue begins by destroying the pillars of human societies: the police headquarters, the school, and the church. After that, he takes the city hostage, sends everyone to their homes and seals them with plant life, causes the plants to release alarming numbers of oxygen which causes the houses and the people inside to suffer from terrifying fires, his plan is to apply that metric to the world and end the human species.

In the last edition (number 24) of the arc - called Raízes -, the clash between the two finally happens and although there is physical combat, this is a mere detail given the real problems exposed there, the real clash takes place in dialogue. Woodrue didn't understand the green, he hurt him, so the Swamp Thing was “reborn” and went to meet Woodrue, showed him the lack of logic in his plan and, soon after, the green acted just like the Christian God had done. with Adam and Eve, he expelled Woodrue from his domains, removed him from his presence.

We have reached the final stretch of our analysis, it remains to point out some similarities between the notion of rhizome and the Swamp Monster. The Monster's connection with green also demonstrates some rhizome properties, one of which resides in the fact that the rhizome is composed of a “line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension according to which, following it, multiplicity metamorphoses.”, changing its nature” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 31). This is clear in the abilities that Swamp Thing develops in arcs following the one discussed here, in which his ability to metamorphose applies to appearing anywhere on the planet and even off the planet as long as he exists, in the new location (point of the network), a form of plant life that, in turn, metamorphoses and forms the Swamp Monster, hence the notion of deterritorialization and non-significant rupture that encompasses the figure of the rhizome and also the Swamp Monster:

**Figure 03** - Example of Swamp Thing rhizome properties



Fonte: Bissette (Moore 2014, p. 128).

All of this, in a way, implies considering that “it has no beginning or end, but always a means through which it grows and overflows” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 31), and that it also behaves like a being “always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, with multiple inputs and outputs, with their lines of flight” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 31). Going further, and considering that “a plateau is always in the middle, neither beginning nor end” and that “a rhizome is made of plateaus” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 32), we can state that the Swamp Monster is a rhizome and constitutes a plateau, both at the level of narrative and fictional character as well as comic book character.

Finally, Alan Moore's own passage through the character is a plateau, it is neither a beginning nor an end, but rather a point, a “continuous region of intensities, vibrating on itself, and which develops avoiding all orientation on a point culminating or towards an external purpose” (Deleuze; Guattari, 1995, p. 32). Therefore, it is noted that the definitions of rhizome manage, to a large extent, to understand the Swamp Monster and his elemental properties, as well as the connection with green established until then, both by the Monster and by Woodrue.

## CONCLUSION

Alan Moore's stint as comic book writer for the Swamp Thing title – in the 80s – bears fruit to this day in the character's cosmology, the reinvented origin is still maintained, the reformulated concepts still generate new narratives with the elemental being. The influence, corroborated by other works by the author – see *Watchmen* (1986) and *V for Vendetta* (1982) – served as a way of consolidating this new phase of comic books, with denser narratives, deeper characters and themes of great social relevance that demonstrate profound criticism of the global reality that has developed up to that point.

In *Swamp Thing*, specifically, what we observe is the occurrence of a figuration of death that is based on two anthropological concepts, death-rebirth and the double. The first occurs, naturally, when we observe the elemental being and its journey of self-knowledge. The process of discovering oneself as a plant and not a man powerfully operates the concept of death-rebirth: The Monster is a “new being”, therefore, a new individuality that does not contain a real continuity of a previous life. Therefore, the monster is a plant with no humanity to preserve, at least without humanity in the sense in which it was thought to have and which Woodrue's anatomy lesson proved did not exist. The second is noted in the narrative as the idea of individual survival, endorsed by the memories that were transmitted in the process of decomposition and “feeding” of the swamp. It is the monster that, when thinking it is Alec, uses the dead man's memories to operate in everyday life as if it were the dead man himself, it is the double, but a reconstituted double that renews itself based on the already existing archaic concept. Added to the picture – painted here – are other conceptions about the figuration of death, decomposition, recognition of oneself in the other, endocannibalism that permeate these editions and reverberate this vibrant figuration of death in the narrative.

However, the figuration of death trembles in the face of the rhizome capacity presented by *Swamp Thing* and his connection with green (also experienced by Woodrue). Reality, as a being of the Monster, operates with terms established in the definition of what is a rhizome, it constitutes a “being-rhizome”, a “becoming-rhizome”. The principles of the rhizome define the very characteristics of the Monster and the green, whether through the connection and heterogeneity in which the Monster at one point in the mesh can connect to any other point, at the same time that it is so, in which there is no point initial nor final. Or by the principle of multiplicity that reiterates what has already been said, and leads to the idea of the non-existence of positions in the rhizome,

as well as by the principle of non-significant rupture that can be seen in the Monster, as it breaks, breaks in any place and, soon after, resumes from any other existing point. Therefore, if we can say that a rhizome is made of plateaus, perhaps we can say that Alan Moore's Swamp Thing is a plateau in which the character himself and his connection to green is a rhizome.

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