The Ecocidal Imagination:
Dystopian Fiction in an Era of Environmental Crisis

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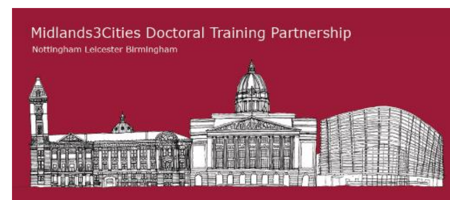

ABSTRACT

Specifically addressing the environmental turn of recent dystopian fiction, this thesis investigates the ways in which environmental crisis and climate change have been represented through speculative dystopian futures. This analysis draws on research from both utopian/dystopian studies and ecocritical theory in order to address the lack of dialogue between these two areas, exploring how demands for new approaches to environment and ecology pose challenges to the existing thematic, ideological, and formal conventions of the dystopian genre. Through an analysis of a range of recent dystopian texts, this project explores the ways in which the dystopian novel engages in an ecocritical discourse with contemporaneous environmental policies and cultural conceptions of climate change, highlighting the dialogic relationships between humanity and non-human nature as presented within contexts of extinction, climate change, and environmental exploitation. In particular, this analysis looks at how these novels employ dystopian genre conventions and to what effect, as well as the extent of self-reflexivity within these texts and how this contributes towards an ethical or ideological engagement with contemporary environmental debates.

This thesis therefore aims to carry out an ecocritical re-evaluation of recent trends within the dystopian genre, evaluating this shift away from anthropocentric visions of human society and proposing an emerging body of 'ecological dystopian' or 'ecodystopian' novels which provide a more encompassing vision of humanity as an embedded part of a global ecology. These texts take the disintegration of ecological stability and human destruction of the environment ('ecocide') as the site of dystopia, looking at how environmental concerns function not as the background for dystopian society, but as part of the narrative. Ultimately, by bringing an ecocritical perspective to the dystopian novel, this thesis argues that the genre of dystopia offers a potentially productive forum for creating an ecocritical dialogue around the issues of environmental exploitation and responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION: THE ECOCIDAL IMAGINATION

What happens when the utopian aspirations of our society are shown to be fundamentally opposed to the material limitations of our surrounding environment? Arguably, it is in pursuit of the modern utopia - the neoliberal vision of limitless man - that the current environmental crisis has come to haunt expectations for the future, complicating previous ideals of progress, profit, and pleasure. Whereas the human capacity to change and shape the environment once promised the ability to control our natural surroundings, we are increasingly coming to realise that humanity's actions have had unforeseen side effects which are rapidly moving out of our control. Deforestation to fuel and build our societies has caused widespread flooding that now threatens to destroy these societies in countries world-wide. Agricultural farming practices designed to feed an ever-growing population have produced chemical pollution and water shortages that threaten to leave other societies poisoned and parched. And the extinction of animal species has led to the decimation of certain environments. The hunting of sea otters, for example, has led to the disappearance of kelp forests, which in turn has led to further species disappearance due to a loss of habitat, one which can absorb CO2 and slow ocean acidification.[1] What these aspects of the environmental crisis demonstrate is the existence of a complex and interlinked global ecosystem where no element is removed from the whole, and where the actions of one society or species may be paid for by another on the other side of the world.

Perhaps no issue embodies this environmental unpredictability as well as global climate change, which subsumes and exceeds the above issues to present a wider network of environmental changes and interrelationships. Indeed, developing into a prevalent public concern in the 1980s, climate change now stands as one of the central challenges for the twenty-first century and has become a staple feature in the speculative imagination. In recent literary fiction, depictions of droughts, ice ages, torrential floods, and city-destroying earthquakes have become an increasingly common feature designed to communicate the possible consequences of humanity's

[1] Christopher C. Wilmers, James A. Estes, Matthew Edwards, Kristin L. Laidre, Brenda Konar, 'Do trophic cascades affect the storage and flux of atmospheric carbon? An analysis of sea otters and kelp forests', *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, 10.8 (2012), 409-415

pollution of the planet. And yet, despite this enthusiastic outpouring of disaster novels, the translation of a global environmental crisis into a literary work of fiction has not proven straightforward. Climate change is not a single disaster, but a vast and complex network of causes, effects, and changes. It is a problem that encompasses other environmental issues such as chemical pollution, resource shortage, ocean acidification, and the destruction of forests. The resulting global warming is not an event, but a slowly developing narrative.[2] Although it is most often conceived as a series of CO2 percentages or a hockey stick graph of temperature change, climate change is also a political issue, a physical encounter with the environment, and a personal and collective emotional experience.

Significantly, although depictions of environmental disaster are by no means new, climate change and global warming exceed previous environmental issues in terms of scale, stretching over vast geographical distances and lengths of time, causing world-wide effects, and at the same time producing minute changes that are not necessarily visible to the human spectator. Consequently, global warming overflows the boundaries of normal human perception, its dispersal across time and space challenging humanity's capacity to measure and understand it. And yet, Timothy Morton argues, we encounter global warming on a daily basis:

> Global warming is not a function of our measuring devices. Yet because it's distributed across the biosphere and beyond, it's very hard to see as a unique entity. And yet, there it is, raining on us, burning down on us, quaking the Earth, spawning gigantic hurricanes […] Like the image in a Magic Eye picture, global warming is real, but it involves a massive, counterintuitive perspective shift to see it.[3]

[2] I use 'climate change' to refer to the various changes in the atmosphere and the Earth's landscape and the distributed causes and effects of these changes. I use 'global warming' to specifically refer to the rise in the Earth's surface temperature as one consequence of global climate change.

[3] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p.49; please note that Morton chooses to use 'global warming' instead of 'climate change', arguing that '[o]n the terrain of media and the socio-political realm, the phrase *climate change* has been such a failure that one is tempted to see the term itself as a kind of denial, a reaction to the radical trauma of unprecedented global warming' (p.8). However, I interpret global warming as a consequence of climate change, and although it is the dominant consequence, often responsible for other environmental changes such as weather patterns, it is also the product of other climate problems such as pollution and deforestation.

In other words, although we see and experience its effects on a daily basis, the phenomenon of global warming is impossible to represent in its full entirety and complexity. It is both local and global, here and elsewhere, tangible and yet elusive. For Morton, this makes global warming a 'hyperobject', arguing that 'hyperobjects are not simply mental (or otherwise ideal) constructs, but are real entities whose primordial reality is withdrawn from humans'.[4] Authors wanting to tackle climate change are faced with the challenge of representing something that we can only indirectly experience and never wholly perceive. Consequently, climate change poses a challenge to the traditional capabilities of the novel in both form and style, leading critics to argue that the material crisis of climate upheaval has in turn provoked a crisis of representation.

Addressing the problems of representing global crises, Peter Middleton suggests that '[a]s a literary form, the novel appears all too limited when handling obvious global crises, and prompts a new question: what happens to the novel when a global crisis lacks such ready figuration?'[1] Although Middleton is not specifically talking about environmental crisis, his suggestion that immediate disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, can symbolically represent broader, less tangible crises is an opinion shared by many critics of climate fiction, such as Adam Trexler, Greg Garrad, and Lawrence Buell. Within speculative and science fiction, such 'natural' disasters act as an easy way of figuring the environmental crisis by representing it through a single, limited catastrophe that is more easily understood. It allows authors to make the consequences of human industry and development *immediately* apparent in scenarios that are designed to be provocative. At the same time however, the reduction of a global environmental crisis to a single act of destruction risks simplifying what is a deeply complex and ongoing phenomenon. Representations of destruction may be dramatic and entertaining, but they often eclipse the day-to-day presence of climate change in politics, the economy, and the home.

Furthermore, in attempting to foreground humanity's inadequate responses to climate change and criticise how society has perpetuated the crisis, the author must confront a radical re-orientation in terms of the traditional ideologies and values the novel supports. In particular, the novel has traditionally been a form dedicated to

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[4] Ibid., p.15

representing the human experience, a subjective and sensory representation of an individual's interaction with the world around them. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt, commenting on the concept 'whereby the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter', argues that 'the novel is the form of literature which most fully reflects this individualist and innovating reorientation'. In comparison to earlier literary forms which 'reflected the general tendency of their cultures to make conformity to traditional practice the major test of truth' relying on historical narratives, myths, and fable, the novel's 'primary criterion was truth to individual experience – individual experience which is always unique and therefore new'.[5] Emphasis on the individual rather than the universal allowed authors to present unique and subjective perspectives which, Watt argues, were understood to be more truthful to real human experience. In many ways this is especially true of dystopian fiction, which focuses on the individual's awakening as their own subjective perception of their surroundings prompts them to question the status quo. The universal values of the dystopian society are challenged by the individual's own experience, an interaction which will be further explored in Chapter One.

Consequently, these narratives are driven by an ideology which values the individual and their right to equality, freedom, and political autonomy. In contrast, the challenge to address the threat of global warming has led to the development of an ecological outlook which de-privileges the individual through an appeal to think globally, and de-privileges the human through the need for a more ecocentric ethics. Indeed, the coining of the term 'Anthropocene' to mark out an era geologically influenced by human activity on the planet also signals a recognition that this role can no longer be taken for granted. With the introduction of this ecocritical approach, the dystopian narratives emerging in response to environmental concerns play host to a conflict between the individual experience and freedom promoted in classical forms of the dystopian genre, and the need for social responsibility and a global awareness in tackling pressing environmental issues.

The elusive nature of global warming is further complicated by the fact that it is the climax to a succession of compounded problems, which, rather than being solved, have instead become normalised, the backdrop to everyday life in the new

[5] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957; Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p.13

millennium. Indeed, Brian Stableford argues that '[t]he notion that the twenty-first century would be an era of unprecedented ecological crisis, highly likely to lead to a temporary or permanent collapse of civilisation, became so firmly entrenched in speculative fiction as virtually to be taken for granted'.[6] Indeed, the twenty-first century has seen a surge in apocalyptic fiction, while dystopian narratives increasingly take place within a context of environmental disaster and social breakdown: an environment scarred by nuclear warfare and chemical pollution provides the background setting for Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), a history of drought and other environmental disasters precedes the totalitarian state of Panem in Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* (2008), while rising sea levels create the New London of Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006). However, despite the fact that so many of these novels portray future societies devastated or threatened by environmental change, they fail to engage with an ecocritical dialogue, instead relegating these catastrophes to the background in a formal move that indicates the normalisation of the problem. The casual inclusion of environmental apocalyptic scenarios in recent science fiction indicates and further encourages the acceptance of environmental risk and instability, as well as the idea that such a future is unpreventable and inevitable. Without any critical engagement with environmental breakdown, climate change is essentially ignored.

In order to effectively represent and tackle the issues raised by climate change and global warming, this environmental process must be approached as more than just a literary theme. Writing about the literary response to global warming in his study *Anthropocene Fictions*, Adam Trexler argues that rather than rely on traditional literary parameters, the climate change novel 'remakes basic narrative operations. It undermines the passivity of place, elevating it to an actor that is itself shaped by world systems. It alters the interactions between characters and introduces entirely new things to fiction. Finally, it mutates the ecological systems that underpin any novel's world'.[7] This challenge has been taken up by a range of authors, and recent years have seen an outpouring of 'cli-fi', an emerging corpus of climate change novels that has

[6] Brian Stableford, 'Ecology and Dystopia', *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (ed.) Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.259-281, (p.273)
[7] Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), p.233

arguably become its own genre of climate fiction. Novels like Nathaniel Richard's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013), David Brin's *Earth* (1990), Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004) and Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* (2012) represent new, imaginative engagements with the causes and consequences of the environmental crisis, breaking down traditional divisions between foreground and background by creating human narratives that become one thread within a wider, global tapestry. These novels are not simply 'about' climate change, Trexler argues but 'are best understood as a force that interacts with climate change, remaking what we know about the climate and novel at the same time'.[8] In doing so, they engage with new ideologies and approaches to nature emerging from the ecocritical scholarship that began to develop in the 1990s.[9]

'Simply put', writes Cheryll Glotfelty, 'ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment'.[10] More specifically perhaps, ecocriticism seeks to appraise how the environment has been conceived of and represented within human culture. 'Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective', explains Glotfelty, 'ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies'.[11] By challenging normative thinking about non-human nature, ecocritical approaches demonstrate how human ideas about the natural environment are culturally constructed rather than objective truths. However, as a relatively recent critical field, the parameters of literary ecocriticism and what an 'earth-centred' approach might consist of remain contested. In particular, critics such as Dominic Head have questioned whether an 'ecocentric agenda can be fully accommodated within contemporary literary studies', highlighting the tension between ecology's focus on the material environment as opposed to theory's stress on textuality.[12] Indeed, many critics have noted ecocriticism's aversion to theory. Laurence Coupe argues that in contrast to the critical theory of the 1970s,

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[8] Ibid., p.35

[9] Although environmental approaches to literary analysis do emerge before the 1990s, ecocriticism does not emerge as a collective critical movement until the 1990s, with the formation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992. See Glotfely and Fromm, cited below.

[10] Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.xix

[11] Ibid.

[12] Dominic Head, 'The (im)possibility of Ecocriticism', *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, (eds.) Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (London: Zed Books, 1998), pp.27-39 (p.28)

ecocriticism challenges 'the self-serving inference that nature is nothing more than a linguistic construct' and 'negotiates what "the real thing" might involve'.[13] Similarly, Lawrence Buell argues that a 'number of early ecocritics looked to the movement chiefly as a way of "rescuing" literature from the distantiations of reader from text and text from world that had been ushered in by the structuralist revolution in critical theory'.[14] Instead, initial efforts in literary ecocriticism focused on immersion in the natural world as a method of counteracting this supposed alienation, focusing on the material reality of nature as represented in environmental and romanticist writing, and particularly non-fictional nature writing.

Yet, the 'referential mode' of such an approach has faced criticism for producing a false notion of mimesis whereby 'representations of nature in environmental literature […] are considered to provide an unmediated access to the natural environment itself'.[15] Such an approach prioritises literary realism, argues Serpil Oppermann, and 'uses literature as a pretext to study environmental issues'.[16] Similarly, Dominic Head suggests that although some ecocritics such as Buell have addressed this false concept of mimesis by developing a more critical approach to realist representations of the natural world, the continued focus on non-fiction 'appear[s] to delimit the kind of text that can be seen to meet ecocritical requirements,' suggesting that 'narrative fiction would seem to be peculiarly resistant to the operations of ecocriticism'.[17] In contrast, the need to establish a more consistent and theoretically-grounded practice of literary ecocriticism has required a reconsideration of its relationship to pre-existing theoretical approaches, postmodernism in particular. Indeed, as ecocriticism has developed as a field, its tensions and similarities with postmodern theory have been increasingly addressed by critics. SueEllen Campbell argues that postmodernism and ecocriticism come from a shared critical stance as '[b]oth criticize the traditional sense of a separate, indepent, authoritative *center* of

[13] Laurence Coupe, 'Introduction', *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, (ed.) Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.1-8, (p.3)
[14] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p.6
[15] Serpil Oppermann, 'Theorizing Ecocriticism: Towards a Postmodern Ecocritical Practice', *ISLE*, 13.2 (2006), 103-128, p.111
[16] Ibid.
[17] Dominic Head, 'The (im)possibility of Ecocriticism', p.33; p.32

value of meaning; both substitute the idea of *networks*'.[18] Similarly, Daniel R. White states that 'ideas of ecology and postmodernity are the complementary halves of a new environmental ethics and practice', explaining that '[t]he "eco-logic" of ecology and the "para-logic" of postmodernity are both based on the generative ideas of "difference"'.[19] While Dana Phillips argues that postmodernism is essentially opposed to ecocritical values because it reduces nature to a cultural construct, Oppermann stresses repeatedly that '[p]ostmodernism does not claim to erase the referent', nor to suggest that there is no nature outside the text.[20] Instead, a postmodern theorizing of ecocriticism focuses specifically on the question of representation and communication, approaching the literary text as a way of experiencing and interpreting the natural world where 'reality is already mediated by representation within a set of discourses, and thus there are only competing interpretations to truth claims and no ultimate grounds of explanation for a preexisting reality'.[21]

Emerging from this point of tension and negotiation between the material reality of nature and the textuality of its literary representations, a postmodern theorisation of ecocriticism suggests a dialogic interplay where cultural discourses and the surrounding environment mutually inform each other. Ecocriticism thus presents a useful theoretical approach to the project of climate change fiction, which seeks new creative ways to represent the relationship and interdependence between humanity and their environment. Indeed, Hannes Bergthaller argues that '[t]he idea that the roots of the ecological crisis are to be found in a failure of the imagination, and that literary studies – the human imagination being their home turf – therefore have an important role to play understanding and overcoming the crisis, is foundational to most forms of ecocriticism'.[22] As this introduction has already outlined, the phenomenon of climate change highlights the partial and subjective nature of humanity's experience and understanding of the environment, even before one attempts to represent this

[18] SueEllen Campbell, 'The Land and Language of Desire: Where Deep Ecology and Post-Structuralism Meet', *Western American Literature*, 24.3, (1989), 199-211, pp.206-7
[19] Daniel R. White, *Postmodern Ecology: Communication, Evolution, and Play* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp.32-33
[20] Dana Phillips, *Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Serpil Oppermann, 'Theorizing Ecocriticism', p.113
[21] Serpil Oppermann, 'Theorizing Ecocriticism', p.113
[22] Hannes Bergthaller, 'Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood*', *English Studies*, 91.7 (2010), 728-743, p.730

interaction through narrative. With its focus on multiple, partial, and subjective understandings, ecocriticism thus responds to the limitations and challenges outlined above, and provides the ideal theoretical framing for examining the representation of climate change and ecological crisis within the dystopian novel.

The development of climate change or 'Anthropocene' fiction is already well-documented by a broad range of critics, demonstrating a growing environmental focus across several genres from realist, social novels to detective fiction to science fiction and fantasy. Within this growing body of scholarship, a few authors and works deserve specific mention. Adam Trexler, quoted above, presents one of the most comprehensive and detailed surveys of the vast array of novels engaging with climate change and the concept of an Anthropocene era in his monograph *Anthropocene Fictions*. Looking at representations of environmental politics, disasters, and science, Trexler explores the different thematic approaches taken by authors and the different challenges these approaches raise. Meanwhile, collaborating with Adeline Johns-Putra, another prominent critic in the field of climate change fiction, Trexler has reviewed the literary criticism this emerging genre has attracted.[23] Johns-Putra has herself published a number of articles looking at how climate change has pushed authors to construct new creative engagements with existing environmental discourse and narrative structure.[24] Working with John Parham and Louise Squire, Johns-Putra has also produced an edited collection which focuses on literary and cultural engagements with the contentious question of sustainability.[25] Another particularly recent work is Astrid Bracke's *Climate Crisis and the 21st-Century British Novel* which brings an ecocritical focus to recent British fiction, looking at how narratives of environmental disaster are used to rethink humanity's attitude to the natural world.[26] Frederick Buell also considers the concept of global warming as a literary narrative,

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[23] Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism', *Royal Meteorological Society/ Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 2.2 (2011), 185-200

[24] See Adeline Johns-Putra, 'The Rest is Silence: Postmodern and Postcolonial Possibilities in Climate Change Fiction', *Studies in the Novel*, 50.1 (2018), 26-42; Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Borrowing the World: Climate Change Fiction and the Problem of Posterity', *Metaphora* (2017), 1-16

[25] Adeline Johns-Putra, John Parham, and Louise Squire, *Literature and Sustainability: Concept, Text and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017)

[26] Astrid Bracke, *Climate Crisis and the 21st-Century British Novel* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017)

looking at the different discursive strategies used by authors to approach the challenge of representation.[27] Although focused specifically on an American context, Buell's *From Apocalypse to Way of Life* is another essential study in the representation of environmental crisis in literature. Buell highlights the central role of apocalypse and crisis in environmental rhetoric and questions how these concepts shape our social, political, and literary responses to environmental change.[28] The prominence of apocalypse in the environmental imagination is demonstrated in the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, where environmental crises, catastrophe, and climate change are the subject of three out of five chapters detailing 'Major Directions' within the ecocritical field.[29] Similar concerns are also explored in the work of another Buell: Lawrence Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*.[30] Here, Buell explores different ecocritical approaches and directions, as well as considering some of the challenges of incorporating environmental discourse within literary studies.

In addition to this work on the representation of environmental crisis in literature in general, there are also a number of critical engagements with the relationship between environmentalism and science fiction, of which Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson's *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction* is perhaps the most comprehensive. This edited collection provides several in-depth analyses of how science fiction authors have confronted environmental issues, arguing for the productive intervention that the genre can make in the question of environmental crisis.[31] Eric C. Otto's *Green Speculations: Science Fiction and Transformative Environmentalism* also makes a strong case for the potential critical role played by

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[27] Frederick Buell, 'Global Warming as Literary Narrative', *Philological Quarterly*, 93.9 (2014), 261-294

[28] Frederick Buell, *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (London: Routledge, 2003)

[29] Joni Adamson, 'Environmental Justice, Cosmopolitics, and Climate Change', pp.169-183; Karen Thornber, 'Environmental Crisis and East Asian Literatures', pp.198-211; Kate Rigby, 'Confronting Catastrophe: Ecocriticism in a Warming World', pp.212-225, in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, (ed.) Louise Westerling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2014).

[30] Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)

[31] Gerry Caravan and Kim Stanley Robinson (eds.), *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014)

science fiction in environmental discussions.[32] Beginning with an analysis of the genre's key narrative strategies, Otto explores the ecocritical approach demonstrated by science fiction novels through their relevance to different areas of environmental philosophy, including deep ecology and ecofeminism. Finally, there also exists a rich collection of works on the relationship between literature and the environment more broadly, of which there is too much to document here.[33] Although these works don't necessarily respond directly to the threats posed by global climate change, the ecocritical approach they take challenges established notions about humanity's relationship to the environment and the ways in which non-human nature is conceived and portrayed in everyday discourse.

This body of critical work represents a complex engagement with the ways in which global warming and other environmental changes have challenged the thematic and formal conventions of the novel, and consequently has provided an important influence in shaping the approach taken by this thesis. Many of the questions posed by these critics will be repeated here, raising similar concerns over the representational capacity of the novel and the need for new and creative engagements with environmental issues. However, amongst this growing field of literary criticism, there has been little work that specifically addresses the genre of dystopian fiction. This lacuna is surprising considering that both the areas of dystopian literature and literary ecocriticism have received a great deal of recent critical attention. Yet although the wider body of recent critical work on utopian and dystopian fiction acknowledges the influence that developing environmental anxieties have contributed to the content and themes of the genre, these considerations are often limited to a brief mention which does not further investigate these arguments. Even significant and recent works such as Tom Moylan's *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000), Moylan and Baccolini's *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (2003), and Gregory Claeys recent monograph *Dystopia: A Natural History* (2017), although considering

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[32] Eric C. Otto, *Green Speculations: Science Fiction and Transformative Environmentalism* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2012)

[33] A small sample of key works includes: Greg Garrard (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, M.A.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Dana Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Louise Westling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

environmental factors in the development of the utopian and dystopian genre, lack any dedicated or concerted analysis of the ecological and environmental interest shown in recent dystopian writing and the implications it may have for the genre.

The majority of critical work devoted to evaluating ecocritical approaches in dystopian fiction largely consists of journal articles studying individual texts from publications such as the *Journal of Ecocriticism*, *English Studies*, and *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*.[34] In particular, articles like Allison Dunlap's 'Ecodystopia: Reproduction and Destruction in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*' provide a new, ecocritical approach to well-covered dystopian novels. Notably, it is from the ecocritical approach, rather than utopian/dystopian studies, that much of this criticism has emerged. As a result, these studies are often more focused on how these authors engage with and represent environmental issues like climate change, pollution, and animal extinction than their engagement with genre conventions. Such articles also tend to focus on individual texts and therefore provide new readings of specific novels rather than contributing to larger discussions about the relationship between ecocritical approaches and the dystopian genre.

Two significant exceptions are Eric C. Otto's *Green Speculations*, outlined above, and Brian Stableford's chapter 'Ecology and Dystopia' included in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature.* Beginning his overview in the mid-nineteenth century when these terms first appeared, Stableford first outlines the roots of both concepts before tracking a dialogical relationship between environmental themes and the dystopian genre. He presents an argument that locates the urban environment as the original source of dystopian fantasy and notes in particular how industrial growth during the nineteenth century led to substantial concerns about pollution, 'the first and foremost of the deadly ecological sins'.[35] Whereas utopian visions expressed a hope that modern technologies would be able to produce cleaner cities, Stableford argues that dystopian fiction betrayed the fear that the reality would

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[34] Some examples include: Allison Dunlap, 'Ecodystopia: Reproduction and Destruction in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake', *Journal of Ecocriticism*, 5.1 (2013), 1-15; Rozelle, Lee, '"I Am the Island": Dystopia and Ecocidal Imagination in Rushing to Paradise, Super-Cannes, and Concrete Island, *ISLE*, 17.1 (2010), 61-71; Softing, I.A., 'Between Dystopia and Utopia: The Post-Apocalyptic Discourse of Cormac McCarthy's The Road', *English Studies*, 94.6 (2013), 704-713

[35] Brian Stableford, 'Ecology and Dystopia', p.263

be quite the opposite. Moving into the mid-twentieth and twenty-first century, Stableford tracks the literary response to the emerging awareness of environmental pollution and climate change and underlines an environmental turn in modern dystopian fiction: ‘ecological issues rudely barged their way into the foreground of futuristic fiction in the 1950s and 1960s, with the result that the political issues central to Orwellian novels were gradually forced out to the margins’.[36] This movement is significant because whereas earlier dystopian texts often used nature as a backdrop for the exploration of political and social issues, novels in the late twentieth century began to focus more and more on the environment as a potential dystopian space, framing it as the site and subject of the dystopian vision. Furthermore, a great strength of Stableford’s chapter is its analysis of the developing conceptualisation of nature and its relationship to humanity, an exploration that demonstrates to the reader how religious, romanticist and Enlightenment philosophy has shaped human attitudes and actions towards the non-human environment.

However, despite Stableford’s detailed overview of the development and intersection of environmental issues and dystopian literature, little ecocritical or dystopian theory is brought to bear on the discussion. In particular, the definition of dystopia, so often debated within utopian scholarship, is not outlined, and the inclusion of catastrophe and apocalyptic novels within this overview suggests a conflation of these narrative forms into a single category of negative speculative fiction. Instead, Stableford’s approach is a broad one that considers a wide range of both fictional and non-fictional texts in order to consider the development of a dystopian attitude towards the environment and mankind’s existence within it, rather than focusing on the conventions and structures of the literary genre itself. Consequently, the environmental crisis is presented as a theme in dystopian fiction, rather than something that might challenge how the genre is constructed and understood. In contrast, Eric C. Otto’s *Green Speculations* focuses on how the formal strategies of science fiction complement those of environmental rhetoric. However, like Stableford, although Otto includes two ‘ecodystopian’ novels in his analyses these texts are not entirely differentiated from the broader category of science fiction. This tendency to characterise texts as dystopian primarily based on their unpleasant visions of the future omits the significance of the *type* of space they represent, and how the setting impacts

[36] Ibid., pp.269-270

the novel's narrative structure and the critical perspective it develops. As a result, the impact of the environmental turn upon dystopia as a distinct literary genre is lost.

Consequently, although many dystopian novels feature in the analyses outlined above, this project argues that the dystopian genre warrants a more dedicated evaluation. Indeed, the demand for a reorientation towards a more ecological outlook poses a particular challenge to the form and conventions of a genre which has traditionally focused on the portrayal of specific human communities and political government. As Chapter One will explore, dystopian novels have traditionally been social visions primarily concerned with human affairs rather than the consequences for the wider natural world, focusing on anthropocentric issues of government, politics, and social identity. In classic texts such as *Brave New World* (1932), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and *We* (1924), as well as in many other dystopian works, it is the city devoid of nature that plays host to the dystopian and despotic societies portrayed, with fears of urban overcrowding and pollution setting the scene for the more immediate threat of authoritarian governments and the loss of individual freedoms.

In his exploration of the relationship between ecology and dystopia, Stableford argues that 'most futuristic fantasies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries […] accepted the notion that the most fundamental social evil – the essential seed of dystopia – was the abstraction of human beings from a supposedly harmonious relationship with the natural environment and its inherent rhythms'.[37] The city, removed from nature, has therefore always had dystopian potential. With the rapid urban expansion that took place during and after the industrial revolution, the growth of cities went hand-in-hand with the rise of capitalism and the consumer society. Increasing numbers of factories and machines caused increasing levels of pollution, while the influx of workers caused problems with overcrowding and slum-like housing. In some dystopian texts, the loss of nature is a side-effect of growing urbanization and pollution. In others, the eviction of nature from the world of man is a deliberate task seen simply as the next logical step in humanity's development towards rationality and technological superiority. In Zamyatin's *We*, D-503 reflects that 'Man ceased to be a wild man only when we built the Green Wall, only when, by means of that Wall, we isolated our perfect machine world from the irrational, ugly

[37] Ibid., p. 266

world of trees, birds, and animals'.[38] In other dystopian fictions nature is eliminated not because it challenges human rationality, but because it serves no purpose within consumer society.

The absence or deliberate removal of nature is significant in these dystopian texts, representing a disconnection from a concept of 'natural order'. However, although the presence of nature and consideration of the environment may appear to be a minimal element within these classic dystopian texts, it is not entirely absent. Nature and the non-human environment in fact play a significant, if understated, role, often acting as an oppositional space that resists the control of totalitarian government. In their narratives, Orwell, Huxley, and Zamyatin employ images of 'wild' nature and pastoral spaces to underline the confined and unnatural character of life within these societies. While the cities are presented as static and stifled, the natural spaces outside the urban centre seem to embody a force of freedom and spontaneity. As acknowledged by Borgmeier in his essay 'Nature in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', not only does nature serve as an antithesis to the dystopian social system, but '[i]n other dystopias Nature is the territory of the opposition movement'.[39] In novels such as *We* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), nature not only becomes a site or source of resistance, but also a space of utopian possibility.

In her study of Mexico's ecocritical dystopian fiction, Maria Odette Canivell makes the claim that 'eco-criticism is a standard motif of the dystopian genre […] for over a century dystopias have brought to light our detachment from nature and, by extension, from our natural instincts, hence the collective nature-deficit disorder that tends to characterize dystopian societies'.[40] Indeed, as explored above, humanity's detachment from nature is a recurring theme in the dystopian genre. However, I would caution against characterising these earlier texts as ecocritical, as Canivell does, and disagree strongly that ecocriticism acts as a 'motif'. Although nature plays a significant role in these texts, it is important to note that this role is largely symbolic.

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[38] Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (1924; London: Penguin, 1993), p.83 - subsequent references will be to this edition

[39] Raymond Borgmeier, 'Nature in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*', *Essays from Oceania and Eurasia: George Orwell and 1984*, (eds.) B.J. Suykerbuyk and C. Neutjens (Antwerp: Univ. Instelling Antwerpen, 1984), pp.111-119, (p.113)

[40] Maria Odette Canivell, 'Homero Aridjis and Mexico's Eco-Critical Dystopia', *Blast, Corrupt, Dismantle, Erase: Contemporary North American Dystopian Literature*, (eds.) Brett Josef Grubisic, Gisèle M. Baxter, and Tara Lee (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), pp.339-354 (p.344)

Existing on the periphery, the natural environment stands in opposition to the dystopian society, as a space largely unthreatened by the human-created totalitarian states. Here nature plays the role of a 'natural' state, a norm in relation to which human identity can be reassured and a sense of authenticity can be regained. Where narratives portray polluted and overcrowded environments, these depictions often serve as backgrounds to what is essentially an anthropocentric and social critique. Although we can certainly bring ecocritical readings to the texts, the texts themselves often lack a more complex representation of nature and ecology. An ecocritical perspective is more than simply lamenting humanity's separation from or pollution of the natural world. Instead, ecocriticism involves a critical approach to the relationship between humanity and the non-human environment, challenging the concept of a human/nature division in an attempt to understand the complex relationships across a global ecology which includes the human.

Consequently, I think it is important to underline the difference between texts that include environmental issues and texts that take these environmental issues as the central focus of their narratives in order to actively engage with an ecocritical discourse. For example, in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston and Julia temporarily escape from a totalitarian society dominated by technology to a romanticised rural nature, described as 'the Golden Country': 'an old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a foot-track wandering across it and a molehill here and there'.[41] Although one could argue that this nostalgia for a pre-industrial countryside implies a scrutiny of mankind's abuse of his natural environment, the central critique of Orwell's dystopian vision is generally agreed to be a social one. The environment is more of a backdrop than a subject in the novel. In contrast, the ecodystopian novel takes the disintegration of ecological stability and human destruction of the environment ('ecocide') as the subject of its critique, looking at how environmental concerns function not as the background for dystopian society, but as part of the narrative. The dystopian literature emerging in the 1970s and onwards increasingly demonstrates more complex interactions with the environmental issues of its time, responding to a growing awareness of environmental threats and the long-term consequences of human action. Novels such as Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) take man's treatment

[41] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949; London: Penguin, 2013), pp.35-6 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *NEF*

of the environment as its central focus. In the narrative, the character Crake decides to eradicate the human race because he believes if they are allowed to continue they will destroy the Earth. The novel engages with questions of sustainability, genetic manipulation and an ethical relationship to nature that sets up an ecocritical discourse with contemporary environmental policies. Consequently, the introduction of environmental concerns into the genre does not replace its traditional focus on the politics of social governance, but instead broadens this focus to consider how humanity both has influence on and is influenced by their environment. Rather than a restricted, anthropocentric focus, such ecodystopian texts express a more holistic concern for the planet's wellbeing.

Addressing the lack of dialogue between literary dystopias and ecocriticism, my project calls for a new focus on the environmental turn of recent dystopian fiction and aims to evaluate this shift away from anthropocentric visions of human society and towards a more encompassing vision of humanity as an embedded part of a global ecology. This study analyses how dystopian novels use ecocritical strategies to explore contemporary environmental concerns, and explore the dialogic relationships between humanity and non-human nature as presented within contexts of extinction, climate change, and environmental exploitation. Consequently, this project asks how environmental dystopian novels engage in an ecocritical discourse with contemporaneous environmental policies and cultural conceptions of climate change. Analysing a range of dystopian texts, this project considers the ideological approaches towards the representation of the environment as well as the use of language in constructing nature. This question of representation will be central to this study. Responding to the formal difficulties posed by climate change, some of which are outlined in this introduction, this project will consider how dystopian fiction responds to the demands made by an ecocritical perspective on the representational capacity of literature. To do so, I will also be looking at how these novels employ dystopian genre conventions and to what effect, as well as the extent of self-reflexivity within these texts and how this contributes towards an ethical or ideological engagement with contemporary environmental debates.

Ultimately, the aim of this project is to engage with current deliberations about the genre in order to argue for a change in the focus of current critical work on dystopian fiction. I will encourage a new emphasis on the increasingly prevalent

environmental anxiety in dystopian writing, in particular looking at how it challenges existing genres conventions and definitions. A study that engages with both these areas will produce an insightful exploration of an emerging genre of ecological dystopian fiction, a section of the genre that has been underrepresented so far.

The first chapter necessarily begins with defining the dystopian genre itself. The nomenclature of dystopian and utopian literature is a notoriously difficult field, not least because the term ‘dystopia’ has uses beyond literary fiction. Furthermore, following the titular date of Orwell’s *Nineteen Eight-Four* (a title which has become a shorthand for the dystopian vision), the growing popularity of the term, which continues to increase to the current day, has seen its usage become more and more diversified. Establishing a working definition for the literary genre is therefore a primary concern for this project, reclaiming its significance within the critical field. Although genres are not fixed entities, the significance of the ways in which a genre has evolved and changed is only apparent in the context of its historical roots and development. Furthermore, while an acknowledgement of the legacy of novels such as Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Zamyatin’s *We* appropriately underlines the importance of these foundational works, there is also a need to identify less recognised sources for the genre. In doing so, this chapter aims to both broaden and refine the characteristics on which definitions of the genre have relied. Importantly, such an exploration not only seeks to give a brief formal and historical overview of the genre, but also seeks to differentiate it from other genres and literary movements which have developed alongside and informed dystopian fiction. In particular, this first chapter seeks to understand the evolution of the genre, exploring how dystopian visions of totalitarian societies have been replaced by representations of neoliberal capitalist and corporate dominated societies located in compromised and risk-filled environments. This shift in setting has important consequences for the other elements of the dystopian novel, including its formal structure and its function.

While the narrative form and function of the dystopian novel are explored in more depth later in this study, the setting of the neoliberal dystopia and the ideologies from which it emerges are the central focus of Chapter Two. This chapter argues that the ecodystopian novel engages with environmental problems as part of a larger context of social, economic and political issues and confronts the global scale of climate change politics through critiques of the narrative of globalization. In these

texts, the system of capitalism is identified as contributing towards environmental exploitation and shaping the way in which humanity, especially in western societies, engages with environmental risk. This engagement is shaped by an ideology of technological utopianism, in which scientific and technological developments are often championed as providing humanity with the means to overcome environmental limitations. At the heart of these dystopian societies is a narrative of progress, and it is this narrative of progress that ecodystopian novels such as Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007) and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009) seek to expose as a paradox. Rather than focusing on apocalyptic events, these narratives defer catastrophe to instead represent environmental crisis as an ongoing and lived phenomenon where progress is understood as an effort to maintain the current system against environmental pressures.

Consequently, the dystopian societies portrayed in these texts are not the product of a single political ideology or form of technological dominance, but are produced by a network of global economic and environmental factors upheld against concepts of catastrophe. This dispersal of power structures and environmental changes poses significant challenges to a genre that has traditionally been focused on the experience of the individual. In Chapter Three, the way in which the ecodystopian novel often problematizes the legitimacy and integrity of the individual's perspective is considered. Responding to some of the difficulties outlined at the beginning of this introduction, this chapter explores how the ecodystopian novel addresses some of the challenges in perceiving and understanding climate change, including the complicity of the protagonist with the ideological structures of the neoliberal capitalist dystopian society. While some texts employ strategies which attempt to overcome the limitations of the individual perspective, other texts take a self-reflexive approach in negotiating these limitations. Significantly, in texts such as Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998) and George Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987), these formal interventions change the way in which the protagonist's counter-narrative of resistance is constructed, offering new responses to the challenges posed by a new type of dystopian space. This chapter analyses these different narrative and formal strategies and how they negotiate the tension between the primacy of the individual and the need for a global perspective. Finally, this chapter considers how these novels reflect on their own success or failure

to represent or address climate change and other environmental issues, demonstrating a self-aware intervention in the very same questions posed by this thesis.

The destabilization of the concept of 'nature' thus undermines the traditional distinction between background and foreground in the literary text, challenging the formal strategies and narrative structure of the dystopian novel. Yet this loss of nature as a framing presence for human activity also has consequences for the notion of human identity and the values that inform expressions of hope in these visions of the future. Chapter Four considers how the ecodystopian novel problematizes traditional definitions of 'humanness' in response to radical environmental change. In particular, this chapter focuses on the concept of the posthuman as a potential space for resistance and difference. From the cyborgs and artificial intelligence presented by Winterson, Brunner and Gee, to the biological transgression and genetic creations imagined by Atwood and Bacigalupi, the posthuman is a recurring figure within the ecodystopian novel. Drawing on theories of trans-corporeality and ecological conceptions of materiality, this chapter argues that the figure of the posthuman plays a key role in the counter-narrative of the ecodystopian novel where it is used to critique traditional notions of the human/nature binary and problematize the sustainability and relevance of conventional ideas of human identity and agency. Analysing the different forms of posthumanism introduced by Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003; *The Year of the Flood*, 2009; *MaddAddam*, 2013), Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway: A Novel* (2017), and Peter Watt's *Starfish* (1999), this chapter argues that within the ecodystopian vision of environmental crisis the posthuman becomes a disruptive space which underlines the need to understand human beings as embodied creatures entangled within a wider non-human ecological network.

Chapter Five stands as an extended conclusion to this project, summarising the questions and challenges that have been raised in response to the preceding analysis of the thesis. It aims to bring together the different elements from each chapter through a discussion of the relevance or suitability of the dystopian genre in addressing climate changed futures in comparison to catastrophe and post-apocalyptic novels. This concluding section asks what is unique about what the dystopian genre has to offer in tackling the environmental crisis as both a literary and a cultural challenge, and compares the strategies offered by these texts. To finish, this chapter indicates some

of the outstanding questions raised by this project that invite and warrant further attention.

Finally, the term 'nature' requires some brief attention. At many points in this thesis I will use the term 'nature' to refer to the non-human environment, including physical habitats, the climate, and the vast array of non-human species. Such a usage is problematic. In the era of ecocriticism, 'nature', with or without a capital 'N' has become a contentious term. In her study appropriately titled *What is Nature?*, Kate Soper remarks 'as with many other problematic terms, its complexity is concealed by the ease and regularity with which we put it to use in a wide variety of contents. It is at once both very familiar and extremely elusive'.[42] Recognised as both an empirical, material reality and a cultural construction, nature is often conceived as a concept which refers to everything that isn't human, creating a conflict between human and non-human nature which has been exacerbated by both religious and secular humanist narratives of exceptionalism which justify humanity's control over the natural world and its commodification as resource. Yet as many ecocritics have strived to show, this division is false. William Cronon explains that nature 'is a profoundly human construction' arguing that 'the way we describe and understand that world is so entangled with our own values and assumptions that the two can never be fully separated. What we mean when we use the word 'nature' says as much about ourselves as about the things we label with that word'.[43] In other words, the term nature is one that is conceptually open to interpretation and the way in which it is employed and understood reflects back on the user.

A full evaluation of the complex implications of this term would far exceed the scope of this thesis, which is arguably more dedicated to its analysis of the dystopian genre than furthering the development of ecocritical work around such conceptual arguments. However, I wish to acknowledge that in using the term nature to refer to the non-human I do so in full awareness of its problematic usage. At the same time, by bringing an ecocritical perspective to the dystopian novel, I hope to show that the way in which nature is represented and positioned in these texts presents a more complex

[42] Kate Soper, *What is Nature?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.1
[43] William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), p.25

engagement with this concept, reflecting back on a growing environmental and, indeed, ecological awareness in this literary genre.

CHAPTER ONE: THE EVOLUTION OF DYSTOPIA

Introducing his attempt to readdress the generic nomenclature of utopian fiction, Antonis Balasopoulos writes that '[i]f anxiety over the delimitation of the object of study constitutes the universal symptom of every emerging disciplinary field, the field of utopian studies – codified as such in the mid-1970s – can be said to constitute a particularly vexed case'.[44] Not only does the term utopia itself continue to be used in varying and conflicting ways, but as the genre of utopian fiction has developed a wide array of sub-categories such as anti-utopia, dystopia, heterotopia, critical utopia, critical dystopia, ustopia, and even anti-anti-utopia, have emerged in an attempt to further clarify the genre and its different manifestations. Consequently, any attempt to engage with dystopian literature necessitates an understanding of how the term 'dystopia' has been understood and defined in order to establish its position within this utopian taxonomy. Before engaging with the concept of 'ecodystopia' which forms the focus of this study, chapter one will therefore begin by establishing a theoretical understanding of the dystopian genre's central thematic and formal conventions, constructing a working definition with reference to existing scholarship on the genre. Importantly, this project focuses on the dystopian novel as a literary form, rather than addressing the concept of dystopia more broadly. Yet a short look at this term in its wider use quickly illustrates the confusion and difficulties it raises in regards to understanding this literary genre.

'Dystopia' is a concept that has been problematic to define. The field of utopian studies is an interdisciplinary one, approached from political, sociological, historical, architectural, and literary perspectives, and likewise the term 'dystopia' has been variously deployed. Current knowledge suggests that the word dystopia first appears in the eighteenth century, used with reference to Thomas More's *Utopia* in order to refer to a 'bad' place or 'unhappy country', although its best known earliest appearance is during a political speech in 1868.[45] Competing with alternative names such as

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[44] Antonis Balasopoulos, 'Anti-Utopia and Dystopia: Rethinking the Generic Field', *Utopia Project Archive 2006–2010*, (ed.) Vassilis Vlastaras, (Athens: School of Fine Arts Publications, 2011), 59-67, p.59

[45] V. M. Budakov, 'Dystopia: An Earlier Eighteenth-Century Use', *Notes and Queries*, 57.1 (2010), 86-88

'cacotopia', 'negative utopia', and even 'futopia', it is 'dystopia' that has persevered in common usage today.[46] In these earliest uses, dystopia is used as a socio-political concept to refer to a situation or state that could come into being through the consequences of irresponsible political action. The term entered popular use in the twentieth century, when it is used to refer to a similar concept, but as represented in fiction. Since then, the dominant use of the word dystopia has been in reference to this body of speculative fiction and dystopia is now used to describe both the fictional narrative genre and the fictional, negative places that these texts depict.

However, in recent years the word has lost its socio-political grounding, employed to refer to any world, society, or place presented in fiction deemed terrible compared to contemporary standards. Although the open etymology of the term lends itself to such broad usage, the danger is that the significance of the concept is diluted. Fredric Jameson argues that genres are 'essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to *specify the proper use* of a particular cultural artifact' (italics mine).[47] In other words, when a text is positioned as part of a particular genre it sets up certain expectations in the reader and prompts a particular response. The problem is that as the term dystopia becomes increasingly applied by the general public and the media to all negative speculative fiction such characterisations have a tendency to elide dystopian, catastrophe, and post-apocalyptic narratives, three genres which, though alike in many respects, pursue three very different formal strategies. Of course, genres are not fixed entities, but cultural constructions open to evolution and change. In response to growing environmental anxieties all three of these genres have evolved, and they do often overlap in certain respects. However, when these different genres are characterised under the umbrella of dystopian fiction there is a risk that the specific formal and thematic features of the dystopian novel are overlooked and the significance of this genre is lost.

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[46] Jeremy Bentham uses the term 'cacotopia' (from Greek 'kako' meaning bad or evil) alongside 'dystopia' in his 1818 *Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the form of a catechism*; anti-utopia or negative utopia is often used interchangeably with dystopia, but as this chapter will go on to explain, the two can be understood to designate two different literary forms; 'futopia' is suggested by Karl E. Meyer in 'O Scared Old World, That Has Such Robots In't', *The Reporter* (July 6 1954), 35-37 < http://www.unz.org/tuPub/Reporter-1954jul06-00035> [Accessed: 10/10/17]

[47] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.106

This loss of specificity in terms of genre is preceded and enabled by the fact that beyond the literary sphere the adjective 'dystopian' has become increasingly prevalent in popular use, used not only to describe possible future consequences, but also to describe real places and states currently existing, and retrospectively applied to historical societies from political dictatorships to slavery. Maria Varsam coins the term 'concrete dystopia', in opposition to Bloch's 'concrete utopia', to emphasise the material and historical dimensions of dystopia, arguing that 'concrete dystopia brings together the past and present, creating thus a continuum in time whereby historical reality is dystopian'.[48] The broadening use of the term dystopia is evidenced by Gregory Claeys' recent monograph *Dystopia: A Natural History*, which sets out to chart the wide historical background and imaginative scope of dystopia as a concept embodying humanity's worst impulses and fears. Claeys' 'natural history' suggests how the nature of a 'dystopian' or monstrous element within the social imagination has evolved over time. Beginning with the concept of an 'original dystopian space' as one inhabited by monsters, Claeys argues for the existence of different types of dystopian space, both mythological and historical, ranging from visions of Christian hell, to 'la Terreur' of the French Revolution, to the despotic governments of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. Claeys's emphasis on dystopia as an expression of fear emerging from 'the emotional substrata of behaviour' means that the types of society or space imagined vary enormously, but are brought together under the definition of dystopia as the 'negative pasts and places we reject as deeply inhuman and oppressive' and the 'negative futures we do not want but may get anyway'.[49] Consequently, rather than exploring its formal or literary heritage, Claeys chooses to focus on dystopia as a spatial and evaluative term, used to characterise the nature of a society or place which can be fictional or real, and consequently uses the term dystopia to encompass many different types of negative space.

Debates over fictionality as a characteristic of dystopia lead to further confusion. Ruth Levitas argues that 'Dystopias are not necessarily fictional in form;

[48] Maria Varsam, 'Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Its Others', *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, (eds.) Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.203-224, (p.208)
[49] Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.498

neither predictions of the nuclear winter nor fears of the consequences of the destruction of the rain forests, the holes in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and the potential melting of the polar ice caps are primarily the material of fiction'.[50] Although the argument Levitas makes here aims to underline that representations of dystopia are often based on legitimate and realisable fears, it elides the current negative trends with their possible future consequences. A prediction of nuclear winter may be taken as the basis for a dystopian projection; however, although the possibility is feasible, the consequences of these threats are yet to be fully realised. In other words, they remain in the domain of speculation and fiction until they come to be. However, in contrast, there is no such fictionality in the argument for the existence of historical dystopian societies. The question here is whether a dystopia can be an already existing reality or only one that is yet to be realised. For example, would the diary of Anne Frank be considered a dystopian novel? It meets many of the criteria of the genre which I will go on to detail in this chapter, but it is a historical record, not a fiction. Yet the world Anne Frank writes about could legitimately be considered a dystopia. At least, critics such as Gregory Claeys seem to suggest that this is the case. As noted earlier, the term dystopia is used to describe the 'bad place', as well as the narrative that presents this space. However, if this space can be any negative place or society, then any text presenting such a place could be characterised as a dystopian text. Consequently, the representation of a 'bad place' is not enough to define the dystopian novel. Here we can see the confusion caused when questions of historical reality versus fictionality are introduced. For purposes of clarity, this project focuses on the dystopian novel as a genre of fiction in contrast to the more abstract concept of dystopia. With this emphasis on fictionality, it looks at the 'bad place' of dystopia only in so far as it is represented in narrative.

Finally, one of the key issues in defining dystopia is the fact that what makes a place or society dystopian is difficult to specify. Although some sort of interpretative or evaluative judgement may be offered by the author, authorial intentions are not always clear and are sometimes misunderstood. As many critics have underlined, a space or society can be judged dystopian or not depending on the subjective valuations of the individual, influenced by their ideology or social position. In her study of 'relative dystopia', Luana Barossi argues that by labelling a space/society dystopian,

[50] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd, 2011), pp.225-226

'we are automatically presuming that this place or situation could be considered bad to every individual from that society […] ignoring the alterity or other points of view'.[51] Indeed, within dystopian fiction we often find characters who are more than satisfied by their surroundings, considering their society a utopian one, while readers outside the text can bring many varied interpretations and reactions to the text that contrast with authorial intentions. Consequently, many critics argue for the coexistence of both the good and the bad, such as Margaret Atwood who asserts that 'within each utopia, a concealed dystopia; within each dystopia, a hidden utopia […] scratch the surface a little […] you see something more like a yin and yang pattern'.[52] The resulting ambiguity means that the act of defining a space as a dystopia is a contingent and subjective valuation. The two co-exist, and which one you perceive depends on your perspective.

It is at this point where a distinction between the dystopia as the 'bad place' and dystopia as a literary narrative mode can again be particularly useful. Although the nature of the dystopian space will always depend on the individual's judgement, the dystopian novel as a narrative form can be characterised through the specific literary, thematic, and formal features it employs. Darko Suvin makes a similar distinction when he outlines the difference between utopia as a 'literary artifact' and utopia as a 'tableau' in his definition of the genre of utopian fiction.[53] Consequently, from this point onwards in the thesis I will use the term 'dystopia' to refer to the fictional *space* or *society* presented within the text, but refer to *the genre of fiction* through the adjective, specifying 'the dystopian genre' or 'dystopian novel'. Furthermore, by focusing specifically on the dystopian novel as a fictional, literary depiction of an undesirable future society, I hope to provide a definition which clarifies the parameters of the genre. In doing so, I challenge the broadening use of the term 'dystopia' to argue that the dystopian genre requires more than simply the representation of a space that can be interpreted negatively. This first chapter therefore aims to outline the type of space, or more specifically the type of society, that

[51] Luana Barossi, 'Through Different Eyes: Relative Dystopia in Post-Apocalyptic Topoi', *Apocalyptic Projections*, (ed.) Annette M. Magid (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), pp.2-26, (p.3)
[52] Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (New York: Virago, 2011), p.85
[53] Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979; Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), pp.58-9

characterises dystopian fiction. Furthermore, recognising that genre is a way of controlling desired and undesired responses to a text, this chapter looks beyond content to explore the literary strategies, ideologies, and formal qualities employed by the dystopian novel, and how these characteristics shape and inform the reading experience.

Through an exploration of content, form, and function, this first chapter therefore sets out to establish the parameters of the dystopian novel, and explore how it has evolved in response to the fears and anxieties of its time. Drawing on existing definitions and interpretations, this chapter will first outline the conventions and characteristics of the dystopian novel with the purpose of providing a working characterisation for this genre. It will consider how these features were established in the founding works of the genre and how these conventions were continued, challenged, or adapted in later dystopian texts that emerged in response to new political, social, technological, and environmental anxieties. This analysis begins by looking at the nature of the fictional dystopian society portrayed in the text, before exploring the role of the dystopian protagonist and the significance of their narrative journey. In particular, it explores the post-1970s evolution of the dystopian novel, tracking its response to the growth of neoliberal discourses, its movement away from the representation of fascist and communist autocracies, and the introduction of an environmental awareness into the genre. Consequently, this chapter will outline the process of neoliberalisation and the consequences of this economic and political movement on the role of the state, the nature of society, and the identity and position of the individual. Furthermore, it will consider the relationship between this process to the emergence of an environmental consciousness and the conflict that arose between nature and the human within this context. It will introduce the ways in which the traditional conventions and characteristics of the dystopian genre are challenged by the need to respond to a global environmental crisis.

Rather than attempting to provide a concise and universally-applicable definition, this chapter instead proposes to break the dystopian novel down into a collection of key thematic and formal elements that have characterised the genre, recognising that not all novels will adhere to all the characteristics defined here. Some texts will be more traditionally dystopian, while others break with convention in interesting and often deliberate ways. The way in which authors adhere to or subvert

the conventions of a genre reveal the ideological values of a text, as well as the conflicts within it. Through this deconstruction and analysis of the genre's defining elements, I intend to clarify my own interpretation and definition of the literary dystopia as it is conventionally understood and explore the ways in which ecodystopian novels build on key elements of the traditional genre in their attempt to address the challenge posed by the global environmental crisis.

PART ONE: CONTENT AND CONTEXT

As outlined above, definitions of what constitutes the dystopian novel seem to rely first and foremost on its content, eliding the genre with the nature of the space or society it portrays. In his well-known nomenclature of utopian fiction, Lyman Tower Sargent defines the 'dystopia' as 'a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in a time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived'.[54] Although the term 'dystopian' is often used as an adjective to describe any nightmarish world, the dystopia is not simply the 'bad place' given by its Greek etymology. Sargent's definition above specifies the dystopia as a 'society'. This focus on human government is demonstrated by other definitions given by critics such as Darko Suvin, who defines dystopia as: 'a *community* where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and *relationships between its individuals* are *organized* in a significantly less perfect way than in the author's community' (italics mine).[55] Such definitions suggest that even in its broadest sense the dystopian novel requires the representation of some form of human community. This distinction sets dystopian fiction apart from other fictional representations of nightmare futures. Most importantly, it differentiates the dystopian novel from the thriller or survivalist narratives of catastrophe or post-apocalyptic fiction, a distinction that will be particularly important later in this study

[54] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', *Utopian Studies*, 5.1 (1994), 1-37, p.9

[55] Darko Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), p.238; Significantly, Suvin makes a similar distinction when defining the utopian literary genre, noting that 'the element of *community* differentiates utopias on the one hand from "robinsonades," stories of castaways outside of an alternate community', *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), p.75

for defining the difference between the ecodystopian novel and other types of fiction which also attempt to portray visions of environmental crisis.

Other critics are more demanding about the specific content which should be found in the future society portrayed in the dystopian novel. Similar to Sargent, M.H. Abrams defines dystopia as 'a very unpleasant imaginary world', but he goes on to specify how in the dystopian novel 'ominous tendencies of our present social, political, and technological order are projected in some disastrous future culmination'.[56] Similarly, Gregory Claeys uses the term dystopia 'in the broad sense of portraying feasible negative visions of social and political development', consequently excluding fantastical content such as H.G. Wells's Martians.[57] Dystopian fiction is therefore understood to have an extrapolative function, and indeed most dystopian novels do appear to construct their visions of the future around the fears and trends of their time, reflecting the context in which they are written. For critics such as M. Keith Booker, this characteristic is essential to the value of the genre. He asserts that 'the treatment of imaginary societies in the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant more or less directly to specific "real world" societies and issues'.[58] Certainly, acclaimed dystopian novels such as George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* both draw their power to a large extent from the way they project the contemporary politics and fears of their respective times and countries. Dystopian fiction then is inseparable from the political and historical context from which it emerges, often rendering it closer to the present than other works of science fiction. Although it is fictional in nature, the dystopian novel therefore has a grounded historical dimension.

Yet despite its relevance to contemporary reality, the world presented in the dystopian novel is designed to be unfamiliar and disconcerting. Darko Suvin argues

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[56] M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (7th edition), p.328 <http://www.ohio.edu/people/hartleyg/ref../abrams_mh.pdf> [Accessed 21/05/15]
[57] Gregory Claeys, 'The Origins of Dystopia', *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (ed.) Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.107-132 (p.109)
[58] M. Keith Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p.18; Interestingly, Booker chooses to use the term 'relevance', while Claeys stresses the 'feasibility' of these future worlds. I personally agree with Booker, as often unfeasible or science fictional scenarios can still be used to reflect relevantly and powerfully back on our own society.

that 'the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one'.[59] While utopian fiction often features a foreign traveller or visitor who, led and informed by a guide, experiences the utopian society as an outsider, the protagonist of the dystopian narrative is typically already a citizen of this society. Consequently, the dystopian novel almost always opens *in medias res*, plunging the reader directly into an unfamiliar world with minimal exposition. George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* famously begins 'It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen', immediately calling the reader's attention to the questionable and strange elements present in this society (*NEF*, 3). In their portrayal of a future unpleasant society, dystopian novels thus strike an uncanny balance between the familiar and the foreign. As a result the reader is distanced from the social and political elements that might otherwise seem familiar, giving the reader a fresh and self-reflexive viewpoint through their experience of the fictional world.

Booker argues that this formal strategy of defamiliarisation is '[t]he principal technique of dystopian fiction'. He explains that 'by focusing their critiques of society on spatially or temporally distant settings, dystopian fictions provide fresh perspectives on problematic social and political practices that might otherwise be taken for granted or considered natural or inevitable'.[60] This function is similarly encapsulated in Suvin's term of 'cognitive estrangement', where the term 'cognitive' is intended to '[imply] not only a reflecting of but also *on* reality. It implies a creative approach toward a dynamic transformation rather than towards a static mirroring of the author's environment'.[61] In other words, the speculative futures portrayed in dystopian fiction are designed to reflect critically back upon the context out of which they emerge and, in doing so, actively engage the reader who must themselves make meaningful connections between the elements of the future fictional society and the contemporary historical context of the novel. Consequently, these extrapolative narratives not only attempt to imagine the future culmination of present trends, but more importantly seek to draw attention to how the consequences of such actions are

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[59] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p.22
[60] M. Keith Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p.19
[61] Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p.22; It should be noted that Suvin identifies 'cognitive estrangement' as a defining characteristic of the science fiction genre in general, to which dystopian fiction belongs.

already apparent today. For both Suvin and Booker, this critical and interpretative function is a central defining characteristic of the dystopian text, marking it as both part of the science fiction genre and the post-Enlightenment tradition.

This brief overview introduces the three characteristics which define the dystopian setting in its broadest sense: the representation of a negative fictional society or community which has come about as a result of contemporary political, social, or technological trends, presented in such a way as to provide the reader with a self-reflexive perspective on their own reality. Yet the resulting type and content of the dystopian society portrayed will of course depend on the political and social trends to which these authors respond.

'Dystopia' as a term describing a narrative mode entered into common use in the twentieth century, developing in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars during a period of intense political upheaval and change. Consequently, the popular understanding of the dystopian literary genre is commonly defined by the novels that appeared at this time. In particular, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937), and George Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty Four* (1949) continue to be regarded as exemplary examples of the genre. The result is that, as Gregory Claeys highlights, 'from both literary and historical viewpoints, dystopia is identified with the "failed utopia" of twentieth-century totalitarianism […] a regime defined by extreme coercion, inequality, imprisonment, and slavery'.[62] This focus explains the definitions of the genre that insist on some form of totalitarian rule, such as that given by Benjamin Kunkel who argues that the dystopian novel 'envisions a sinister *perfection* of order. In the most basic political terms, dystopia is a nightmare of authoritarian or totalitarian rule'.[63] However, as this chapter will go on to demonstrate, the nature of the imagined dystopian society and its implied threat for the future are dependent upon the novel's historical context, and as the shadow of the Cold War receded, so did the dystopian vision of the totalitarian state. To limit the understanding of the dystopian novel to the fear of despotism and autocracy would be to ignore the way the genre has developed to respond to new trends and fears within society, as well as to ignore the origins of

[62] Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, p.5
[63] Benjamin Kunkel, 'Dystopia and the End of Politics', *Dissent*, (Fall 2008) <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/dystopia-and-the-end-of-politics> [Accessed: 22/01/2015]

the genre in earlier science fiction. Consequently, this chapter not only aims to clarify the parameters of the dystopian genre, but also seeks to broaden its scope to pay more attention to those narratives beyond the classical totalitarian novels.

Notably, although the genre of dystopia was only really characterised thus in the latter half of the twentieth century, critical histories of the genre often look back to earlier novels to trace the beginnings of this literary trend.[64] In particular, H.G. Wells *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The Sleeper Wakes* (1910), Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908) and E.M. Forster's 'The Machine Stops' (1909) are often given as notable examples of 'proto-dystopias' due to their 'inversion' of utopian narratives and their focus 'on the terrors rather than the hopes of history'.[65] Through their portrayals of negative futures as warnings to the present, these novels anticipate the more 'classical' forms of the genre.[66] In particular, Adam Stock draws attention to the temporal structure of these earlier narratives, suggesting Wells and Forster as central in the formal development of dystopian fiction through their presentation of 'future-as-past', a formal dynamic that is central to the dystopian novel's critical function.[67] Notably, although these novels present nightmares of control and/or authoritarian states, they are less preoccupied with political ideologies. Instead, these proto-dystopian texts can be seen as a response to urbanization and industrialisation, primarily concerned with urban pollution, labour, and technology. Environmental concerns are also prominent in many of these texts, demonstrating fears of toxic pollution as a result of increased industrialisation, as well as overpopulation. While much of the utopian fiction of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries imagined a future where the development of technology and machinery would free humanity from labour, these proto-dystopian texts instead imagined a world where technology would enslave and limit the

[64] Indeed, in 1954 Karl Meyer argued that 'the concept of a malignant future is so new to our thinking that we do not even have a word to describe what Max Eastman has called the "inverse Utopia"'. 'O Scared Old World, That Has Such Robots In't', *The Reporter* (1954), 35-37, (p.35) < http://www.unz.org/Pub/Reporter-1954jul06-00035> [Accessed: 10/10/17]
[65] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), pp.111-112; Tom Moylan uses the term 'proto-dystopia', but credits Gorman Beauchamp with the term
[66] Gorman Beauchamp describes *The Iron Heel* as 'a sort of prelude to 1984' through its presentation of the evolution of capitalism into 'the proto-fascism of the Iron Heel' , '"The Iron Heel" and "Looking Backward:" Two Paths to Utopia', *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 9.4 (1976), 307–314, p.307
[67] Adam Stock, 'The Future-as-Past in Dystopian Fiction', *Poetics Today*, 37.3 (2016), 415-442

individual, providing a critical counterpoint to the utopian ideals of social and technological progress.

Building on these fears of 'techno-modernity', Caroline Edwards takes an alternative perspective on the predecessors of dystopian fiction, identifying a sub-genre of 'early dystopias of monopoly capitalism'. Including novels such as Ignatius Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* (1890) and the previously mentioned *The Iron Heel*, Edwards characterises this body of literature as one which merged the fears of techno-modernity with a focus on commercialism and the dominance of a corporate elite. More significantly however, she suggests that approaching the genre through proto-dystopian novels 'written against monopoly capitalism' can prompt critics to 'rethink the beginnings of the dystopian genre' and consequently:

> this opens up a different way of thinking about the evolution of the genre which can help to clarify its interrelationship between technology, modernity and futurity outside of the more commonly used framework of liberal individualism versus authoritarianism collectivisation (whether socialist, fascist, capitalist, or a mixture of these).[68]

Indeed, concerns about technological dependence and a growing consumer culture may precede fears of totalitarianism but both share a concern with the loss of individual agency. We see such an interplay of themes developing in the novels which emerged alongside the more famous of the dystopian classics. Examples include Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), which imagines how such technological automation would strip people of purpose, rendering humanity obsolete, and Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* (1953), which presents a society dominated by advertising firms where the forces of capitalism work to create a mass of obedient consumers rather than thinking individuals. Furthermore, Huxley's *Brave New World* contains both an authoritarian state and the dangers of technological dependence and consumerism. In fact, Krishan Kumar argues that '[i]n selecting consumerism, in the broadest sense, as the major development of contemporary capitalism, Huxley had showed himself the most perceptive of the dystopian writers. Power is there, but it prefers to exercise itself

[68] Caroline Edwards, 'Techno-modernity: how we love it, how we fear it' (Keynote Talk), *Dystopia Now*, Birkbeck, May 2017, p.13

in ways that evade our recognition and hence resistance'.[69] In particular, Huxley's representation of Bernard Marx and his complicity in the system and his difficulty in enacting an effective narrative of resistance foreshadows similar narrative developments in later representations of capitalist dystopia. Arguably then, although it is the totalitarian societies of authors like Orwell which popularised the dystopian genre, it is the more abstract concept of a conformist society and a loss of individual identity and freedom which defines the dystopian genre – whether bought about by political dictatorships, corporate conspiracies, or technological development. Consequently, while many of these concerns with capitalism and environmental exhaustion are overshadowed by fears of despotism in the post-war totalitarian dystopian narratives, what is particularly interesting about these earlier depictions of capitalist dystopian societies is how they explore many of the themes which would become central to the post-1970s dystopian novel.

Although the development of the body of dystopian fiction began to receive more dedicated critical attention in the 1960s and 70s, this period also marks a fading of the dystopian novel in favour of a revival of utopian writing, finding a new form in the 'critical utopia'.[70] Meanwhile, during this period the more pessimistic side of the literary imagination was dominated by an outburst of post-war catastrophe fiction. In August 1945, the world witnessed the horrific power of the atomic bomb, an event which would effectively end the Second World War in a brutal display of mankind's capacity for destruction. Written in the shadow of Hiroshima, catastrophe fiction by authors such as J.G. Ballard, John Christopher, and Thomas M. Disch imagined various scenarios of devastation on Earth. Describing alien invasions, falling comets, new ice ages, droughts, bombings, and other disasters which bring humanity to its knees, these novels were apocalyptic in nature, with different thematic concerns and formal conventions from the dystopian fiction of the proceeding decades. Apocalyptic fiction, at least in its contemporary sense, is defined by its representation of a global

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[69] Krishan Kumar, 'Utopia's Shadow', *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the page, on screen, on stage, (ed) Fátima Vieira* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp.19-22, (p.22)

[70] See for example: Kingsley Amis's *New Maps of Hell: A Survey of Science Fiction (1960; London: Penguin Books, 2012*) or Harold L. Berger's *Science Fiction and the New Dark Age* (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976); for more on the 'critical utopia', see Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000).

disaster which is culture- or world-ending in scale.[71] Rather than focusing on the power structures or politics of society, these texts presented the disintegration of society and explored the challenge of human survival.

The apocalyptic imagination has an extensive religious and literary history markedly separate to the heritage of the dystopian novel.[72] Over time however, the apocalyptic narrative has moved away from its biblical origins to more secular visions of catastrophe. As a result the term 'apocalypse' in its contemporary and popular sense is now used to refer to any end-of-the-world scenario, whether caused by natural disaster, extra-terrestrial events, or man-made destruction. More importantly, the apocalypse has gone from being a divine event, outside of mankind's control or responsibility, to become an event stemming directly from mankind's own actions, a consequence of his reckless behaviour.[73] As such, the apocalyptic narrative takes the form of a cautionary tale, acting as a warning for humanity to change its ways before it is too late. Indeed, it is often argued that '[e]nvironmental apocalypticism […] is not about anticipating the end of the world, but about attempting to avert it by persuasive means'.[74] As Greg Garrard neatly underlines, '[o]nly if we imagine that the planet has a future, after all, are we likely to take responsibility for it'.[75] Apocalyptic and dystopian fiction therefore apparently share the aim of acting as a catalyst for change by drawing attention to and critiquing the society of the present through representations of a negative future, yet it is important to recognise that they fulfil this function in different ways, the significance of which will be revisited in Chapter Five.

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[71] If the disaster or event is localised rather than global then the text would be characterised as catastrophe fiction rather than apocalyptic.

[72] The term 'apocalypse' is derived from the Greek 'apokalupsis', which means to reveal or uncover. In its biblical origins, it appears in the New Testament's Book of Revelation where it referred to the vision given to John in a revelation or unveiling of divine purpose that depicted the ending of the world and God's judgement upon good and evil. Notably, in the biblical apocalypse, the non-believers and the sinful would be left to suffer during the Tribulation while the good would be saved to inherit New Jerusalem – a heaven on Earth. Consequently, the apocalypse not only provided a conclusion to the biblical story that began with Genesis, but more importantly perhaps, has an important moral function by offering hope and justification to the faithful. The traditional apocalyptic narrative therefore promises not the destruction of humanity, but its salvation.

[73] For more on the evolution of apocalyptic narratives, see Elizabeth K. Rosen, *Apocalyptic Transformation: Apocalypse and the Postmodern Imagination* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008).

[74] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, pp.107-8

[75] Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p.116

It is justifiable then that Moylan identifies a 'clear dystopian tendency' in the catastrophe and apocalyptic novels of the 1960s and 70s, and certainly their implicit critique of humanity's destructive nature and their portrayal of society in collapse demonstrates a shared 'dystopian' sensibility despite their different approach.[76] In particular, both apocalyptic and dystopian fiction fell under the spectre of the Cold War, and the nuclear threat fed into anxieties about the potential dangers of modern technology and its misuse already present in the science fiction genre, now projected over a global scale. Yet although many catastrophes were presented in the specific form of a nuclear disaster, many took on the form of environmental and 'natural' disasters. Indeed, Hiroshima prompted the broader realisation that humanity truly had the capacity and the means for global self-annihilation, and such annihilation was not restricted to the domain of nuclear warfare.

Significantly, a surge of environmental themes and concerns accompanied this outpouring of catastrophe and apocalyptic fiction in the 1960s and 70s, signalling a more explicit environmental perspective within the science fiction genre. This popularisation of the eco-apocalyptic scenario, in both the public and literary imagination, is often accredited to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, a non-fiction text published in 1962. Lawrence Buell goes as far to argue that if '[o]thers had portrayed doomsday by bomb and holocaust; Carson invented doomsday by environmental genocide'.[77] Often lauded as the text that launched the environmental movement, *Silent Spring* painted a dire portrait of how household and agricultural chemicals were poisoning water supplies, filtering through the food chain, and consequently silencing the natural world by causing the death of birds and animals. Drawing on a body of scientific data and research, but writing with an impassioned eloquence, Carson bought an awareness of these issues to the public eye.

In literary fiction, narratives of man-made disaster were not a new occurrence. In fact, they began emerging in the nineteenth century in response to the increased levels of urban pollution produced during the Industrial Revolution. Novels such as W.D. Hay's *The Doom of the Great City* (1880) and Richard Jefferies' *After London* (1885) were notably apocalyptic, depicting societies suffocated by noxious fumes and toxic wastes. However, *Silent Spring* addressed pollution on both a greater and smaller

[76] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, p.121
[77] Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.295

scale, depicting how chemical contamination filtered through the surrounding ecological networks to affect both human and non-human life. Notably, in *Silent Spring* Carson drew substantially upon the apocalyptic rhetoric which surrounded the Cold War. Killingsworth and Palmer argue that Carson 'tapped into […] the public's growing uneasiness over science and the military in the Cold War era' and on several occasions 'explicitly aligned nuclear and agricultural science within the same conceptual framework'.[78] This parallel appealed to the popular imagination and by taking such everyday practices like the spraying of crops and placing the potential consequences on a par with the devastation caused by nuclear weapons, Carson thus transformed environmental pollution into a much more urgent and immediate problem, providing the starting point for a renewed interest in environmental politics.

Significantly, even the more recognisably dystopian texts that do appear in this period often veer towards the apocalyptic, focusing on the breakdown rather than the (imperfect) functioning of society. Similarly, these dystopian novels are less concerned with the threat of worldwide despotism, and more anxious about human population growth, increasing industrialization, and the resulting pollution. Indeed, the two concerns were often complimentary as increasing populations produced ever more waste and pollution. Such fears were by no means new, with Thomas Robert Malthus voicing concerns about the restraints on resources for human population growth in his *Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society* published in 1798. However, the 1960s and 70s demonstrate a resurgence in these fears with the publication of a wide array of overpopulation narratives, both British and American. These include Brian Aldiss' *Earthworks* (1965), Harry Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966), which would become the basis of the classic science fiction film *Soylent Green* (1973), and John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968). Meanwhile, the disastrous consequences of toxic chemical use and pollution, as highlighted by Rachel Carson, were presented in novels such as Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1972) and Philip Wylie's *The End of the Dream* (1972). Brunner and Wylie painted sardonic portraits of a world choking on its own waste, while J.G. Ballard's *The Drought* (1965) imagined how pollution could have greater unforeseen

[78] M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, 'Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming*', *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, (eds.) Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press: 1996), pp.21-45, (pp.27-28)

consequences for the natural world, and consequently for the human psyche. The anxieties expressed by these novels demonstrated a recognition of the incompatibility of humanity's ongoing expansion in the face of Earth's limited space and resources. They consider how pollution and overpopulation influence social relationships and class structure, beginning to shape the environmental critiques which would develop with more complexity in the following decades.

Concerns over the conflict between environmental limitations and capitalist expansion played a central role in the new wave of dystopian fiction which emerged during the 1980s and 90s, which was characterised largely by its response to the post-1970s reconfiguration of capitalism. Across the western world, and to an extent beyond, this period witnessed the expansion of market-orientated economic reform and the development of an increasingly pervasive neoliberal ideology in both political and economic practices. In particular, through the major neoliberal reforms led by Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in America, neoliberalism has grown to dominate discourse around political government, economic growth, and social identity. Yet, the term 'neoliberal' raises its own terminological difficulties, not least because no one seems to self-identify as a neoliberal, thereby characterising this term as a pejorative label applied externally. Although it is not the intention of this project to expand the criticism on the concept of neoliberalism, I do intend to apply this term and its surrounding critical context to the dystopian fiction considered here, and thus some introduction of my usage of the term is required.

As Pellizzoni and Ylönen have noted, 'venturing into the terrain of neoliberalism is a risky endeavour, even at a conceptual level'. Yet although recognising that the term faces criticism for its many contradictory and ambiguous uses, Pellizzoni and Ylönen argue that the term can in fact provide 'a valuable function as a reference point for critical inquiry' due to its 'very plurality of meanings' which 'draws attention to the dynamic, complex nature of the issue'.[79] Similarly, Jamie Peck criticises the ubiquitous and universal use of the term, but argues that although neoliberalism may have become 'omnipresent', 'it is a complex, mediated, and heterogeneous kind of omnipresence, not a state of blanket conformity'.[80] As this and

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[79] Luigi Pellizzoni, and Marja Ylönen, *Neoliberalism and Technoscience: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 2012), p.1
[80] Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p.30

the subsequent chapter will go on to argue, it is the often contradictory nature of neoliberal ideology that makes it so problematic to critique and counteract. Rather than an all-encompassing, consistent project, the process of neoliberalisation has expressed itself variously across different historical manifestations.

In an economic and political context, neoliberalism is generally understood as a rejection of the welfare state and the 'organised capitalism' of state intervention demonstrated in the preceding decades. Neoliberalism is used to describe a renewal of liberal economics, established in large part by Friedman's Chicago School movement, which rejects Keynesian economic policy in favour of increased market freedom and decentralised government. In comparison to the *laissez-faire* attitude of liberal capitalism in the nineteenth-century, in a neoliberal model the state plays a more prominent role in regulating the system, establishing conditions which encourage competition and prevent monopolies. Such a system emphasises the value of individual liberty, choice, and opportunity, and is designed to maximise efficiency and profit through increased competition and de-regulated trade.[81] However, Jamie Peck argues that despite 'the pristine clarity of its ideological apparition', neoliberalism 'has only ever existed in "impure" form, indeed *can* only exist in messy hybrids. Its utopian vision of a free society and free economy is ultimately unrealizable'.[82] It is the resulting failures of this utopian ideal, and the consequences of its apparent successes, that have resulted in the pejorative characterisation of this term, as demonstrated by critics such as Naomi Klein and David Harvey.

Although neoliberalism is primarily understood as an economic doctrine, its significance, at least in the context of this thesis, lies in how its policies and values have extended into and shaped the accompanying social and cultural spheres. Indeed, Wendy Brown argues that definitions which 'reduce neo-liberalism to a bundle of economic policies with inadvertent political and social consequences […] eschew the *political rationality* that both organizes these policies and reaches beyond the

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[81] For a more detailed overview of this transition and the sources for the definition of neoliberalism given here, see: Jim McGuigan, *Neoliberal Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2005); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007; London: Penguin, 2008); Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[82] Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, p.7

market'.[83] The generalization of neoliberal ideas to social systems was recognised early on by Foucault, who argued that neoliberalism 'involves extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself'. Such a system would be 'a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family'.[84] Consequently, while the term neoliberalism is often invoked to describe an economic system, it can be more broadly understood as a liberalist political rationality or ideology which draws upon and internalises capitalist structures and values. By 'equat[ing] moral responsibility with rational action', argues Brown, 'it relieves the discrepancy between economic and moral behaviour by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences'.[85] The resulting form of subjectivity cultivated by neoliberalism, and the way in which this ideology reformulates the ways in which relationships within societies are structured and articulated is a key question explored by the post-1970s dystopian novel.

Consequently, although some dystopian fiction would continue to portray societies ruled by despotic governments, towards the end of the twentieth, and beginning of the twenty-first century many dystopian novels moved away from this convention towards visions of corporate hegemony, returning to themes explored in earlier proto-dystopian texts of monopoly capitalism. Power stems from the global economy rather than from the state, and control is exercised through employment, the provision of funding, and the consumer market. Unlike the classical novels of Orwell, Huxley, and Zamyatin, there is no Big Brother, no World Controller, and no Benefactor in the futures imagined in what I will here characterise as the 'neoliberal dystopia'. Instead the reader is confronted by 'HelthWyzer', 'AgriGen', and 'MORE'; powerful, transnational corporations who appear to pull all the strings behind a figurehead or seemingly absent government. Where state presence endures, it is subordinated to facilitate and serve capitalist economic interest. Focusing on the

[83] Wendy Brown, 'Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory & Event*, 7.1 (2003) <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/48659> [Accessed: 06/06/17] (no page numbers given)
[84] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*, translated by Graham Burchill (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.242; Foucault is referring more specifically to ordoliberalism here, an early form of neoliberalism in Germany, but argues that the same 'generalization of the economic form of the market' is found equally, if not more so, in American neoliberalism (p.243).
[85] Brown, 'Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy' (no pages numbers given)

dehumanising and controlling influence of capitalism and technology, these dystopian narratives take place in futures where the pursuit of profit and progress has become the driving force behind societies dominated by faceless corporations and ever-present advertising.

The 1970s revival of the dystopian novel was therefore distinctly anti-capitalist, locating the hegemonic structures of its era not within an all-controlling government body, but in the less static structures of the global economic market and the neoliberal values that drive it. This trend drew influence in part from the cyberpunk tradition. With their gritty, urban focus, and anti-authoritarian politics, cyberpunk novels and film, including classics such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) (based loosely on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) by Philip K. Dick) and the widely-acclaimed *Neuromancer* (1984) by William Gibson, were some of the earliest science fiction narratives to depict a future dominated by technology and transnational business interests. In fact, Mark Bould argues that '*Neuromancer* inaugurated the SF of multinational capital and corporate globalization, its depiction of information circulating in cyberspace a potent metaphor for the global circulation of capital'.[86] In particular, cyberpunk picked up on the drive for technological development supported by neoliberal capitalism, exploring the freedom and possibilities offered by advanced technology such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence.

Underlying this obsession with technology is the central anxiety outlined earlier: the recognition of planetary limitations in the face of endless capitalist expansion. Gerry Canavan suggests that 'post-1970s recognition of this unhappy ultimate limitation on the future growth of wealth may do much to explain the cultural importance of cyberpunk in the 1980s and 1990s and speculation about a technological "Singularity" in the 2000s' arguing that such texts 'offer an alternative scheme for getting outside scarcity and precariousness' by proposing to 'simply leave the material world altogether, by entering the computer. In virtual space, with no resource consumption or excess pollution to worry about'.[87] Such fantasies reveal what Suvin

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[86] Mark Bould, 'Cyberpunk', *A Companion to Science Fiction*, (ed) David Seed (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp.217-231, (p.220)
[87] Gerry Canavan, 'Introduction: If This Goes On', *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, (eds.) Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), p.9

describes as the 'escapist use of cyberspace' and underline a central difference between cyberpunk and dystopian fiction.[88] Whereas cyberpunk fiction revels in environmental risk and the possibilities of technology, dystopian fiction is often more fixated on the material and cultural costs of such developments. Increased scientific and technological innovation, while offering utopian potential, seems only to further feed into dystopian fears about the alienation and enslavement of the individual in society. Furthermore, although cyberpunk sometimes shares the dystopian text's potential for self-reflexivity and social criticism, much of the genre seems caught up in the excitement offered by cyberspace, drug-use, and criminality. Criticising such works as Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1986) and Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* (1986) for their lack of critical depth, Suvin suggests that much of the genre could be characterised as a 'parasite on a disease […] flaunting its own newness as a marketable commodity'.[89] Similarly, Raffaella Baccolini argues that cyberpunk's 'somewhat self-indulgent cynicism foreclosed any real subversive critique of the conservative society'.[90] Yet cyberpunk's interest in the potential opportunities and dangers of new technology, particularly in relation to questions of human (and post-human) identity, would become an important influence on later dystopian texts, as would its focus on the controlling influence of the corporate economy.

The diffusion of control and power from a single despotic government to a collection of multi-national companies changes the nature of the dystopian society. Instead of ruthless oppression and forced uniformity, such dystopian texts present societies that may at first appear utopian, especially due to their contrast to earlier visions of fascist or communist totalitariaism. In contrast to these earlier collectivist nightmares, the neoliberal society promises freedom and choice. David Harvey argues that when:

> The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of human dignity and individual freedom as fundamental, as "the central

[88] Darko Suvin, 'On Gibson and Cyberpunk SF', *Foundation: The Review of Science Fiction*, 46 (1989), 40-51 p.48
[89] Ibid., p.50
[90] Raffaella Baccolini, 'The Persistance of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction', *PMLA*, 119.3, 'Special Topic: Science Fiction and Literary Studies: The Next Millennium' (2004), 518-521, p.520

> values of civilisation" […] they chose wisely, for these are indeed compelling and seductive ideals. These values, they held, were threatened not only by fascism, dictatorships, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose.[91]

In many ways then, the society of the neoliberal dystopia portrays itself in direct opposition to the dystopian templates that had preceded it, emphasising notions of individual freedom in order to justify and endorse its mission. To an extent, people in the societies of novels such as Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* appear to have their freedom, their individuality, and the possibility of social and financial mobility, as well as being seemingly allowed to indulge in various superficial freedoms and social deviances. Furthermore, these neoliberal societies appear to endorse the individual, employing new technological and scientific advancements to the aim of fulfilling various desires of self-determination, including simulated experiences, cosmetic surgery, and genetic alteration. Exploring these links between capitalism and utopian individualist ideals, Matthew Eagleton-Pierce argues that 'the desire for emancipation and the cultivation of the self is one of the most durable justifications in the history of capitalism', and is actively contrasted to ideas of 'serfdom' and limitations.[92] Consequently, like the classical dystopian novel, the hegemonic narrative constructed is a utopian one. Yet rather than promoting a narrative of national unity and order, the neoliberal dystopia promises a utopia of consumerist pleasure, technological exuberance, and limitless improvement. In other words, a celebration of neoliberal capitalism in all its unregulated glory.

Yet, in a society defined by competition, people all too easily become resources to be exploited by each other and by powerful corporations – either as customers, assets, or collateral in an ongoing rivalry. Such exploitation forms one of the central conflicts in Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*, where the short-sighted and selfish pursuit of profit results in a citywide contagion. Indeed, the neoliberal ideal of rational self-interest is inherently flawed in the capitalist system because it comes at the expense of others when individual freedom is translated into selfishness and a dismissal of social

[91] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.14
[92] Matthew Eagleton-Pierce, 'On Individualism in the Neoliberal Period', *PSA 66th Annual International Conference*, (March 2016), p.7

responsibility. Economic competition between individuals, between companies, and between countries works to keep society in line. Furthermore, within these novels this consumer-based culture is normally portrayed as being supported by sharp social inequalities between those who have and those who have not. David Harvey suggests that this inequality isn't simply a side-effect, but 'the fundamental core of what neoliberalization has been about all along'. He argues that 'part of the genius of neoliberal theory [is] to provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power'.[93] Similarly, within the neoliberal capitalist dystopian society, the promise of freedom and choice is often employed as part of a narrative of self-determination where poverty is branded as a consequence of personal failings. Economic power is translated into social class, and this inequality is often expressed geographically, with the poor relegated to an outside space away from view. In Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, the poorer members of society are forced out to the 'pleblands', city suburbs plagued by crime and pollution, while the privileged live in defended and purified 'compounds'. Similarly, in Gee's *The Ice People*, those unable to earn a place within the economic market are left homeless, branded as 'Outsiders', while the unemployed of the society imagined in Turner's *The Sea and Summer* are labelled 'Swill' and forced to live in the high-rise towers of the Enclaves. Unable to gain employment and with no disposable income to spend on commodities, these individuals are reduced to non-entities, their lack of economic value leading to an erasure of individual worth or agency. Living with poverty and disease, this population is excluded from the hegemonic narrative and often demonised as lazy or criminal.

Meanwhile, any attempts at protest are quickly silenced. Those attempting to cheat the system face ruthless reprisals from either a corrupt state police force, or, in the absence of a state presence, from privately employed security firms upholding their own interpretation of the law. Furthermore, the market liberalism of these societies does not guarantee political liberty. In fact, in order that the free market can operate at its optimum a certain level of regulation must take place at the social and political level. Within dystopian narratives, the protagonist may encounter this regulation in many forms, including parking tickets, passports, exclusion zones, and even war. In other words, the oppression so often associated with totalitarian dystopia persists in

[93] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp.130-131

the neoliberal society imagined by these novels, even though the controlling structures often take different forms. Indeed, Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism 'is compatible with, and sometimes even productive of authoritarian, despotic, paramilitarisitc, and/or corrupt state forms and agents within civil society', supporting Franco Bernadi's statement that 'neoliberalism is the most perfect form of fascism' because the neoliberal concept of 'competition' is 'the concealment of a war machine in every niche of daily life'.[94] Such violence in the name of the free market is most obvious in the practices of transnational corporations which seek to prey on weaker countries, a neoimperialist project which masquerades under the justification of economic competition in its efforts to assert global dominance. In comparison to earlier capitalist proto-dystopian texts, the depictions of neoliberal capitalist dystopias which emerge in the 1980s and 1990s are characterised by the massive shift of national economies during the process of globalization and the growth of multi-national conglomerates. Labour markets have been exported abroad creating international networks which exploit the cheap workforce of less developed nations while profiting from the consumer markets. As a result, economic liberalism and its consumerist culture necessarily divides the population into targetable markets, both at home and abroad. Consequently, the central promise of freedom, diversity, and self-determination of the individual is undermined by the very same system that championed it in the first place, resulting in both a standardisation and fragmentation of individuality and identity that is responsible for the protagonist's feeling of alienation.

Most significantly, in the neoliberal society the systems or instruments of oppression, though present, have become less visible and less centralised, and this characteristic forms a key difference between totalitarian and neoliberal dystopias. Whereas the power exerted by the fascist governments of totalitarian dystopias are centralised within a ruling government and personified through a dictator, neoliberal dystopias have no central point of power. In its stead, we have what Chris Vials, writing about the neoliberal dystopia in Margaret Atwood's novels, describes as 'a kind of "un-state" that replicates the logic of the market, with power flows lacking a

[94] Brown, 'Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy'; Franco Bernadi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), p.95

definitive origin point, yet exercises absolute and brutal sovereignty all the same'.[95] These market forces are not exercised by a single body, but collectively through corporate bodies, their employees, and even their customers. Oppression and control in the neoliberal dystopia is thus exercised through cultural programming, and citizens within the society, including the protagonist, participate in the structures and ideologies that uphold the system. Through the cultivation of desire through advertising, neoliberal capitalism produces a self-fulfilling vision of consumerist utopia in which, Tom Moylan argues, 'the authentically radical call of Utopia is both co-opted and silenced, leaving in its place tropes of dystopia to represent and inform what critique and opposition remain'.[96] In other words, the citizen is kept compliant through the promise of freedom and self-expression, which is fulfilled through the role of the consumer. Consequently, not only do these governing forces lack any identifiable point of authority, producing no obvious oppressive system against which the protagonist can rebel, but furthermore systems of control in this society are internalized by the protagonist as well as being enforced upon them.

This lack of a definitive origin point is complicated further with the introduction of a more overtly environmental focus into the genre. As explained in the introduction to this study, environmental concerns have played a long-standing role in proto-dystopian and dystopian fiction. Depictions of urbanization and modernization often form the backdrop of the dystopian societies, accompanied by fears of overcrowding, pollution, and resource exhaustion. In other novels, such as Zamyatin's *We* and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, the natural environment is presented as a space which exists outside of the dystopian society, forming a space of opposition and resistance. Yet, depictions of the non-human environment are often limited, used to emphasise the unnatural nature of the dystopia or to create an unappealing background for a critique more focused on social and political issues. However, alongside the post-1970s progression of neoliberal capitalism, the public were witness to a new wave of environmental ruin. The Chernobyl disaster in 1986 demonstrated the potential devastation of a nuclear accident, while the threat of climate change was finally acknowledged with the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

[95] Chris Vials, 'Margaret Atwood's Dystopic Fiction and the Contradictions of Neoliberal Freedom', *Textual Practice*, 29.2 (2015), 235-254, p.242
[96] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, p.187

Change (IPCC) in 1988. With the entry of global warming into the popular imagination, anxieties about melting ice-caps and carbon emissions continued to grow throughout the 1990s, and remain one of the greatest environmental concerns to the present day. Apocalyptic visions related to climate change have abounded in recent literature and film, as fictional worlds are flooded (Will Self's *Book of Dave* 2006), frozen over (Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*, 1998), or left desolate (Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, 2006).

Furthermore, although pollution and resource exhaustion have remained important themes, the crisis of climate change has opened up more complex engagements with existing political and environmental issues, such as population growth. Addressing the development of environmental literature, Ursula K. Heise argues that in comparison to earlier fiction, which often took up the issue of overpopulation as the dominant theme, texts such as George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*, emerging from the late 80s onwards, take a more cautious approach. These texts

> consider population growth as one factor in a whole complex of environmental, social, and political problems such as pollution, climate change, social inequality, uneven access to power, and international competition and conflict. The mode in which the topic is broached differed fundamentally from texts written twenty or thirty years earlier.[97]

In other words, these novels challenge the human/nature dichotomy to construct a more complex understanding of the interaction and interdependence between humanity and its surrounding environment. In particular, many of these novels draw links between the economic and technological ambitions of capitalist and neoliberal capitalist ideologies and the exploitation of the environment, identifying the roots of the environmental crisis as extending beyond industrial activities and into everyday cultural systems.

Emerging as part of the initial wave of political and literary interest in the issue of global climate change, Turner's *The Sea and Summer* presents a world where

[97] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.80-81

increasing CO2 emissions have enhanced the greenhouse effect, raising global temperatures and melting the polar ice caps to produce a dramatic rise in sea level and leaving Melbourne vulnerable to repeated flooding. The resulting changes in the atmosphere have affected the production of agricultural crops, which, along with the pressures of unchecked population growth, has resulted in food shortages. Meanwhile, attempts to increase farmable land through the use of fertilisers has polluted the water table. Consequently, although population expansion is a central topic, within the narrative it is positioned as one factor within a more complex network of economic, political, and environmental developments. The environmental pressures described by Turner result in a dystopian society which is economically, socially, and geographically split. The minority of employed workers are the Sweet, living in family homes and able to afford small luxuries. Meanwhile the majority of the population, the unemployed Swill, are confined to the 'Enclaves' and left to scrape out a life in the squalid, overcrowded, and often flooded high-rise towers.

Significantly, rather than a totalitarian government that emerges as a result of extreme human political movements, Turner makes it explicit that the oppressive government and sharp social division he envisages are the result of several environmental factors which are bound up with the politics and economics of twenty-first century Melbourne. '[T]hey were bound into a web of interlocking systems', writes Turner, 'finance, democratic government, what they called high-tech, defensive strategies, political bared teeth and maintenance of a razor-edged status quo – which plunged them crisis to crisis as each solved problem spawned a nest of new ones'.[98] As Van Ikin argues, 'Turner takes care to make it clear that this is not a draconian, oppressive social structure […] It is the hand of inevitable social determinism, not the hand of the malign tyrant, which has separated the Swill from the Sweet'.[99] This 'inevitable social determinism' not only establishes the dystopian society, but regulates it, because although there is a controlling government at work behind the scenes, it is the forces of economic insecurity, class prejudice, and poverty which keep its citizens in line. The Sweet's obedience is driven by the threat of redundancy and a paralysing fear of social downfall. In contrast, deprived of information, education, and

[98] Turner, George, (1987), The Sea and Summer (London: Gollancz, 2013), p.14 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *TSAS*
[99] Van Ikin, 'New Light on the Future: George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*', *Perceiving Other Worlds*, (ed.) Edwin Thumboo (Singapore: Times Acad, 1991), pp.58-67, (p.60)

resources, the Swill are too preoccupied with the daily struggle of living to revolt. Taking advantage of their social prejudice, the government actively encourages the divide between the two groups through propaganda on the television or 'Triv', preventing the exchange of information between the groups and thus any sort of collaborative resistance. This sort of social division, driven by a lack of resources within a society governed under a capitalist ideology, would become a staple feature in the dystopian narratives emerging in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Whereas the totalitarian government often asserts the utopian nature of the society it sustains, the government in *The Sea and Summer* does not pretend that the current society is ideal, but it *does* take advantage of claims to necessity in order to justify its regimented, though unequal, society, claims that are difficult to refute. And both groups seem resigned to the status quo. When the Conway family's former neighbours and friends fail to support them, Alison defends them, telling her angry sons that 'one must live with society as it exists' (*TSAS*, p.37). Equally, it is explained that government officials 'convince[d] the Tower Bosses that only a condition of status quo could preserve a collapsing civilization' (*TSAS*, p.108). Claims of necessity are thus used to rob the individual of agency, while also undermining the justification for resistance. Furthermore, whereas the source and expression of oppressive power is relatively visible in the totalitarian state, the fact that society in the novel emerges in response to environmental demands rather than political hegemony means that the controlling forces in play are not always directly apparent. *The Sea and Summer* is not set in a neoliberal capitalist dystopia; the state remains in control of economic interest. However, like the neoliberal dystopia, there is no obvious villain or leader who can be challenged. Consequently, the protagonist often finds it much harder to forge an effective and relevant narrative of resistance, especially as the identification of the state government as the source of oppression demonstrates a limited awareness of the wider environmental strains on society.

Finally, due to its focus on human society and politics, the way in which dystopian fiction engages with environmental anxiety is significantly different to apocalyptic narratives. Rather than portraying a dramatic disaster which wipes out the majority of the human population, the dystopian narrative instead presents a human society which is struggling to live with and adapt to the new ways of living demanded

by environmental change. Consequently, these novels situate issues like pollution, overpopulation, resource depletion, bioengineering, and climate change within a wider social and political context which emphasises that it is not just the climate that is changing: the world and societies that these climates enfold are changing, too. Such changes are multi-directional, and the environment shapes humanity as much as humanity has shaped the environment. This is the ecodystopian novel: a text which takes a critical approach to the way in which humanity conceptualises and interacts with the non-human environment around it in order to explore the changing interrelationship between the two in an era of environmental crisis. However, without the explicit anthropogenic forces of oppression often presented in classical forms of the genre, such dystopian settings change the way in which the protagonist functions in the novel, complicating the traditional journey of resistance and rebellion. This question of the protagonist's journey and the form of the ecodystopian novel will be explored in Part Two.

PART TWO: NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND THE PROTAGONIST

As a genre, the dystopian novel is not only characterised by its setting, but also by the perspective and journey of the protagonist through whom the reader experiences the fictional world portrayed in the novel. Typically, the dystopian narrative focuses on a single, specific subject or character. In his own attempt to differentiate between utopia and dystopia, Fredric Jameson describes dystopian fiction as 'generally a narrative, which happens to a specific subject or character' in comparison to the more descriptive 'nonnarrative' of the utopian text.[100] In the authoritarian or totalitarian states portrayed in classical dystopian texts, this individual often finds him/herself subsumed within the collective as the government strives to create a peaceful and compliant civilian body. Differences among the population which cannot be eradicated are instead regulated and standardized, and this hegemonic order is sustained through the use of state propaganda, surveillance, and education. Independent desires and pleasures are either suppressed and forbidden, as in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, or exploited and regulated, as in *Brave New World*. In other well-known works such as *We*,

[100] Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.55-56

Swastika Night, and *The Handmaid's Tale* individuals are stripped of their identity entirely, given collective names or numbers instead of names, or even no names at all. Either way, the ruling government ruthlessly strives to eliminate independence and individuality, justifying this process through arguments for equality, efficiency, and/or the general good. The resulting regime is consequently portrayed as a utopian achievement, standing as the hegemonic social narrative.

The fear of this loss of individual identity and agency is a recurrent characteristic of the dystopian genre, whether that be at the hand of technological domination, genetic slavery, or totalitarian dictatorship. For Naomi Jacobs, this feature is key to the negative characterisation of the dystopian society. She argues that '[m]uch of the repulsive force of classical dystopia comes from its portrayal of a world drained of agency – of an individual's capacity to choose and to act, or a group's capacity to influence and intervene in social formations'.[101] When choice and agency are suppressed, there is a loss of identity and worth for the individual. Descartes's epistemological statement 'I think, therefore I am' may establish the existence of the individual consciousness, but in a society where good citizens are not required to (and, ultimately, cannot) think for themselves, the worth or value of that existence is compromised. Indeed, in Zamyatin's *We* individuality has been eradicated to the extent that that there is no 'I' and consequently, to doubt the existence of society would be to doubt the existence of the self: we think, therefore society is. Meanwhile, in Huxley's *Brave New World*, the concept of an independent consciousness is fundamentally challenged by the fact that its citizens are genetically conditioned clones.

Chad Walsh argues that the loss of identity in dystopian fiction is due to the breakdown of the individual by the state into 'nothing but a cluster of functions'. He suggests that 'by weakening the sense of individual identity, [the state] make it more likely that the average man will merge his own frail identity with the social whole'.[102] In this respect, the ultimate aim of the collectivist dystopia is that the self cannot be conceptualised as separate to society because no individual identity is available to them. While in totalitarian dystopias the government employs surveillance, harsh laws,

[101] Naomi Jacobs, 'Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*', *Dark Horizons*, (eds.) Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.91-111, (p.92)
[102] Chad Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare*, (New York; Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962), p.142; p.143.

and even psychological conditioning to supress individual identity, in other types of dystopian society individuality is supressed by other means. In proto-dystopian texts such as ‘The Machine Stops’ it is the over-reliance on technology which has reduced humanity to a feeble state, leaving them isolated but without any independence. In *Player Piano*, a similar dependence on technology supported by a capitalist ideology robs individuals of their agency and self-worth, reducing them to their value as labour and consequently eroding any basis on which to build their sense of identity.

As already noted in Part One, the suppression of individuality is less apparent in the neoliberal dystopia. Through enterprise, consumer goods, and new technologies these capitalist societies promise to liberate the individual, allowing them to determine their identity through clothing and other commodities. Yet the loss of individual identity remains a key feature in these dystopian narratives. These societies reduce individuals to ‘a cluster of functions’ by characterising their worth as labour or consumers, eroding the value and autonomy of the individual. Indeed, the promises of consumerism endorse a superficial notion of individuality and identity that serves to further integrate the individual within the capitalist system. Consequently, these narratives of neoliberal dystopia have more in common with capitalist proto-dystopian texts such as *Player Piano* and *The Iron Heel*, than depictions of totalitarian dystopia. When the forces of environmental change are brought to bear on the neoliberal dystopia, the resulting pressure on the economy is used to uncover the flaws and limitations of a society predicated on a capitalist economic system that values its citizens as resources rather than as individuals. This perspective is especially evident in the depiction of the failed capitalist government in *The Sea and Summer*. Reflecting on her social fall, Alison writes ‘My husband killed himself and overnight I was a nonentity, an indelicate presence without income or status expected to have the decency to slip quietly from sight’ (*TSAS*, p.154). Similarly, as tower boss Billy explains: in the eyes of the government ‘Swill are nothing because they do nothing because there’s nothing for them to do’ (*TSAS*, p.45). Individual identity and worth are predicated on positions of employment and social class within an economic structure that is no longer sustainable, and which reduces individuals to a faceless mass to be managed and controlled.

In contrast, the narrative journey of the protagonist is constructed in opposition to this hegemonic uniformity and order. They act out against their prescribed role,

creating a counter-narrative of resistance which attests to the existence and value of the individual and demonstrates their capacity to change the world around them. As mentioned before, the dystopian protagonist is typically already a member of the imagined society, immersed in its machinations and its culture. However, far from being the ideal citizen, the protagonist often feels alienated from the society around them. This sense of disaffection sometimes exists from the beginning of the narrative, or develops as the result of the discovery of a forbidden object, or an incident or meeting with another character. These feelings of dissatisfaction or curiosity lead the protagonist into a process of critical reflection and education that results in a disillusionment with his/her apparently perfect society, a journey which creates a counter-narrative of resistance that challenges the values of the hegemonic order and forms the narrative focus of the dystopian novel. This resistance may be private and individual (for example, in the form of a kept, forbidden object or the writing of a diary) or it may be collective and public (as part of an underground resistance movement). In the case of a first-person narrative, the act of narration itself can stand as a form of resistance to the hegemonic dystopian order, often made more concrete by its recording in a journal. The motif of a journal or diary is a common feature of dystopian literature, especially in those representing authoritarian dystopias. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four* Winston keeps a diary that allows him to express his hatred of Big Brother and his suspicions of the government's rewriting of history, while in *A Journal of the Flood Year* (1993) Fawke's journal allows him to record the encroaching water that the sensors fail to detect, and which the government thus refuses to acknowledge. These records challenge the hegemonic narratives of their dystopian societies. Consequently, language plays a central role in the counter-narrative of many dystopian texts, which often portray societies where the use of language, especially written language, is strictly controlled or forbidden. As Baccolini observes, when the protagonist does use language 'it means nothing, words having been reduced to a propaganda tool'.[103] A reclamation of language becomes one method of reasserting the self. By refusing his/her predetermined role, the protagonist demonstrates an ability to resist the hegemonic order through the possession of

[103] Raffaella Baccolini. '"It's not in the womb the damage is done": Memory, Desire, and the Construction of Gender in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*', *Le trasformazioni del narrare*, (ed.) E. Siciliani et al. Brindisi, (1995), pp.293-309, (p.295)

individual agency. Regardless of the form this resistance takes, for critics such as Baccolini and Moylan 'the construction of a narrative of the hegemonic order and a counter-narrative of resistance' is one of the key characteristics of dystopia as a literary genre.[104]

Importantly, this conflict is characterised as one that takes place between the individual experience and the collective establishment. The traditional dystopian novel therefore appeals to the liberal ideals of individualism, autonomy, and self-determination. It is significant then that the narrative of the dystopian novel is often written in the first-person or as a third-person narrative focalized through a first-person perspective. The narrative invites the reader to identify with the protagonist and it is through the protagonist's perspective that the dystopian nature of the society is established and the negative elements identified and explored. Consequently, while the nature of the portrayed society or space as utopian or dystopian may vary according to the reader's external judgement, the dystopian genre is less ambiguously characterised by the way in which the narrative provides a perspective on this society. This narrative prioritises the experience of the individual protagonist and communicates their alienation through the use of a restricted viewpoint and limited knowledge. In other words, the reader's experience and knowledge of the dystopian society is restricted to the protagonist's own experience and knowledge.[105]

This primacy of individual experience is essential to challenging the hegemonic order of the dystopian society. In these societies, citizens are often encouraged to mistrust their own perceptions in favour of an unquestioning belief in the state. A memorable example is the motif of 'two plus two equals five' in *Nineteen Eighteen-Four*:

> The hypnotic eyes gazed into [Winston's] own. It was […] something that penetrated inside your skull, battering against your brain, frightening you out of your beliefs, persuading you, almost, to deny the

[104] Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (eds.), 'Introduction: Dystopia and Histories', *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1-12, p.5

[105] Such a narrative perspective is not entirely unique to the dystopian novel. The novel as a liberal form has arguably always been preoccupied by the self. However, the dystopian text's rejection of omniscient narration and its focus on the alienation of the individual reflects the particular preoccupation with inner consciousness and individual subjectivity which characterises literary modernism in the first half of the twentieth century.

> evidence of your senses. In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it […] If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable – what then? (*NEF*, 91-2).

If the world is only knowable through the mind, then the Party's ability to control the mind means they effectively control the world. In protest, Winston asserts '[f]reedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows'.[106] Winston makes a claim to the truth of his individual experience in order to defy the control of Big Brother. In classic dystopian narratives, the catalyst for resistance or rebellion often hinges on something that exists beyond the control of the totalitarian state. In particular, the natural environment gives the protagonist recourse to a world external to the dystopian society that is accessible and knowable through their own sensory experience, allowing them to confirm the value of their selfhood. Arguing for the importance of nature in Orwell's writing, Sandison argues that 'Nature, in the sense of the surface of the earth, is *real*. Its reality is conveyed to the individual through his senses and in precisely this commerce is his personal identity confirmed'.[107] As Winston asserts 'The solid world exists, its laws do not change. Stones are hard, water is wet'.[108] Similarly, in *We*, it is his travels over the Green Wall that lead D-503 to an alternate sense of identity, while in *Brave New World*, Bernard Marx travels to the sea because it 'makes me feel as though […] as though I were more me, […] More on my own, not so completely a part of something else' (*BNW*, p.78). Furthermore, argues Sandison, 'on the evidence of sense operating in nature the entity of the self exists and is able to make personal judgements and establish personal values'.[33] In other words, it is through the interaction between external nature and the individual that a sense of self and agency is established and freedom of the mind is developed. In comparison to the superficial neoliberal freedoms of market opportunity and consumer culture outlined above, the freedom expressed here by Winston is the ability to believe something that fundamentally challenges the hegemonic order.

[106] Ibid., p.93
[107] Alan Sandison, *The Last Man in Europe: An Essay on George Orwell* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p.10
[108] Ibid.

Winston's defeat at the end of the novel is accompanied by his acceptance of O'Brien's statement that there is no nature external to Big Brother's control. Denied contact with a reality external to the totalitarian state, the citizen is deprived of their ability to think and thus their individuality. Interestingly, this loss of agency to a despotic government is associated with industrial themes of mechanization as the urban environment seems to reduce the individual to a cog in the machine of society. The protagonist's resistance is therefore an assertion of their individuality and agency, as well as of a reality verifiable through the senses.

In many of the totalitarian societies represented in fiction, knowledge of the past is prevented or history is edited to comply with and support the hegemonic narrative of the ruling government. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, history is continually re-written as alliances change and government workers fall out of favour, and evidence that disagrees with the current version is destroyed. Without any physical proof that the world ever existed otherwise, citizens are unable to find evidence that society has existed any differently. In some dystopian narratives, remnants or photos from the past provide the evidence which cause the protagonist to question their society. In *Swastika Night*, the photo of Hitler attests to the existence of an alternative narrative, depicting him not as the godlike, mythological hero who is celebrated in the Nazi-inspired totalitarian society, but as a small, ordinary man. This discovery causes the protagonist Alfred, an Englishman living under the German Empire, to question the history he has been taught and sets him on a path to resistance and rebellion. Yet, where no physical alterity is possible, memory often serves as a space of resistance within the dystopian narrative. 'Through memory and recollections', argues Raffaella Baccolini, 'the dystopian citizen returns to past times and culture, but he also strives for a better future by imagining to be free. Memory of the past and desire both for the past that is gone and for a better future are inseparably linked'.[109] In many dystopian narratives it is the memory or knowledge of how society used to be that allows the protagonist to imagine a society different to the one they live in presently. Referencing the work of Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, Ivan Stacy argues that when confronted with totalitarian regimes '[b]earing witness, through an act of narrative, is therefore an act of resistance

[109] Raffaella Baccolini, 'Journeying Through the Dystopian Genre: memory and Imagination in Burdekin, Orwell, Atwood, and Piercy', *Viaggi in Utopia* , (eds.) R. Baccolini, V. Fortunati and N. Minerva (Ravenna: Longo, 1996), pp.343-357, (pp.343-344)

against this destruction of memory […] Witnessing is only completed when experience is transmitted through narration'.[110] When this memory is written down it becomes physical evidence of something outside the hegemonic government narrative, which is another reason why the act of reading and writing is often forbidden in the dystopian society.

Yet as Baccolini recognises, where the act of remembering does take place there is a tension between memory as an act of resistance, and as a retreat into nostalgia. Winston's memories and dreams of the 'Golden Country' and his idealisation of the maternal female figure may provide him with a source of hope and resistance, but they are idyllic and romanticised. As a result, argues Baccolini, 'there is no safety or escape in it for us, because it is that very past that has created the dystopian future'.[111] In contrast, in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* Offred's memories of the past may be positive sources of hope, but they are also coloured by the initial signs of the dystopian society in which she now lives. While Winston seems to retreat from the present through memory, Offred's act of remembrance seeks to understand how the present came to be. Significantly, this concept of resistance through memory is also intertwined with the notion of individual identity. Emphasising the primacy of the individual experience in his study of the novel, Ian Watt argues that personal identity is 'an identity of consciousness through duration in time; the individual was in touch with his own continuing identity through memory of his past thought and actions'. Quoting Hume, he continues '"Had we no memory, we never should have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person". Such a point of view is characteristic of the novel'.[112] Consequently, memory forms a space from which the protagonist can form a sense of self and identity apart from the one they have been given by the dystopian society they live in.

Yet although many of these same methods of resistance remain common features in the post-1970s dystopian novel, the hegemonic forces that they oppose have become less static and identifiable. As already outlined in Part One, whereas the source

[110] Ivan Stacy, 'Complicity in Dystopia: Failures of Witnessing in China Mieville's *The City and the City* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 13.2 (2015), 225-250, p.226
[111] Baccolini, 'Journeying Through the Dystopian Genre', p.352
[112] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, p.21

and expression of oppressive power is much more visible in the totalitarian state, in the neoliberal dystopian society the protagonist often finds it much harder to recognise the source of hegemonic control, and consequently more difficult to forge a narrative of resistance. This difficulty is compounded with the introduction of a more ecologically informed approach which introduces environmental issues which are closely interwoven with other social and political factors. Indeed, protagonists in these narratives, although portrayed as experiencing feelings of dissatisfaction with or alienation from the world around them, are often represented as having limited awareness of these neoliberal structures of power and their relationship to a rapidly deteriorating environment.

Interestingly, many of these narratives locate their protagonist within the economically-mobile and privileged population of this society, rather than with the oppressed poor. Although writing from the perspective of the dispossessed may produce a more obvious and straightforward critique of the economic imbalance present in the neoliberal society, the authorial decision to do otherwise is important because it allows the author to craft a more complex critique of the ways in which neoliberal ideology asserts its control. Writing about Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, Vials argues that the novel 'gives us the perspective of those reared in the affluence of the Compounds, and it does so in order to show how an investment in relative privilege can create consent for a loss of political rights'.[113] In other words, the author demonstrates how the wealthy are equally subjugated within this society, although it is a different form of oppression, and that it is precisely the accumulation of wealth and other privileges that allows this subjugation. Such privilege results in the protagonist's complicity in the perpetuation of neoliberal capitalist systems, and in the resulting environmental damage and exploitation. It is interesting to note that Orwell's Winston, Huxley's Bernard, and Zamyatin's D-503 are similarly situated in more privileged social positions, working in roles that support the authoritarian powers of the state. For example, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is Winston's job in the Records Department which reveals the manipulation of history carried out by Big Brother and provokes Winston's dissent. Meanwhile, in *Brave New World,* Bernard's identity as an alpha both gives him a more critical perspective on society unavailable to the lower

[113] Vials, 'Margaret Atwood's Dystopic Fiction and the Contradictions of Neoliberal Freedom', p.246

castes, and tempers his desire to rebel through his social privilege. Positioning these characters within the upper echelons of society gives them greater access and perspective on the power structures of their dystopian societies, and consequently generates more nuanced forms of critique.

Consequently, this complicity is not always an unconscious submission to cultural and economic forces. In these novels the reader is presented with citizens who *consciously* preserve a level of ignorance with regards to social, political, or environmental concerns in order to continue a comfortable existence and avoid feelings of guilt or responsibility. Meanwhile, they make full use of and enjoy the conveniences and consumer pleasures available to them, drowning their feelings of discontent through the cheap and easy satisfaction of all their superficial and immediate desires. This human weakness is apparent in both Jimmy the Snowman from Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* and Maggie Gee's Saul from *The Ice People*, who are prime examples of flawed dystopian protagonists. In fact, both of these characters observe examples of resistance, but do not take part themselves until they are caught up in actions beyond their control. They both fail to break out of their prescribed roles until the dystopian society is bought down by an external disaster. Instead, the counter-narrative they create is constructed through retrospection, a self-reflexive engagement which not only challenges the static structures of the present, but also those of the past. This formal concept of retrospective resistance will be considered in greater detail in Chapter Three. In other narratives, such as *The Sea and Summer* and *The Space Merchants*, the protagonist begins in a position of affluence and (un)conscious ignorance but is later bought face-to-face with the economic and social realities faced by the lower classes.

This ignorance of or indifference towards the environmental and economic forces which shape the dystopia is exacerbated by failures of communication. Breakdown of communication is a key theme in both neoliberal and ecodystopian fiction, occurring despite an increase and sometimes because of an increase in communication and media technology. The rapid development and popularisation of information technologies in the twentieth century created global communication networks, allowing more and more people to connect with the world around them. Referring to Raymond Williams's early study on the effects of television broadcasting, Jim McGuigan argues that 'the experience of "mobile privatisation", the simultaneity

of much greater actual and virtual mobility, on the one hand, with an increasingly cocooned, individualised and perhaps isolated social existence on the other hand, is a characteristic feature of modern life'.[114] This contradictory state has been exacerbated in recent years through the emergence of the internet and its mass accessibility through personal and mobile devices. In particular, the increasing simultaneity and interactivity of these communication technologies, such as Google Maps and social media, has created the concept of a humanity more closely connected than ever before. Pointing to IBM's 1990s 'small world' campaign, Susan Bryant argues that '[t]he term "small planet" seems intended to bring to mind a shrinking world—not in a literal sense, but in the sense that we feel "closer" to other people and places through the implementation of information and communication technologies (ICTs)'.[115] Similarly, Heise argues that the image of the 'Blue Planet', a photo of the Earth taken from orbital flight, was a major influence for Marshall McLuhan's creation of the concept of Earth as a 'global village'.[116] Yet while critics like Heise explore how such visions of global connectedness were employed to underline the limitations of our planet and to emphasise the interconnection between humanity and nature, the global discourse of corporations like IBM instead focus on market potential. These closer connections between people and places were presented as opening up new opportunities for trade as the world becomes more accessible with greater possibility for change.

Yet the narrative of the neoliberal dystopian novel challenges the common idea that such technological developments have necessarily improved global communication. In many of these ecodystopian novels society is often presented as having access to vast amounts of information via the internet and other computerised resources, however the protagonist is often separated from the real consequences of social inequality and environmental crisis by these same mediums.[117] In Atwood's

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[114] Jim McGuigan, *Neoliberal Culture*, p.127

[115] Susan Bryant, 'Communication and the Environment in the Age of the "Small Planet"', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 32.1 (2007), 55-70, p.57 http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1805/3120 [Accessed: 07/11/17]

[116] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.22

[117] This is not necessarily a new theme. In E.M. Forsters 'The Machine Stops', Vashti and her 'friends' trade recycled lectures on obscure topics, while the developed information and communication systems leaves them unable and unwilling to observe the world and its realities first-hand.

Oryx and Crake, the protagonist Jimmy and his friend Crake spend much of their free time as children watching violent and gruesome shows on the internet, sites like 'hedsoff.com' which 'played live coverage of executions in Asia' or sites like 'Shortcircuit.com, brainfrizz.com, and deathrowlive.com' which broadcast criminal 'electrocutions and lethal injections'.[118] However, the authenticity of these shows is repeatedly called into question: 'Crake said with digital genalteration you couldn't tell whether any of these generals and whatnot existed any more, and if they did, whether they'd actually said what you'd heard [...] these bloodfests were probably taking place on a back lot somewhere in California' (*OC*, pp.94-5). Only being able to view these images on a screen, the protagonist is distanced from such events, unable or unwilling to acknowledge their reality or relevance to their own lives. As Toby voices in *The Year of the Flood*, 'I knew there were things wrong in the world, they were referred to, I'd seen them in the onscreen news. But the wrong things were wrong somewhere else'.[119] Consequently, while the counter-narratives of characters like Winston and D-503 rely on direct experience with environments outside of the totalitarian society, in the neoliberal dystopia the primacy of individual experience is fundamentally undercut by these information technologies. Furthermore, nature can no longer act as an external site of opposition and resistance because interaction with nature is revealed to be mediated and commodified.

Susan Bryant, borrowing the phrase from Ursula Franklin, characterises this type of interaction as '"asynchronous" communication', as opposed to '[t]he face-to-face and other "real time" encounters' of '"synchronous" communication'. Bryant argues that:

> Experiencing daily life and human interactions in a manner unrelated to natural rhythms and time means losing a sense of the living earth, community, culture, and history. And [Franklin] argues that "sequence and consequence are intimately connected in the human mind; can one let go of sequence and maintain the notion of consequence, let alone accountability?" Indeed, while digital-age communication gives us

[118] Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Virago, 2004), p.95 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *OC*
[119] Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* (London: Virago, 2010), p.284 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *YF*

> flexibility and convenience, it may be an important component of a suite of practices that may be further disconnecting us from a sense of responsibility toward each other, let alone our planetary home.[120]

In other words, Bryant argues that the increase of digital communication technology is further disassociating human societies from their surrounding environment, and without this 'sense of the living earth', humanity is unable to appreciate the connections between individual actions and their global impact. This problem is particularly pronounced when facing the global consequences of climate change, consequences which vastly exceed the individual's experience.

The ecodystopian novel, with its emphasis on exploring the interaction between humanity and non-human nature, attempts to address these failures of communication. As noted earlier in the chapter, the dystopian narrative normally concentrates on an individual, relating the rebellion and journey of a unique protagonist who rises up against the status quo. The narrative is thus limited to and shaped by their perspective. However, the global scope of climate change and environmental decline challenges the capacity of the individual to perceive and comprehend its relationship with human society and human actions. Even when the action of the narrative is located within a single society or government, the forces that are interacting with the power structures of this society are dispersed across the globe. These limitations are not necessarily wholly negative. Indeed, the idea that global communication technology and space travel have allowed us to see the planet in its entirety, to fully understand it, is a deeply flawed notion with dangerous implications. As Timothy Clark argues: 'No matter from how far away or "high up" it is perceived or imagined, or in what different contexts […] [the Earth] is always something we remain inside and cannot genuinely perceive from elsewhere'.[121] Instead, the ecodystopian narrative works within the limitations of the individual's subjective understanding, encouraging an awareness of the global ecological networks that surround them while exploring this tension between an inside/outside perspective.

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[120] Bryant, 'Communication and the Environment in the Age of the "Small Planet"', p.65; Bryant quotes Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Toronto, ON: Anansi Press, 199), p.154

[121] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.33

One of the key ways in which ecodystopian novels address the limitations of the individual protagonist is through formal innovation, especially through the use of multi-perspective narratives, incorporating the experiences of several interrelated, yet diverse, characters into one plotline. This strategy appears in the capitalist dystopian novels of John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* and *Stand on Zanzibar*, but is more popularly adopted by the climate fiction of the 1980s and 90s. In works such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* trilogy (2004; 2005; 2007), and David Brin's *Earth* (1990), this strategy allows the author to observe and comment upon environmental changes from a wider perspective, and to demonstrate the interconnection between political, economic, cultural and environmental contexts. In particular, faced with the dispersed effects of global warming, multiple viewpoints allow a more considered portrayal of the varied manifestations of climate change in everyday life. Furthermore, this narrative strategy is important for combatting ideals of individualism, instead creating narratives that demonstrate how each individual is part of a greater network.

The use of multiple narrative perspectives is employed in some ecodystopian works, such as *The Windup Girl* and *The Sea and Summer*, where the viewpoints of several characters are interwoven. In Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, the narrative is divided between Toby and Ren, but the novel also provides a second perspective on Atwood's previous novel *Oryx and Crake* by retelling the events experienced by Jimmy from a lower-class viewpoint. In this way, sequels are used to introduce new perspectives, creating a complex account and critique of the events in both novels. Yet those ecodystopian novels which have a single protagonist have also found alternative ways to employ elements of multiplicity and fragmentation. Intertextuality often plays an important part in these novels, with references to other texts establishing important critical links and playing a role in the creation of a counter-narrative. Other novels create fragmented and non-linear narratives through temporal disruption, introducing a single protagonist who narrates between different time zones. Such narrative strategies help to complicate the discourse of the novel by creating a dialogue between these different parts of the text. For example, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Ice People* are novels which centre on the apocalyptic or catastrophic event, splitting the narrative into two timelines: before and after. The protagonist/narrator is one who has survived this catastrophe, which may take place suddenly (*Oryx and Crake*) or gradually (*The*

Ice People), and provides the perspective in both. Struggling to survive in a post-apocalyptic world, the narrator looks back into their past, recalling the events that led to their present moment. These narratives can thus be seen as combinations of the dystopian and apocalyptic genres. By employing the post-apocalyptic element of the survivor narrative, the author allows the protagonist to look back on the dystopian society, identifying and critiquing elements of which they were previously unaware or purposefully ignorant, giving them a chance to critique their own actions.

The conflicts of interest at play within these texts and the narrative strategies they employ characterise many ecodystopian novels as part of what Baccolini and Moylan have named 'critical dystopia':[122]

> By self-reflexively borrowing specific conventions from other genres, critical dystopias more often blur the received boundaries of the dystopian form and thereby expand its creative potential for critical expression. Drawing on the feminist criticism of universalist assumptions – fixity and singularity, and neutral and objective knowledge – and recognising the importance of difference, multiplicity, and complexity, of partial and situated knowledges, as well as hybridity and fluidity, the critical dystopias resist genre purity in favour of an impure or hybrid text that renovates dystopian sf by making it formally and politically oppositional.[123]

Such an approach suits the ecocritical nature of these novels. Ecocriticism challenges normative thinking about the environment, specifically addressing the perceived dichotomy between human and animal, culture and nature. Critical work on ecocriticism and ecocritical texts has focused on questions of scale and complexity, especially as the nature of climate change as a hyperobject and the question of the Anthropocene puts focus on partial and multiple knowledges. The formal aspects of critical dystopian texts, as opposed to the classical dystopian novel, complement and develop alongside the needs of an ecologically aware and critical approach.

[122] The term 'critical dystopia' was first introduced (but left undeveloped) by Lyman Tower Sargent in the 1990s. Drawing on Tom Moylan's evaluation of the 'critical utopia' in *Demand the Impossible* (1986), Sargent used the term 'critical dystopia' to describe those works of dystopian fiction which seemed to evade the classical definitions of the genre: 'The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited', *Utopian Studies*, 5.1 (1994), 1-37, p.9
[123] Baccolini and Moylan (eds.), 'Introduction', *Dark Horizons*, p.7

The way in which these critical dystopian texts are constructed also shapes the way narratives of hope and resistance are developed in these novels. In *The Sea and Summer*, the counter-narrative of resistance against the state initially seems to be taken up by the two Conway brothers. Rejecting their newfound poverty, they embark on efforts to rise back into Sweet society. Teddy passes demanding tests to enter the recruitment school for Police Intelligence, watched over by Captain Nikopoulos. Meanwhile, Francis uses his talent for mental arithmetic to gain employment with Mrs Nola Parkes, the owner of a small import-export firm who uses his skills for economic fraud. Consequently, the Conway brothers initially emerge as the potential heroes of the novel as their ambitions to make something of themselves appeals to the liberal ideals of individualism, autonomy, and ambition that often mark out the protagonist of the dystopian novel, and, indeed, the liberal protagonist of the novel in general.

However, in their efforts to rise from poverty, the boys are faced with the demands and limitations of the social order around them. This confrontation challenges their values and leads them to develop what Blackford describes as a 'responsible understanding of their world and day-to-day engagement with it'.[124] Rather than rebelling against the social order, Teddy and Francis learn to reconcile themselves to the economic and social circumstances that have formed society. During their journey the Conway brothers are further hindered by their own selfish humanity and pride which undermine their initial heroism and call their motivations into question. While their individualism and ambition may have initially characterised the two as heroic protagonists, as the novel continues these same liberal ideals are shown to be part of the profit-driven culture responsible for society's undoing, particularly in the case of Francis. His desire to escape the Fringe is driven by fear and selfish wants that centre on material wealth and comfort. Rather than rebelling against the system, he becomes part of it, selling his talent for personal gain and essentially forging his sense of identity and self-worth from his economic value as a human calculator.

While Francis demonstrates how selfish rebellion only serves to reintegrate him into society's corrupt economy, Teddy undergoes a re-education in which he is made to confront his own selfishness and ignorance. Through this education, Teddy is

[124] Russell Blackford, 'The Rough and the Roughs', *Chained to the Alien: The Best of Australian Science Fiction Review*, (ed.) Damien Broderick (California: The Borgo Press, 2009), pp.73-81, (p.74)

able to form a more responsible engagement with his society and its politics, leading him to a potentially redeeming path of working towards a better society. He becomes one of Nick's 'New Men': 'people who do what they can instead of sitting on their arses waiting for time to roll over them' (*TSAS*, 356). Although this endeavour may at times confront him with unanswerable ethical conundrums, it demonstrates the point that only by being aware of the realities and details of the world around you can you build a more positive vision of the future. Consequently, Turner's choice to present his dystopian future through the first-person perspectives of characters arguably limited by their flawed personalities and local interests highlights the fact that these economic and environmental pressures do not simply change the structure of society, but demand a radical shift in the values and ethics of humanity. In particular, the values of individualism and freedom are tempered in the ecodystopian narrative through the need to recognise a moral responsibility to human and non-human others. '[A]wareness and responsibility are the conditions of the critical dystopia's citizens' argues Baccolini, '[i]nstead of providing some compensatory and comforting conclusion, the critical dystopia's open ending leaves its characters to deal with their choices and responsibilities'. [125] In comparison to the classical dystopian narrative, the protagonist in the ecodystopian narrative must not only develop an awareness of the power structures around them, but must also take responsibility for the part they play in maintaining these structures. Indeed the narrative journey of the Conway brothers is one structured around education and accountability, with the open ending of the central narrative suggesting an ongoing engagement with the social and environmental issues in their society.

The ability to take responsibility not only for one's own actions, but for society in general, is a theme shared with John Brunner's *Stand on Zanizbar* and *The Sheep Look Up*, which represents a similar narrative journey towards responsibility. Observing that the world depicted in Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* is 'geared toward either dodging the issues or relieving the individual from any sense of responsibility for what is happening to him and the world he lives in', Stephen H. Goldman comments that for Brunner, 'man must take responsibility for himself *and* his race' and '[i]f there is ever to be a future for mankind, than acting as a man, not as a rat, is

[125] Baccolini, 'The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction', p.521

a prime prerequisite for assuring that future'.[126] Yet Goldman's assertion that '[m]ankind's future is at stake here because individuals refuse to act as *humane* beings' suggests a distinctly anthropocentric form of moral responsibility which is furthermore viewed as an innate human characteristic.[127] Although this expression of humanism addresses the social division and apathy present in the ecodystopian society, it supports a concept of human exceptionalism that has become problematic in recent ecocritical debates. Andrew Baldwin suggests how the ontological destabilization produced by climate change as something that exceeds human understanding has triggered a 'crisis of humanism': 'a condition of anxiety that results when the foundational tenets of humanism seem no longer tenable'.[128] Presenting the concept of climate migration 'as a construct whose purpose is to stabilize the human', he argues that discourses of humanism are limiting and even false when faced with the more complex systems produced by climate change.[129] Significantly, while later ecodystopian texts continue to appeal to humanist values of responsibility and care central to earlier texts, these values are complicated by the introduction of a posthumanist ethics which questions the centrality of the human.

Within the ecodystopian novel, discourses of individualism are thus undermined by the necessity of understanding the threat of climate change as a global and socially-complex issue, while the values of humanism are challenged by the question of formulating an appropriate ethical response. The need to foreground humanity's inadequate and irresponsible reaction to environmental decline leads the ecodystopian novel to challenge the traditional ideologies and values which the dystopian genre conventionally supports. The result is a questioning of human identity and a conflict between the value of individual freedom and the need for social responsibility and limitations in tackling pressing environmental issues. Consequently, the ecodystopian novel can be seen to have a different approach towards effecting change than earlier dystopian fiction, appealing to different values that often conflict with individual human interests.

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[126] Stephen H. Goldman, 'John Brunner's Dystopias: Heroic Man in Unheroic Society', *Science Fiction Studies*, 5.3 (1978), 260-270, p.262
[127] Ibid., p.263.
[128] Andrew Baldwin, 'Climate change, migration, and the crisis of humanism', *WIREs Climate Change*, 8 (2017), 1-7 https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.460 [Accessed: 01/06/2018], p.2
[129] Ibid., p.3

PART THREE: THE FUNCTION OF DYSTOPIAN FICTION

This disruption of the traditional values and ethics of the dystopian novel has implications for the final aspect which defines the dystopian genre: its function. In other words, what is it that the dystopian novel as a form of narrative and a genre of fiction is designed to do and to achieve? Significantly, it is around this question that the division between utopia and dystopia, is commonly marked. Dystopias are often referred to as the opposite of utopia, the nightmares as opposed to the dreams of the future. While utopian texts are characterised as expressions of hope which portray visions of prosperity and reflect on humanity's best characteristics, dystopian novels are characterised as expressions of pessimism and despair, reflecting on human greed, corruption, and power in various worst-case scenarios. Yet, as this chapter has already demonstrated, dystopias are not solely defined by their fears for the worst. In fact, such a characterisation is another element that has led to confusion in defining the dystopian genre, with critics such as Serban Dan Blidariu arguing that 'the genre of dystopia has in the end more to do with presenting a world where hope is almost extinguished regardless of the political or natural cause of the situation'.[130] However, as this final section will explore, hope can be present in dystopian fiction to varying degrees. Significantly, although dystopia is often referred to as the opposite of utopia, the majority of utopian scholars locate the dystopian novel *within* the utopian imaginative project. Lyman Tower Sargent, for example, asserts that 'dystopia has been the dominant form of utopianism since around World War 1'.[131] Although their content may vary considerably, a consideration of the function of utopian and dystopian literature quickly reveals their similarities. Consequently, this final section considers the ways in which the dystopian novel is understood as an expression of utopianism, using this relationship to further define the dystopian novel, and its differences from utopian and anti-utopia literature.

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[130] Serban Dan Blidariu, 'Inheritance after Apocalypse: the Dystopian Environment', *Altre Modernità/Otra Modernidades/Autres Modernités/Other Modernities*, 9 (2013), 53-65, p.55
[131] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'Do Dystopias Matter?', *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the page, on screen, on stage,* (ed) Fátima Vieira (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p.10

In her appraisal of Bloch's approach to utopia and his focus on function as its defining characteristic, Ruth Levitas puts forward five functions of utopia, four from Wayne Hudson's *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (1982) and one of her own: 'its *cognitive function* as a mode of operation of constructive reason, its *educative function* as a mythography which instructs men to will and desire more and better, its *anticipatory function* as a futurology of possibilities which later become actual, […] its *causal function* as an agent of historical change' and 'its expressive function, as an articulation of dissatisfaction'.[132] Rather than a list of separate features, Levitas identifies these functions as facets of a unified 'positive function of effecting transformation' which characterises the utopia.[133] If the dystopian novel is to be considered as part of the utopian project, it makes sense that it would fulfil many of these same functions, which indeed it does. This chapter has already detailed how dystopian texts present a futurology of possibilities designed to educate and instruct readers to be more critical of present trends in a desire to prevent negative futures. Perhaps more so than utopian texts, dystopian novels are an articulation of a dissatisfaction and suspicion of the present, designed to provoke positive change. The defining difference of course is that the dystopian novel uses a negative speculative future rather than a positive one in order to fulfil its purpose. The similarity in function supports the argument that dystopian fiction is a subgenre of utopian literature. The way in which dystopian fiction extrapolates present trends and speculates on possible future events has already been dealt with at length in this chapter, so here I want to focus on the educative or didactic function of the dystopian novel as well as the presence and role of hope in the text and its capacity to affect historical change.

The ability to enlighten the reader by bringing to light the dangerous trends and flaws in contemporary society is one of the core values of the dystopian novel, but how do we define this educative or didactic function? Recognising that '[t]he aim of the dystopia as a genre has often been didactic', Inger Anne Søfting argues that 'morality has played a central role'.[134] Of course, morality, or what is right, is not a

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[132] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.117 (italics in original); Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (1982; London: Macmillan, 1986), pp.18-19, quoted in: Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.117.
[133] Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.117
[134] Inger Anne Søfting, 'Between Dystopia and Utopia: The Post-Apocalyptic Discourse of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*', *English Studies*, 94.6 (2013), 704-713, pp.707-708

static value and in many of the earlier dystopian novels morality is embodied by a claim to individual freedom and expression. However, the morality of these values has become compromised in the neoliberal era by narratives of ambition and exploitation, and although they remain key values in modern society, the way they are obtained and expressed has become more complicated. These conflicts of interest play a central role in ecodystopian fiction, which often makes moral claims upon the responsibility of the individual as part of a collective. Rather than rebelling against limitations, the ecodystopian novel often asks its readers to consider the necessity of those limitations and to accept restrictions to their daily freedoms.

As explored in the second part of this chapter, the ecodystopian novel challenges individualist ideas, and in doing so not only proposes alternative strategies for resistance, but more importantly suggests radically different motivations for confronting these dystopian futures. The educative function of the dystopian novel, which, as Levitas puts forward 'instructs men to will and desire more and better', directs the reader towards a more ecologically-minded and holistic engagement with the issues of capitalist expansion and environmental decline. This approach challenges the narrative of human exceptionalism by introducing a specifically eco-centred morality where the desire for 'more and better' is not structured around ideas of human comfort and ease, but around the wellbeing of all the living things that inhabit the Earth.

Furthermore, dystopian novels fulfil an additional function to those of the utopia. The dystopian novel is designed to check the aspirations of the utopia, ensuring that in striving for a better world humanity does not accidentally bring about something worse. Critics such as Krishan Kumar highlight that the concept of dystopia is a reaction or response to utopia, arguing that '[d]ystopia is not so much the opposite of utopia as its shadow'.[135] Explaining a similar concept in more detail, Michael Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Prakash Gyan argue that '[d]espite the name, dystopia is not simply the opposite of utopia. A true opposite of utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone

[135] Kumar, 'Utopia's Shadow', p.19

wrong'.[136] The educative function of dystopian fiction can thus be understood to include a sceptical or critical perspective on expressions of utopian hope, a warning against utopian hubris.

This process of education is not an isolated function, but feeds into the causal function, what Levitas describes above as an 'agent of historical change'. For many critics, the genre of dystopian fiction is thus designed to act as a catalyst and generate motivation towards action and change. Jaap Verheul argues that 'dystopian predictions not only serve as social warning signals, but are construed as appeals to radical action and intervention'.[137] Similarly, Lyman Tower Sargent insists that 'a defining characteristic of the dystopian genre must be a warning to the reader that something must, and, by implication, can be done in the present to avoid the future'.[138] Consequently, to present the reader with an inevitable future which cannot be changed seems counter-productive to the function of the dystopian and utopian genres as outlined above. The existence of this potential for intervention, the potential to change the history of the future, is understood in the concept of hope, and, as Fátima Vieria, argues, '[d]ystopias that leave no room for hope do in fact fail in their mission'.[139] They are, in other words, bad dystopian texts. In fact, Moylan argues that such texts would not be considered dystopian. Instead they are examples of anti-utopian fiction:

> at one end of the spectrum a dystopian text can be seen as *utopian* in tendency if in its portrayal of the "bad place" it suggests (even if indirectly) or at least stimulates the potential for an effective challenge and possibly change by virtue of human efforts (what Raymond Williams understood as "willed transformation"). At the other end, it can be deemed *anti-utopian* if it fails (or chooses not) to challenge the ideological and epistemological limits of the actually existing society.[140]

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[136] Michael Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Prakash Gyan, *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p.1
[137] Jaap Verheul (ed.), 'Introduction', *Dreams of Paradise, Visions of Apocalypse* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2004), p.2
[138] Lyman Tower Sargent, 'The Necessity of Utopian Thinking: A Cross-National Perspective', in *Thinking Utopia Steps into Other Worlds*, (eds.) John Rusen, Michael Fehr, and Thomas W. Reiger (New York: Berghahn, 2005), p.3.
[139] Fátima Vieira, 'The Concept of Utopia', *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, (ed.) Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.3-27 , p.17
[140] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, p.156

The sub-genre of anti-utopia therefore specifically critiques the concept of or desire for utopia, suggesting that such a state is impossible and, indeed, undesirable. Although it shares many characteristics with anti-utopia, the dystopian vision in contrast can be understood as a negative expression of utopian hope; a frightening vision designed to act as a warning to its contemporary audience. As Sargent argues 'the message is also quite clearly, it does not have to be like this. And to me this is the important point'.[141] Even in the more pessimistic of dystopian texts, if resistance and dissent exists and there is a possibility that such a future could be prevented, then this space offers the potential for positive social action.

Dystopian narratives therefore sit between the utopia and the anti-utopia. They are both more pessimistically critical than the utopia, but less cynical and closed than the anti-utopia, embodying a negotiation between hope and despair. Bringing together definitions of the dystopian text from critics such as Baccolini, Suvin, and Baggesen, Moylan argues 'we can examine a dystopia in terms of its narrative and counter-narrative structure to track the manner in which its textual novum generates internal innovation in and through its narrative trajectories and ending'.[142] The ways in which this conflict between narrative and counter-narrative is negotiated and realised consequently characterises the text as either an open dystopia which 'retains a utopian commitment at the core' or a closed dystopia which 'abandons the textual ambiguity of dystopian narrative for the absolutism of an anti-utopian stance'.[143] Significantly, Moylan argues that dystopian works do not fit neatly into these boxes, but range between the continuum of these two stances. Consequently, dystopian, utopian, and anti-utopian novels are not separated by a clear-cut line and some novels will demonstrate some overlap between these categories. An example of Moylan's 'closed dystopia' would be Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. While this novel is often described as a dystopian text, it is also arguably an anti-utopian novel because neither the modern, regulated city of London nor the Savage Reservations offer an attractive choice to the reader. While both protagonists, Bernard and John, are able to recognise

[141] Sargent, 'Do Dystopias Matter?', p.12
[142] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, p.156
[143] Ibid.

the flaws in their societies and voice their dissatisfaction, they fail to achieve any sort of viable resistance because they are too caught up in their private desires and fears.

At the other end of the scale, Baccolini and Moylan posit the existence of a subgenre of critical dystopia, where ‘the ambiguous, open endings of these novels maintain the utopian impulse *within* the work’, in contrast to the more classical dystopian texts where this hope often lies outside the text.[144] For critics like Baccolini, this form of critical dystopian narrative, prevalent in feminist dystopian fiction, ‘challeng[es] the traditional expectations that dystopian science fiction must end tragically’ and ‘also open[s] spaces of resistance and maintain[s] the utopian impulse within the story’.[145] Many later examples of dystopian texts demonstrate this ‘critical’ or ‘open’ characteristic, where resistance against the dystopian society plays a key narrative role and continues beyond the novel’s conclusion. Examples include Chang-rae Lee’s *On Such a Full Sea*, which plays with the concept of the first-person narrator and perspective in presenting several different societies, each of which could be considered utopian and dystopian, and constructing a narrative of resistance that is never voiced, only reported. In other narratives, efforts to construct a more utopian society form part of the dystopian world. In Margaret Atwood’s *Maddaddam* trilogy, where the dystopian society is dissolved after a man-made virus wipes out humanity, the preservation and continuation of the ‘God’s Gardeners’ community provides an alternative to the neoliberal, capitalist society that existed before. Importantly, Moylan emphasises that ‘critical dystopia’ is not a separate genre: ‘That the recent dystopias are strongly, and more self-reflexively, “critical” does not suggest the appearance of an entirely new generic form but rather a significant retrieval and refunctioning of the most progressive possibilities inherent in dystopian narrative’.[146] Consequently, the critical dystopian novel can be seen as a renewal of the utopian spirit that lies at the heart of the dystopian vision.

Identifying hope and potential for action as central to the dystopian project, this study will analyse different aspects of this function throughout the following

[144] Baccolini and Moylan, ‘Introduction’, *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, p.7
[145] Raffaella Baccolini, ‘Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katharine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler’, *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, (ed.) Marleen S. Barr (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp.13-34, (p.19)
[146] Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky,* p.188

chapters. In analysing the ideologies which structure the dystopian societies presented in the ecodystopian novel, specifically the neoliberal ecodystopian society, Chapter Two will address the conflict between utopian hopes and dystopian realities. It will identify how these narratives provide an 'educative' or sceptical approach to the utopian narrative which exists in our present. Chapter Three, with its focus on the journey of the dystopian protagonist, will look at the development of the counter-narrative in the ecodystopian text, evaluating how authors negotiate the conflicts between traditional liberal, humanist values and the ecological perspective introduced in these texts. Chapter Four considers the different embodiments of hope and difference in these novels. In particular, it recognises the recurring figure of the posthuman in ecodystopian narratives, and considers what significance the posthuman might have in addressing a world made hostile to humanity by climate change and environmental exploitation. Finally, in the conclusion I will come back to the notion of hope and change in discussing why the dystopian novel is a productive form for addressing the environmental crisis, differentiating it from the apocalyptic novel with which it is so often compared.

In conclusion, the dystopian genre is far more than the representation of the 'bad place' its name suggests, but instead demonstrates a collection of thematic, formal, and functional concerns which have evolved to meet new challenges throughout the late twentieth and twenty-first century. Importantly, genres are not rigid, and definitions must evolve as new texts emerge. In such a way, texts do not belong to genres as such, but work as responses to them, using and shaping existing conventions and evolving the genre. Although *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *We* are often used as the defining works of the dystopian genre, they are not the genre in itself, nor even perhaps the starting points for the development of this ongoing literary trend. Instead, the dystopian novel emerges from a more complex relationship with other literary forms, including the catastrophe and apocalyptic novel to which it is so often compared.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a flexible, working model for the dystopian narrative form, addressing some of the interpretative and taxonomical questions which complicate the characterisation of this genre, while also allowing space for different expressions of the genre. It is important to note that not all dystopian texts will fulfil all of the characteristics outlined here. Indeed, some of the

novels which are analysed in this study will deviate from traditional conventions in significant and often meaningful ways, challenging the expected narrative structure of the dystopian novel and its traditional focus on the individual. At the same time, some of the characteristics outlined in this chapter are more integral than others: not all texts that enact a social and political critical reflection on current society are dystopian, however texts that lack this function are not dystopian novels, at least, not good ones.

The introduction of environmental concerns and ecological perspectives challenges some of the traditional characteristics of the dystopian genre. However, as John Frow argues, '[t]exts work upon genres as much as they are shaped by them, genres are open-ended sets, and participation in a genre takes many different forms'.[147] The remainder of this study is thus devoted to looking at how the ecodystopian novel participates in the genre: how it is shaped by the literary heritage of the classical dystopian novel, and how it challenges it. Importantly, the ecodystopian novel, with its ecocritical perspective, challenges the human/nature dichotomy by confronting the reader with the fact that our society, our economy, and our culture are indivisible from the surrounding environment in which we live. It is the interdependence and interaction between these various economic, social, political, environmental and technological factors which produces the society of the ecodystopian novel. Consequently, these texts not only explore humanity's impact upon the environment, but also highlight the environment's influence upon humanity.

[147] John Frow, *Genre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.28

CHAPTER TWO: ANTHROCENTRIC HUBRIS

Expressing his discontent with the term 'Anthropocene', a concept used to describe the geological era shaped by human activity made popular in the critical work of the twenty-first century (particularly in the study of climate change fiction), Jason W. Moore instead draws upon an alternative term: the 'Capitalocene'.[148] Moore argues that no term 'captures the basic historical pattern modern of world history as the "Age of Capital" – and the era of capitalism as a world-ecology of power, capital, and nature'.[149] For Moore, 'Global warming is not the accomplishment of an abstract humanity, the *Anthropos*. Global warming is capital's crowning achievement. Global warming is *capitalogenic*'.[150] Consequently, blaming humanity as a species for the current environmental situation is not only wrong, argues Moore, but provides no basis for productively challenging the present crisis. In contrast, putting forward the concept of capitalism as a 'world-ecology', Moore argues that environmental exploitation and pollution should not simply be seen as the product of the steam engine or other carbon-driven technologies, but the consequence of a capitalist mode of understanding and organizing nature.[151] In other words, Moore seeks to shift the focus from industry to the set of social practices which produce it, placing capitalism at the centre of the debate about environmental crisis.

Likewise, in addressing the growing environmental and ecological interest expressed in the dystopian genre, I wish to focus on how authors often situate their narratives within a capitalist future society. Capitalism, in the sense of a commodification of goods and services and a drive towards growth and profit, is often presented as the driving force behind environmental destruction. In particular, this

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[148] For more on the concept of 'Anthropocene' in the context of ecocritical work, see Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015)
[149] Jason W. Moore, 'Introduction', *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, (ed.) James W. Moore (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), pp.1-11, (p.6)
[150] Jason W. Moore, 'Name the System! Anthropocene & the Capitalocene Alternative' (2016) <https://jasonwmoore.wordpress.com/2016/10/09/name-the-system-anthropocenes-the-capitalocene-alternative/> [Accessed 10/08/17]
[151] Jason W. Moore, 'The Rise of Cheap Nature', *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, (ed.) James W. Moore (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), pp.78-115, (p.85)

chapter explores the representation of the 'neoliberal dystopia', as defined in the previous chapter. Emerging in the 1970s and onwards, the neoliberal dystopia provides a different setting and context from the totalitarian or authoritarian dystopian societies depicted in earlier novels. This dystopian space is not only governed by a neoliberal economic market, but also by a neoliberal culture which incorporates capitalist values and relationships into the structure of society. Such a perspective seems particularly pertinent considering that growing environmental concerns in the second half of the twentieth century were accompanied by the renewal and popularisation of neoliberal politics in the 1970s and 80s under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Pro-market policies such as the sale of pubic assets to private companies and the removal of trade restrictions gave greater freedom to existing capitalist practices, initiating an era of corporate globalization.

Writing about the challenges which face an imaginative response to environmental crisis, Frederick Buell argues that

> [t]he rapid installation of growth-oriented, deregulated, entrepreneurial, free-market-fundamentalist, privatising, neo-social Darwinist capitalism […] together with the liberatory possibilities read into new GNRC (genetic, nanotechnological, robotic, and computer) technologies seemed, in their emergence onto the scene in the Reagan era, to change everything.[152]

For some, this emergence of a neoliberal economy and deregulated free market, alongside the ever-growing possibilities of scientific innovation, ushered in a new age of progress and potential for humanity. Even as environmentalists have attacked the dominance of these systems as culpable for the environmental crisis, others, like Julian Simon, have responded by claiming that such '[a]dvanced economies have considerable power to purify their environments' and that the 'human imagination can flourish only if the economic system gives individuals the freedom to exercise their talents'.[153] Rather than fearing environmental repercussions, this approach embraces environmental risk because it creates a disequilibrium that pushes technology and

[152] Frederick Buell, 'Global Warming at Literary Narrative', *Philological Quarterly*, 93.3 (2014), 261-294, p.278
[153] Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource 2* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p.255; 408

society to new levels of progress. The argument follows that this progress will in turn drive the innovation necessary to give humanity the tools it needs to solve the environmental crisis.

However, critics like Frederick Buell argue that, in reality, '[t]he result is a gothic predatory capitalism that keeps creating more and more damage and hence unsatisfiable risk-demands and then profiting off remedies (partial, always incomplete ones) all the way down'.[154] The neoliberal economy is thus understood as a form of 'predatory capitalism': an exploitative and self-perpetuating system without limits. Defining a similar concept of 'disaster capitalism', Naomi Klein explains how this risk-driven economy takes advantage of disasters (whether environmental disasters like hurricanes and flooding, or man-made disasters like warfare and governmental collapse) in order to initiate further neoliberal reforms, such as privatization or deregulation, to further business profits.[155] Furthermore, the environmental devastation argued by many to have been caused by capitalism's 'unsatisfiable' demands for growth and profit seems to do little to challenge this system. In the face of this 'predatory' capitalism, environmental problems like pollution, resource shortage, and climate change instead present potential opportunities for investment and invention. In what McCarthy and Prudham define as 'free market environmentalism', carbon emissions provide the basis of eco-taxes, but can be offset by 'sustainable' practices or traded against other resources.[156] Similarly, Foster, Clark, and York put forth a concept called 'the Midas effect', 'whereby economics, in addressing environmental problems, constantly seeks to transmute ecological values into economic ones'.[157] Capitalism therefore abstracts the reality of environmental crisis by incorporating it within the existing system, translating its different elements into values of cost or profit, and deferring the need for structural change.

Such exploitation has not gone unnoticed. While novels like John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* (1972) depict companies which create technologies (water filters, respirators) to profit off daily environmental pollution, other novels, like Ben Elton's

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[154] Buell, 'Global Warming at Literary Narrative', p.279
[155] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007; London: Penguin, 2008)
[156] James McCarthy and Scott Prudham, 'Neoliberal Nature and the Nature of Neoliberalism', *Geoforum*, 35 (2004), 275–283, p.279
[157] J.B. Foster, B. Clark and R. York 'The Midas effect: A critique of climate change economics', *Development and Change*, 40.6 (2009), 1085-1097, p.1088

This Other Eden (1993) and Nathaniel Rich's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (2013), satirise the potential for financial corporations and insurance companies to profit off the risk of environmental disasters themselves, transforming such disasters into a type of resource. In *This Other Eden*, environmental apocalypse becomes a major advertising campaign, with disasters deliberately engineered to further sales of the self-sustainable 'claustrospheres'. Meanwhile, in the worlds depicted by Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy (*Oryx and Crake*, 2003; *The Year of the Flood*, 2009; *MaddAddam*, 2013) and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* (2009), 'green' or sustainable technology has become a profitable market as corporations compete to create solutions (as Buell notes 'partial, always incomplete ones') to problems which were arguably caused by capitalism in the first place. Consequently, although the depictions of environmental degradation in these novels challenge the sustainability of capitalism, there is also a recognition of how environmental crisis can all too easily be absorbed into the capitalist system with the result that efforts to address environmental issues treat the symptoms, but not the root cause.

Similarly, techno-scientific developments become part of this risk narrative as new technologies produce unintended side effects, including altering the relationship between societies and their environments. Technology and science play an important role in the continuation of the capitalist narrative through their ability to support existing neoliberal practices (for example, facilitating the globalization of the neoliberal economy), but also through its promise to provide perpetual innovation in areas such as medicine and environmental engineering. Such innovation and technological development is held up as the solution to the world's problems, including starvation, pollution, and global climate change (although access to these technological solutions is complicated when they are commodified within a neoliberal system). For example, instead of changing or limiting the practices and industries responsible for producing pollution, developing technologies propose to provide a way of siphoning carbon dioxide from the air and sequestering it into carbon stores underground.[158] A recent article on 'Ecowatch' proclaims that '[w]e're on the verge of a new wave of environmental progress: a revolution in environmental protection and advocacy driven by new technologies […] Ensuring that 21st century problems are

[158] Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS): http://www.ccsassociation.org/what-is-ccs/

met with 21st century solutions'.[159] Such expressions of technological positivism support the concept of human exceptionalism, presenting humanity as a species independent of their environment and paving the way for narratives of technological evolution and space exploration. Indeed, when faced with environmental exhaustion, science provides capitalism with the promise of new resources through recycling technologies, genetically modified crops, and the colonization of other planets.[160] Consequently, technology is portrayed as having the potential to free humanity from its limitations, not just environmental ones but corporeal ones too. Cosmetic surgery allows doctors to sculpt the human body, robotic technologies produce artificial limbs, and genetic research hopes to one day reverse the process of aging. The resulting ideology of technological utopianism is therefore closely tied in with the neoliberal narrative of freedom and self-determination, pronouncing that such developments will allow humanity to create a better, more prosperous future.

The global development of neoliberal techno-capitalism has thus resulted in a form of anthropocentric hubris: a belief that humanity has the ability to transcend the physical limitations of the body and the planet, that intelligence and innovation will provide the solutions for each impending crisis, that profit and growth equal progress. Nature and the environment are rendered subservient to this prideful anthropocentrism and its utopian aspirations. It is from this ideology that the neoliberal dystopia emerges. Rather than the consequence of a single, extreme political ideology, the neoliberal dystopia is the product of a complex network of interlinking factors. At its core, it is centred on the concepts of 'predatory capitalism' and 'disaster capitalism' outlined above, and despite promoting the freedom and value of the individual the neoliberal dystopian society commodifies both people and non-human nature. Yet although environmental risk is often subsumed within the hegemonic ideologies of these societies, narratives of environmental crisis have the potential to undermine the separation of nature and humanity which underpins this anthropocentric ethos and so challenge the values and objectives of this neoliberal agenda.

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[159] Tom Murray, 'Environmental Innovation Will Transform Business as Usual', *Ecowatch* (30 March 2018) https://www.ecowatch.com/environment-business-sustainability-edf-2554760634.html [Accessed: 11/06/18]

[160] A prominent example is Elon Musk's SpaceX Project, which hopes to 'enable humans to become a spacefaring civilization and a multi-planet species by building a self-sustaining city on Mars' <https://www.spacex.com/elon-musk> [Accessed: 18/10/2018]

In the ecodystopian novel, the juxtaposition of some form of environmental crisis against the utopian narrative of the neoliberal society highlights the contradictions inherent in current economic and environmental practices and, as a result, questions the cost of humanity's faith in neoliberal capitalism and science. Whereas apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novels often challenge this form of capitalism by suggesting its ecocidal nature through portrayals of collapse and destruction, the ecodystopian novel instead portrays the way these ideologies persist despite environmental and social pressures, such as resource shortages and an increasingly unpredictable climate. As Peter Newall asserts: 'the fate of the planet's ecology is increasingly bound up with the fate of contemporary capitalism […] This means the contradictions that are intrinsic to capitalism become ever more apparent in the ecological and social systems with which the global economy interacts, upon which it is based and which "sustain" it'.[161] As Newall highlights here, the threat of environmental crisis works to emphasise the contradictions within techno-capitalist societies by presenting the capitalist economic system as interwoven with more complex social and ecological networks. In such a way, many ecodystopian novels are 'eco' in more than one sense, offering not only an ecocritical perspective but also an economic focus. By addressing the neoliberal ideologies that underpin a risk-driven, and techno-scientific capitalist culture these novels not only stress the unsustainability of our current economic models, but perhaps more importantly portray the ongoing consequences when this system is sustained, suggesting how these contradictions are already apparent in the present.

Drawing on the characteristics of the dystopian space discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter explores the nature of the neoliberal society as envisaged by the ecodystopian novel and evaluates the values and ideologies on which this society is based. The focus is therefore primarily the setting of the narrative; however, the chapter will also consider how certain formal elements such as imagery, recurring motifs, intertextuality, and narrative structure contribute to this construction of narrative setting and the critique it enables. This analysis begins by looking back to earlier dystopian and apocalyptic texts which critique capitalism's characterisation of nature as a resource, particularly through narratives of colonial conquest. Following

[161] Peter Newall, *Globalization and the Environment: Capitalism, Ecology and Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p.3

the development of these colonial themes in more recent fiction, this chapter then explores how neo-colonial narratives are used to explore networks of power and exploitation perpetuated by capitalist ideology within a neoliberal structure. It explores how the ecodystopian novel, with its focus on the interconnection between humanity and the environment, critiques the environmental and social consequences of the 'predatory' nature of capitalism, focusing on the key neoliberal values of 'competition', 'innovation', and 'growth' and the discourses of globalization, technological positivism, and progress which they produce.

The second part of this chapter turns to the concept of 'technological utopianism', and argues that the societies portrayed in these novels are often the dystopian result of such technological promise. By imagining the fulfilment of the utopian aspirations of scientific and technological development, the ecodystopian novel attempts to address the reality of such an achievement, and its impact upon society and its environment. Novels such as Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* and Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* question the role of technology within humanity's response to global climate change and explore key conflicts between environmental discourse and capitalist goals. In particular, they critique the discourses of human exceptionalism and technological positivism that have sustained the exploitation of the environment despite arguably also being the cause. Through this analysis, this chapter will address how these novels reject the ideals of progress, competition, and innovation often espoused by neoliberal ideology to instead emphasise how this system instead preserves the status quo and hinders humanity's ability to adapt to changing environmental circumstances. Consequently, this chapter will argue that the dystopian societies of these novels are portrayed as the outcome of the utopian goals of a technology-driven neoliberal ideology.

PART ONE: ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC IMPERIALISM

The system of capitalism has always required growth and expansion, prompting capitalist nations to look for new resources to claim and lands to plunder. Accordingly, one way in which authors have attempted to address the 'predatory' nature of capitalist globalization is through narratives of imperialism. Narratives of imperialism have always been central to science fiction, especially in the tales of space

exploration that imagined mankind expanding its frontiers to conquer and terraform new worlds. Linking the development of science fiction genre directly with colonial exploration, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay argues that '[t]he dominant sf nations are precisely those that attempted to expand beyond their national borders in imperialist projects'.[162] Similarly, Tom Moylan associates the colonial project with the development of utopian fiction. Introducing his monograph on the utopian imagination, he argues that the literary utopia '[d]eveloped within the context of early capitalism and the European exploration of the new world' and 'functioned within the dominant ideology that has shaped the capitalist dream'.[163] These arguments suggest that capitalism and colonialism, through their shared focus on exploration and innovation, played a significant role in informing the development of science fiction and utopian literature.

Consequently, it seems fitting that the emergence of catastrophe and proto-dystopian fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was equally accompanied by the questioning of imperialism and capitalist-driven colonial expansion, voicing suspicion and resistance in opposition to the initial utopian aspirations of capitalism and its increasing dominance. In tales of what Stephen Arata calls 'reverse colonization', alien invasions become critiques of the earlier space exploration narratives, foregrounding the brutality of colonialization and imperialist practices.[164] A famous example is H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1897), where the narrator, talking of the Martians, argues '[a]nd before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence'.[165] Such a statement sets up the narrative for an explicit comparison between the alien invasion and the historical colonisation of both non-human nature and other human societies, such as the invasion of Tasmania that Wells' narrator refers to here.

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[162] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr, 'Science Fiction and Empire', *Science Fiction Studies*, 30.2, (2003), 231-245, p.231
[163] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (1986; Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2014), pp.1-2
[164] Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: "Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, 33.4 (1990), 621–645, p.623; Arata also gives examples of 'reverse colonization' outside of science fiction, including Bram Stoker's gothic horror novel *Dracula* and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story 'The Sign of Four'.
[165] H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898; London: Penguin Books, 2005), p.9

The catastrophe and apocalyptic narratives of the 1960s and 1970s were also interpreted as either reflecting on the end of empire and the vulnerability of Western supremacy, and/or inviting criticism of the imperial project itself. Indeed, John Rieder has argued that 'the lexicon of science-fictional catastrophes might profitably be considered as the obverse of the celebratory narratives of exploration and discovery, the progress of civilization, the advance of science, and the unfolding of racial destiny that formed the Official Story of colonialization'.[166] Although not all catastrophe novels address imperial themes directly, they do often question many of the values on which such imperial interests are built.

Accompanying these end-of-empire narratives, we also see more environmental and ecological themes begin to emerge during this period. Such anxieties were not only the result of a growing environmental awareness, but also the realisation of the possible danger posed by the misuse of technology and science, embodied in the perceived threat of nuclear destruction after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. In novels such as John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951) and Charles Eric Maine's *The Tide Went Out* (1958), the dangerous and unforeseen consequences of technological developments cause the breakdown of civilisation. The critique of colonialism and anxiety about environmental practices are bought together in Thomas M. Disch's *The Genocides* (1965), which presents a scenario where giant alien plants have infested the Earth's surface. These giant plants reconfigure the planet's ecosystem, draining local resources and changing the climate, which leads to species extinction and the breakdown of human civilisation. The absence of the aliens themselves from the majority of the narrative and the focus on the strange plants themselves presents this conquest as primarily agricultural. Human beings are seen as no more than pests to be eradicated. Referencing Hartwell's characterisation of the aliens as 'bored agribusinessmen', Rob Latham argues 'the novel is a powerful critique of techno-scientific methods of accelerating and amplifying natural processes of cultivation. This mechanized agriculture amounts to the systematic "rape of a planet" that has far-reaching consequences'.[167] The narrative of alien colonialization is thus

[166] John Rieder, 'Science Fiction, Colonialism, and the Plot of Invasion', *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, 46.3 (2005), 373-394, p.374
[167] Rob Latham, 'Biotic Invasions: Ecological Imperialism in New Wave Science Fiction', *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan

used to critique the unnatural cultivation processes present in contemporary agricultural practices. Significantly, Disch's description of the silent landscape which results as a consequence of the aliens' eradication of Earth's biodiversity recalls similar descriptions in Carson's *Silent Spring*, which offered a scathing critique of just such practices.

Colonialism therefore has two aspects in these narratives: the appropriation and exploitation of resources, and the enslavement or eradication of the resident population. Of course, the two are sometimes elided. In *The War of the Worlds*, human beings provide a resource for aliens who collect and drain them. In fact, Moore argues that in the world-ecology of capitalism, the two *are* the same:

> capitalism was built on excluding most *humans* from Humanity – indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, nearly all women, and even many white-skinned men (Slavs, Jews, the Irish). From the perspective of imperial administrators, merchants, planters, and *conquistadores*, these humans were not Human at all. They were regarded as part of Nature, along with trees and soils and rivers – and treated accordingly.[168]

Moore therefore establishes capitalism as a key force behind colonial conquest, arguing that historical colonialization played an important role in the place of human beings and natural resources in the capitalist system.

While many of these earlier narratives were more apocalyptic in nature, the critique of nature as resource also lies at the heart of one of the first environmental dystopias to emerge at this time. Explicitly addressing environmental and ecological concerns, Ursula Le Guin's dystopian novel *The Word for World is Forest* (1972) employs a narrative of colonialization to critique the way in which humanity abuses natural resources and the people who depend on them. Colonial conquest is shown to lead to ecological destruction as habitats are torn apart in the desire to harvest resources and restructure the landscape to suit colonial needs. The narrative is set in a future where the Earth, stripped bare, has become a 'desert of cement'.[169] However the

University Press, 2014), p.85; references David Hartwell, 'Introduction' to Thomas M. Disch, *The Genocides* (Boston: Gregg, 1978), pp. v-xv (p. xiv).
[168] Moore, 'The Rise of Cheap Nature', p.79
[169] Ursula Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest* (1972; London: Gollancz, 2015), p.14 - Subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *WWF*

dystopia presented is not a human one. Instead, the narrative takes place on the alien planet of 'New Tahiti' where humanity has enslaved the local population of green, furred Athsheans in order to harvest the trees for wood. The project of colonialization is thus presented as both environmental and social, as both the Athsheans and their environment are exploited by the human forces. In the introduction to the text, Le Guin references the US invasion of Vietnam, stating that 'it was becoming clear that the ethic which approved the defoliation of forests and grainlands and the murder of non-combatants in the name of "peace" was only a corollary of the ethic which permits the despoliation of natural resources for private profit or the GNP' (*WWF*, 7). Like Moore, Le Guin identifies the key problem in both forms of violence as an ideology which reduces both nature and other human beings into either resources to be acquired, or obstacles to be eradicated.

Similar depictions of resource depletion and ecological imperialism can be found in later dystopian narratives, such as Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, where intertextual references to colonialism abound throughout the narrative. The narrative of *The Stone Gods* opens with the announcement that mankind is preparing to travel to and colonise a newly discovered planet named 'Planet Blue'. In a gesture to Europe's colonial history, Planet Blue is referred to as 'the new world' and the space ship constructed for the flight is named 'the *Mayflower*', presenting this act of space exploration as part of a longer history of colonialization.[170] In another quasi-parallel, the indigenous dinosaurs which inhabit the planet, are characterised as 'monsters' and are 'humanely destroyed' to make room for mankind (*SG*, 6). Furthermore, this imperialist mission to discover new worlds, both on Earth and beyond, is linked to the utopian promises of new lands: '*The new world – El Dorado, Atlantis, The Gold Coast, Newfoundland, Plymouth Rock, Rapanaui, Utopia, Planet Blue*' (*SG*, 8). These unexplored places embody hope for further expansion which is expressed in the utopian mode of a better future, but it is undermined when in a later chapter this new planet is revealed to be our own Earth, now polluted and exhausted.

In another link to the capitalist ideologies of the colonial adventure, the central protagonist, who appears in different guises in all four chapters of the book, is called Billie or Billy Crusoe, making an explicit link to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

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[170] Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods* (London: Penguin, 2008), p.7; 73 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *SG*

Characterising Crusoe as a figure who exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit of liberal capitalism, Louis James argues that '[i]nstead of being in communion with nature, Crusoe wishes to possess and exploit his environment'.[171] Crusoe shapes the natural landscape around him to create objects for his use and to improve his living conditions, setting up walls and fortifications that establish his mastery over the island. As *homo economicus* Crusoe exemplifies the anthropocentric nature of economic individualism. This spirit is very much in evidence in the society introduced in *The Stone Gods* as Billie explains that '[w]e are running out of planet and we have found a new one. Through all the bright-formed rocks that jewel the sky, we searched until we found the one we will call home. We're moving on, that's all' (*SG*, 4). The idea expressed here that one can 'run out of planet', characterises the planet as a useable and ownable resource at mankind's disposal, while the new planet is conceptualised as a space to be made habitable and fit for humankind.

However, Crusoe is also a pioneer figure who, argues Hicks, 'becomes a means of reckoning with the possibilities of radical environmental and social change, change once represented most vividly in Western culture though depictions of geographic travel and colonial encounters'.[172] Like Robinson Crusoe, the Billie Crusoe in *The Stone Gods* is a character who travels to new worlds and strange places, but instead of tales of individual ingenuity and construction, the encounter between Billie and these places is one which develops new forms of understanding and, importantly, love. Each reiteration of capitalist exploitation in the novel is thus met with the possibility of resistance and change, challenging the inevitability of capitalism's logic. Consequently, Winterson uses the Crusoe figure to explore new possibilities of interactions between old worlds and new worlds.

In contrast to earlier narratives such as Le Guin's, Winterson not only critiques the act of ecological imperialism, but more specifically reflects on the ideologies and capitalist logic that justify and motivate such actions. Although it is the value of wood as a resource that drives the colonial mission in *The Word for World is Forest*, characterising it as capitalist in its motivation for resource acquisition, the narrative is predominantly focused on the theme of environmental exploitation as a human rather

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[171] Louis James, 'Unwrapping Crusoe: Retrospective and Prospective View', *Crusoe: Myths and Metamorphoses*, (eds.) Lieve Spaas and Brian Stimpson (London: Macmillan, 1996), p.4
[172] Heather J. Hicks, *The Post-Apocalyptic Novel in the Twenty-First Century: Modernity Beyond Salvage* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.80

than an economic issue. The Athsheans in many ways stand as a personification for their world, and as citizens of the dystopia they stand as nature personified. In other words, it is the natural world that is the subject of dystopian oppression and destruction in the novel. Furthermore, the physical invasion of the planet is overseen by a human army acting for the global interests of planet Earth rather than a private corporation or business interest. The conflict is consequently simplified as a confrontation between humanity and nature.

In comparison, the commodification of Planet Blue in Winterson's narrative is presented as the result of capitalist competition and expansion. The world portrayed in *The Stone Gods* is divided into three regions: the Central Power, the SinoMosco Pact, and the Eastern Caliphate. The narrative centre is based in the Central Power, which can be read as a representation of current western society and is presented to us as the economically-dominant nation. The very fact that it calls itself the '*Central* Power' effectively marginalises the other regions. Although the Central Power is not presented as directly exploiting the other nations, its economic dominance is used to establish its political and ethical superiority in a way that marginalises and devalues the other nations. Having funded the large majority of the space mission, the Central Power now intends to claim the planet as its own, insisting that its commitment to democracy prevents it from sharing this new planet with the other nations and instead 'we'll leave this run-down planet to the Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact, and they can bomb each other to paste while the peace-leaving folks of the Central Power ship civilisation to a new world' (*SG*, 7). Based on ideas of entitlement and blame, such a sentiment reflects a neo-imperialist self-importance which the Central Power uses to justify their actions. However, in the first part of the novel Billie reveals that MORE, the dominant and aptly named conglomerate based in Tech City, 'is taking over the Central Power. MORE owns most of it, funds most of it, and has shares in the rest' (*SG*, 71). Winterson thus suggests that behind the face of the political government, the corporations pull the strings. In this future world, true power stems from the global economy. In fact, MORE intends to claim control of 'Planet Blue' which it intends to rule not by a democratic government or king, but by 'a Board of Directors' (*SG*, 74). In other words, global capitalism will quite literally be the governing body of this new planet. In the same way that the capitalist interests of 'the Company' drives the colonialist mission portrayed in Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899), the space mission to

colonialize the new planet in *The Stone Gods* is depicted as a business venture led by capitalist interests.[173]

While *The Stone Gods* presents an actual act of interplanetary colonialization, other dystopian narratives which emerged in response to the growth of neoliberal capitalism, such as Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy, do not present such explicit acts of colonial conquest, but instead focus on the neo-colonial nature of the everyday activities of corporations and businesses. In particular, such narratives emphasise the predatory nature of neoliberal capitalism through exploring the discourse of 'globalization'. Although this term has attracted a range of differing critical definitions and perspectives, globalization can loosely be understood as a movement towards greater international interconnection and interaction. In a cultural sense this might involve the dissemination and exchange of social trends, artistic values, and cultural phenomena, while in a political sense it describes multilateralism and the construction of transnational governing structures. Within an economic context globalization can be generally defined as an international movement to increase free trade through improved communication and deregulated markets, thereby distributing the benefits of technological and economic progress world-wide.[174] Of course, these different characterizations are not separate trends, but interrelated aspects of a wider movement.

Particularly in the economic sense, globalization can be understood as an expression of the neoliberal project, embodying the same key values of 'competition', 'innovation', and 'growth'. It also shares the same potential for exploitation and, with its focus on transnational expansion as corporate empires set out to colonialize new territories and populations, is often characterised as an extension of the imperialist ideology which drove historical colonialism. Furthermore, these corporations do so while proposing an argument of shared growth and prosperity, drawing on the rhetoric of political cooperation and shared social concerns found in other expressions of globalization. In the introduction to *Organizations, Markets, and Imperial Formations: Towards an Anthropology of Globalization*, Subhabrata Banerjee,

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[173] A very similar corporate mission to colonise a new planet is presented in a much earlier text *The Space Merchants* (1953) by Pohl and Kornbluth.
[174] For studies of the differing approaches to the concept of globalization, see Ursula K. Heise *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008) and Paul Hirst, Grahame Thompson, Simon Bromley, *Globalization in Question* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009)

Vanessa C.M. Chio, and Raza Mir argue that '[b]oth development and globalization have their roots in colonial histories […] Neocolonialism can be understood as a continuation of direct Western colonialism without the traditional mechanism of expanding frontiers and territorial control, but with elements of political, economic and cultural control'.[175] Instead of frontiers, businesses expand into new markets, competing for financial territories and cultural markets on a global scale. The competitive nature of neoliberal capitalism thus results in a form of economic and cultural neo-colonialism as primarily western-centred transnational corporations seek to monopolize the market.

However, such a change in focus has important ramifications for the way in which environmental exploitation is represented. Unlike the direct environmental pillage and extermination of resident populations represented in *The Genocides*, *The Word for World is Forest*, and *The Stone Gods*, the environmental destruction and neo-colonial relationships engendered by the globalization of corporate neoliberalism are often less direct and less visible. As explained in the introduction to this chapter, environmental risk and the exploitation of natural resources is assimilated within the hegemonic capitalist narrative, which is further interwoven with the neo-colonial exploitation of less developed countries. This neo-colonial relationship is incorporated and sometimes masked by legitimate economic systems. Furthermore, when ecodystopian narratives are located in primarily Western centres of developed economic power, this neo-colonial exploitation is often pushed to the periphery of the narrative leaving it to be gestured at, but never fully explored. Such a gesture is seen when, in *The Stone Gods*, Billie comments on the military action abroad to 'liberate our fellow citizens across the world' (*SG* ,157) and explains that surrounded by growing environmental crises 'Iran launched a nuclear attack on the USA' (*SG*, 158). Offering a critique of how the USA has used military intervention to promote its interests in the past, Winterson imagines how the bombs 'left the cities of the West as desperate and destroyed as the cities of the East where we waged our righteous wars and never counted the cost' (*SG*, 194). Yet these comments are largely scene-setting, and this war features little in the plot. Similarly, in *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood's

[175] Subhabrata Banerjee, Vanessa C.M. Chio, and Raza Mir, 'The Imperial Formations of Globalization,' in *Organizations, Markets, and Imperial Formations: Towards an Anthropology of Globalization*, (eds.) Subharbrata Banerjee, Vanessa C.M. Chio, and Raza Mir (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009), pp.3-14, (p.8)

sequel to *Oryx and Crake*, the unequal economic development of globalization is briefly gestured at in its representation of the Happicuppa Corporation. The description of its 'sun-grown, pesticide-sprayed, rainforest-habitat-destroying coffee products' and 'its treatment of indigenous workers' aims to reflect critically back on the predatory nature of similar corporations in our present reality; however, again it plays little role in the narrative (*YF*, 444). Although acknowledging the neo-colonial nature of capitalist globalization, these dystopian narratives are instead focused on confronting the oppressive nature of neoliberalism and its environmental consequences at home (within western economically-dominant nations), without paying much attention to how this society is supported through further oppression and environmental destruction abroad.

The global nature of neoliberal capitalism means that the dystopian society can no longer be thought of as a bounded, national space. Instead, it is produced through power structures and economic networks that criss-cross the globe, meaning that each example of a localised, dystopian space is the product of a greater, globalised system. Arguing that '[p]lace is thicker and more concrete than mere location', Val Plumwood introduces the concept of 'shadow places' to describe 'the many unrecognised places that provide the material support of self' beyond the singular, local place.[176] Plumwood argues that for any attempt to address the environmental crisis to be both effective and responsible, it must reach beyond ideas of local sustainability or self-sufficiency to address these global relationships. Taking Plumwood's argument and applying it to the ecodystopian novel, the implication is that to forge an effective and globally-inclusive critique, the ecodystopian novel must extend beyond the depiction of a singular or self-enclosed dystopian society. As Winterson's and Atwood's novels both demonstrate, although western settings allow a critique of neoliberal culture, what they do not do is provide sufficient space to represent the many 'shadow places' that support the dystopian society, and the consequences of globalization for less-developed countries outside the main power centres of the West.

In contrast, in his novel *The Windup Girl*, Paolo Bacigalupi re-orientates the often western-centred narrative of environmental exploitation by placing Bangkok, Thailand at the centre of his story. Drawing on the speculative world first outlined in

[176] Val Plumwood, 'Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling', *Australian Humanities Review*, 44 (2008), 139-150, p.144

Bacigalupi's earlier short stories 'The Calorie Man' (2005) and 'Yellow Card Man' (2006), *The Windup Girl* depicts a post-energy crisis society recovering from the strain of fossil-fuel exhaustion. This future world is one contaminated by pollution and altered by genetic engineering, where mutating diseases have decimated the agricultural industry and spread into the local population. Food has become a commodity, a tradeable and profitable resource, prompting the rise of western transnational corporations like UTex, PurCal, and HiGro who profit from this agricultural crisis by using genetic engineering to create new plants and food resources, which are then patented for a protected financial return. Thailand is presented as one of the few nation-states to have yet held out against these corporations, resisting exploitation through the preservation of its own independent and closely-guarded seedbank. Bacigalupi's remapping of the capitalist narrative allows a geopolitical exploration of the social and environmental consequences of neoliberal globalisation.

One of the novel's central questions is that of the nation state. In particular, its independence and its future when faced with the globalizing and exploitative nature of a western-dominated capitalist economy. In the novel, the government in Bangkok define Thailand's identity as a nation-state as dependent on its separation from the outside world. In order to preserve this independence it erects both physical and economic borders:

> As others were crushed under the calorie companies' heels, the Kingdom stood strong.
> *Embargo!* Chaiyanuchit had laughed. *Embargo is precisely what we want! We do not wish to interact with their outside world at all.*
> And so the walls had gone up – those that the oil collapse had not already created, those that had not been raised against civil war and starving refugees – a final set of barriers to protect the Kingdom from the onslaughts of the outside world.[177]

The neoliberal capitalist notion of the 'free market' is rejected by the Thai government as a form of assault by the calorie companies. Identifying the neo-colonial critique within the novel, Malisa Kurtz argues that for the Thai government in *The Windup Girl*

[177] Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl* (London: Orbit, 2009), p. 173 - subsequent references will be from this edition, abbreviated as *WG*

'the social cleavages that have been created by an information/global economy and [...] the consequences of uneven technological development translate to a form of neo-colonial rule'.[178] Indeed, it is the technological superiority and economic dominance of primarily Western transnational corporations which threatens Thailand's independence.

So far, Thailand has been able to maintain its independence through the work of its gene-hackers, who copy calorie company crops in a sort of agricultural piracy, and due to having a seedbank from which it can engineer its own crops to feed its population. Akkarat, the Trade Minister, describes the country's seedbank as 'our finest weapon' and 'the heart of us', underlining the practical and symbolic independence it represents (*WG,* 217). However, an undercover AgriGen employee named Anderson seeks access to Bangkok's seedbank. For Anderson, this seedbank is 'a treasure trove of biological diversity' and a 'gold mine' (*WG*, 125), which would allow his company to thrive. As an environmental resource, it represents the basis of political independence to Thailand, but is reduced to a potential profit by capitalist agents. The attempts to take control of Thailand and its resources form the central plot of the narrative, exercised through a mix of economic and environmental pressure. Agricultural plagues leave the population of Thailand undernourished, pushing the government towards seeking outside aid. However, it is suggested that the majority of agricultural plagues that have afflicted Thailand have been deliberate creations rather than accidental mutations, released by the transnational calorie companies in order to put pressure on independent states like Thailand. Such underhand tactics are not isolated: other countries 'like India and Burma and Vietnam all fall like dominoes, starving and begging for the scientific advances of the calorie monopolies' (*WG*, 5). This conquest is therefore viewed as a form of colonisation as technologically-weaker countries succumb to the economic rule of the calorie corporations.

Throughout the narrative, Anderson justifies his quest for the seedbank through the global capitalist ideology that '[c]ooperation benefits both parties' (*WG*, 329) and promises that '[a]ll we're interested in is a free market' (*WG*, 213). Indeed, according to the free-market economics of neoliberalist capitalism, state sovereignty over the

[178] Malisa Kurtz, 'A Dis-(Orient)ation: Race, Technoscience, and The Windup Girl', *Brown and Black Planets: The Politics of Race in Science Fiction*, (ed.) Isiah Lavender (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), pp.177-194, (p.180)

management and trade of resources, commodities, and capital must be surrendered to the global market where international competition between competing businesses will drive growth, control prices, and ensure maximum productivity. Such competition is claimed to work in the interests of all parties, with state interference only hindering this process. Furthermore, this process of globalization promises to share advances in industry and technology, helping less advanced nations by giving them the opportunity to participate in a global market. A similar justification is put forth by the 'General Technics' corporation in John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968) in the corporate takeover of Beninia, a small African state. Discovering that this worthless 'snake's-tongue scrap of land […] with neither skills nor natural resources to be exploited' could potentially provide a well-situated location for mineral processing, GT puts in place a programme of education and industrialisation framed as a 'revolution in domestic affairs' and 'a great future for Beninia'.[179] Their intervention is further justified as preventing a possible conflict following the impending retirement of the Beninian President.

Yet this possible conflict and the terrible poverty experienced in Beninia are both the result of previous colonial action. Beninia is described as 'one of the cruellest legacies of colonial exploitation, a country which owes its present gross overpopulation to an influx of refugees from tribal conflicts in adjacent territories and almost completely lacks the natural resources to support itself' (*SZ*, 85). Furthermore, although the intervention of General Technics may well be the only way to prevent a war over the Beninian state, the motivation for this act is based purely around the availability of cheap labour and economic profit. Despite talk about the mutual benefits of the corporate takeover, the planned programme of industrialisation and education overlooks how such changes could compromise the pre-existing peace and happiness of its society. Uneven technological and economic development leads to the domination of the global market by mainly Western corporations who can then use their dominant position to exploit the vulnerability of less developed nations for profit. Consequently, the global activities of powerful transitional corporations mirror imperialist patterns by attempting to undermine local economic protection.

[179] John Brunner, *Stand on Zanzibar* (1968; London: Millennium, 1999), p.21; 583 - subsequent references will be form this edition, abbreviated as SZ

The predatory nature of the neoliberal economy is made evident through Anderson's narrative in *The Windup Girl* as it becomes obvious to the reader that Anderson is happy to exploit Thailand for his own gain, musing that '[i]f he could just ascertain the seedbank's location, a raid might even be possible'. The fact that '[t]hey've learned since Finland' suggests that is wouldn't be the first time (*WG*, 125). Akkarat easily sees through Anderson's promises, refuting his claim of 'mutual interests' to insist instead that

> Your people have tried to destroy mine for the last five hundred years […] Ever since your first missionaries landed on our shores, you have always sought to destroy us. During the old Expansion your kind tried to take every part of us […] With the Contraction your worshipped global economy left us starving and over-specialised (*WG*, 216).

By making a direct link between historical colonisation and economic exploitation, the global advantages espoused by neo-liberal economics are thus confronted and shown to underpin a predatory and neo-colonial relationship between technologically-dominant governments and smaller, weaker societies. Therefore, Bacigalupi underlines that the capitalist system is merely an ongoing manifestation of the imperialist mission.

For critics such as Amitav Ghosh, this geopolitical and neo-colonial dimension is integral to debates about climate change and the Anthropocene, though often overlooked. He argues that the focus on capitalism as principally responsible for the practices that have led to the exploitation and disintegration of the natural world, though valid, obscures empire and imperialism as equally accountable. Yet while some narratives often align capitalist and imperialist goals, Ghosh suggests that '[w]hile capitalism and empire are certainly dual aspects of a single reality, the relationship between them is not, and has never been, a simple one: in relation to global warming, I think it is demonstrably the case that the imperatives of capital and empire have often pushed in different directions'.[180] Ghosh's primary example is Asia, a continent 'conceptually critical to every aspect of global warming' that plays the 'dual role of

[180] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p.87

both protagonist and victim'.[181] The way in which our understanding of industry and environmental pollution is shaped through the narrative of imperialism is summed up in *The Stone Gods* by Friday (another gesture to Robinson Crusoe), who explains that before the war

> we all knew we were frying the planet. The reason we didn't do it, in the rich West, was because India and China were never going to do it till they'd drained every drop […] We've been developing non-fossil-fuel dependent technologies but barely using them because they're more expensive than the old-fashioned heavy hitters of oil and coal. Pollution was still cheap. How could the West mend its ways when the developing and industrializing world was going to compete at any cost? (*SG*, 196).

Rather than working towards mankind's mutual benefit, Winterson, in a clear and scathing comment designed to reflect on our present society, underlines how capitalist ideals and competition between countries instead works towards our mutual destruction. Yet, through Billie, Winterson also makes clear that the responsibility for the environmental crisis is not equally shared and far from clear-cut: 'We made ourselves rich polluting the rest of the world, and now the rest of the world is polluting us', argues Billie, 'when we destabilised the planet it was in the name of progress and economic growth. Now that they're doing it, it's selfish and it's suicide' (*SG*, 37-8). While other characters in the novel are all too ready to blame the environmental problems on the industrializing East, Billie underlines how the West's attempts to enforce its environmental standards onto other nations inflicts further oppression upon less developed nations who rely on fossil fuels to compete in a globalized economy.

This tension is more extensively explored in *The Windup Girl*, where Bacigalupi seeks to demonstrate the conflicts that arise between national politics, capitalist globalization, and environmental stability. Nation states like Thailand are not only vulnerable to the pressures of unequal economic development, but are also disproportionately vulnerable to the environmental consequences of capitalist expansion. This vulnerability is emphasised throughout *The Windup Girl*, where the rising ocean that surrounds and threatens to consume Bangkok gives physical presence to the dangers of global warming. As the most visible border in the novel, the seawall

[181] Ibid., p.87; 92

is all that stands between Bangkok and its destruction. Present from the opening of the novel, the image of the seawall and the looming body of water behind it, becomes a central and recurring motif: ‘It’s difficult not to always be aware of those high walls and the pressure of the water beyond’, thinks Anderson, remembering the cities of ‘New York and Rangoon, Mumbai and New Orleans’ already swallowed by the rising waters (*WG*, 10), while Kanya observes that it ‘is obvious that they are in the depths of a bathtub’ (*WG*, 391). As a result, the consequences of global warming continually overshadow the narrative and actions of the characters, linking this threat of inundation with their technocapitalist activities. Visiting the Quarantine Department, Kanya regards the computers and ‘the amount of power burning through them makes [her] weak in the knees. She can almost see the ocean rising in response’ (*WG*, 308). By linking fossil-fuelled technology directly to the rising waters, Bacigalupi not only communicates the immediacy of the environmental crisis, but also transforms the ocean into a symbolic, physical embodiment for the environmental consequences of such technologies.

However, this critique goes beyond the technologies themselves to critique the economies that drive and support them. The Quarantine Department, which receives ‘[m]ore than three quarters of the Ministry’s carbon allocation’ (*WG*, 304-5), is dedicated to protecting the agricultural resources of Thailand from the various mutating plagues. While the Midwest Compact uses its economic dominance to attract new scientific minds and increase its technological capabilities, Thailand is left to struggle in isolation. Thailand’s economic vulnerability means that these fossil-fuelled technologies cannot be abandoned as they are necessary for its survival. At the same time, they are simultaneously contributing to the city’s destruction, embodied by the omnipresent image of the looming ocean. This image of the ocean is also used to represent the threat of biological pollution and mutation, the source of deadly plagues that affect both crops and people. Jaidee, the leader of the ‘white shirts’ who heads the ministry’s efforts to repel the genetic invasions from the outside world explains: ‘Protecting the Kingdom from all the infections of the natural world is like trying to catch the ocean with a net. One can snare a certain number of fish, sure, but the ocean is always there, surging through’ (*WG*, 68). Listing the various black-market practices and natural forces threating his country he observes that ‘[t]he Thai Kingdom is being swallowed […] They are being swallowed by the ocean’ (*WG*, 69). Here, the

consequences of genetic experimentation, spurred largely by the promise of economic profit, are linked back to the theme of the ocean and the seawall, and therefore to the other forces threatening to breach the Kingdom's borders. Through this theme of walls and boundaries, Bacigalupi weaves together the consequences of economic, political, and environmental changes, challenging the division between human society and the surrounding environment.

For Jaidee, it is in many ways too late to save Thailand, as he is all too aware how the consequences of capitalist greed are already flooding his country. The Environment Ministry's attempts to protect the environmental integrity of the state are compromised by economic bribery and political corruption. Yet, at the same time the economic health of the nation is hindered by anti-pollution schemes and overzealous quarantine procedures. When Jaidee's White Shirts burn farms and produce, they leave families destitute and destroy jobs when companies are forced to shut down. 'The white shirts seem to have forgotten they need outsiders' argues Carlyle, '[w]e're in the middle of a new Expansion and every string is connected to every other string, and yet they're still thinking like a Contraction ministry. They don't understand how dependent they've already become on farang' (*WG*, 140).[182] In their efforts to protect Thailand's independence, the Environment Ministry has overlooked the connections between the economic activities of the foreign companies working in Thailand, and the stability of the nation. Furthermore, in attempting to maintain the environmental integrity of their nation, they further compromise its economic and political independence.

In *The Windup Girl*, such conflicts are exacerbated by the nationalist interests of the Thai kingdom and its hostility towards outsiders, which promotes a racist cultural division where immigrant works are exploited. Yet relying on the factories for employment, these same workers are reluctant to reveal environmental contamination when such information could close the factory and lose them their jobs. The focus on short-term profit from both corporations and individuals is prioritised over environmental interest, and for some this income is all that stands between them and starvation. As Hock Seng, a 'yellow card' immigrant who is one of the five protagonists of the novel, tells a young worker:

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[182] *Farang* is a colloquial term denoting someone of European ancestry – a foreigner.

> 'I don't care about "eventually". I care about this month. If this factory fails to produce, we won't have a chance to worry about this "eventually" you speak of […] Don't worry about tomorrow. Worry about whether Mr. Lake throws us all out on the street today' (*WG*, 189).

Bacigalupi therefore presents the economic vulnerability and the environmental irresponsibility present in Bangkok as a complex and inseparable relationship, resulting from Thailand's neo-colonial relationship with the transnational calorie companies.

Significantly then, Kanya recognises the calorie companies' economic exploitation as the primary enemy: 'How can one fight their money? […] Who remembers their obligations when money comes surging in as strong and deep as the ocean against the sea walls? […] We are not fighting the rising waters. We are fighting money' (*TWG*, 244). Kanya identifies the rising waters as a symptom of the financial greed that the calorie companies have engendered, equating the loss of Thailand's political independence and the loss of the city itself. Developing this connection, Bacigalupi links the city's growing poverty to the looming ocean, with the slums that lean against the ruins of the old Expansion tower described as 'lap[ping] all around it' (*WG*, 325). Furthermore, towards the end of the novel the outbreak of political violence and increased attempts by the western calorie companies to exploit the city is overshadowed by the increasingly threatening and symbolic presence of the ocean and the 'curiously insubstantial' seawall (*WG*, 455). As an image of environmental foreboding, the ocean is more than a manifestation of climate change. It embodies the complex conflict and interrelationship between national politics, a globalized neoliberal economy, and the surrounding environment. The overbearing presence of the ocean and the seawall constantly undermine Anderson's and the Trade Ministry's optimistic hopes for progress and profit, erasing the boundary between actions in the human sphere and the surrounding environment, and demonstrating the clear consequences of one for the other.

The depiction of the city is also important in challenging the divisions between humanity and its environment. Over the course of the novel, Bacigalupi develops a theme or motif of the sick or polluted body. Indeed, many residents of the city suffer and die from mutating plagues that spread between crops and people, or carry disfiguring cauliflower-like growths on their bodies. Interestingly, this theme is

equally found in the depiction of the city itself. Cities have often been imagined as bodies; whether as a mindless, growing organism, or a consuming industrial monster, or as a human body, with people and traffic running through their veins. In *The Windup Girl*, the city is presented as a sick body, its arteries and veins clogged and overwhelmed by its dirt and people. Throughout the novel, the protagonists must constantly negotiate the crowds and traffic which are described as 'clog[ging] around the entrances' or 'clot[ting] the artery' of alleys and roads (*WG*, 11). The choice of 'clog' and 'colt', which are repeatedly used, rather than an alternative like 'block', suggests a coagulated or sticky mass of humanity residing in the veins of the city. In fact, the human population is often described as a parasite or disease on the body of the city with 'hovels' which 'attach themselves like barnacles to the ramparts', and 'vendors' that 'scab along the alley' (*WG*, 105; 10), as if the symptom of an infection. Meanwhile the Expansion towers, symbols of a former age of technological wealth and economic prosperity, become skeletons, their 'great bones picked clean' while they 'blister in the sun' (*WG*, 10). This symbolic imagery contributes towards the critique of capitalist exploitation mentioned earlier as the economic and political corruption caused by capitalist ambitions manifests itself as a physical sickness and infestation of the city. Jaidee, the head of the White Shirts that inforce the Environmental Ministry's laws, despairs at the financial corruption he finds within Bangkok, observing that 'he lifts the lid of some new part of the divine city and finds roaches scuttling where he never expected' (*WG*, 116). Consequently the poverty, political corruption, and biological diseases suffered by Bangkok's population is reflected in the city's own stagnation and degeneration, a contamination across the boundary between humanity and its environment through which Bacigalupi presents a dystopian vision of ecological connection.

Bacigalupi thus presents the Thai Kingdom as one forged from walls and boundaries. As a nation state it defends its economic and political borders against the monopolising efforts of the transnational calorie companies. As a society it defends its ontological and biological borders from genetic creations that threaten nature and the human. And as a city, the capital Bangkok defends its borders from climate change and the rising waters beyond the walls. Yet, towards the end of narrative, as Akkartat, the Trade Minister, finally gives the calorie company representatives access to Thailand's precious seedbank he tells Kanya: 'We've passed the time when we can

hide behind our walls and hope to survive. We must engage with this outside world […] We cannot survive if we are entirely isolated. History tells us we must engage with the outside world' (*WG*, 491). At the conclusion of the novel, all walls and borders have been breached, although importantly the calorie companies never get hold of Thailand's seedbank in the end. Baciglaupi makes no clear judgements on whether this dissolution of borders should be viewed as a positive or negative outcome. However, he clearly questions the sustainability of these physical and ontological boundaries in a world where every individual and every country must recognise their place as part of a wider global network.[183]

In his evaluation of *The Windup Girl*, Hageman argues that '[r]ather than pretending to escape the ideology of capital, the novel directs the reader to reimagine the prospects of thinking ecology specifically by confronting the contradictions inherent to the ideology of capital that enframes our very capacity to think ecology'.[184] This conflict is evident in the mounting tension between Thailand's Trade and Environmental ministries as each attempts to further its interests without acknowledging the context and limitations created by the other. Indeed, the contradictions in the Trade ministry's approach to profit and progress are matched by the contradictions within the Environmental ministry's attempts to purge and purify Thailand's environment. Bacigalupi's decision to centre his dystopian narrative in Thailand is central to the exploration of these conflicts, presenting Thailand and the developing East as both protagonist and victim to the environmental exploitation enacted by predatory capitalism. Bacigalupi demonstrates how the neoliberal dystopia is not limited to a single nation but is structured and perpetuated over a global scale. This perspective allows him to address some of the conflicts of interest between more and less developed nations and the corporations that operate from them. In particular, it demonstrates how the roots of the current environmental crisis cannot simply be blamed on capitalism, but must acknowledge the neo-colonial imbalance exploited by a globalized economy.

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[183] Significantly, walls and boundaries, whether physical, metaphorical, or ontological, and the forces which threaten to breach them, are a recurring image or theme in several of the novels considered in this study. Examples include the 'Paradice' biodome which isolates the Crakers in Atwood's *MaddAddam* series, the gated communities in Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, and the seawall in Ely's *A Journal of a Flood Year*.

[184] Andrew Hageman, 'The Challenge of Imagining Ecological Futures: Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*', *Science Fiction Studies*, 39.2 (2012), 283-303, p.290

PART TWO: PROGRESS AS PARADOX

Technology and scientific innovation also play a conflicting role in the narrative of *The Windup Girl*. Genetic engineering initially offers a possible solution to global food shortages, allowing the Thai government to continue to resist the control of transnational corporations by producing new food crops from their own protected seedbank. However, this same genetic experimentation, presented as a widespread practice in the future world of the novel, is also largely responsible for the influx of both agricultural and human diseases as the result of accidental mutations and unexpected consequences. The genetically-modified cheshires for example, cats that can disappear and change colour, were originally designed as a harmless entertainment but have instead multiplied and hunted local species into extinction, haunting the streets as a constant reminder of the irresponsible scientific folly that techno-capitalism has indulged. As Gibbons, once a calorie corporation genetic scientist now working for the Thai government, explains: ‘We have released demons upon the world, and your walls are only as good as my intellect’ (*WG*, 350). Both ontological and physical, these walls are breached by the deliberate and accidental consequences of scientific intervention in genetics.

Furthermore, the same genetic modification technologies are also being used by the transnational calorie companies against Thailand. The calorie companies in the novel deliberately make the food products they sell sterile in order to stop outside parties growing crops from them, ensuring a continual demand and reliance upon their products and realising Timothy Morton’s warning that ‘[w]hat’s wrong about genetic engineering is that it turns life forms into private property to enrich huge corporations.’[185] Taking a sceptical approach, the dystopian narrative checks the aspirations and promises of technological utopianism by questioning the reality of such technological developments when realised within a neoliberal culture. In Bacigalupi’s novel, rather than tackling global starvation, technology, as employed within a capitalist system, is shown to exploit and exacerbate the problem. Fulfilling his

[185] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010), p.86

definition of 'predatory capitalism', Buell notes that in *The Windup Girl*, 'today's visionary new technologies run rampant *are* the new disasters, not the solution'.[186] Rather than promoting real change, technology becomes a tool which supports the existing system.

Science and technology have long been a contentious aspect of the utopian/dystopian divide. For many dreaming of utopian futures, scientific developments promise to cure disease, eradicate the need for physical labour, provide the means for social equality, and even free humanity from the physical constraints of the body. Meanwhile, dystopian texts voice the fears of the unintended consequences or even the deliberate sinister usages of technological innovation for oppression and terror. In *The Windup Girl*, the 'calorie plagues' that caused worldwide crop failure in the novel are attributed to these same calorie companies as a form of accidental carelessness or deliberate genetically-engineered sabotage. This sort of industrial sabotage is also present in Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, where pharmaceutical companies begin to secretly introduce new diseases in order to sustain profits once existing diseases have been eradicated. Although technoscience is neither utopian/dystopian in itself, at the same time it cannot be considered as impartial or separate from the cultural and political pressures that surround its development and implementation. Addressing the relationship between technoscience and neoliberalism, Pellizzoni and Ylönen argue that 'science and society (politics, economy, culture) exert a reciprocal influence not only at an institutional or organizational level, but also, and perhaps primarily, at the level of their rationalities'.[187] In other words, far from being a neutral force, scientific and technological developments are fundamentally interconnected with the ideologies and rationalities of the societies from which they emerge.

The technological revolution of the 1970s and 80s is deeply interwoven with the concurrent neoliberalisation of society and the economy, each feeding into and transforming the other. The neoliberal push towards privatisation and its logic of a free competitive market affects the way in which technology is developed and accessed. Embedded in a neoliberal discourse of continual progress and growth, technology is

[186] Buell, 'Global Warming as Literary Narrative', p.274
[187] Luigi Pellizzoni and Marja Ylönen, *Neoliberalism and Technoscience: Critical Assessments* (London: Routledge, 2012), p.10

understood as the means to break past apparent limitations and grow beyond current boundaries. Within an environmental context, technology and scientific innovation are often presented as a means of overcoming the current ecological crisis. This technological utopianism is particularly highlighted in John Brunner's novels. In *The Sheep Look Up* the character of Grey is working on a computer programme which he boasts will be able to predict the events of the future and so allow humanity to avoid future destruction. Meanwhile, in *Stand on Zanzibar*, technological innovation is hailed as the solution to the West's overpopulation and resource shortage, despite the fact that technological advancement is what has allowed them to reach this stage of 'progress' in the first place. In both narratives, technology and scientific research are not directed to the further understanding or tackling of environmental issues, but are instead geared towards preserving the existing system despite those issues. Neal Bukeavich argues that '[n]otions of unending capitalist growth and grand bioengineering technologies in [*Stand on Zanzibar*] exist as fantasies that allow individuals and institutions in the Western World to act as if environmental constraints do not exist'.[188] Indeed, Grey continually ignores the greater context of a degrading environment around him while working on his project. However, when he finally finishes his computer programme at the end of the novel, its findings are that '[w]e can just about restore the balance of the ecology, the biosphere, and so on – in other words we can live within our means instead of an unrepayable overdraft, as we've been doing for the past half century – if we exterminate the two hundred million most extravagant and wasteful of our species'.[189] The promise of future technological solutions and the unrelenting drive towards progress is represented as deferring threats of environmental crisis until it is too late.

However, the logic of continual capitalist expansion is more than a notion or 'fantasy'. It is a fundamental part of the neoliberal ideologies which structure the societies presented in the novels, and technology is not simply a tool but an informative part of that culture. Kate Soper argues that '[t]he Subject-Object conception of the Humanity-Nature relationship is the register in modern philosophy of the "scientific

[188] Neal Bukeavich, '"Are we Adapting the Right Measures to Cope?": Ecocrisis in John Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar"', *Science Fiction Studies*, 29.1 (2002), 53-70, p.58
[189] John Brunner, *The Sheep Look Up* (1972), in *John Brunner: SF Gateway Omnibus* (London: Gollancz, 2014), p.306

revolution" which in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries replaced an animistic with a mechanistic view of nature'.[190] This perspective transformed nature into something that could be measured and quantified, but also positioned nature as a passive object, a resource which could be used or controlled by humanity. Consequently, it created the myth of mankind's separation and domination over nature. Such a perspective was reinforced by the development of new technologies that allowed the further study and transformation of nature. This scientific perspective also played an important part in the imperialist project. Identifying the role played by technology, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay argues that 'technological development was not only a precondition for the physical expansion of the imperialist countries but an immanent driving force. It led to changes in consciousness that […] established standards of "objective measurement" that led inevitably to myths of racial and national supremacy'.[191] Here, Csicsery-Ronay identifies how the development of a concept of an 'objective' scientific knowledge, supported through technological innovations, furthered imperialist narratives. Notions of social and economic development which were often used to justify the colonial actions of imperialist nations were presented as a measure of progress based on a western-model of industrialisation. Similarly, the neo-colonial nature of neoliberalism holds up involvement in a global free market as a similar standard of progress, sharing the technological developments with less developed countries.

This technological development as progress is what takes place in Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, where the corporation General Technics sets out to take advantage of the small nation of Beninia. Commenting on the economic colonialization of Beninia, Bukeavich argues that 'it depends on a form of scientific imperialism that excludes any mechanism for fostering the development of alternative, indigenous forms of knowledge'.[192] Beninia may not be rich, but it is peaceful. However, the western standards of progress as understood by characters like Norman House prevent it being seen as anything more that an undeveloped scrap of land. Indeed, the super-computer Shalmaneser, constructed from Western-based data, is unable to comprehend the existence of Beninia because 'it was inconsistent with the larger mass

[190] Kate Soper, *What is Nature?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.43
[191] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr, 'Science Fiction and Empire', *Science Fiction Studies*, 30.2 (2003), 231-245, (p.233)
[192] Bukeavich, 'Ecocrisis in John Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar', p.59

of data already in store' (*SZ*, 523). As an embodiment of the western system of knowledge and technology, Shalmaneser lacks the capacity to foster alternative forms of knowledge. Yet, alternative forms of knowledge are exactly what Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* and other ecodystopian novels suggest we need.

Levitas argues that after 1950 the 'untroubled assumption of progress has been severely shaken. Fascism, the Holocaust and the military unnecessary bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki left a legacy of anxiety and pessimism'.[193] In contrast, the central fear of the dystopian novels which emerged post-1970 is not that progress may no longer be possible, but that the concept of progress has become narrowed to a technological and economical context. Challenging this notion of progress, Naomi Klein argues that:

> What industry calls innovation, in other words, looks more like the final suicidal throes of addiction. We are blasting the bedrock of our continents, pumping our water with toxins, lopping off mountaintops, scraping off boreal forests, endangering the deep ocean, and scrambling to exploit the melting Arctic—all to get at the last drops and the final rocks. Yes, some very advanced technology is making this possible, but it's not innovation, it's madness'.[194]

Criticising the technocentric characterisation of 'innovation', Klein challenges the idea that a new technological development necessarily engenders change or growth. Through her focus on the consequences of such limited ideas of 'innovation', Klein draws attention to the interdependence between humanity and an environment which it is destroying under the guise of sustaining growth, a connection that technology increasingly masks through a rhetoric of human exceptionalism and the domination of nature.

In the 'Easter Island' chapter of *The Stone Gods*, Winterson challenges this division between human and nature at the heart of capitalism, but also criticises the value of economic profit or power on which capitalism is based. The way in which non-human nature is commodified into an exploitable resource for profit is frequently identified by critics as the central problem within capitalism. Evo Morales argues that

[193] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, (Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd, 2011), p.27
[194] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), p.144

'[c]ompetition and the thirst for profit without limits of the capitalist system are destroying the planet. Under Capitalism we are not human beings but consumers. Under capitalism mother earth does not exist, instead there are raw materials'.[195] Here, Morales describes the way in which capitalism changes the way in which human beings relate to their surrounding environment. Instead of a species living in symbiosis with its habitat, capitalism abstracts human societies from their environments, creating a one-directional relationship which exploits the natural environment for useable resources and profit. Criticising this constructed division, Val Plumwood argues '[t]o the extent that we hyper-separate ourselves from nature and reduce it conceptually in order to justify domination, we not only lose the ability to empathise and to see the non-human sphere in ethical terms, but also get a false sense of our own character and location that includes an illusory sense of autonomy'.[196] In other words, the reduction of nature to resource not only facilitates ecological imperialism, but obscures the complex interdependence between humanity and nature.

Dissecting the inherent contradictions of capitalism within human culture, Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* presents an intriguing representation of the way in which this delusional concept of human exceptionalism and the drive to accumulate capital results in the commodification and exploitation of the environment. The title of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* stems from the central chapter of the novel: 'Easter Island'. While the novel enacts a general criticism against the concept of progress within a neoliberal society, this chapter focuses on the values by which power and progress are measured. In particular, this chapter takes a notably ecocritical approach by undermining and challenging the division between humanity and nature. This chapter is narrated by Billy, a ship hand with Captain Cook who is marooned on an island with strange stone idols. These idols, he discovers, have been constructed by the island's residents, 'worked for magical purposes and in veneration of unseen powers' (*SG*, 132). He describes the strange events he witnesses between two competing native tribes, and although the exact history is never ascertained it seems that rival tribes have first constructed and then destroyed the stone idols in efforts to

[195] Evo Morales, 'Climate Change: Save the Planet from Capitalism', *Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal* (28th November 2008) http://links.org.au/node/769 [Accessed: 30/07/17]
[196] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.9

gain 'Mana', which stands for some sort of spiritual power. Yet, in order to build and transport these stone statues, the trees on the island have been felled, and as the conflict continues the island is eventually left barren and the dependent ecosystem falls apart. The parallels to the current environmental crisis are latent throughout the chapter as Billy observes: 'no man dreamed that the wood gone would never return' (*SG*, 133).

Despite continuing the environmental critique of the rest of the novel, the much shorter chapter of 'Easter Island' appears out of place compared to the much more futuristic setting of the other sections. Yet, in many ways, the island stands as a microcosm for the planet, and the chapter stands as a metaphor for the novel's central critique, a relationship that Winterson herself suggests:

> It is as if, here, everything signifies some other thing: the Bird, the Egg, the flag, the writing, the winning, the winner, the Stone Gods, even the island, even the world are symbols for what they are not […] That one thing should stand for another is no harm, until the thing itself loses any meaning of its own. The island trees and all of this good land were sacrificed to a meaning that has now become meaningless. To build the Stone Gods, the island has been destroyed, and now the Stone Gods are themselves destroyed (*SG*, p.136).

The island trees have been sacrificed to achieve Mana, an expression of wealth and power, but in order to do so the island's ecosystem has been decimated, leaving the Stone Idols to become an empty signifier as the human and animal population of the island slowly perishes. Although it is made highly symbolic in this section, the encounter between humanity and nature is a familiar one: the destruction of the natural environment results from the competition to establish power, whether economic, political, or spiritual. Mana is capital, an embodiment of power, and 'Easter Island' dramatizes how the rationality of capitalism drives humanity to destroy the surrounding environment on which that cultural system, and the human species more generally, ultimately depends. It undermines its own existence. Billy's Bible reference '[w]hat should it profit a Man that he gain the whole World and lose his own Soul' is therefore a damning judgement on how capitalism has shaped the way in which we value the world (*SG*, 131).

In contrast to the narrative of progress championed by capitalism, ecodystopian narratives use representations of environmental crisis to highlight the inherent

contradictions within this capitalist system. In particular, they undermine the concept of progress central to the notion of limitless economic and technological growth. Criticising this notion of progress, Richard McNeill Douglas argues that '[e]nvironmentalism strikes at the common assumption of the modern world, that history only runs in one direction, and that the future must inevitably be better than the past; that humankind has discovered the key to taking control of its fate'.[197] Here, McNeill characterises the delusion of limitless expansion which underpins capitalist economics as a linear narrative, where economic growth is thus considered progress in its movement towards the future. In contrast, many ecodystopian novels, such as *The Windup Girl*, *The Stone Gods*, and *The Sea and Summer*, use their narrative setting to contest the concept of a linear narrative of progress, drawing attention to how progress is defined.

Notably, Bacigalupi resists the apocalyptic climax of a world-ending crisis by choosing to set his narrative not in the apocalyptic setting of the Contraction, but in the post-crisis world of a second expansion. The return to an Expansionist economy is presented by Anderson and other Western businessmen as progress, but it is overshadowed by crisis and the overwhelming presence of water:

> And beyond the factories, the rim of the seawall looms with its massive lock system that allows the shipment of goods out to sea. Change is coming. The return to truly global trade. Supply lines that circle the world. It's all coming back, even if they're slow at relearning. Yates had loved kink-springs, but he'd loved the idea of resurrected history even more (*WG*, 91).

The symbolically-laden presence of the looming seawall seems to deliberately undermine Anderson's optimistic hopes, again aligning economic and technological growth with climate change and the rising waters. Andrew Hageman argues that 'Lake embodies a will to confront setbacks, but he also makes visible the contradictions inherent in an idea of capitalism as constant reinvention in the face of crisis'.[198] These contradictions are visible in this passage where the language used here is not that of

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[197] Richard McNeill Douglas, 'The Ultimate Paradigm Shift: Environmentalism as Antithesis to the Modern Paradigm of Progress', *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, (ed.) Stefan Skrimshire (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.197-218, (p.206)
[198] Hageman, 'The Challenge of Imagining Ecological Futures', p.289

change or progress, but of return and resurrection. The 'new Expansion' (*WG*, 90) that Yates celebrates is not a new direction of progress for humanity, but a return to the system that caused the supply crisis in the first place. Even Anderson himself seems to recognise this irony after the fall of the Environment ministry brings them closer to gaining the seedbank. To Carlyle's comment that they're observing '[t]he dawn of a new era', Anderson murmurs '[b]ack to the future' (*WG*, 212), again suggesting that this concept of capitalist-technological advancement does not serve progress at all, but instead perpetuates an already existing system in a refusal to adapt to the changing environment.

In contrast to *The Windup Girl*, Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* begins in a society still undergoing Expansion. Despite pollution and the threat of environmental crisis, the capitalist economy thrives and technological innovations dominate the urban landscape. Yet Winterson also challenges the notion of technological progress. Like Anderson Lake, Manfred in *The Stone Gods* believes that technology can solve the environmental crisis, lecturing Billie that: 'We have the best weather-shield in the world. We have slowed global warming. We have stabilized emissions. We have drained rising sea levels, we have replanted forests, we have synthesized food, ending centuries of harmful farming practices […] What more do you want?' (*SG*, 37-8). Faced with an impending environmental catastrophe he insists that those who say it's too late for the planet are 'anti-science' (*SG*, 37). Yet Winterson suggests that technology doesn't deliver progress or innovation, but instead only serves to postpone the planet's fate while reinforcing the status quo. The society of the Central Power exhibits an inability to learn from past mistakes and is unable to understand that the core ideologies behind humanity's successes could equally be at fault for the planet's undoing. They proclaim Orbus the 'success story of the universe' and put the social and environmental disasters they have experienced down to 'a few wrong turnings' (*SG*, 4-5). Although Billie comments that '[t]he new planet offers us the opportunity to do things differently', it soon becomes obvious that the mission to colonise Planet Blue will only attempt to implement the exact same system responsible for the downfall of Orbus (*SG*, 4). Indeed, undermining Planet Blue's potential as a fresh start for humanity, Billie's boss Manfred insists: 'We need infrastructure, buildings, services. If I'm going to live on a different planet, I want to do it properly. I want shops and hospitals. I'm not a pioneer. […] We can't go back to the Bog Ages'

(*SG*, 38). Consequently, like Anderson in *The Windup Girl*, Manfred defines progress and change as the same, but better – the same systems and values, but facilitated by more advanced technologies. He thus refuses to see how these systems of capitalist growth and technological innovation are unavoidably interconnected with the ecology of the natural world.

Criticising the belief that technology holds the solution for the current environmental crisis, Winterson complains that '[w]hen Stephen Hawking bangs on about how the future of mankind is in space, it makes me really depressed. It's a boy's fantasy, like not tidying your bedroom because your mother will do it – trash the place, then leave'.[199] Instead, we can read *The Stone Gods* as a challenge to this idea of techno-utopian escapism through its repeated presentation of travels to other countries and other planets, each ending in death. The society depicted in the first chapter named 'Planet Blue' initially appears to be a future vision of our own planet. However, it is revealed that this narrative is in fact set in the past on a planet named Orbus, while it is suggested that the newly discovered 'Planet Blue' of the title is in fact our own Earth, back in the age of the dinosaurs. Portraying a future that is revealed to be our past, this narrative trick unsettles the reader's initial interpretation of the society depicted in the first chapter, bringing a renewed sense of defamiliarization to this dystopian setting. As Billie embarks on a space journey to Planet Blue, a third planet is added in the form of 'Planet White': 'white like a shroud. The planet was wrapped in its own death […] There was no future in this bleached and boiled place' (*SG*, 62-63). It is suggested that this planet too held life like ours, destroyed by global warming caused by CO2 emissions. The current environmental crisis is thus split into past, present, and future in Winterson's novel: 'a dead white planet, a dying red planet, and Planet Blue, out there, just starting up' (*SG*, 68). Rather than a linear narrative of historical progression, Winterson presents a cyclical pattern of repetition and destruction.

This disruption and repetition of time is further emphases by the structure of the novel, which is split into four chapters in three different time zones, moving forward in time with each chapter. The second chapter 'Easter Island', already analysed above, takes us forward to a speculative history of Easter Island. 'Post-3 War'

[199] Jeanette Winterson, 'In search of a grand unified theory of me', *New Scientist* (2007), p.50

and 'Wreck City' seem to bring us to the present day and then into our future, presenting a landscape suffering the after-effects of a nuclear war and a society once again ruled by a technology-driven capitalism. In each chapter, the environmental destruction presented results from the competition to establish power, whether economic, political, or spiritual. These chapters are woven together through the appearance of the same characters, the repetition of phrases and actions, recurring imagery, and a web of intertextual references that link the segments in ways that defy narrative realism. For example, Billie in the third cycle of the narrative finds a journal on the underground called 'The Stone Gods', which retells the first chapter of the novel. Quotes from this chapter, along with a quote from John Donne's 'The Sun Rising' and one from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, are then interspaced with Billie's first-person retelling of her conception, growth, and birth.

The result is a narrative palimpsest where each narrative cycle and each dystopian setting cannot be fully separated from the others, and where descriptions of birth and romance are accompanied with the imagery of shipwreck and space travel. The multiplicity and repetitive nature of these narratives questions the attraction of apocalyptic endings and subverts the attractive myth of a final cataclysm with the less appealing suggestion of repeated violence and ongoing excuses. It thus confronts the linear ideas of history and progress at the core of the Anthropocene, rejecting the fantasy of a fresh start to instead bring the reader back to confront a present which is defined by stasis and repetition. This repetition in some ways suggests a pessimism towards the future. Nicole M. Merola argues that 'rather than opening up possibilities for humans to intervene differently in their socioecological presents and futures, Winterson's repeated stories foreclose the likelihood of change'.[200] However, through its repeated presentations of environmental decline, Winterson pulls the reader back to confront the destructive contradictions of modern capitalism again and again. Although no positive change occurs in the text, this repetition issues a challenge to the reader. As the cyborg Spike tells Billy, 'This is a quantum universe […] neither random nor determined. It is potential at every second. All you can do is intervene' (*SG*, 75). In other words, the lack of closure suggested by this repeating world invites intervention.

[200] Nicole M. Merola, 'Materializing a Geotraumatic and Melancholy Anthropocene: Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*', *Minnesota Review*, 83 (2014), 122-132, p.129

A similar idea is explored in Turner's *The Sea and Summer* (1987), which consists of a narrative and a frame narrative split either side of an apocalyptic event which is never represented. Besides providing the reader with an explanatory commentary and critical perspective on the dystopian society and its motivations, the frame narrative reveals the existence of a world after the dystopia, and, as Andrew Milner argues, 'blunt[s] the force of dystopian inevitability driving the core narrative'.[201] The society introduced in the frame narrative, complete with universities and theatres, stands as evidence that humanity not only survived but has been able to establish a much improved quality of life, hinting at utopian possibilities for the future. However, Milner argues that 'a secondary effect, however, is to suggest how little control humanity can actually exercise over its destiny' by demonstrating how '[t]he crisis will not be averted'.[202] In other words, the frame narrative establishes the core storyline as an already concluded history. Indeed, this new society is built overlooking the ruins of the old city, confronting both characters and the reader with concrete relics of its demise. 'A ruin is a ruin', observes Andra, 'and its final statement is failure'.[203]

Yet I would go further to argue that the frame narrative not only shows how the Greenhouse Culture was eventually submerged, but more significantly suggests how humanity in the fourth millennium may have failed to learn the lessons from its past. Although 'the New City sprawled in smug comfort', there are strong suggestions that behind the peaceful exterior this society faces their own problems (*TSS*, 12). In this far future, the temperatures are dropping as 'the Long Winter – perhaps a hundred thousand years of it – loomed' (*TSS*, 3). Although there is nothing to suggest that this change in climate is anthropogenic, the attitude taken towards it is one of confident human superiority: 'We're very well equipped to endure a million years of cold', lectures Lenna, 'I'll be surprised if we don't do reasonably well with insulation technology and fusion power' (*TSS*, 14).

[201] Andrew Milner, 'The Sea and Eternal Summer: An Australian Apocalypse', *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, (eds.) Gerry Caravan and Kim Stanley Robinson (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), pp.115-126, (p.121); Andrew Milner, 'On the Beach and The Sea and Summer: Two Paradigmatic Australian Dystopias?', *Spectres of Utopia: Theory, Practice, Conventions*, (eds.) A. Blaim and L. Gruszewska Blaim (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), pp.256-268, (p.265)
[202] Andrew Milner, 'The Sea and Eternal Summer: An Australian Apocalypse', p.121
[203] George Turner, *The Sea and Summer*. 1987 (London: Gollancz, 2013), p.109 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *TSS*

However, despite suggestions that they are well prepared to deal with the oncoming climate change, a conversation between Professor Lenna and a visiting actor called Andra Andrasson reveals striking similarities between attitudes in the fourth millennium and those of the Greenhouse Culture:

> ‘Do you worry about the Long Winter?’
> Surprised by the change of direction he reacted without proper thought.
> ‘Should I? It’s a long way off’.
> ‘And therefore unimportant? And is it so far off? There’s no agreement on that and no solid knowledge. Our evening gale may be the first sign, who knows? […]’
> ‘That’s all could-be, could-be. There are planning bodies - .’
> ‘At governmental level?’ She sounded angry with him. ‘It’s somebody else’s business, so why be concerned? Is that it?’
> ‘What would my concern achieve? I’m no scientist’ (*TSS*, 115).

In this conversation, Andra demonstrates how humanity is still failing to address the unknown dangers and possibilities of the future. In particular, he repeats the same sentiments expressed by those characters in the frame narrative, displacing responsibility and choosing ignorance over anxiety. Significantly, the concept of learning from our past is implicated in almost all of these narratives and as we shall see in the next chapter, the concept of anachrony is central to the ecodystopian narrative. Narrative setting thus plays an important part in framing the critique of the ecodystopian novel.

In the 1990s and 2000s, argues Trexler, ‘Capital was understood as a historically and biologically inevitable system. Its production of climate change was intrinsic to its basic operation, a contradiction that would ultimately ensure its extinction’.[204] This feeling of inevitability is also commented on by Slavoj Žižek, who argues that ‘it seems easier to imagine the “end of the world” than a far more modest change in the mode of production, as if liberal capitalism is the “real” that will somehow survive even under conditions of a global ecological catastrophe’.[205] This perceived inevitability is apparent in the ecodystopian novel of the late twentieth and

[204] Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), p.197
[205] Slavoj Žižek, ‘Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology’, *Mapping Ideology*, (ed.) Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso, 1994), pp.1-33, (p.1)

early-twenty-first century, which portrays the ongoing survival of neoliberal capitalism within the context of a disintegrating natural environment. However, while apocalyptic scenarios allow the creation of a clean slate, the novels explored in this chapter postpone or negate the end of the world in order to interrogate the apocalyptic imagination and the absorption of the future into the present that is represents. Consequently, these novels are able to move beyond simply rejecting the sustainability of capitalism to instead present a more complex exploration of the flawed logic of a system that refuses to acknowledge its environmental context, and characterises progress as merely the continuation of the current system. Although environmental degradation has limited more optimistic hopes for humanity's future, accepting the consequences of anthropogenic climate change does not mean resignation to a future reduced to visions of the end. Instead, the ecodystopian novel locates the utopian imagination within the pre-existing dystopian conditions, exposing the internal contradictions of capitalism in order to begin formulating strategies of resistance and change.

Furthermore, by exploring the consequences of environmental exploitation and pollution within their wider economic and cultural contexts, these texts avoid isolating environmental crisis into a single event or concept, while at the same time avoid simplifying the dangers of capitalist expansion. Although critics like Naomi Klein go as far to proclaim that 'climate change [is] a battle between capitalism and the planet', by portraying the continuation of the capitalist system, these novels instead attempt to reveal a more complex and conflicting relationship between capitalist economics, the needs and demands of different human societies, and their surrounding environment.[206] Consequently, in comparison to earlier proto-dystopian novels of monopoly capitalism, these texts present dystopian societies constructed from global interactions. They are not the product of a single state or its national economy, but the product of a global free market, which is less 'free' and less impartial than it presents itself. Indeed, Banerjee and Linstead argue that '[r]ecognizing that the socio-cultural impacts of globalization are not the result of free and self-regulating market economies but the result of coordinated political and economic management may produce a different understanding of how relations of production and consumption are created

[206] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything,* p.22

and sustained'.[207] Similarly, novels like Winterson's *The Stone Gods* and Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* attempt to expose the neo-colonial character of modern market economies, and in doing so create a more complex portrait of the relationship between capitalism and environmental crisis.

Summer Gioia Harrison argues that '[o]pening neoliberalism up to critique as narrative enables us to analyze the complicity of its rhetoric in the perpetuation of inequality, reveal its "naturalness" as an ideological cover designed to privilege the powerful, [and] trace its cultural and ideological roots to discourses of colonialism', but furthermore also offers the opportunity to 'begin to re-write it.'[208] As narratives, ecodystopian novels challenge the hegemonic narrative of neoliberalism by using speculative dystopian societies to draw attention to the consequences and conflicts it produces. By challenging the concept of technological utopianism, these novels expand on the doubts that technology, developed within a capitalist system, will provide a sustainable solution for climate change. Although technology is not condemned as the root of the environmental crisis, these texts do explore how the use and development of science and technology is imbedded within the same neoliberal and capitalist economic, social, and cultural systems. In particular, they emphasise how concepts of progress are tied into scientific and technological developments that are employed to sustain economic growth, solving environmental issues only in so far as it allows the existing capitalist system to continue. Challenging the anthropocentric hubris of neoliberalism's promise of freedom, growth, and prosperity, these texts deconstruct this utopian narrative in order to begin imagining alternative ways of being. Consequently, rather than simply focusing on the technologies or industrial practices that use natural resources and produce pollution, the central point of many of these narratives is that real progress demands a change not in these technologies, but in the ideologies which motivate them.

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[207] Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee and Stephen Linstead, 'Globalization, Multiculturalism and Other Fictions: Colonialism for the New Millennium?', *Organization*, 8.4 (2001), 683-722, p.689

[208] Summer Gioia Harrison, 'A Myth of the First World: Neoliberalism, Neocolonialism, and Environmental Justice in Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*', *darkmatter*, 13 (2016) (no page numbers) <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2016/04/02/a-myth-of-the-first-world-neoliberalism-neocolonialism-and-environmental-justice-in-yamashita%E2%80%99s-tropic-of-orange/> [Accessed: 12/07/17]

CHAPTER THREE: A CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

Throughout history, disasters and periods of upheaval have often proved to be inspirational catalysts for the literary imagination. The emergent crisis around climate change, amongst other environmental issues, has been no exception. Growing environmental anxiety, encouraged as new warnings about CO2 emissions and pollution emerge, has prompted a great deal of new and creative work attempting to grapple with the causes and implications of these environmental changes. And yet, at the same time, these environmental concerns increasingly seem to fade into the background. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, this slipperiness is the result of the vast scale and dispersed effects of the global environmental crisis, which leave such issues feeling distant, irrelevant, and consequently unconcerning. This detachment is exacerbated by the fact that the tangible consequences of global warming always seem to happen somewhere else, mediated through information technologies like the internet or television. Yet at the same time, an opposing pressure stems from the enormity and world-changing nature of such environmental issues. Faced with environmental crisis, the character of Toby in Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* 'remembers the oppressive sensation, like waiting all the time for a heavy stone footfall, then the knock at the door. Everybody knew. Nobody admitted to knowing. If other people began to discuss it, you tuned them out, because what they were saying was both so obvious and unthinkable' (*YF*, 284). Faced with the complexity and scale of the challenge to be faced, the resulting powerlessness can be immobilising. 'We engage in this odd form of on-again-off-again ecological amnesia for perfectly rational reasons', argues Klein, '[w]e deny because we fear that letting in the full reality of this crisis will change everything'.[209] The result is a sort of schizophrenia, a negotiation between the here and nowhere of the environmental changes taking place around us. Furthermore, the way in which we communicate this crisis is mediated by existing discourses around nature and 'natural' disaster which often position nature as something in opposition to humanity, independent and unpredictable. Critics such as Frederick Buell have argued that 'inventing human narratives to weave into these

[209] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), p.4

worlds, ones that break down traditional literary firewalls between backgrounds and foreground, and environmental and social conflicts, offers perhaps the largest challenge'.[210] Forming what has traditionally been portrayed as the background to human activities, climate change consequently resists the traditional representational capacity of the novel.

For many literary critics, the emerging body of 'climate fiction' presents a promising and constructive approach to understanding and communicating the representational difficulties posed by the global environmental crisis, and consequently, for facilitating a discussion towards future solutions.[211] 'Climate fiction can convey cultural narratives, create detailed speculation, incorporate diverse points of view, and hold a multitude of things, from species to machines, places to weather systems', argues Adam Trexler; '[t]hese features make the novel a privileged form to explore what it means to live in the Anthropocene moment'.[212] The discursive and dialogic nature of the novel as a narrative form is highlighted by Trexler as providing a creative space for exploration and consequently understanding. Similarly, Timothy Morton argues that art, which includes the novel, has a vital role to play in facilitating an 'ecological thought': 'Art forms have something to tell us about the environment, because they can make us question reality'. This 'open, questioning mode […] is a thinking that is ecological, a contemplating that is a doing. Reframing our world, our problems, and ourselves is part of the ecological project'.[213] Rather than simply reflecting the world around them, critics like Trexler and Morton argue that these texts are an active, questioning force which seeks to provide new perspectives and 'reframe' our approaches to environmental issues. Other critics, such as Lawrence Buell, go further to argue that literature, both fiction and non-fiction, plays a crucial role in

[210] Frederick Buell, 'Global Warming as Literary Narrative', *Philological Quarterly*, 93.9 (2014), 261-294, p.266
[211] Although the growth of environmentally-interested fiction has been characterised by some as a new *genre* of 'climate fiction', it would perhaps be more accurate to argue that these novels in fact present approaches to climate change and other environmental issues from a wide range of different genres, including detective fiction, young adult fiction, speculative and science fiction, and realist narratives. Such a distinction is needed, as the narrative strategies and conventions employed by these genres differ greatly.
[212] Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), p.27
[213] Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp.8-9

perceiving the natural environment, arguing that '[o]ne has to invent, to extrapolate, to fabricate. Not in order to create an alternative reality but to see what without the aid of the imagination isn't likely to be seen at all'.[214] Although these same critics have suggested that climate change poses difficulties for the traditional structures on the novel, they also suggest that the novel as a narrative form has the ability to adapt 'the literary potentialities of setting, conflict, the organization of characters' and thus achieve new representational modes.[215]

Yet other critics, most notably Timothy Clark, have taken a much more sceptical view on the capacity of the novel to address global environmental issues. In complete opposition to Trexler, Clark argues that '[l]inguistic narrative in particular seems at issue solely as that mode which, by implication, fits least well the demands of the Anthropocene, seemingly more allied with forms of anthropocentric thinking to be overcome'.[216] Furthermore, he takes issue with critics like Trexler and Mehnert who argue that, by adopting an ecocritical approach, art forms, including the novel, have the potential to provide a new and meaningful engagement with the environmental crisis:

> [A]rguments in the 1990s that environmental issues and the novel were ill-suited to each other – with the novel being traditionally and predominantly concerned with matters of individual development and social questions as opposed to nonhuman contexts – were taken at that time largely as outlining a problem which ecocriticism needed to confront and overcome […] Yet, the newly counter-intuitive demands on representation being made by issues such as climate change mean that, ultimately, the deeper challenge may be the other round.[217]

Instead of identifying the representational challenge posed by the environmental crisis as something that can and must be answered by the novel through new, creative interventions, Clark instead suggests 'that still-dominant conventions of plotting,

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[214] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), p.102
[215] Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions*, p.234
[216] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p.187
[217] Ibid., p.191

characterization and setting in the novel need to be openly acknowledged as pervaded by anthropocentric delusion, and that environmental thinking would be stronger if it explored more directly and aggressively the drastic nature of the cultural break that recognizing this may entail'.[218] The implication is that even though climate fiction seeks to challenge anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism through representations of human societies caught up with their environmental surroundings, these largely thematic elements are undermined by the methods they use, often falling back upon conventions of narrative realism.

The question raised here by Clark has significant implications for the body of ecodystopian fiction which this thesis puts forward, not to mention for the larger body of 'eco' fiction which forms the object of studies like Trexler's and Mehnert's.[219] If the form of the novel is inherently anthropocentric, then the traditional dystopian novel is all the more so. As explored in Chapter One of this project, dystopian fiction is a genre which, developing from specifically political roots, focuses on inter-human relationships and social organisation, looking inward at the actions of humankind, not outwards towards a nature from which they are often disconnected. Centred on ideas of subjectivity, memory, and agency, the dystopian narrative is a form defined by the primacy of the individual experience, and driven by anthropocentric values such as intelligence, independence, bravery, and freedom. By Clark's reasoning, it is a genre seemingly unsuited for a meaningful engagement with environmental issues, and yet at the same time environmental disasters and pollution have been a recurring feature of the dystopian landscape, particularly in recent fiction.

However, Clark's criticism does not necessarily contradict the potential of the novel, but, like Trexler and Morton, calls for a radical and self-conscious reformation of the novel's narrative form. Writing over ten years before Morton, but foreseeing a similar conflict between ecocritical concerns and the novel, Dominic Head acknowledged the same limitations of the novel, but suggests that these need not be entirely limiting. Instead, he asks

[218] Ibid., p.191
[219] Antonia Mehnert, *Climate Change Fictions: Representations of Global Warming in American Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

> Can we, then, imagine a novel which incorporates contemporary environmental concerns; which traces the intersection of time and space; which shows how personal time and personal identity are implicated in both social and environmental history; and does all of this – not *despite* – but *because* of its self-consciousness about textuality?[220]

Rather than attempting to overcome the conflicts outlined by Clark, Head imagines a novel which would enact an ecocritical narrative in full awareness of its textuality. Such a novel would have the potential to acknowledge the anthropocentric nature of plot, characterisation, and narrative, foregrounding this conflict rather than solving it. For critics like Adeline Johns-Putra, this approach offers new possibilities to the capacity and scope of the climate change novel. Commenting on Clark's criticism of the novel, Johns-Putra argues that in her reading 'Clark's critique is, in effect, a call for a dose of radical self-reflexivity if fiction is to have relevance as a form of (human) expression in a climate-changing world'.[221] As already acknowledged in the introduction to this thesis, the postmodern approach to questioning the integrity or surface identity of narrative forms fits in well with the ecocritical agenda, which also aims to challenge the integrity of cultural narratives of nature and the environment. If the environmental crisis is also a literary crisis, then ecocriticism, as 'the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' seeks to intervene in both.[222]

Consequently, while this thesis takes an ecocritical approach characterised as inherently postmodern, this chapter considers how climate change fiction, and ecological dystopian novels more specifically, have adopted certain postmodern narrative strategies in their attempt to represent environmental crisis. Postmodernist narratives are characterised by fragmentation and paradox, challenging the concept of a single and authoritative narrative or history. Within the range of features found in postmodern texts, Bran Nicol argues that the most important are:

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[220] Dominic Head, 'Ecocriticism and the Novel', *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, (ed.) Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.235-240 (from 'Problems in Ecocriticism and the Novel', *Key Words*, 1 (1998)), p.239

[221] Adeline Johns-Putra, 'The Rest is Silence: Postmodern and Postcolonial Possibilities in Climate Change Fiction', *Studies in the Novel*, 50.1 (2018), 26-42, p.2

[222] Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996), p.xix

1) a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text's own status as constructed, aesthetic artefact.
2) an implicit (or sometimes explicit) critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional 'world'.
3) a tendency to draw the reader's attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text. [223]

Such strategies highlight the gap between world and word, focusing on the textual mediation and representation of reality through literature. 'What postmodernism does,' argues Linda Hutcheon, 'is to denaturalize both realism's transparency and modernism's reflexive response, while retaining (in its typically complicitously critical way) the historically attested power of both […] With the problematizing and 'de-doxifying' of both realist reference and modernist autonomy, postmodern representation opens up other possible relations between art and the world'.[224] Consequently, postmodernism does not reject realism or modernism, but instead problematizes and develops their aesthetic techniques in attempts to find new and different representational strategies.

Although critics like Glen A. Love and Laurence Coupe have argued that postmodernism is counterproductive to the ecological purpose due to a 'post-structuralist nihilism' and the 'denial of non-textual existence', Serpil Oppermann posits an opposing view and argues that 'postmodernism legitimizes nature even as it challenges and subverts its traditional discourse […] this kind of postmodernism is both interrogative and affirmative'.[225] In other words, postmodernism can be considered reconstructive as well as deconstructive. Similarly, in his study of British fiction, Head argues that the postmodernist novel as constructed by writers 'whose works have also conveyed a conviction about the moral and emotional function of

[223] Bran Nicol, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Publishing, 2009), p.xvi
[224] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.32-33
[225] Glen A. Love, 'Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism', *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, (ed.) Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.225-240, (p.236); Laurence Coupe, 'Introduction', *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, (ed.) Laurence Coupe (London: Routledge, 2000), pp.1-8, (p.2); Serpil Oppermann, 'Seeking Environmental Awareness in Postmodern Fiction', *Critique*, 49.3 (2008), 243-253, p.243

narrative fiction, and its ability to make readers re-engage with the world they know […] has depended on a reworking of the realist contract, involving the reader's willing acceptance that the text provides a bridge to reality'.[226] A similar argument can be applied to the postmodern, ecologically-concerned text, where the ethical and material responsibility to nature shapes the use of postmodern strategies within the novel in order to 're-engage' with the natural world, even as the nature of this engagement remains under scrutiny.

This chapter does not argue that all ecodystopian texts are to be considered postmodern, nor that postmodern novels are inherently ecological; however, it does suggest that postmodern narrative strategies, which are apparent in many of these ecodystopian texts, are uniquely suited to the ecocritical aim of exposing how nature has been discursively constructed, offering useful formal interventions which have the potential to both develop and challenge the traditional conventions of the dystopian text. Consequently, whereas the previous chapter focused on the setting and ideologies of the dystopian society, this chapter turns to the structures and formal strategies of the dystopian narrative. This analysis considers those questions raised by Head, Clark, and Johns-Putra, taking the ecodystopian novel as one form of climate fiction, and explores the way in which authors use and adapt the conventions of the dystopian novel to address the crisis of imagination and representation posed by global environmental change. Asking whether the traditional form of the novel, and of the dystopian novel in particular, is the problem the ecodystopian narrative is trying to overcome, this chapter will explore the different ways in which the experience and counter-narrative of the protagonist is represented. In doing so, this chapter will consider the opposing arguments outlined above, and consider the capacity of the dystopian novel to address such issues.

This chapter begins by briefly exploring how ecodystopian novels have highlighted the difficulties in perceiving and communicating climate change and environmental crisis, analysing the ways in which human conceptions of nature are mediated through information technologies and media representations. By dramatizing the difficulty of forging connections between representations and reality, these novels suggest the dangers of reducing nature to a social construct while simultaneously

[226] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.229.

questioning the individual's ability to conceive of global environmental change. This chapter thus confronts the individualistic scale of the traditional dystopian narrative. Addressing the demand to 'think globally' in response to present environmental challenges, this analysis focuses on the way in which ecodystopian fiction attempts to portray the global scale of environmental change, as well as reflecting back on the difficulties of doing so. This disjunction between scales considers the role of the individual in the narrative and the significance of the individual human experience within the dystopian novel, as well as its limitations. One of the main ways in which ecodystopian novels address the limitations of the individual protagonist is through the use of polyphonic narratives, presenting several interwoven narrative viewpoints. This strategy is used in John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Sheep Look Up*, Turner's *The Sea and Summer*, as well as in later ecodystopian novels such as Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*. This analysis will consider how the use of multiple characters attempts to address the complexities of a global environmental crisis, but also consider how this strategy challenges the traditional focus of the dystopian narrative.

Significantly, whereas traditional dystopian narratives often emphasise the legitimacy of the individual's perspective, the ecodystopian novel often problematizes its integrity. While the first part of this analysis focuses on the fragmentation and multiplicity of perspective created through the use of polyphonic narratives, the second part of this chapter looks at how other novels create fragmented narratives through temporal disruption and retrospection, constructing narratives that bridge different temporal spaces and disrupt ideas of linear narrative progression and narrative reliability. Consequently, this analysis considers the legacy of the last man or survivor narrative, a staple form of the post-apocalyptic genre, and explores how ecodystopian fiction uses post-apocalyptic narratives to form new spaces of resistance. This genre-blurring allows authors to provide a retrospective analysis of the dystopian society, using themes of memory and storytelling to create links between past, present, and future. While polyphonic narratives with several characters may seek to overcome the limitations of the individual viewpoint through multiple narrators, this second type of narrative instead embraces the limitations of individual perspective, employing these limitations as part of their critique.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a consideration of how these texts use metafictional reflections on the role of art in communicating and representing climate

change. In doing so, these texts demonstrate a self-consciousness about their own textuality which foregrounds the conflict between climate change and literary representation rather than attempting to solve it. Although this chapter will focus on those texts which challenge the traditional narrative form of the dystopian genre, it acknowledges that the extent of this self-reflexivity varies greatly across the wide range of dystopian works that have been produced since the genre's environmental turn.

PART ONE: WORD AND WORLD

The ecodystopian novel takes a postmodern approach in exploring the social, technological and cultural 'construction' of nature as a concept. At the same time, many of these novels also voice a central ecological concern in stressing the risk of losing sight of the material reality of nature. The difficulty in representing and mediating the environmental crisis is a central preoccupation of J.G. Ballard's *Rushing to Paradise* (1994), which explores the risks of this gap between material reality and representation. *Rushing to Paradise* is an unconventional dystopian novel which depicts a satirical vision of the utopian island gone wrong in order to launch a critique against ecotopianism and contemporary environmental rhetoric. When it comes to environmental crisis, Ballard is perhaps better known for his quartet of apocalyptic novels in which the Earth is in turn ravaged by destructive winds, rising waters, droughts, and an immobilising crystal: *The Wind from Nowhere* (1960), *The Drowned World* (1962), *The Drought* (1964), and *The Crystal World* (1966). However, although these texts have occasionally been labelled as dystopian novels, they are more accurately described as apocalyptic or catastrophe fiction, representing the breakdown of society as humanity struggles to survive within rapidly changing landscapes. In contrast, Ballard's later novel *Rushing to Paradise*, informed by the environmental movement that emerged between the 70s and 80s, represents a very different approach to the ecological themes touched upon by his earlier novels. The initial catastrophe of the narrative takes place on the remote (fictional) atoll of Saint-Esprit where a group of eco-activists set out to save the island but end up descending into an ecofeminist reincarnation of *Lord of the Flies*. The story is inspired partly upon the events at Maruroa Atoll in the Pacific Ocean, a French island that hosted nuclear testing between

the 1960s and 90s, and the sinking of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* in 1985. At the same time, the novel is also overshadowed by concerns about the apparent ongoing global environmental crisis and how it has been perceived and constructed by society. More explicitly engaged with ecocritical questions than Ballard's earlier novels, *Rushing to Paradise* questions how green politics function in a modern world dominated by the mass media. In particular, it explores the relationship and tension between psychological and physical landscapes, critiquing humankind's capacity to influence, co-opt, or even idealise non-human nature. Such utopian thinking, warns Ballard, contains its own potential for catastrophe.

The catastrophes that take place in Ballard's 1960s novels wipe out human society and technology, cutting off humankind from their cultural context and the mediating systems between them and nature. However, in *Rushing to Paradise*, Ballard presents the catastrophe of Saint-Esprit as one that exists primarily in the media. As Mr Boyd exclaims, 'Reality? That's a public service channel, Neil'.[227] From the beginning of *Rushing to Paradise*, the mission to storm Saint-Esprit and reclaim it as an ecological utopia resembles a publicity stunt rather than a genuine attempt to save the endangered albatross on the island. On their initial approach to the island, the group of eco-activists are armed with the tools of propaganda and violence rather than those of rescue and conservation: 'Instead of the hypodermic syringes and vitamin ampoules that would have cleared the ulcers on their lips, or even a roll of lint to bandage a wounded albatross, there were aerosol paints, a protest banner, a machete, and a video-camera to record the highlights of their raid' (*RTP*, 11). The items the group take with them are designed to make a *visual* statement against environmental destruction rather than a practical difference. The artificial nature of the raid is further suggested through Ballard's use of a semantic field of performance and theatricality: Dr Barbara and Kimo 'posed together', while the French soldiers 'were watching the display', effectively providing an audience. After filming, Neil 'replayed the sound-track' of this 'contrived scene', realizing 'that he was filming a well-rehearsed scene in the theatre of protest' (*RTP*, 22). Through his exaggeration and foregrounding of the hollow hyperreality of the scene, Ballard presents environmental catastrophe as the stage for a performance-based protest, transforming the island into a sort of reality TV

[227] J.G. Ballard, *Rushing to Paradise*, 1994 (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), p.49 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *RTP*

programme, 'The Barbara Rafferty show', as it attracts increasing amounts of media attention (*RTP*, 104). In effect, environmental catastrophe becomes a media creation, another *fait divers* for the public to consume.

Approaching environmental catastrophe as a hyperreal phenomenon, Ballard's self-conscious use of symbolism in *Rushing to Paradise* further emphasises the dangers of viewing nature as a construct, suggesting how this distortion affects the actions taken to address such environmental disasters. Barbara's decision to save the albatross in the first place seems based on the fact that it 'held far more appeal for the public' than 'the endless rallies against ozone depletion, global warming, and the slaughter of the minke whale' (*RTP*, 13). Not coincidently, the albatross itself is a potent symbol: 'The great white bird stirred vague but potent memories of guilt and redemption' and Barbara often reminded Neil that 'Coleridge's poem […] was the foundation-text of all animal rights and environmental movements' (*RTP*, 13). Ballard's intertextual references to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* transform the albatross into a self-aware symbol of humankind's guilt. Arguably then, the group of eco-activists are not travelling to Saint-Esprit to save the albatross, but to save themselves through a narrative of redemption. Resurrecting the albatross becomes equivalent to mankind resurrecting its own potential to preserve the environment and respect the ecology around them: 'Save the albatross, save Saint-Esprit, and save the twenty-first century' (*RTP*, 94). However, in doing so the real albatross must bear the weight of these hopes, its 'wings weighed down by all the slogans and moral blackmail' (*RTP*, 32). Lee Rozelle argues that in Ballard's novel, 'Coleridge's biocentric message is reused to argue that the seabird albatross runs the risk of being destroyed at the beginning of a new century not by nuclear weaponry, but by the sign system "albatross"'.[228] Indeed, on the island of Saint-Esprit, '[m]ore seabirds had been killed by the Dugong's leaking oil than by the French soldiers in their months of occupation, but at least the albatross now soared above the peak' (*RTP*, 85). The conjunction 'but' is revealing of the groups priorities, justifying the death of a large number of seabirds as long as the albatross takes its symbolic place in the sky.

[228] Lee Rozelle, '"I Am the Island": Dystopia and Ecocidal Imagination in *Rushing to Paradise*, *Super-Cannes*, and *Concrete Island*, *ISLE*, 17.1 (2010), 61-71, p.64

The media has been a recurrent topic of Ballard's work. Simon Sellars argues that '[f]or Ballard, globalization's mediation, consumption and broadcasting of experience produces a paradoxical effect that gives the illusion of connectedness, but in fact creates withdrawal, a regression into disparate, private worlds'.[229] While information technologies provide the means for increased communication, Sellars suggests that for Ballard this communication is superficial, resulting in increased isolation and individualism. Similar arguments have been made concerning the rise of information technologies and human engagement with environmental issues. Susan Bryant argues that 'while digital-age communication gives us flexibility and convenience, it may be an important component of a suite of practices that may be further disconnecting us from a sense of responsibility toward each other, let alone our planetary home'.[230] Increasingly aware of environmental issues, but increasingly distanced from them, such an effect produces what Bronizlaw Szerszynski has characterized as 'the post-ecologist condition'. 'At the heart of contemporary western culture', Szerszynski argues, 'there seems to be a constitutive tension between ecological awareness and ecocidal behaviour'.[231] In other words, in what Szerszynski characterizes as an ironical relationship, humanity, while increasingly expressing concern about environmental damage, nonetheless distances itself from this reality and continues to engage in the practices and activities which are causing this damage.

This disjunction between word and world is central to ecocriticism, which investigates the consequences of the ways in which humanity conceptualises and encounters nature. The way in which cultural assumptions and information technologies distance societies from environmental risk or responsibility is also highlighted in Turner's *The Sea and Summer*. In particular, Turner considers the relationship between social privilege and proximity to environmental change. The social division of the Sweet and Swill is not only defined by their economic status, but also by their relationship to the encroaching waters as their class positions lead to

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[229] Simon Sellars, '"Zones of Transition": Micronationalism in the Work of J.G. Ballard', *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, (eds.) Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.230-248, (p.239)
[230] Susan Bryant, 'Communication and the Environment in the Age of the "Small Planet"', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 32 (2007), 55-70 (no page numbers given) < http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1805/3120> [Accessed: 16/11/17]
[231] Bronislaw Szerszynski, 'The Post-ecologist Condition: Irony as Symptom and Cure', *Environmental Politics*, 16.2 (2007), 337-355, p.337

different encounters with climate change. While the Swill live under the constant threat of destructive flooding, the Sweet, living on the higher ground, are blissfully unaware of the impending crisis, kept largely ignorant of the environmental devastation happening around them through the use of censorship and state media.

As noted in Chapter One, the development of information technologies and telecommunication in the twentieth century have played a key role in shaping the way in which humanity conceptualises and encounters the world around them, including nature and environmental crisis. Recent technologies such as the television and the internet produce a sense of connection and global awareness through the effects of simultaneity and interactivity. Ursula K. Heise argues that television, and other similar technologies, produces a 'paradox' in that 'although it allows the viewers an infinitely more varied and detailed access to places and times the overwhelming majority of which they will never see with their own eyes, it also blurs any sense of genuine distinction or authentic historicity precisely through the detail and apparent realism of its presentation'.[232] This 'apparent realism' produces a sense of objectivity and thus authority in the implication that it allows the viewer direct access to what is being presented. Yet, by presenting contained scenes and information divorced from their geographical or temporal specificity, which can be summoned or dismissed at will, television and other media forms compromise the relevance or credibility of such information.

This concurrent proximity and remoteness is conveyed in *The Sea and Summer*, where although the media plays a role in communicating the existence of climate change, it also distances the Conways from its reality. The dual role played by such information technologies is emphasised by the family's dependence on the Triv – a sort of internet/television. Lamenting the ancient model of the Triv in their new home, Francis exclaims '[w]e weren't hooked into Data. We would never know anything' (*TSS*, 44). However, the Conway's move to the fringe brings them into a new and difficult proximity with reality. When heavy rainfall floods a local river to dangerous levels, Francis is unwilling or unable to connect the scenes of devastation on the Triv with his local surroundings: 'Rejecting a connection of events, I said, "[t]hat wasn't our river though"' (*TSS*, 62). Francis, used to viewing environmental

[232] Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms: Time, Narrative, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.25

disaster as something happening elsewhere to someone else, fights to maintain his Sweet mentality, which leads him to reject the relevance of the flooding to his reality.

Significantly, information technologies like the Trivs distance the consequences of environmental change and support social inequality by allowing the Sweet to continue living their privileged lives and ignoring the horrific circumstances of the Swill. '[K]nowing something is not the same as *realizing* it' comments Francis, 'I didn't then grasp the idea of deliberately not knowing something, of keeping it down out of the sight of your mind or of looking at facts in a special light that dimmed out the savagery' (*TSS*, 45; 46). Here, the 'ecological amnesia' outlined by Klein earlier in this chapter is not only a response to the scale and challenge of climate change, but also acts as a defence strategy against environmental guilt. Presented as lazy and criminal, the Swill commonly appear on the Triv as part of drama programmes designed to shock and entertain. This dehumanization of the Swill diminishes the hardships that they suffer due to environmental pressures. Consequently, rather than improving communication, these information technologies instead further distance societies from each other. Media representations of the environment therefore play an important role in maintaining the dystopian social division and order that Turner portrays.

Another novel that explores the environmental and social challenges created by the issue of overpopulation is John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*. Although the novel is perhaps less overtly ecological than later ecodystopian texts, is does present a nuanced exploration of how social, technological, and political issues are tied into environmental decline. Significantly, like *The Sea and Summer*, technology also plays an important part of mediating crises and managing the masses, again in the form of the television. However, these televisions allow viewers to insert themselves into the programmes in the form of 'Mr and Mrs Everywhere', customising the characters to resemble themselves. They can then watch themselves as they wear expensive clothes, travel the world, and take part in new and exciting activities. '[I]t has the immediacy of real life', argues Norman House, one of the lead protagonists, 'because nowadays television *is* the real world […] We're aware of the scale of the planet, so we don't accept that our own circumscribed horizons constitute reality. Much more real is what's relayed to us by the TV' (*SZ*, 314). Echoing the paradox voiced by Heise, above, the authenticity of reality becomes compromised by the supposed authenticity

of the simulation, which promises access to views and information beyond the scope of the individual. The result is a withdrawal from experienced reality, producing the same 'regression into disparate, private worlds' which Sellars finds in Ballard's work and which Jim McGuigan describes as a characteristic of modern life.[233] While Turner's novel imagines how state media exacerbates the social division between rich and poor, in Brunner's dystopian future technology isolates the individual from society and from the materiality of the surrounding world.

Commenting on the representations of virtual reality technology in *Stand on Zanzibar*, Ursula Heise argues that Brunner 'begins to destabilize the integrity and autonomy of the individual that in other overpopulation novels of the period functions as touchstones for any dignified human existence'.[234] The value of subjective and embodied experience becomes problematised in the ecodystopian novel by the simulated realities projected by such technologies, creating a similar disjunction between the local and the global as that posed by climate change. 'Climate science cuts against the grain of ordinary human experience', argues Sheila Jasanoff.[235] It 'detaches global fact from local value, projecting a new, totalizing image of the world as it is, without regard for the layered investments that societies have made in worlds as they wish them to be'.[236] Such a 'totalizing image' is suggested by the photos of the Earth viewed from space, as well as in the discourse of the Anthropocene that has emerged in recent years. Jasanoff argues that the scientific discourses around climate change, such as the assessments produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, may work to establish the facts and figures of this global environmental challenge, but in doing so they detach this knowledge from its meaning and distance this phenomenon from local, subjective, and individual experiences. This detachment challenges the individual's ability to make a meaningful contribution to wider, collective action. Indeed, as a planetary affair, climate change results in globalized narratives of both blame and responsibility, but in doing so often obscures the individual.

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[233] Simon Sellars, 'Micronationalism in the Work of J.G. Ballard', p.239; Jim McGuigan, *Neoliberal Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.127
[234] Ursula K. Heise, 'The Virtual Crowd: Overpopulation, Space and Speciesism', *ISLE*, 8.1 (2001), 1-29, p.11
[235] Sheila Jasanoff, 'A New Climate for Society', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 27, 2-3 (2010) 233-253, p.237
[236] Ibid., p.236

Reversing the argument that individual perspectives are limited in their ability to perceive and communicate global environmental changes, Jasanoff's argument suggests that losing sight of situated, human experience is equally detrimental to the task of constructing a complex and meaningful engagement with the challenge of environmental crisis. Significantly then, the dystopian novel's focus on the individual champions the value of subjective and embodied human experience that Jasonoff calls for, pitting the individual against the totalizing, hegemonic discourses of the dystopian society. As explained in Chapter One, the dystopian novel's focus on the individual means that most narratives are either written in the first-person or written in the third-person, but focalised through a first-person perspective. Indeed, the confessional form of the journal or diary appears as a common convention in the dystopian novel, and there are several examples to be found in the ecodystopian novel too: In George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*, Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* & *2017* and Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* the narrative is delivered as a series of journal entries. Similarly, in David Ely's *A Journal of the Flood Year*, Fowke's engineering report on the failings of 'the Wall' becomes a journal that testifies to his resistance against a technocratic and oppressive society. 'Writing this way gives me an odd feeling', he writes, 'as if it's something private and personal that will draw things out of me I wouldn't ordinarily let go of'.[237] Yet while not all ecodystopian narratives are framed as journals, the majority share a first-person focalization which foregrounds the subjective nature of the individual's experience, contrasting it against the hegemonic narrative of the dystopian society.

The choice to maintain this restriction of first-person narrative perspective in opposition to the supposed omniscience and objectivity of global communication and information technologies is significant when read alongside current critical discourse around the representational challenges posed by climate change. Responding to Ursula K. Heise's argument that 'climate change poses a challenge for the narrative and lyrical forms that have conventionally focused above all on individuals, families, or nations', Timothy Clark suggests that 'climate change seems more germane to modes of representation that involve unfamiliar non-human agencies, multiple and perhaps

[237] David Ely, *A Journal of the Flood Year* (1993; London: Portobello Books Ltd, 2009), p.10

elliptical plots'.[238] Yet the focus on the individual does not preclude the use of such postmodern narrative strategies. In negotiating between the vast, distributed nature of the environmental crisis and the subjective, situated experience of the individual, authors of ecodystopian fiction often employ formal devices that introduce elements of multiplicity, contingency, and artifice into the narrative. In the previous chapter, Winterson's use of a repeating, elliptical narrative with recurring characters and events is a perfect example of how the normal linearity and internal composition of the novel can be disrupted. Each plot revolves around a first-person focalizer and their love interest, but the repeating and intertextual nature of the narrative questions the singularity or separation of each experience. In such a way, the novel situates personal knowledge and actions within the vast scale of historical time, inviting the reader to make connections between the different narrative levels to suggest new perspectives on scale and temporality.

Jasonoff argues that '[l]iving creatively with climate change will require re-linking larger scales of scientific representation with smaller scales of social meaning'.[239] Such a challenge suggests the need for narratives which move beyond the limitations of the individual viewpoint, as suggested by Heise and Clark, while at the same time not losing site of the importance of individual, embodied experience. While the plural and fragmented narrative form of Winterson's novel presents one response to this dual challenge, the polyphonic narrative offers another way of both addressing the individual's experience, as well as providing a wider perspective across society. Borrowed from musical terminology, the concept of 'polyphony' was developed by Mikhail Bakhtin to describe the use of multiple voices, each distinct and not merged into a singular perspective. Such a technique was popular in modernist fiction, but remains integral to postmodern narratives where 'the connection between the world and the words is made problematic in the form of entangled and competing representations of our world, which challenges the nature of binary thinking and its implicit hierarchies'.[240] Rejecting a single, apparently objective or omniscient

[238] Ursula K. Heise, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.205; Timothy Clark, 'Some Climate Change Ironies: Deconstruction, Environmental Politics and the Closure of Ecocriticism', *The Oxford Literary Review*, 32.1 (2010), 131-149, p.144
[239] Jasanoff, 'A New Climate for Society', p.238
[240] Oppermann, 'Seeking Environmental Awareness', p.248

perspective, the polyphonic narrative instead presents a plurality of voices communicating a plurality of different and sometimes conflicting experiences.

The use of multiple plots and multiple narrative viewpoints has been an increasingly popular technique in recent climate fiction, as exemplified in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* trilogy where the variety of focalizers demonstrates the importance of understanding the interconnection between political, economic, cultural and environmental contexts. However, this technique is evident in a few examples of dystopian fiction published much earlier. Acknowledging that eco-science fiction criticism has mainly been focused on recent science fiction authors, Bukeavich argues that 'Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* is the first major sf novel to map complex networks of science, global society, politics, and ecology, and without exaggerating the role of isolated, single characters in creating or solving ecosocial crises'.[241] Although certain characters do take a leading role in the narrative, the crises that form the centre point of Brunner's ecodystopian novels become apparent from the variety of vantage points that Brunner provides, often emerging from several plotlines to converge later in the narrative. In both *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Sheep Look Up* these polyphonic narratives facilitate and emphasise the complex representation of environmental issues as part of a larger network of interdependent factors. Furthermore, the use of multiple viewpoints reduces the emphasis on the individual protagonist by instead suggesting a conflicting array of actions and thoughts through the use of a jump-cut technique.

While the multiple focalizers in Robinson's novels are used to provide a synthesis of knowledge and innovation as they work together to solve environmental issues, the frantic shift from character to character in Brunner's novel highlights the limitations of the individual in perceiving and responding to climate change. Rather than becoming part of a global or even local movement, Brunner's characters are shown to be isolated and short-sighted, suggesting how attitudes towards ecosocial problems are influenced and restricted by cultural systems, power structures, and selfish ambitions. The presence of cultural influences is further suggested as the narrative not only moves between different narrative perspectives, but also includes extracts from news bulletins, advertisements, book quotations and random segments

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[241] Neal Bukeavich, '"Are we Adapting the Right Measures to Cope?"': Ecocrisis in John Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar"', *Science Fiction Studies*, 29.1 (2002), 53-70, p.55

of conversation. Consequently, the large number of characters introduced in these narratives remain superficial stereotypes designed to critique a media-driven, consumer society. However, at the same time this diverse, fragmented narrative suggests the multi-faceted and global scale of the environmental and social problems it chooses to present.

Against this background of the less-defined masses, three or four characters are more fully developed and it is these characters that drive the plot and introduce key environmental and political knowledge. Michael Stern argues that '[i]n each novel, one character is given a privileged status as knower, his way of understanding his world acting as a guide and standard for other characters […] and for the reader'.[242] In *Stand on Zanzibar* the reader is given Chad Mulligan, while in *The Sheep Look Up* Austin Train becomes the voice of ecological reason. These lead characters, though not necessarily the central characters of the narrative, cut through the various conflicting discourses to provide the key critical message of the text. Yet, by situating this message within a disjointed narrative Brunner avoids delivering an over-heavy or simplistic moralising lesson. Instead, Stern argues that '[t]he central cognitive value for Mulligan, Conroy, and Train is not logic but "dialogic" – the empathy and understanding generated in the dialogue of self and other'.[243] Indeed, the dialogues that emerge between the 'knower' character and the other protagonists instead facilitates a discussion around what it means to perceive and acknowledge the reality of environmental crisis.

The use of multiple narrative viewpoints, although a popular technique in climate fiction, has not been so widely adopted by dystopian novels. However, there are several examples where this technique has been used to similar effect. In Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* the narrative is divided between five main characters: Anderson Lake, an undercover AgriGen employee; Hock Seng, a refugee and Anderson's employee; Jaidee, the head of the White Shirts who enforce the Environmental Ministry's laws; Kanya, his second in command; and Emiko, the eponymous windup girl. The narrative focus constantly switches between the different characters, whose actions often affect each other in indirect and unexpected ways,

[242] Michael Stern, 'From Technique to Critique: Knowledge and Human Interest in John Brunner's "Stand on Zanzibar", "The Jagged Orbit", and "The Sheep Look Up"', *Science Fiction Studies*, 3.2 (1976), 112-130, p.117
[243] Ibid., p.118

disrupting their individual plans and schemes. Like Brunner's novels, the fragmented narrative suggests the complex networks at play within a chaotic and seemingly unrelated set of events. Characters are often affected by events they do not fully comprehend or have control over, a fragmentation that is thus suited to representing the diverse and seemingly unrelated consequences of global climate change. Furthermore, the fragmented and shifting narrative perspective results in a plotline that is far from unified and character arcs that defy conventional expectations. However, unlike Brunner's narrative there is no 'knower' character to provide a moral compass within the narrative. Instead, the moral ambiguity of these characters and their actions complicates the reader's judgement of them and the environmental and political situation they face, offering several approaches to the environmental crisis and avoiding any sort of overbearing didactic message. Only Emiko emerges positively from the narrative, and her naivety and disregard for the environmental crisis taking place locates her in a posthuman future that is already moving ahead of the events of the novel.

In *The Sea and Summer*, George Turner uses the strategy of multiple narrators slightly differently. As examined in Chapter One, the narrative journey of the Conway brothers critiques their individualistic values to instead promote the need for responsibility in addressing environmental crisis. This individualism is not only challenged by the plot of the novel, but also by its narrative structure. Like Brunner, Turner uses a polyphonic narrative. However, instead of a third-person narrative focalized through various characters, he presents the majority of his narrative as a series of first-person retrospective journal entries. The narrative is consequently shaped by the different character's interests and prejudices, dramatizing the conflict of approaches and agendas in a world threatened by anthropocentric climate change. Interestingly, the first part of this narrative is almost exclusively centred on Francis reflecting on his early childhood, and Turner uses his perspective to explore some of the difficulties in understanding the reality and relevance of climate change. Francis writes: '2041 was a golden year. Dad would say that things had never been worse, that the whole damned human race was drifting to destruction, but Six-Year-Old had only to see sunlight on the grass to know that this was Dad talk, just as complaint about the

meat ration was Mum talk' (*TSS*, 23).[244] Growing up already surrounded by the ongoing consequences of climate change, Francis is consistently unable to incorporate environmental risk into his world-view. Just as he is unable to link the scenes of flooding to his local environment, Francis is unable to extend his awareness beyond his immediate circumstances. Yet, even the adults that surround him seem to struggle. Francis's father, though aware of the future threats posed by global warming, fails to acknowledge their relevance: '"One day the ice cap will melt completely and all the coasts of the world will drown. Most of Melbourne will go under sixty meters of water." He said it like a comment on something that didn't affect him' (*TSS*, 26). Turner presents characters who are uninterested in the global politics of climate change, focused instead on the lived reality of their day to day lives. Looking back on the ignorance of his younger self, Francis explains '[r]eality was *our* life', '[l]iving familiarly with such knowledge, the horror of it passed us by; it was the normal condition of the world' (*TSS*, 24).

Although initially these entries focus around Francis and Teddy, the narrative soon broadens to encompass a wider cast of six main characters who introduce new perspectives to the limited, self-absorbed opinions of the two Conway brothers. In particular, the boys' mentors and guardians Mrs Nola Parkes, the owner of a small import-export firm for whom Francis works, and Nikopoulos, a Police Intelligence captain who reports on the actions and progress of Teddy, offer interesting counterpoints. The use of this polyphonic narrative enables Turner to present his fictional society through the experiences of several interrelated, yet socially diverse, characters. While Russell Blackford argues that the construction of the narrative as a collection of unconnected first-person accounts 'ends up unassimilated and meaningless', the use of multiple viewpoints allows a more considered portrayal of the dispersed and varied manifestations of climate change in everyday life, offering

[244] A similar normalisation of environmental risk is presented in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, where Jimmy remembers that '[t]here were the things his mother rambled on about sometimes, about how everything was being ruined and would never be the same again, like the beach house her family had owned when she was little, the one that got washed away with the rest of the beaches […] then there was that huge tidal wave, from the Canary Islands volcano. (They'd taken it in school, in the Geolonomics unit. Jimmy had found the video simulation pretty exciting)' (*OC*, 63).

alternate perspectives on the same set of unfolding events.[245] Indeed, later polyphonic narratives such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* series and David Brin's *Earth* would be applauded for this same feature. In contrast to Blackford, Bruce Gillespie, argues that '[b]y acting out his story through dramatic monologues from different characters, Turner places the reader not only at the center of the action but at the center of the dilemma'.[246] Indeed, these polyphonic, first-person narratives allow Turner to present this society according to a range of selfish interests and limited perspectives, using one character to reveal the misunderstandings and faults of another.

Commenting on the scale effects of environmental crisis, Bruno Latour argues that '[n]o-one sees the Earth globally and no-one sees an ecological system from nowhere'.[247] Contesting the demand to think globally he instead argues that '[n]ature is no longer what is embraced from a far away point of view where the observer could ideally jump to see things "as a whole", but the assemblage of contradictory entities that have to be composed together'.[248] In their polyphonic narratives, this 'assemblage of contradictory entities' is exactly what Brunner, Bacigalupi, and Turner create. The use of multiple and contrasting viewpoints creates a patchwork of individual perspectives, offering several angles, but never proposing to represent a single totalizing vision. Instead, it is multiple, elliptical, and contradictory. In contrast to the traditional dystopian narrative which privileges the individual's experience, the ecodystopian narrative problematises it. However, in doing so it does not seek to undermine the value of individual subjectivity. Indeed, the isolation and disillusionment felt by characters like Austin Train, Hock-Seng, and Teddy Conway remain integral to the development of the counter-narratives within these novels. Instead, it situates their journeys amongst a variety of others, suggesting how these counter-narratives are multiple and fragmented. Furthermore, this formal strategy

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[245] Russell Blackford, 'The Rough and the Roughs', *Chained to the Alien: The Best of Australian Science Fiction Review*, (ed.) Damien Broderick (California: The Borgo Press, 2009), pp.73-81, (p.76)
[246] Bruce Gillespie, 'A Symposium on George Turner's *The Sea and Summer*' (Review), *Chained to the Alien: The Best of Australian Science Fiction Review*, (ed.) Damien Broderick (California: The Borgo Press, 2009), pp.90-95, (p.90)
[247] Bruno Latour, 'Waiting for Gaia: Composing the Common World through Arts and Politics', A lecture at the French Institute, London, (November 2011), p.6 <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/124-GAIA-LONDON-SPEAP_0.pdf> [Accessed:21/11/17]
[248] Ibid., p.7

suggests the difficulties present in constructing a collective response to environmental crises, and suggests how the formulation of a response lies not in addressing the global over the local, but perhaps in better addressing the diverse experience of individuals.

PART TWO: REMEMBERING THE FUTURE

In contrast to these polyphonic narratives with multiple focalizers, other ecodystopian novels create fragmented and non-linear narratives through temporal disruption, introducing a single protagonist who narrates between different time zones. In Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* the reader is introduced to the characters of Saul and Jimmy who play the role of the 'last man' in a post-apocalyptic world. Struggling to come to terms with humanity's eradication and their own guilt, Saul's and Jimmy's narration switches back and forth between past and present as they remember the events from their childhood, to their adulthood, and leading up to the disaster. In *Oryx and Crake*, this temporal disruption is accompanied by a physical journey backwards as Jimmy retraces his steps and returns to the source of the catastrophe. As the narrative moves forward, Jimmy travels backwards, until the two timelines meet and the nature of the catastrophe is revealed. In contrast, Saul remains static, spending his time recalling the events that have led to his present moment and recording the story of his past in a journal that forms the body of the narrative. In contrast to Jimmy, Saul is not implicated in the apocalyptic disaster. Instead, the global disaster echoes and shapes his own personal breakdown, while the postmodern narrative strategies employed by Gee problematise Saul's narrative through questions of perspective and ambiguity, reflecting back on the crisis of representation put forth in the introduction to this chapter.

However, as Johns-Putra and Trexler have observed, while Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* 'has likely received the most attention as a single novel dealing with climate change', Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* 'has received little critical attention'.[249] This lack of critical analysis seems surprising considering that Gee's novel is explicitly framed as a work of climate fiction, prefaced by several quotations referencing

[249] Trexler, Adam and Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism', *Royal Meteorological Society/ Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 2.2 (2011), 185-200, p.190

scientific and historical evidence which together predict the arrival of a new Ice Age at some point in the Earth's future. This warning that '[t]he great glaciers of the Ice Age will return' foreshadows the events of the narrative.[250] The opening of the novel continues to foreground questions of environmental risk by establishing a post-apocalyptic setting where the effects of this predicted ice age have been fully-realised. The novel begins in 'the new white world' of a speculative future overcome by an ice age (*IP*, 13). Struggling to survive in this post-apocalyptic, glacial wasteland, the character of Saul is introduced as an old man living with a group of feral boys in the ruins of an airport, where he passes his days desperately writing down the story of his past. Although the novel commences in the depths of an ice age, Saul's retrospective narrative begins in the year 2005, the start of the 'Tropical Time' of global warming, and recalls rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, and water shortage. This initial focus on a world radically altered by anthropogenic global warming and a society caught up in technological exuberance, is in many ways typical of climate change fiction. Similar to the other texts considered in this thesis, Gee uses the representation of the dystopian space to critique the discourses of human ambition and technological positivism that compromise and replace concepts of responsibility and communication, and result in social breakdown and environmental negligence. The narrative is thus split between the pre-apocalyptic dystopian society in which Saul's narrative is based, and the post-apocalyptic frame of the narrative present.

Maggie Gee's choice to use a male, privileged, first-person narrator seems deliberately problematic when read alongside current critical discourse around the representational challenges posed by climate change. As numerous critics, including Ursula K. Heise, Timothy Morton, Timothy Clark, Adam Trexler, have argued, the incomprehensible scale of climate change poses a representational challenge to the singular and personal narrative. The insular focus of this first-person perspective is apparent in *The Ice People*, where the centre point of Saul's narrative is always himself, is always 'I, Saul' (*IP*, 13). Without the more omniscient third-person narrative voice, or the multiple perspectives provided by a polyphonic narrative, the narrative viewpoint appears markedly limited. At the same time, the first-person perspective is an important feature in the dystopian novel, and not necessarily

[250] Maggie Gee, *The Ice People* (1998) (London: Telegram, 2008), p.8 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *IP*

problematic in itself. Indeed, this first-person focalization allows the author to emphasise the alienation of the individual and prioritise his/her subjective experience in opposition to the hegemonic narrative of the dystopian society. Rather than receiving a comprehensive overview of the workings of the dystopian society, the reader instead encounters this society through the lived, everyday experience of one of its citizens. This protagonist, having been fully immersed in the political and social structures around him/her, experiences this world as normal even as his/her disillusionment now makes him/her hyper-aware of his/her surroundings, allowing him/her to critically reflect upon elements of his/her society he/she had previously taken for granted. It is through the perspective of the individual who experiences the strange nature of the dystopia as everyday that the unsettling effect of the dystopia upon the reader is achieved. Through de-familiarisation, the reader is made to reconsider real-world referents in the dystopian context. Consequently, although the use of the first-person may pose a challenge to the ecocritical interests of the narrative, it equally has the potential to provide an effective critical approach to these issues.

Yet in *The Ice People*, Saul fails in this critical capacity. Although the world Saul remembers is full of the effects and consequences of global warming, these environmental concerns rarely feature in Saul's narrative. Furthermore, despite his obvious dissatisfaction with society and the resulting alienation he often seems to feel, he has little interest in politics and appears to be largely unaware of the political, social, and environmental infrastructures that shape the society around him. In fact, these subjects are barely mentioned at all by Saul, and when he does choose to recollect political history he is largely dismissive of it. These short glimpses into the political history of Gee's dystopia hint at a breakdown of government without pinpointing a cause, leaving the reader to speculate:

> When civil order broke down, over the next few years, I stayed optimistic. Who needed governments? If you were young, you were self-reliant. The plagues passed me by, though I lost several friends. The streets grew rougher, but I stayed away from trouble. In wealthier areas, life went on as usual. I didn't let the newscasts upset me (*IP*, 24).

In this brief summary of events Saul answers each national catastrophe with a statement of individual independence and self-determination, expressing his

estrangement from the government and its affairs. Indeed, like the Conway brothers, he does not appear to see the relevance of these wider events to his own life or the events of his narrative. As a result, the reader often has to infer the social history and politics of Saul's society from what he doesn't say or reported conversations he doesn't entirely understand.

In his evaluation of dystopian fiction, Adam Stock describes such ambiguous or absent histories as a common feature of the dystopian genre, arguing that '[u]nder the guise of contested historical knowledge, unknown elements of the future-as-past hide as if redacted in black marker'. Furthermore, he argues that this feature serves an important role as 'the very act of hiding foregrounds the created space as an anomaly in the text. Unknown elements are thereby invested with the mystery and power of taboo'.[251] Such historical gaps invite speculation and creative engagement with the text, encouraging the reader to reconstruct the events of this future-as-past and to draw connections between their own present and the speculative vision presented in the novel, thus contributing to the critical function of the dystopian text. While Stock focuses his analysis on the classical dystopian texts, such historical gaps also appear in *The Ice People* and several other ecodystopian works. In *The Windup Girl*, the events of the novel take place after an economic collapse when society is again rebuilding and expanding, but what occurred in this period is never really detailed, leaving it to the reader's imagination. In contrast, in novels like *Parable of the Sower* and *The Sea and Summer*, the memories of older characters serve to offer small glimpses into the novel's past. In the first few pages of *Parable of the Sower*, Laura remembers a conversation with her stepmother. 'We couldn't see so many stars when I was little', says Laura's stepmother, '[l]ights, progress, growth, all those things we're too hot and too poor to bother with anymore […] Kids today have no idea what a blaze of lights cities used to be – and not that long ago'.[252] Similarly, the central narrative of *The Sea and Summer* opens with a short entry from Alison Conway, the mother, recollecting the summers of her childhood. These short pieces serve to offer some contrast and context for the landscape of the main plots, while also setting the theme of memory and a nostalgia for a former world now lost. Finally, in its structural

[251] Adam Stock, 'The Future-as-Past in Dystopian Fiction', *Poetics Today*, 37.3 (2016), 415-442, p.439
[252] Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (1993) (New York: Warner Books, 1995), pp.4-5

similarity to *The Ice People*, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* also introduces a 'last man' figure in the character of Jimmy who struggles or deliberately refuses to remember the events of the past. Indeed, the act of recovery and confrontation with his past through memory forms the central conflict of the novel. Significantly, in contrast to the classical dystopian texts that Stock identifies, rather than periods of history that are deliberately repressed or 'redacted' by a totalitarian government, in many ecodystopian novel these periods of history have become forgotten or ignored.

To some extent, Saul's indifference appears to stem from his relatively privileged and economically-mobile position within this society: 'I felt on the brink of owning the world', states Saul, recollecting his youth, 'I was a man, and human beings ran the planet […] I was tall, and strong, and a techie, which qualified me for a lifetime's good money. It was new and wonderful to feel like this' (*IP*, 24). Not simply a statement of human exceptionalism, Saul's affirmation of his worth and potential is fundamentally underpinned by expectations of middle-class privilege. Furthermore, as the novel develops, these feelings of strength and self-determination will become inherently linked to ideas of masculinity and technology. This association is especially developed through Saul's work with nanotechnics: 'looking through the electron microscope at tiny machines performing their tiny tasks, their incredible completeness […] it satisfied me at some deep level, made me feel life was still all right, that men were still in command of things, masters of the friendly universe' (*IP*, 53); and his relationship to firearms: 'guns were made for men to play with […] the deep delight of perfect machines, of oiled parts clicking in, of something that works – the pleasure a woman could never understand' (*IP*, 172; 174). Consequently, the conflicts arising from class division or economic imbalance are largely overlooked because Saul as the narrator is largely unconcerned with these issues.

By choosing to locate her protagonist within the economically-mobile and privileged population of this society, rather than with the dispossessed 'Outsiders' which are mentioned by Saul sporadically throughout the text, Gee is able to suggest how Saul's investment in lifestyle and privilege shapes his opinions and actions and renders him complicit with a privatised capitalist system. Indeed, as a gifted technician Saul has a promising career within the ever-growing technological industry, supplying him with the wealth necessary to indulge in domestic conveniences, private health care, and any other consumer pleasures he should wish to buy. Consequently, while

Saul's individual perspective often overlooks issues of climate change, governmental policy, and political infrastructure, his act of (un)conscious ignorance is in itself revealing. Johns-Putra argues that '[o]nce the reader becomes attentive to Saul's unreliability as a narrator, it is possible to read his careless description of these early days as part of a broader ideological context for runaway climate change'.[253] Consequently, without having to explicitly state it, and arguably *because* she doesn't explicitly state it, Gee effectively communicates how a young and privileged generation have become detached from the social and political context around them.

Instead, Saul's narrative is firmly focused on the personal, to the extent that outside of himself, his wife Sarah, and his son Luke the narrow focus of the narrative prevents any sustained development of other characters within the novel. Similarly, the events that Saul describes all revolve around him and his family. Yet Saul fails to realise how his desires and demands, even within this family unit, are inscribed by the value systems and identity politics of the society he lives in. When Sarah explains her reluctance to marry, arguing that '[i]t's political […] You never see the political angle', Saul argues back that 'I thought marriage was personal, actually. It's about you and me, and – love and children' (*IP*, 49). Saul is unable to understand or imagine that the act of marriage could be a political statement, or have any ramification beyond the personal. Yet Saul's desire to marry Sarah is motivated by an ideal of masculinity located within the nuclear family, an ideal in which Saul is ideologically invested: 'I could support you' begs Saul as the couple discuss their future, '[y]ou could be a mother, I could be the man … I'd really like to look after you' (*IP*, 43). This difficulty to see the connections between the personal and the political, between the private and public, is one of Saul's key faults, portraying him as a self-absorbed and potentially naïve character. On the other hand, the critique of *The Ice People* depends upon the reader's ability to perceive the connections between the personal and the political which form the heart of the novel's discourse on the inextricable relationship between social and environmental attitudes.

Within the narrative, Gee seems to implicitly link the personal and the environmental/political by constructing recurring parallels between the breakdown of

[253] Adeline Johns-Putra, 'Care, Gender, and the Climate-Changed Future: Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*', *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*, (eds.) Gerry Caravan and Kim Stanley Robinson (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), pp.127-142, (p.136)

Saul and Sarah's relationship and the encroaching ice age. Indeed, their first quarrel is accompanied by the first reports of the ice thickening: 'I made love to her, and her headache went away, and so did that first queer flurry of awareness, light as the first little flutter of snow' (*IP*, 40). The parallelism here connects the two ideas, and this thematic link between their relationship and environmental change continues to be developed throughout the novel. When confirmation of the ice age is published, Saul's shock at this environmental news is compared directly to his relationship with Sarah: 'I had a sudden feeling that I knew what was happening, I knew what was coming, had foreseen it all, had lived it already as my own heart chilled, as our happiness darkened and began to freeze over' (*IP*, 142). Here, Saul envisages the coming ice as a global replay of his own breakdown, the Earth positioned in the role of a potential happiness now 'darkened'.

The parallels between Saul's relationship with Sarah and his environmental awareness are significant because they both describe a failure to recognise early signs of change and an ignorance of the anachronism present in the way they think and act. Knowledge comes too late, and established modes of behaviour are not easily changed. Throughout the novel, Saul struggles to match his expectations of who people are or should be to the reality. Indeed, although Saul describes the gender segregation in his society he cannot understand it because his gender essentialist views prevent him from understanding why women would want to break out of their traditional role. Similarly, throughout the narrative he fails to recognise how his wife Sarah is changing and consequently commits the same mistakes over and over again. When Sarah complains about the heat, Saul responds '"[b]ut you like the heat, don't you?" She turned and stared. I knew her. I loved her' (*IP*, 39). Here, Saul invokes his love for Sarah as the basis of his knowledge, yet fails to comprehend how love is not an equivalent to understanding. Consequently, in drawing links between the personal and the political, the representation of Saul's behaviour towards Sarah and his son can be understood as representative for wider modes of human behaviour.

While in other ecodystopian novels the use of multiple narrative perspectives helps the reader to appreciate the shortcomings of characters like Saul, in *The Ice People*, the single first-person viewpoint means that the reader is encouraged to sympathise with rather than critique Saul's narrative. Commenting on the difficulties

of the first-person narrative, Ivan Stacy identifies a similar conflict in his essay on Mieville's *The City and the City* and Isiguro's *Never Let Me Go*:

> By offering us a contract of fictional testimony in the first person the two novels invite us to empathize with the protagonist-narrators, and hence to read *allegro*. Yet this same empathy can cause us to align ourselves with the values of the narrator: we may fail to train a sufficiently critical lens on the ways in which the narrators and ourselves have been thus maneuvered.[254]

Indeed, there is a danger that a reader who too closely allies him/herself with Saul may fail to question the integrity of his narrative. Consequently, the critique offered by such texts are two-fold: focusing both on the dystopian space, but also on the narrative perspective that represents that space to the reader. Although the subjective, individual experience is vital to constructing the counter-narrative in the dystopian novel, Saul's first-person narrative is problematic because the integrity or value of this experience is undermined by Saul's limited viewpoint and the possibility that he may be both accidently and deliberately misrepresenting his past.

Responding to the argument that discussions around climate change fiction 'ultimately depend on conventional and anthropocentric expectations of narrative stability and reliability', Johns-Putra suggests that postmodern narrative approaches not only offer 'the opportunity to critique [...] the norms and expectations around realism', but 'moreover, to align this with an exposé and de-centering of what, after Plumwood, one might view as the hegemonic centrism of human exceptionalism'.[255] Saul's ambiguous and fragmented narrative in *The Ice People*, which can be read as a postmodernist critique of 'anthropocentric expectations of narrative stability and reliability', thus offers a creative approach to the challenge of representing and communicating the issues around climate change. Indeed, recognising other dystopian narratives where protagonists fail to acknowledge the reality of the society around them, Stacy argues that '[t]hese failures on the part of the protagonists also give rise

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[254] Ivan Stacy, 'Complicity in Dystopia: Failures of Witnessing in China Mieville's *The City and the City* and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 13.2 (2015), 225-250, p.229
[255] Johns-Putra, 'The Rest is Silence', p.6; p.9

to the opportunity for fiction to act as a means of examining the nature of witnessing itself'.[256] In other words, rather than treating the unreliability or limitations of the first-person perspective as something to overcome, Gee makes this question part of the narrative, challenging the reader to engage critically with Saul's testimony.

Indeed, throughout the text Gee draws the reader's attention to the prejudice and gaps in Saul's perspective. One prominent example is how the integrity of Saul's narrative is undermined by his sexist views towards women, especially in the case of Briony, a member of the women's political collective 'Wicca World' of which Sarah is one of the leaders. When Sarah introduces Briony to Saul as Wicca's weapon officer, Saul responds 'I merely thought it ridiculous – how could someone so young and pretty handle weapons?' (*IP*, 119). Later on, when Briony almost attacks Saul when she catches him following her, Saul seems to alter what he thinks he hears to be consistent with his ideas about women: '"Oh god, I nearly killed you," I thought I heard her say, then decided she must have said she nearly *called* me' (*IP*, 176). Finally, when Briony saves Saul and Luke by shooting the attacking mutant Dove he calls it 'beginner's luck' (*IP*, 243). Despite being told explicitly about Briony's experience with weapons by both Sarah and Briony herself ('she got very assertive, and pretended she had once been in the Army. But I poured her a whiskey and calmed her down' (*IP*, 197)), Saul's sexist assumptions prevent him from visualising Briony as anything but a vulnerable dependant and potential love interest. In these moments, the reader is made aware of Saul's narrative unreliability and the gender essentialist views that shape his perspective.

The reliability of Saul's narrative is further compromised by Gee's choice to present Saul's narrative as an account rendered from memory rather than one being relayed in the present. This temporal fragmentation disrupts the linear nature of the narrative as the focus switches throughout between Saul's present moment and his past, constantly reminding the reader of the narrative's retrospectivity. The fact that the narrative is forged from memory implies the possibility of unintentional errors or gaps and Gee highlights the fallibility of Saul's narrative by having him question his perception and recollection of events – '[m]aybe I don't remember it right' (*IP*, 153), '[p]erhaps I imagined them; or dreamed them' (*IP*, 194) – and correcting himself - '[a]nd that was a lie' (*IP*, 190), 'I didn't really believe what I said. Or maybe I did, but

[256] Stacy, 'Complicity in Dystopia', p.248

I don't any more' (*IP*, 153). Other moments are less obvious: 'I told myself it was all for him. I had even sacrificed Briony' (*IP*, 272). In this statement, the phrase 'I told myself' highlights the sentiment as retrospective, suggesting that Saul now doubts his justifications. While these comments signal moments of doubt, they also simultaneously work to demonstrate Saul's apparent honesty, further encouraging the reader's trust and consequently further problematizing issues of unreliability.

As a retrospective account, it is also important to recognise the distance between the thoughts and opinions of the present Saul doing the narrating, and those of his younger self whom he describes. It is the opinions and interests of the present Saul, the old man who shapes the narrative, which at times creates a sort of ironical self-awareness in the depiction of his younger self: 'I understood nothing' (*IP*, 120). In his exploration of the complex nature of focalisation in first-person narration, William F. Edmiston argues that although in first-person retrospective narratives the experiencing focal character and the narrator are the same person, this does not mean these two roles or perspectives should be equated. Instead, he argues, the narrator 'has at least two possibilities at his disposal. He has his own, subjective point of view, and he can also, because of the duality of the subject, adopt the point of view of the hero, his earlier incarnation'.[257] In other words although the narrator may present events from the perceptions of his younger self, he does so from a temporally removed viewpoint. Indeed, referencing Seymour Chatman, Edmiston explains 'A narrator […] does not have a perceptual point of view, because he is outside the story and cannot "perceive" anything about it […] This also holds true for a retrospective narrator: "Typically, he is looking back at his own earlier perceptions-as-a-character. But that looking back is a conception, no longer a perception"'.[258] This temporal gap between the perception of the focal character and the conception of this experience held by the narrator opens up the possibility for either retrospective clarification or narrative unreliability. On one hand, the narrator is not restricted to his earlier perspective and can retrospectively provide further information or reflective hindsight. On the other hand, although the narrator 'usually says *more* than his younger self knew at the

[257] William F. Edmiston, 'Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory', *Poetics Today*, 10.4 (1989), 729-744, p.730
[258] Ibid., p.737; referencing Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p.155

moment of event […] Sometimes, however, ignorance is shared by hero and narrator, precisely because some kinds of information are inaccessible to both', such as the thoughts and motives of other characters in the text.[259] Furthermore, the narrator may choose to withhold information from the reader, or simply forget certain details.

Yet memory not only creates gaps in information, but also threatens to introduce new information that did not exist in the experiencing moment. Indeed, Franz K. Stanzel, also referenced by Edmiston, argues that '[m]any first-person narrators go far beyond transcribing that which they have experienced themselves by letting the narrative arise anew from their imagination'.[260] The relative (un)reliability of the narrative is suggested by its form. Indeed, at points in Saul's narrative, his presentation of people and events seem influenced by a retrospective foreboding or regret. Good examples are the scenes preceding the disastrous abduction of his son, where Saul's knowledge of how events unfold colour his descriptions of his preparation: 'I meant the guns to come in much later, so why did I show them to the guys, the very first time that we all got together?' (*IP*, 171). Despite protesting his innocence at various points in the lead-up to the abduction, here Saul seems to question the innocence of his actions. Although he does go on to explain 'I wanted to impress them, show them I was serious' (*IP*, 171), the paragraph break after this statement creates a pause which invites the reader to doubt Saul. These feelings of regret run throughout this section, and affect Saul's description of the Wicca building as they arrive to carry out the abduction: 'It stood still and gothic in the afternoon light which made it a different red from normal, rawer, duller, more like … meat […] I thought of an animal covered in flies. I wasn't going to kill anyone' (*IP*, 180). This protestation of innocence only makes sense as a retrospective appeal and conflicts with the connotations of death in the description of the building, foreshadowing the blood bath to come.

While the problem of memory and retrospect complicates the reliability of Saul's narrative, the significance of memory is itself bought into question by the way in which climate change as a hyperobject complicates traditional conceptions of time, specifically in the relationships between past, present, and future. 'Hyperobjects

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[259] Ibid., p.731
[260] Franz K. Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative*, translated by Charlotte Goedsche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.215

envelop us,' writes Timothy Morton, 'yet they are so massively distributed in time that they seem to taper off, like a long street stretched into the distance. Time bends them and flattens them […] hyperobjects seem to beckon us further into themselves, making us realize that we're already lost inside them'.[261] Saul's ignorance or indifference towards the global environmental changes occurring around him arguably stems from the fact that he is 'lost' within their vast timespan. Indeed, the quotations at the beginning of the novel allow Gee to introduce the immeasurable timescales of the environmental changes that she represents. When the possibility of cooling temperatures is first reported Saul dismisses the data as faulty, commenting 'no one believed them, no one could envisage that global warming was coming to an end. It was too damn hot' (*IP*, 40). Yet when confirmation is eventually established it arrives with the realisation that the approaching ice age will not only develop quickly, but that they are already in the midst of the change. The result is a feeling of disorientation as ideas of timescale have to be radically rethought: '[M]y heart began to race', recounts Saul, 'I had always assumed – hadn't everyone? – that ice ages took hundreds of years to get established … The findings were clear. *Twenty years*, that was all it took' (*IP*, 142), 'we were almost halfway towards the ice by the time the public kerfuffle started' (*IP*, 148). Here, Gee's decision to represent a quick-acting ice age allows her to concentrate the tensions at the heart of the current global warming crisis, including the realisation that the knowledge has arrived too late.

Consequently, the resulting feeling of disorientation is exacerbated by the way in which thinking about climate change requires us to reconsider the significance of the past in light of new knowledge in the present. Indeed, Timothy Clark argues '[t]he sense of anachrony becomes a general malaise of the Anthropocene, as people come to realize how deeply inherited modes of thought and practice are contaminated by unintended side-effects, producing a general retrospective derangement of meaning'.[262] In other words, established ways of thinking and acting become compromised when they are shown to stem from and be complicit in destructive systems, prompting a reassessment of established historical narratives. The tension between these inherited modes of thought and their applicability to the present lies not

[261] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p.55
[262] Timothy Clark, 'The Deconstructive Turn in Environmental Criticism', *symploke*, 21, Issues 1-2 (2013), 11-26, p.16

only in the difficulty of changing such ways of thinking, but also in the retrospective consequences it is too late to change. Musing that adventure stories are a thing of the past, Nola Parks reflects '[m]y mind reeled back to walks in rain forests now chopped to chipboard, to swimming in bays whose blue water had turned grey and foul, to being young in a world of wonders with no prescience of it being torn down around you … preserved in old novels' (*TSS*, 72). The adventure stories that Francis enjoys becomes subject to the sense of anachrony described by Clark above as Nola recognises how they rely on natural environments no longer present. This sense of 'malaise' or unease therefore lies in the sense that it is always too late, that like Saul we have gone '[b]lindly, blindly through life's night. Missing the landmarks. Missing the stars' (*IP*, 148).

Commenting on the temporal fragmentation and retrospective narrative in *Oryx and Crake*, another post-apocalyptic ecodystopian novel, Katherine Snyder argues that '[i]f the doubled temporality of trauma requires repetition without origin and an endless regression of love and loss, it nonetheless also permits repetition with a difference, repetition as reworking. Retrodetermination does not mean that the past can be changed, but it does allow for the possibility that the present meanings of past events can be'.[263] For Snyder, Jimmy's retelling of his past, like Saul's, becomes a way of working through the guilt and trauma of the past in a way that opens up new meanings in the present. Memory therefore plays a vital role in the construction of the dystopian counter-narrative, serving as a tool for assigning significance to past actions and failures to act. Significantly, questions of history and memory have always played an important role in the dystopian genre. 'Denials of history and tradition like those in *Brave New World* are quite common in dystopian fiction', argues Keith Booker, 'where a lack of meaningful dialogue with the past often paradoxically plays an important role in the impoverishment of the present'.[264] In contrast, Baccolini has identified memory as a key component in the creation of the dystopian counter-narrative, arguing that 'the dystopian protagonist often reclaims a suppressed and subterranean memory that is forward looking in its enabling force, liberating in its

[263] Katherine V. Snyder, '"Time to go": The Post-Apocalyptic and the Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*', *Studies in the Novel*, 43.4 (2011), 470-489, p.485
[264] Keith M. Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p.63

deconstruction of the official story, and its reaffirmation of alternative ways of knowing and living in the world'.[265] The suppression and recovery of memory are therefore central to the narrative of resistance in the novel. However, as mentioned earlier, the periods of history preceding the dystopian society in ecodystopian fiction have not been deliberately destroyed but have instead become obscure and misremembered. In the Greenhouse culture of Turner's *The Sea and Summer* '[t]he old public library had been preserved and in a culture of tapes and data banks its content were fabulous', but other than library staff '[n]o other member of the public was there […] History was *there*, glooming uselessly in the street' (*TSS*, 193). Consequently, instead of simply recovering these periods of history, memory in the ecodystopian novel often serves to revaluate the significance of the past in light of present knowledge, introducing a sense of anachrony alongside themes of memory and regret.

However, climate change not only rewrites the relationship to the past but also calls into question the possibilities of the future. Indeed, apocalyptic notions of climate change threaten the relevance or importance of the present moment through their eradication of the future, a threat present in the arctic wasteland in the opening of *The Ice People*: 'In the new Days, people don't risk words. If you open your mouth, the ice blows in, hurting the teeth no dentists care for. Drying your throat. Piercing your soul. Filling your heart with loneliness. Best keep the old words close to your chest … They don't hurt me if I write them down' (*IP*, 66). The emptiness of the non-future defies language, yet Saul's act of written storytelling becomes a way of negotiating this void. Sarah Dillon argues that 'Saul initially figures his narrative, his reproductively futural tale, as a defence against his death'.[266] However, his narrative 'is not a defence against his end, but […] his compulsion, that which holds him together, that which shores up his identity'.[267] When Saul begins his narrative, he hopes his story will keep him alive by entertaining the wild boys who might otherwise eat him. However, as the novel continues, Saul's act of narrative becomes a more

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[265] Raffaella Baccolini, 'Journeying Through the Dystopian Genre: Memory and Imagination in Burdekin, Orwell, Atwood, and Piercy', *Viaggi in Utopia*, (eds.) R. Baccolini, V. Fortunati and N. Minerva (Ravenna: Longo, 1996), pp.343-357, (p.345)
[266] Sarah Dillon, 'Literary Equivocation: Reproductive Futurism and The Ice People', *Maggie Gee: Critical Essays*, (eds.) Sarah Dillon and Caroline Edwards (Canterbury: Gylphi Limited, 2015), pp.101-132, (p.120)
[267] Ibid.

personal exercise in identity formation and preservation: 'I have found a hiding place and written as if it would save my life, though I don't suppose anything can save me. I mean to finish my story though' (*IP*, 66). Instead of protecting himself from the future, Saul's act of narration appeals to the existence of a future in order to validate his existence in the past and present. More specifically, like the father in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Saul's appeal to the future is embodied in his son, and it is in relation to his son that Saul gives meaning to his past actions.

If climate change complicates relationships to the past and to the future, Saul's storytelling becomes a way of making sense of his place in time and space. Retrospectively, he is able to assign meaning to his past actions and to understand their unintended side-effects, although this understanding remains incomplete. His story becomes a way of dealing with his experience of climate change and the relationships to his wife and son, two experiences which for Saul are intertwined. However, Saul's act of narration also insists on the continuance of a future, and his own significance in this future, because it presupposes a reader for this narrative. The fact that Saul chooses to record his story on paper implies that he intends it for an audience, for 'whoever will read it' (*IP*, 13). Similarly, in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, storytelling becomes a way of piecing together and reshaping the meaning of past events as Jimmy not only retells his story to himself, but also takes on the role of storyteller and historian for the Crakers – a genetically-engineered humanoid species which replace humanity. As Jimmy confronts his past, he is also able to write back against it, and in doing so constructs new narratives that allow him to build utopian movements towards the future out of the failures of his and humanity's past.

Consequently, the relationship between past, present, and future is altered in the ecodystopian narrative compared to classical dystopia. While Booker argues that the disconnection between past and present implies 'that the present can be enriched through learning from the past', a suggestion that 'is clearly based on traditional liberal notions of historical progress', ecodystopian narratives complicate this idea.[268] Instead, Clark argues that '[e]cocritical reading cannot just be some act of supposed retrieval, but now becomes also a measure of the irreversible break in consciousness and understanding, an emergent unreadability'.[269] Although these texts are critical of

[268] Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature*, p.63
[269] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p.62

what has been described variously as a postmodern 'hyper-present' or neoliberalism's 'temporal immediacy', the ecodystopian novel also introduces a sense that the past is unreadable due to the anachrony produced by climate change.[270] As a result, the past cannot simply be retrieved, but must be rewritten and reconstructed. Consequently, while Baccolini posits memory as an enabling force that allows the protagonist to resist the hegemonic narrative, in these novels the retrospective stance itself becomes a force of resistance through its efforts to bring present knowledge and understanding to the events of the past. This revaluation of the past is a particularly prominent theme in post-apocalyptic dystopian novels such as Gee's *The Ice People* and Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy. In these texts, it is not only the period between the author's present and the dystopian space that becomes a sort of future history, but the dystopian society itself belongs to Stock's concept of future-as-past as it exists in the narrative past before its destruction by some form of apocalyptic event. In these temporally-divided narratives, the representation of the dystopian society becomes an act of recovery and reconstruction as isolated survivors such as Saul and Jimmy offer remembered scenes from their past.

Despite its inherent questions of reliability, storytelling itself is a recurring motif in dystopian and post-apocalyptic literature, opposed to the erasure of the past. 'Bearing witness, through an act of narrative, is therefore an act of resistance against this destruction of memory', writes Ivan Stacy, but '[w]itnessing is only completed when experience is transmitted through narration'.[271] The narratives the protagonists construct practice a self-reflexive engagement with the past to enact a process of resistance and redemption which challenges the hegemonic power structures of the dystopian order, or, in the post-apocalyptic novel, the apocalyptic destruction of human history. Furthermore, as a motif that questions the nature of representation, the concept of storytelling has the potential to contribute to the ecocritical questioning of the novel's capacity for representing and communicating climate change. Writing on the value of the novel Peter Boxall suggests that it 'is perhaps only when one tells a story about the world that it comes into any sort of perceptibility, even if the process of storytelling itself admits, necessarily, of a degree of falsehood, a degree of

[270] Ursula K. Heise, *Chronoschisms*, p.26; Mathias Nilges, 'Neoliberalism and the time of the novel', *Textual Practice*, 29.2 (2015), 357-377, p.368
[271] Stacy, 'Complicity in Dystopia', p.226

invention'.[272] Similarly, Jonathan Gottschall argues that '[i]f the purpose of memory is to provide a photo-perfect record of the past, then memory is deeply flawed. But if the purpose of memory is to allow us to live better lives, then the plasticity of memory may actually be useful. Memory may be faulty by design'.[273] Explaining how memories are often retrospectively shaped by their subject, he continues 'we misremember the past in a way that allows us to maintain protagonist status in the stories of our own lives'.[274] In other words, the invention involved in Saul's retelling of his past becomes an integral part of his attempt to understand and communicate the events that took place. This retelling works both on a personal level, for Saul himself, and on a wider level, as a metaphor for humanity's past exploitation of the natural environment. Even as Saul continues to misinterpret and misrepresent, the process of storytelling demonstrates an attempt to come to terms with past decisions and misunderstandings.

Consequently, in comparison to some of the first-person diary and journal narratives mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the fact that the reliability and value of Saul's narrative is deliberately called into question is significant. In particular, the foregrounding of the narrative as a deliberately forged story is another example of a postmodernist strategy at work in Gee's novel. Although this narrative artifice has further implications for the narrative reliability, this uncertainty is what primes the reader to question how they read Saul's narrative, switching from 'an empathetic *allegro* reading' to a more critical '*lento*' reading.[275] Significantly, similar questions about storytelling and interpretation are evident in other ecodystopian texts. In *The Stone Gods*, Billie's first-person narrative of the first chapter becomes an act of storytelling when it is found as a bundle of papers on the Tube in the third chapter by another Billie 65 million years later, carrying the title of the novel 'The Stone Gods'. Existing in both time periods, this narrative is both a journal written in protest against the hegemonic narrative, as well as a forgotten relic of the past prompting the reader

[272] Peter Boxall, *The Value of the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.74
[273] Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010), p.170
[274] Ibid.
[275] J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002), referenced in Ivan Stacy, 'Complicity in Dystopia: Failures of Witnessing in China Mieville's The City and the City and Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 13.2 (2015) 225-250

to question the world around them. Extracts from this first narrative are scattered throughout this later chapter, creating thematic links between the different temporal periods and contributing to the concept of the 'repeating world' that characterises Winterson's novel. Indeed, the three parts of the novel are three versions of the same love story, presenting three versions of the same characters, challenging the idea of a single version of themselves or their story. Through its fragmentation and repetition, this narrative palimpsest questions the myth and the attraction of apocalyptic endings so often associated with the environmental crisis. Instead, argues Hope Jennings, '*The Stone Gods* demands a closer examination of the ways in which our beliefs about the End are inextricably tied to how we fantasize our beginnings'.[276] Rejecting a definitive apocalyptic ending, *The Stone Gods* instead brings the reader back again and again to confront the same environmental challenges and the same ongoing excuses.

While these acts of storytelling figure as acts of resistance against the dystopian societies presented, in other novels the theme of storytelling is part of a wider questioning of the value and use of art. In Turner's *The Sea and Summer* the main storyline of the novel, focused on the Conway family, is embedded into a post-apocalyptic frame narrative set a thousand years later when the cities of the twenty-first century have become historical curiosities for the attention of academics and tourists. Within this frame, the core narrative is presented as a novel written by Professor Lenna Wilson, an academic researching the history and collapse of the 'Greenhouse Culture' in Australia. Rather than a work of fiction, Lenna's novel is introduced as a 'Historical Reconstruction' based on recorded testimonies, 'on tape and in data banks' (*TSS*, 16), consequently presenting the core narrative as a work of reconstructed history. Although it is the core dystopian narrative that forms the bulk of Turner's novel, the frame narrative performs an important function in shaping how the reader interacts and understands this central text. However, Lenna's presence as author is absent completely from this central narrative, and although the reader is informed that it is a reconstruction, there is no evidence of this reconstruction in the narrative. Consequently, although the use of multiple narrators works to undermine the views of some of its characters, this element of the frame narrative could do more

[276] Hope Jennings, '"A Repeating World": Redeeming the Past and Future in the Utopian Dystopia of Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*', *Interdiscplinary Humanities*, 27.2 (2010), 132-146, p.134

to question the representational value and integrity of these first-person journal entries and raise the question of the status of the central narrative as a piece of climate fiction itself.

Instead, critical reflection of the representational capacity of art is predominantly explored though the motif of acting which runs throughout the text. Like storytelling and narrative, invention is integral to acting's ability to make the reader perceive something that is not actually there: 'You don't have a dagger on stage. He *acts* it. He makes you see it as he does […] The audience has to be looking for the dagger, not watching you! Their eyes have to be behind yours, looking out' (*TSS*, 133; 134). Acting becomes a way of altering and creating perspectives. Within the central narrative, acting and role play are shown to be essential to Teddy Conway as he learns to think from alternative perspectives, beginning an education in empathy that leads him to a more responsible engagement with his society. Indeed, although his ability to act the role of Swill is first put to use in infiltrating their tower blocks for the interests of State surveillance and security, it is only by doing so that Teddy questions the social stereotypes he has been fed in his childhood. By the end of the narrative, acting becomes a form of communication able to share common values and bridge class divides as Teddy acts out his stories in mime (*TSS*, 353-4).

The motif of acting is also prominent in the frame narrative where the protagonist Andra Andrasson hopes to create a play based around the Greenhouse Culture presented in Lenna's historical novel. Like Teddy, Andra views acting as an act of invention and conjury that has the potential to bring the past into existence in the present. In particular, his attentions focus around Billy Kovacs, the Swill tower boss, as the character that he wishes to portray: 'In the density of the vision conjured by his creativity he was sweat-stinking, revolted, need-driven and guilty before the 70,000 ghosts of Tower Twenty-three' (*TSS*, 12). Andra's choice of subject is significant. Billy is arguably the central character in *The Sea and Summer*, at the centre of the majority of the novel's action and political debate, yet he is notably silent. Unlike the other main characters, no part of the narrative is given from his perspective and he consequently has no narrative voice in Lenna's novel. Furthermore, the reasons for this absence are never considered, although narrative realism would suggest that his lack of education means he'd be unlikely to keep a journal. On the other hand, because he is in many ways the central conundrum of the novel, Billy's voice is a

notable and meaningful absence. Indeed, the fact that Andra struggles again and again to become him suggests a difficulty in the imagination and representation of someone so far removed from his own reality.

The question of literature's capacity to represent or challenge climate change is foregrounded in the final pages of the text. Having read Lenna's novel, the character of Andra writes to her about his failure to draw workable material from it for his play: 'Your novel is not at fault', he writes, 'I should have seen from the beginning that these people struggled in the nets of local culture and their own personalities; they did not represent the collapsing world. It might be impossible, I feel, to create a group that *could* represent it' (*TSS*, 361). Quoting this meta-authorial conclusion to the novel, Ursula Heise argues, 'Turner seems to question his own narrative procedure and its ability to bridge precisely the gap between stories of individuals and accounts of global transformations' which she underlines as 'one of the central challenges for cultural representations of climate change'.[277] Indeed, although Lenna insists that '[t]he little human glimpses *do* help, if only in confirming our confidence in steadfast courage' (*TSS*, 362), the description of these perspectives as 'glimpses' confirms the idea that her novel and therefore Turner's novel fails to be truly representative of the crisis on a global scale. On the other hand, the foregrounding of the limitations of this narrative structure consisting of multiple, partial and subjective perspectives highlights the contingency of such narrative forms and their resistance to complete or authoritative versions of the past. This postmodernist strategy presents a self-reflexive acknowledgement of the constructed nature of both the central narrative and the novel as a whole. Rather than attempt to overcome the representational challenge posed by climate change and global environmental phenomena, texts like Gee's *The Ice People* and Turner's *The Sea and Summer* instead incorporate the shortcomings and conflicts inherent to the representational capacity of the novel into the text themselves.

Writing about anachronistic ecocritical readings of texts that precede the concept of global warming, Timothy Clark argues that

> For a critic to evaluate competing versions of the significance of a text increasingly involves something as near to impossible as anticipating

[277] Heise, *Sense of Place, Sense of Planet*, p.208

> the hindsight of a future that must now be conceived in terms beyond simple enlightenment conceptions of progressive human self-liberation and self-understanding.[278]

Yet 'anticipating the hindsight' of the future is exactly what the ecodystopian narrative attempts to do. By offering speculative visions of worlds radically altered by climate change, these texts not only aim to make the consequences of environmental exploitation more tangible, but transform future into past in a switch of perspective which encourages a more critical view of the present. In fact, although some of these novels have been explicitly identified as retrospective narratives, all dystopian narratives to some extent involve a sense of retrospect as the reader is encouraged to view their present as the fictional world's past.

The introduction to this chapter presented the argument that climate change is a phenomenon which challenges the representational capacity of the novel. In particular, it challenges the conventional focus on individual subjectivity and development which is central to the dystopian narrative. '[D]oes the challenge of representing major ecological issues', asks Clark, 'mean acknowledging the limits of human capacity for engagement beyond certain scales in space or time, and beyond the spheres of immediate identification or empathy?'.[279] Indeed, the texts considered here all adopt conventional ideas of protagonists and plot, and many choose to present narratives focalized through a first-person perspective, despite its apparent limitations. Yet, as acknowledged in this chapter, climate change is not a phenomenon that can be viewed from outside. Despite the fact that its scale exceeds human perception, climate change *is* experienced as a lived reality. But these experiences are multiple and partial. Consequently, while some critics have condemned the anthropocentric limitations of the novel, it is the acknowledgement of these limitations that may allow the novel to move forward. In particular, the ecodystopian narratives considered here seem, to some extent, equally aware of the challenges of communicating and understanding the environmental crisis.

Significantly, the dystopian genre has always been centred on questions of knowledge and alternative knowledge. The counter-narrative of the dystopian protagonist aims to challenge hegemonic discourses, both within the novel and outside

[278] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p.64
[279] Ibid., p.182

it as it offers a critical reflection on contemporary society. However, the ecodystopian novel brings further questions about the value and limitations of the individual protagonist, complicating the dystopian counter-narrative by exposing it as flawed, conflicted, and multiple. The use of multiple narrators in these texts works to expose the limitations of the individual's perspective. Rather than a single individual disillusioned with their surrounding reality, the reader is instead presented with a fragmented collage. Yet polyphonic narratives not only offer multiple perspectives, but also help to capture the conflict between the specific drive behind the novel's plot and the larger, contextual imperative of environmental crisis, and subsequently the conflict between the individual's plight and the need for collective action. Such narratives question the nature of the conventional dystopian protagonist and the values which this figure champions. Concepts of individual rights, freedom, and independence are measured against alternative demands for environmental responsibility. While polyphonic narratives open up new perspectives beyond the individual, other ecodystopian novels use genre-blurring with post-apocalyptic fiction to create temporally fragmented narratives that further interrogate the individual protagonist. Choosing to use a first-person focalized narrative, authors like Margaret Atwood and Maggie Gee manipulate the limitations and unreliability of this perspective in order to communicate the difficulties and tensions involved in perceiving, understanding and reacting to the global phenomenon of environmental change.

Caught between the immateriality produced by growing information technologies and the overwhelming materiality of the environmental crisis, Peter Boxall argues that the novel plays a privileged role in negotiating between these two spaces. 'The novel urge is the movement of the non-existent within existent things', he writes. 'It is this capacity, to live in the world without being of it, that is the particular gift of the novel to our generation, now, as we seek to reconceive our relations to our transformed bodies to our sickening planet'.[280] The novel is thus a space of potential, where creativity and imagination interact with existing reality in order to forge new meanings. The postmodernist reflection on the role of memory and storytelling, central in so many of these narratives, becomes one way of moving between the failures of the past and new possibilities in the future, locating utopian

[280] Boxall, *The Value of the Novel*, p.90; 91

potential within the dystopian text. Commenting on the challenge of representing the environment, Lawrence Buell argues that ‘our reconstructions of environment cannot be other than skewed and partial. Even if this were not so, even if human perception could perfectly register environmental stimuli, literature could not. Even when it professes the contrary, art removes itself from nature’.[281] Instead, he argues that ‘[t]he capacity of the stylized image to put the reader or viewer in touch with the environment is precisely what needs stressing as a counter to the assumptions that stylization must somehow work against outer mimesis or take precedence over it’.[282] Although Buell goes on to privilege non-fiction over fiction, this argument stands true for the novel. The literary narrative, like all art forms, is a form of mediation, producing not a mirror image of what it seeks to represent, but an interpretation. It is through such acts of interpretation that the subjects of the narrative are made meaningful, but, furthermore, it is through foregrounding the acts of interpretation themselves that the motives and limitations of these narrative forms become apparent.

[281] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*, p.102
[282] Ibid., pp.97-8

CHAPTER FOUR: POSTHUMAN POTENTIAL

The phenomenon of global climate change presents an ontological disruption in the relationship between humanity and the environment as the concept of nature becomes increasingly unstable. 'In the past', argues Timothy Clark, 'nature may have seemed to offer a stable frame to give basic structure to human life, as with the immediate cultural overtones of the seasons […] A sense of entrapment, unpredictability and fragility becomes dominant now'.[283] Instead of an enduring background presence, nature seems to announce itself violently into the foreground or else, as a meaningful concept, dissolve altogether. 'In our age of ecological panic', argues Timothy Morton, 'what we are losing is precisely this sense of "nature" or "the environment" as an enveloping, nonhuman and/or non-sentient "world". This world provided a background to our foreground, offering meaningfulness precisely in its opacity, acting as a screen on which we project our fantasies'.[284] Such a sense of 'nature-as-background' is particularly apparent in the novel where the landscape often provides the canvas against which the author charts the journey, both material and psychological, of the protagonist. The sense of nature as 'a screen on which we project our fantasies' becomes particularly apparent in classic utopian fiction where the environment is envisaged in terms of Arcadia - a mixture of the unspoilt wilderness and managed garden – and presented as beautiful, plentiful, and exhibiting a 'natural' order. Indeed, as Kate Soper has underlined, '[t]he idea of "nature" as that which we are not, which we are external to, which ceases to be fully "natural" once we have mixed our labour with it, or which we have destroyed by our interventions, also propels a great deal of thought and writing about "getting back" to nature, or rescuing it from its human corruption'.[285] Such utopian narratives often play on these same tropes, suggesting that it is by learning to live in harmony with this "natural" order that humanity in texts such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), William Morris's *News from*

[283] Timothy Clark, 'Nature, Post Nature', *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment*, (ed.) Louise Westling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.75-89, (p.84)
[284] Timothy Morton, 'Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals', *SubStance*, 37.3, 'Issue 117: The Political Animal' (2008), 73-96, pp.93-4
[285] Kate Soper, *What is Nature?: Culture, Politics and the non-Human* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.16

Nowhere (1890), and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) are able to create utopian societies. Consequently, the natural world is presented as a stable, harmonious, and passive setting on which visions of social and political utopia can be constructed.

In contrast, in the classic dystopian narratives of Huxley and Zamyatin the natural world is positioned in opposition to the dystopian society. The establishment of the 'unnatural' totalitarian regimes which control and organise their human populations are represented as going hand in hand with an exploitation or rejection of the natural world. Where examples of 'untamed' or wild nature are presented, they play a redemptive role in opposition to industrial growth and social oppression. Commenting on this characterisation, Kate Soper argues that '[u]ntamed nature begins to figure as a positive and redemptive power only at the point where human mastery over its forces is extensive enough to be experienced as itself a source of danger and alienation'.[286] Nature in such examples may be chaotic and dangerous, yet it retains a sense of an enduring natural order or sphere that is opposed to the artificial or man-made. In doing so, it forms a backdrop against which the criticism of the dystopian order can be constructed. Significantly, regardless of how it is presented, the natural world or environment is figured as what is 'other' to the human, offering meaning through its contrast with the type of social and political structures portrayed.

However, as Morton highlights, in this era of environmental crisis such a sense of nature as an 'enveloping world' that somehow surrounds but remains distinct from humanity is disrupted by its sudden pronounced material presence. Rejecting previous conceptions of sublime nature as something 'over yonder', Morton argues that '[f]or nature to be sublime, we have to be at least a little distant from it. A toxic leak is not sublime by the time it has entered the lungs. Global warming is not sublime, it is far more disorienting, and painful, than that'.[287] The meaning of terms like 'nature' and 'environment' demand rethinking as previously everyday aspects of the environment accepted as a background to daily life gain new significance in their proximity. Seasonal temperatures become suspect in discussions of global warming, while storms and floods are no longer 'natural' disasters, but somehow connected to agricultural and industrial activities distributed across the globe. This disruption is not only caused by

[286] Kate Soper, 'Nature/"nature"', *FutureNatural: Nature, Science, Culture*, (eds.) George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and Tim Putnam (London: Routledge, 1996), 22-34, p.25
[287] Morton, 'Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals', p.92

the impact of physical and material changes in the climate, but also by scientific innovations which have allowed humanity to become newly aware of the diverse range of forces and lifeforms that shape our environment and our own bodies.

The ecodystopian novel plays host to this rebellious nature which refuses the role of background and rejects a characterisation of passive materiality. Throughout this thesis, I have drawn upon ecocriticism's challenge of the human/nature dualism in order to suggest how the ecodystopian novel, presenting a society which emerges from an interaction of human and natural factors, destabilises traditional understandings of nature and the nonhuman environment. In particular, these texts challenge the closed, anthropocentric nature of traditional dystopian narratives. What emerge instead are human societies that shape and are shaped by their surrounding environments, producing complex ecologies that reject totalising explanations in favour of multiple and fragmented perspectives. Faced by the extensive scale of their environmental contexts, these perspectives can only offer shifting and partial understandings of the power structures and pressures which create the ecodystopian society. Yet the disruption caused by the global environmental crisis and the threat it poses to future human survival not only leads us to reformulate the ways in which we think about the environment and its impact on human society, but subsequently to rethink the ways in which we understand human identity, and, more importantly still, the values such an identity is predicated on.

Significantly, notions of what constitutes the human have consistently been articulated in comparison to the nonhuman natural world that surrounds them. It is not simply that the term 'nature', as Kate Soper puts it, 'refers to everything which is not human', but that '[a]ttitudes to nature map the exclusions, devaluations and revaluations through which Western humanity has constituted and continuously re-thought its own identity'.[288] In particular, the divide between man and animal so famously put forward by René Descartes in the seventeenth century continues to exercise a cultural influence to this day. Challenging such divides has been a central thread of ecocriticism's work to revise anthropocentric conceptions of nonhuman nature and attribute value to non-human life. Referring to the dualistic constructions of reason and nature, mind and body put forward by rationalist ideologies, Plumwood argues that:

[288] Soper, *What is Nature?*, p.15; 10

> [t]he inability to see humans as ecological and embodied beings that permeates western culture is one of the major legacies of this aspect of rationalism […] Humans are seen as the only rational species, the only real subjectivities and actors in the world, and nature is a background substratum which is acted upon.[289]

Yet, with the disruption of this background, this relationship must be reformulated on both sides. Provoked by growing anxieties about the degradation and pollution of the natural world, ecocriticism as a theoretical field seeks to demonstrate how conceptual and cultural understandings of nature are directly implicated in how humanity utilizes the environment and play an important role in shaping the discourses of conservation and sustainability. Rethinking human identity in relationship to the new and disruptive agency of the natural world thus becomes a central task in confronting a climate-changed future.

Readdressing the destabilising effect of climate change already explored in the previous chapters of this study, this chapter considers the effects of this ecocritical deconstruction on the question of human survival and utopian hope in the ecodystopian novel. Whereas traditional dystopian novels often locate their counter-narratives within a return to a liberal humanist characterisation of the human, what is striking about many of the novels analysed in this thesis is the recurring presence of the posthuman: the child-like, robotic Doves in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*, the android Spike and the mutated forest children in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, and the Cheshires and the genetically engineered Emiko, the eponymous posthuman of Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*. Whether the product of genetic mutation, biological engineering, mechanical construction, or even cultural education, the posthuman stands as a central figure in these narratives, expressing the permeability of the human/nature dichotomy and complicating questions of free will, rationality, and self-determination.

This chapter focuses on three examples in particular: the Crakers in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, the uploading of human consciousness in Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway: A Novel*, and the rifters in Peter Watt's *Starfish*. While the first part of this

[289] Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.19

chapter introduces the concept of the posthuman, the second part seeks to understand how ecodystopian narratives use representations of the posthuman to reconsider the relationship between humanity and a climate changed world, posing sustainability as both a biological and cultural challenge. The final part of this chapter looks at how new constructions of posthuman identity emerge from humanity's material embodiment in the nonhuman environment, and suggests how the complex, multiple, and fluid nature of these relationships shapes the space of hope and potential within the novel. In doing so, the ecodystopian novel not only interrogates current concepts of nature and humanity, but also suggests how such concepts may have to adapt in the face of radical environmental change.

PART ONE: THE POSTHUMAN

In an era when genetic engineering, biotechnological developments, and artificial intelligence seem to promise new and exciting possibilities for future human and non-human life, it is unsurprising that representations of the posthuman have become an increasingly popular occurence in science and speculative fiction. Yet, the posthuman can take many forms and, as Francesca Ferrando explains, '[t]he label "posthuman" is often evoked in a generic and all-inclusive way' as an 'umbrella term', 'creating methodological and theoretical confusion between experts and non-experts alike'.[290] The term posthuman is used to describe physical, technological or genetic alterations to the body (a robotic, prosthetic leg or the introduction of foreign genetic material) which destabilise existing ontological conceptions of humanity. However, it also demarcates a distinct theoretical and ideological perspective that challenges the traditional ideas and values taken to constitute human identity, which in part emerges from this possibility of physical alteration. For example, the mixing of human and animal DNA in novels such as H.G. Wells *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) raises questions about the onotological division between man and animal, while the representation of artificial intelligence and emotion in novels like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) destabilises the unique idea of self-

[290]Francesca Ferrando, 'Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Difference and Relations', *Existenz*, 8.2 (2013), 26-32, p.26 <http://www.bu.edu/paideia/existenz/volumes/Vol.8-2Ferrando.pdf> [Accessed: 26/07/14]

consciousness and intelligence as a defining human characteristic. Meanwhile, the representation of cloning in Kazuo Isiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) challenges the notion of artificial versus natural life to raise the question of what it means to be fully human. In each of these examples, the posthuman is defined in opposition to existing notions of human identity, and accordingly, my analysis of the posthuman begins with a brief overview of the values which have traditionally been taken to constitute the human. Although there is not space here for a comprehensive introduction to posthumanist theory, I will briefly outline the meaning of the term 'posthuman', as well as its critical background.

While human beings are identifiable as a distinct biological species (although the defined boundaries of this biological category are themselves suspect in posthumanist critique), definitions of 'humanness' are traditionally defined according to liberal humanist terms which emphasise certain qualities supposedly unique or exceptional to humanity.[291] In particular, humanism privileges the mind over the body, focusing on the possession of reason and independent thought which are demonstrated through the use of language and characterise the human as an autonomous and rational being. Philosophers such as Descartes, described by Neil Badmington as 'one of the founders of humanism'[292], writes that these qualities separate humanity from animals, arguing that reason 'is naturally equal in all men' and 'alone makes us men and distinguishes us from the beasts'.[293] Such distinctions remain current today. For modern humanist organisations like the British Humanist Association, it is the possession of reason that allows humanity to make ethical decisions based on distinctions of right and wrong. Indeed, the need for human dignity and the human capacity for moral thought are often held up as underpinning the conception of civilisation. Furthermore, such valuations continue to support the mind/body duality, with transhumanists such as Nick Bostrom arguing that '[i]t is not our human shape or the details of our current human biology that define what is valuable about us, but rather our aspirations and ideals, our experiences and the kinds of lives we live'.[294]

[291] For challenges to the species distinction see, for example, Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014)
[292] Badmington, Neil, 'Theorizing Posthumanism', *Cultural Critique*, 53 (2003), 10-27, p.16
[293] Descartes, René, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. by Donald Cress, 4th edn (Indianapolis; Cambridge : Hackett, c1998), p.1
[294] Nick Bostrom, *The Transhumanist FAQ*, version 1.5 (2003) <transhumanism.org/resources/faq15.doc> [Accessed: 02/08/14], p.3

Such arguments continue to privilege the mind in definitions of the human, regarding alterations to the body as aesthetic changes rather than indicating any fundamental alteration to the concept of identity.

It is no coincidence that dystopian narratives often privilege these same humanist values in the narratives of resistance enacted by their isolated and autonomous protagonists. As argued in Chapter One, the role of the individual is central to the dystopian narrative, and it is their capacity for independent agency which is suppressed in the dystopian society, either through oppressive technological control or biological reprogramming. For Peter Boxall, this control presents 'a "dystopia of the body reduced, even dismembered" by the technological apparatuses of the state that are bent on disaggregating the human, on undermining the procedures that allow for secure tenancy within the body, and within the cubic centimetres inside the skull'.[295] Identity is therefore grounded with the concept of the bounded self. When this boundary is compromised, the removal of freewill and independent rationality through the individual's integration into the machine of society transforms the dystopian citizen into something less than human. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Big Brother demands that its citizens relinquish reason to instead be able to believe, if so commanded, that two plus two is five. Living under constant surveillance and without the need or ability to think for themselves, these citizens become increasingly animal-like. The workers in Winston's office are described as 'beetle-like': 'little dumpy men, growing stout very early in life, with shorts legs, swift scuttling movements and far inscrutable faces with very small eyes' (*NEF*, p.69). Meanwhile, in *Brave New World* an Epsilon-Minus, one of the biologically manipulated and hypnotised masses, is described as 'a small *simian creature*' who 'smiled up with a kind of *doggily* expectant adoration into the face of his passengers' (*BNW*, 50; italics mine). Without independent reason and autonomy, the citizens of dystopia are dehumanised, become an unthinking and purposeless 'swarm' (*BNW*, 54).

In recent years, scientific, technological and biological developments have challenged traditional conceptions of the human by suggesting how the human body can be altered and artificially created through scientific interventions, or by

[295] Peter Boxall, 'Science, Technology, and the Posthuman', *The Cambridge Companion to British Fiction since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.127-142, (p.132)

challenging the uniqueness of the human consciousness through demonstrations of artificial intelligence. While a humanist perspective focuses on the dystopian potential of such infringements on the individual, posthumanism explores how these developments suggest new forms of human identity that undermine and surpass the limitations of liberal humanist conceptions of the self. Feminist criticism has played an important role in this post-structural deconstruction of the enlightenment subject, presenting notions of gender and identity as constructed and performative. Consequently, as Poster argues, '[t]he rational, autonomous individual who pre-exists society, as Descartes and Locke maintained', is exposed 'as a western cultural figure associated with specific groups and practices, not as the unquestioned embodiment of some universal'.[296] The essential characteristics that are taken to define humanity are thus revealed to be part of a hierarchical cultural system.

Posthumanist criticism, developed by a range of critics including Francis Fukuyama, Elaine Graham, Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Bill McKibben, and Cary Wolfe, emerges as part of this attempt to reconfigure the way in which the concept of human is defined. In particular, it seeks to understand the implications of new technological developments such as virtual reality, prosthetics, and genetic engineering for the human being. Significantly, posthumanism rejects the ideology of transhumanism, often characterised as a form of technoscientific posthumanism. Transhumanism celebrates the potential of new medical and scientific advances to transcend the existing limitations of the human body, using genetic manipulation or surgical inventions to enhance and improve the human physically and mentally. Yet, as Elaine Graham underlines '[w]hether the body is augmented, rebuilt or obsole […] the essential, rational self endures unimpeded'.[297] In other words, transhumanism is just a further reiteration of humanist philosophy. In contrast, posthumanism questions how human consciousness and rationality would necessarily change in reaction to such bodily alterations, refusing the disconnect between body and mind. In fact, the

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[296] Mark Poster, 'Postmodern Virtualities', in *FutureNatural: Nature, Science, Culture*, (eds.) George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and Tim Putnam (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.183-202, (p.198)
[297] Elaine L. Graham, ' *Representations of the post/human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.9

posthuman is not indicated solely by the physical changes to or loss of the body, but equally by the shift in identity caused by this changed configuration.

Furthermore, posthumanism is not antihumanism. As Francesca Ferrando clarifies, '[a]ntihumanism fully acknowledges the consequences of the "death of Man"' while 'posthumanism does not rely on any symbolic death' but 'is aware of the fact that hierarchical humanistic presumptions cannot be easily dismissed or erased'.[298] In other words, while antihumanism rejects the significance of humanist values and philosophy, posthumanism instead formulates a new approach to these values, accepting, as Neil Badmington argues, that 'the "post-" of posthumanism does not (and, moreover, cannot) mark or make an absolute break from the legacy of humanism'.[299] Posthumanism is thus a continuing practice which consistently questions the values which underpin conceptions of human identity, rejecting traditional dualities and offering a more fluid, pluralistic approach. It is not only the idea of human exceptionalism that is challenged, but concepts of race and gender have also become central targets of posthumanist critique, as feminist and post-colonial work adopts the rhetoric of the posthuman to voice new forms of self and sexuality. With notable works such as Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' (1984) and Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013) drawing attention to the limitations of traditional humanist thought, posthumanism therefore seeks to radically challenge concepts and limitations of human identity.

The posthuman thus threatens traditional conceptions of identity, but it also seeks to address the uncertainty of what it means to be human in a time of climate change. 'Although some current versions of the posthuman point toward the anti-human and the apocalyptic', argue Hayles, 'we can craft others that will be conductive to the long-range survival of humans and the other life-forms […] with whom we share the planet'[300]. To this end, this chapter is especially interested in ecocritical definitions of the posthuman, which ground conceptions of identity in relation to the material environment and environmental agency. Both posthumanist and ecocritical theory

[298] Ferrando, 'Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Difference and Relations', pp.31-32
[299] Badmington, 'Theorizing Posthumanism', pp.20-21
[300] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.291

challenge traditional relationships between humanity and their surrounding environment, as well as critiquing the presumptions of speciesism and deconstructing the ethical and ontological boundaries between living creatures. Consequently, they offer a complementary combination in addressing new forms of human and non-human identity and subjectivity in an era of environmental crisis. Defining this concept of 'ecological posthumanism', Serpil Opperman argues that this approach 'stresses the significance of complex environmental relations, perviousness of species boundaries, and social-ecological-scientific networks within which human and nonhumans, knowledge practices, and material phenomena are deeply enmeshed'.[301] The ecological posthuman reimagines human identity as the hybrid product of nature and culture, emphasising the material agency of the natural world while simultaneously questioning the self-contained agency of the human being. Such an understanding recognises how environmental changes and disasters impact and affect the human body, as well as human politics and concepts of self.

This deconstruction of conventional notions of human identity has significant implications for the dystopian genre. As already discussed briefly in Chapter One and Two, the ecodystopian novel, with its stress on environmental responsibility and its critique of traditional notions of progress, challenges those rationalist and liberal humanist values which have previously been central to the dystopian novel. Such values continue to structure current dystopian novels to varying extents. In particular, young adult dystopian novels such as Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2008; 2009; 2010) and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (2011) champion the right and capacity for an individual to determine their own future free from oppression and control. The deconstruction of the foreground/background distinction posed by the current environmental upheaval challenges such values on two fronts. The first is a dissolution of spatial boundaries. As laid out in previous chapters, the vast spatial and temporal dimensions of the current global environmental crisis disrupt the traditional boundaries of the dystopian narrative. The dystopian society can no longer be thought of as a single, geographically localised and enclosed space, but instead becomes one expression of a global network of forces. It is not just politically constructed, but subject to interacting economic and environmental pressures, responding to and

[301] Serpil Oppermann, 'From Posthumanism to Posthuman Ecocriticism', *Relations*, 4.1 (2016), 23-37, p.26

producing ideological systems. This demand to think globally is accompanied by a realisation that there is no outside. Unlike Zamyatin's D-503, the ecodystopian protagonist cannot escape to some external and unaffected community. Climate change does not respect national borders.

Referring to the work of David Wood, Timothy Clark argues that the phenomena of globalisation and climate change means that there has been a 'loss of externality' which 'means that the consequences of human action do not go away any more'.[302] In other words, the consequences of anthropogenic pollution and environmental degradation cannot be consigned to a space somewhere outside or away, whether that be the sea, the atmosphere, or a distant country. Nor can the consequences of such action be continually dismissed or postponed as belonging to a distant future, especially when a failure to act now has direct consequences for the quality of life of future generations. The loss of this externality, argues Clark,

> enacts a profound crisis of thought and politics, as well as an economic, social and psychological one. Bob Pepperman Taylor writes, "the ecological facts of life threaten to challenge our most dearly held political values: justice, freedom, and democracy," a view that might be reformulated less drastically as the need to revise those very notions of 'justice, freedom, and democracy', to embrace the unborn, and even the non human.[303]

Indeed, the rational and self-determining individual becomes an increasingly suspect figure in the view of environmental ethics, where individual 'rights' and material needs are set in direct conflict with those same needs and rights belonging to others, both human and nonhuman, present and future. Without the limitless externality of a geographical or temporal elsewhere, the traditional liberal subject is no longer viable nor justifiable.

This first challenge is an ethical and economic one, setting the future survival of a certain kind of human identity against an environment which increasingly appears to be unable to sustain it. The second challenge made against the liberal humanist subject also stems from the dissolution of an external or surrounding concept of nature,

[302] Clark, 'Nature, Post Nature', p.82
[303] Timothy Clark, 'Towards a deconstructive environmental criticism', *Oxford Literary Review*, 30.1 (2008), 44-68, p.57

but this challenge is an ontological one. Addressing new conceptions of nature as theorized in developing fields of new materialism, ecological postmodernism, and ecofeminism, Serpil Oppermann argues that 'old conceptions of matter as a stable, inert, and passive substance, and of the human agent as a separate observer always in control, are being replaced here by the new posthumanist models that effectively theorize matter's inherent vitality'.[304] This concept of material agency not only challenges previous conceptions of the natural world, but further suggests that the individual can no longer be conceptualised as a private, bounded, and self-determining body separate from the environment. Instead, critics such as Stacy Alaimo argue that 'the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world'.[305] Putting forward a theory of trans-corporeality, Alaimo emphasises the permeability of the human body and its interconnection with its environment. In her work, she draws upon Elizabeth Grosz, who argues that 'we need to understand the body, not as an organism or entity in itself, but as a system, or series of open-ended systems, functioning within other huge systems it cannot control through which it can access and acquire its abilities and capacities'.[306] Supporting an ecocritical ethic which aims to deconstruct boundaries between nature and culture, Alaimo and Grosz present a posthuman concept of identity which destabilizes traditional notions of personhood, presenting the human body and its identity as transient, malleable, and fragmented. In particular, such an emphasis on the materiality of the human body challenges humanist conceptions of identity which locate the defining characteristic of humanity within the mind and its capacity for rationality and self-consciousness.

This multi-faceted challenge posed by the breakdown of traditional conceptions of nature consequently results in a posthuman reformulation of human identity which has significant implications for the role of the protagonist in the ecodystopian novel. As argued in previous chapters, the self-determining agency of the individual is the key humanist value at the heart of the classical dystopian text, while the desire for freedom and autonomy has been integral to the counter-narrative

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[304] Serpil Oppermann 'A Lateral Continuum: Ecocriticism and Postmodern Materialism', *ISLE*, 19.3 (2012), 460-475, p.465
[305] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.2
[306] Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), p.3

of hope it puts forward. Yet in the context of current ecocritical debates, the viability of this traditional counter-narrative is undermined by calls for a more holistic concept of environmental rights and the suggestion that the characters are not separate and independent agents, but shaped and determined to varying extents by the dystopian setting itself. Indeed, Alaimo argues, 'understanding the substance of one's self as interconnected with the wider environment marks a profound shift in subjectivity [...] what was once the ostensibly bounded human subject finds herself in a swirling landscape of uncertainty'.[307] Responding to this shift in subjectivity thus requires a re-evaluation of what it means to be human in an era of global environmental crisis, and it is this challenge that the ecodystopian novel attempts to address.

PART TWO: (A)PART OF/FROM NATURE

Dismantling the human/nature boundary is not unproblematic. The difficulty is highlighted by Kate Soper, who argues that '[n]ature is that which Humanity finds itself within, and to which in some sense it belongs, but also that from which it seems excluded in the very moment in which it reflects upon either its otherness or its belongingness'.[308] Exacerbated by both religious and secular humanist narratives of exceptionalism, the term 'nature' is employed to refer conceptually to the nonhuman world and to designate those spaces and species apart from human activity. It is this separation that is often blamed for humanity's irresponsible actions regarding the use and manipulation of nature as 'resource'. Jayne Glover underlines how, in the opinion of many ecological philosophers, the formulation of the difference between 'human and non-human worlds' as a dualistic opposition 'has been used as a justification for instrumentalist approaches to the environment' and is therefore responsible for 'our current ecological crisis'.[309] Consequently, early ecocritics often argued for a renewed acknowledgement or recognition of humanity's belonging to nature as the solution to this crisis, which would lead to a more responsible and ethical engagement with the natural world. However, as Hannes Bergthaller underlines, the outcome of this

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[307] Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, p.20
[308] Soper, *What is Nature?,* p.49
[309] Jayne Glover, 'Human/Nature: Ecological Philosophy in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*', *English Studies in Africa*, 52.2 (2009), 50-62, p.51

conceptual framework is equally problematic, suggesting that 'all solutions to the ecological crisis are variations on one basic injunction that one might designate as the ecological imperative: humans ought to acknowledge (to properly perceive) that they are a part of nature and behave accordingly'.[310] Although at first glance such an argument may seem compelling, the implications, argues Bergthaller, produce a 'performative contradiction' which states that 'humans *ought* to behave like a part of nature because they *are* a part of nature' (italics in original).[311] Reminiscent of Soper's earlier evaluation of humanity's relationship to nature, this ecological imperative once again highlights the difficulty in locating human identity in relation to the natural environment.

The inadequacy, and indeed dangers, of this ecological imperative are made literal in Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy through the creation of the genetically-engineered, humanoid Crakers, through which humanity's relationship to nature comes under scrutiny. In the future dystopian society presented in the trilogy, climate change has resulted in droughts that have destroyed crops, lakes, and forests, and created rising sea-levels that have washed away the beaches and the eastern coastal cities (*OC*, 71-2). Yet despite this environmental decline, the wealthier segments of human society continue to thrive as improved medical knowledge has led to the near annihilation of disease and the prolongation of life, while new technologies have given scientists greater control over genetics and the human body. Like many other ecodystopian texts, Atwood's novels share a criticism of neoliberal economics and the consumerist drive of modern science, depicting how narratives of progress and profit have resulted in pollution, environmental exhaustion, and species extinction. Frustrated with humanity's inefficiency and inability to live within their means, the scientist Crake decides to eradicate the human population through a deadly virus and replace them with a more environmentally-friendly version in an effort to preserve the planet and its remaining ecosystem. The novel is set after the virus has decimated the human population but employs retrospective narrative to reflect on the dystopian society and Crake's actions that precede this apocalyptic event.

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310 Hannes Bergthaller, 'Housebreaking the Human Animal: Humanism and the Problem of Sustainability in Margaret Atwood's Oryx and Crake and The Year of the Flood', *English Studies*, 91.7 (2010), 728-743, p.731

311 Ibid.

Significantly, Crake views the current environmental situation as the result of humanity's biological flaws, arguing that '*Homo sapiens* doesn't seem to be able to cut himself off at the supply end. He's one of the few species that doesn't limit reproduction in the face of dwindling resources' (*OC*, 139). For Crake, who characterises human beings as 'hormone robots', this behaviour and the resulting environmental crisis is the result of 'faulty' biology (*OC*, 196). Crake's criticism fundamentally undermines those humanist conceptions of identity which prioritise the rational, thinking self, instead suggesting that human behaviour is simply the outcome of genetic instructions. Furthermore, this emphasis on human beings as biologically determined presents them as a part of nature that acts unnaturally – they are 'faulty' (*OC*, p.196). For Crake, this is because humans possess imagination:

> Men can imagine their own deaths, they can see them coming, and the mere thought of impending death acts like an aphrodisiac. A dog or a rabbit doesn't behave like that. Take birds – in a lean season they cut down on eggs, or they won't mate at all. They put their energy into staying alive themselves until times get better' (*OC*, 139).

This inability to act like an animal marks human beings, in Crake's opinion, as an evolutionary abomination, not only engineering its own demise, but that of many other nonhuman species. Further suggesting a mechanical characterisation of human behaviour, sustainability becomes a question of biological failings, flaws that Crake believes that science can provide the means and methodology to fix. The narrative is thus, in part, an exploration of the terms on which such sustainability could be achieved.

Commenting on the first instalment of her *MaddAddam* trilogy, Margaret Atwood states that '[i]t's interesting to me that I situated the utopia-facilitating element in *Oryx and Crake* not in a new kind of social organization or a mass brainwashing or soul-engineering program but inside the human body'.[312] The question of genetics and biology becomes central to the notion of identity in *Oryx and Crake*, which uses the figure of the posthuman to explore how environmental crisis challenges the viability of current ideas of human identity as something defined in opposition to nature. As

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[312] Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (New York: Virago, 2011), p.94

Hannes Bergthaller underlines, the question of 'sustainability' in the novel 'is thus a question of housebreaking the human animal, that is, of aligning human behaviour to the requirements of the planetary oikos'.[313] This concept of taming the human animal aims to reconceptualise the interactions between human and nature in order to develop more appropriate and sustainable modes of behaviour. Recalling the imperative that: 'humans *ought* to behave like a part of nature because they *are* a part of nature', Crake's creation of a new-and-improved human race represents his attempt to correct humanity's design faults by eliminating those characteristics he sees as responsible for society's conflicts and the environmental crisis.

The outcome of his efforts are the Crakers, a posthuman species engineered from a mixture of human, animal, and plant DNA designed to live in perfect harmony with their environment. Armed with in-built insect repellent, UV resistant skin, increased sensory abilities, predator-repelling urine, and a strong immunity to disease, they are designed to be superior, in evolutionary terms, to humans, a fact that is constantly reiterated throughout the novels. Beyond these physical characteristics, Crake explains that '[w]hat had been altered was nothing less than the ancient primate brain. Gone were its destructive features, the features responsible for the world's current illnesses (*OC*, 358). Instead, the Crakers 'were perfectly adjusted to their habitat', with no ability to develop 'the king-of-the-castle hard-wiring that had plagued humanity' and eating 'nothing but leaves and grass and roots' (*OC*, 358). The Crakers thus represent an exaggerated pastiche of the utopian vision of ecological balance, thriving in the literally post-human world they have been designed to inhabit.

Yet, the Crakers highlight the 'humans-as-part-of-nature' paradox. Although they are *naturally* sustainable in the sense that they are biologically designed to act within the confines of their environment, they are fundamentally *unnatural* beings having been artificially engineered from an array of genetic sources, as opposed to evolving naturally. The paradox is completed by the fact that in comparison to the Crakers, human beings as a *natural* product of evolution are also viewed as *unnaturally* destructive. Yet, rather than a fault in their biological evolution, the dominance of humanity as a species is testament to their Darwinian triumph as they have developed new technologies to allow them to access, use, and exploit increasing levels of natural resources so support an exponential population growth. Consequently, Atwood's

[313] Bergthaller, 'Housebreaking the Human Animal', p.728

representation of the Crakers demonstrates that far from solving the environmental dilemma, the acknowledgement that humans are 'part of nature' proves to be a further complication. Refuting the idea that humanity inhabits an exterior relationship to nature, Peter Watts argues that:

> [t]he problem with Humans is not that we've isolated ourselves from Nature— it's that we embody Nature, cranked to the nth degree. We are selfish, we care only for what works in the moment, and we have no real sense of future consequences—like every other product of Darwinian processes. The fact that we're presently crushing the rest of Nature under our boot doesn't mean that we ourselves are being "unnatural" when we do it. Cancer is natural, too.[314]

For Watts, recognising that the human/nature dichotomy is a false division is important, but is not the solution to the current ecological crisis. Instead, by helping us to greater appreciate the difficult position from which we address this crisis, this acknowledgement becomes the first step towards forming new approaches and discourses which exceed this previous dualism.

Quoting Haraway, Greg Garrard argues that '[t]he cyborg will be a key figure in the poetics of responsibility because its irreverence and keen sense of irony are quite incompatible with traditional pastoral, wilderness and apocalyptic tropes: "The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust"'.[315] In other words, the 'cyborg' or posthuman offers an alternative approach to questions of sustainability and ecology because they already exist outside the human/nature dichotomy. 'Not having "fallen"', argues Garrard, 'the cyborg does not need to be redeemed, only to survive'.[316] It is the desire to create and voice new forms of identity and subjectivity which radically break from the confines of previous structures which represents the utopian potential of the posthuman. Within the ecodystopian novel, the posthuman, as a radical reimagining of the human, thus stands

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[314] Watts, Peter, 'Wildlife, Natural and Artificial: An Interview with Peter Watts' (interviewed by Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman), *Extrapolation*, 48.3 (2007), 603-619, p.613

[315] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.146; quoting Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p.151

[316] Ibid.

as an exploratory space for new forms of hope, change, and agency in the face of the neoliberal and climate change dystopia.

The posthuman's potential to challenge our current framing of the human also plays an important role in Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway: A Novel*. In his novel, Doctorow introduces a future dystopian society similar to those depicted in Winterson's and Atwood's texts, where the continued pressure of capitalist growth under a neoliberal philosophy of competition has resulted in growing social and economic division, political conflict, and environmental degradation. Despite new technological developments that have the potential to resolve poverty and inequality by providing the necessary resources to all, those in power continue to privatise the equipment and programming in the belief that 'private property is the most productive property'.[317] Disillusioned with the individualist and exclusionary society they live in, three young people, Hubert Etc., Seth, and Natalie, decide to leave 'default' society to become walkaways and join the communes popping up outside the city limits. These societies take advantage of new technology and bioengineering available to them in order to find another way of living – to create a post-scarcity society which is communally built and managed. The novel is openly utopian in its desire to posit a different kind of society, even as the walkaways find themselves consistently threatened by attempts to undermine and destroy their efforts.[318]

Although superficially the novel seems less focused on the crisis of climate change than some of the other texts featured thus far, the fragile and polluted environment does in fact play a key role in the politics of the novel, and the narrative of resistance and change that it develops. Indeed, a large part of the novel's conflict revolves around the question of human survival in the face of growing environmental pressures, both practically in terms of resource depletion and pollution but also

[317] Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway: A Novel* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), p.42 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *WAN*

[318] Like the term dystopia, 'utopia' has a complex terminological history, used to describe the good place (eutopia) that is nowhere (utopia), and the literary genre that represents this space. It is also used as an adjective to describe an attitude or ideological approach. In her introduction to the term, Fátima Vieira writes that utopia 'is thus to be seen essentially as a strategy. By imagining another reality, in a virtual present or in a hypothetical future, utopia is set as a strategy for the questioning of reality and of the present', ('The Concept of Utopia', p.23). Likewise, I use the term 'utopian' here in the sense of a desire for a better future motivated by a discontentment with present circumstances and the hope that the transformation of society and a more positive future is achievable.

ethically in the face of nonhuman and future human rights. Significantly, these environmental concerns are represented as inextricable from their social and economic contexts, and, as a result, constructing a fairer and more equal form of community equally demands a more sustainable and less wasteful way of life. Yet, at the same time, the rhetoric of sustainability comes under critique by some of the characters: 'For hundreds of years, people have been trying to get everyone to live gently on the land, but their whole pitch was, "hold still and try not to breathe"', explains Sita, one of a community of walkaways, as her and Limpopo trudge through a toxic wasteland. 'The environmental prescription has been to act as much as possible like you were already dead. Don't reproduce. Don't consume. Don't trample the earth or you'll compress the dirt and kill the plants. Every exhalation poisons the atmosphere with CO2'. Arguing that the very process of living is destructive to an ever-fragile planet, Sita concludes that 'It's either kill yourself now or kill your descendants just by drawing breath' (*WAN*, 259). Framing a popular conflict, Sita presents the view that humanity as a species is at odds with its environment and, instead, driven by the belief that the environment is 'most prolific and healthy without us', argues that 'the best human course is to absent ourselves from it, to do what the original Thetfordians did, but on a grand scale. Evacuate the planet' (*WAN*, p.257). This anti-humanist course of action is precisely that taken by Crake, who eradicates humanity to give non-human nature a fighting chance.

However, the proposal that Sita puts forward is not, unlike Crake, a literal human extinction. Yet, like Crake, Sita argues that human evolution is at odds with its environment and her proposal likewise involves a deliberate modification of human behaviour. Taking advantage of new cybernetic technology, the proposal is to upload human consciousness to run as online simulations, apart from the body. 'Now we've got a deal for humanity that's better than anything before', argues Sita, 'lose the body. Walk away from it' (WAN, 259). This virtual existence not only promises transhumanist achievements such as immortality and limitlessness, but these virtual consciousnesses could be controlled by parameters allowing people to 'consciously decid[e] how you want to live your life and mak[e] it stick, by fine-tuning your parameters so you're the version of yourself that does the right thing, that knows and honors itself' (WAN, 259). In terms of the environment, such an existence not only removes the physical dependence on natural resources, but furthermore, Sita suggests,

'[w]e could constrain our sims to spaces where we value nature so much that we prefer to be disembodied and not a force for its destruction, to experiencing it directly' (*WAN*, 258). For Sita, such a transition to a virtual existence where consciousness could be modified represents a utopian future defined by free will, a triumph of rational and ethical thinking over the selfish human mind: 'Everything we know we *should* do but can't bring ourselves to do because the part of us that sees the whole map knows it's the way to go can't convince the part that's in the driver's seat. *It's about being able to choose*, make the choice stick' (emphasis mine, *WAN*, 260). In other words, it's about making the choice to tame the human animal in such a way that you would not want to choose otherwise. Or to put it differently, choosing to live in a box, then altering the way you think so you like living in that box. So while Atwood locates her utopian mechanism in the body, Doctorow locates it in the mind.

However, the proposal to 'lose the body' is as problematic as Crake's proposal to alter the 'ancient primate brain'. While Crake's solution reduces human identity to the body, the solution imagined by Doctorow reduces human identity to the mind. Indeed, the disembodiment suggested by this concept of virtual existence problematically buys into a mind/body duality that privileges the rational and self-aware consciousness as the key human characteristic, existing separately to the material body, an idea that is fundamentally rejected by posthumanism. This issue is acknowledged to some extent by Doctorow through Limpopo, who, responding to Sita, asks '[w]hat happens if you ditch your bodies, upload, and it turns out the human race can't survive without whatever makes us terrified of losing our bodies […] It's not hard to think of an aversion to having a body-ectomy as pro-survival. What if you're engineering the mass suicide of the human race' (WAN, 262). Unfortunately her concern is rendered a non-issue by the text, which fails to explore this conflict further and concludes with the revelation of a successful mass-uploading of the human race. Indeed, while the utopian potential of the Crakers is deliberately problematic, Doctorow seemingly suggests that it is *the fear* of losing the body, and not the loss of the body itself, which needs to be overcome. Furthermore, the move to a virtual or digital existence in *Walkaway* reinforces the human need for some form of externality, as underlined in the introduction to this chapter,

Acknowledging that the move to cyberspace 'might be understood as the apotheosis of Cartesian and Enlightenment rationality', Graham argues that 'if persons

have no fleshly substance in cyberspace, then this raises the question of whether it is still appropriate or meaningful to link traditional ideas of identity, freedom, agency or community with notions of corporeality or physical space'.[319] As noted in Chapter One of this thesis, it is through physical interaction with nature that the traditional dystopian protagonist is able to forge their own concept of reality apart from that put forth by the totalitarian society. It is the basis of their resistance. While the disruption of the natural environment through climate change obviously destabilizes this relationship, the disembodiment of cyberspace negates this relationship entirely. The possibility that uploaded human consciousness could be manipulated and exploited is another threat expressed in *Walkaway* that is never fully resolved. The resulting conclusion is that although cyberspace provides the opportunity to radically re-constitute the self without the limitations of the body, the lack of physical embodiment within a surrounding environment problematises the development of independent cognition necessary to enact free will and resistance.

In suggesting that sustainability is dependent upon a radical alteration of the human, both authors raise the question of the conflict between the preservation of the nonhuman environment and the value of human free will. Despite Sita's emphasis on choice, the idea of altering the parameters of human consciousness is reminiscent of Crake's attempts to control human behaviour through genetic alteration. Both texts suggest a possible harmonious, even utopian, existence if this free will is sacrificed for the greater good. Significantly, the use of external or internal controls as a utopian strategy for suppressing humanity's more violent and negative characteristics is not a new concept in utopian and dystopian fiction. John Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar*, a much earlier narrative focusing on the problems of overpopulation and exploitative capitalist governments, imagines both an intelligent computer (Shalmaneser) wielding external control and able to make humanity's decisions for it, and the discovery of a genetic mutation which causes a specific population to exude 'a sort of tranquiliser' which internally suppresses violent or aggressive behaviour (SZ, 642). However, despite the utopian potential of both these options, the central characters are horrified at the implications: 'what in God's name is it worth it to be human, if we have to be saved from ourselves by a machine?', exclaims Chad Mulligan (SZ, 645). The removal

[319] Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the post/human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p.188

of self-determination is presented as the only utopian option, but it is also horrific. Reacting to the possibility of a wide-spread application of this genetic discovery, Chad insists that:

> [Brotherly Love is] not something to be made in a factory, packaged and wrapped and sold! It's not something meant to be – to be dropped in bombs from UN aircraft! That's what they'll do with it, you know. And it isn't right. It isn't a product, a medicine, a drug. It's thought and feeling and your own heart's blood. It isn't right (SZ, 646).

Although the distribution of this genetic tranquiliser offers the possibility of achieving long-lasting peace, Chad's reaction recalls the often-quoted line in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* that '[g]oodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man'.[320] Whether this tranquiliser is implemented is not known, as the novel concludes with this revelation. If making the right choice is made into the only choice, a kind of utopia may be achieved, but it comes at the price of free will, and consequently, in the view of liberal humanism, at the price of your humanity itself. This conflict lies at the border between utopian and dystopian societies, and is often the slipping point between them. Indeed, the value of free will stands as a central question in debates over the conflicting interpretations of Skinner's *Walden Two* as a utopian or anti-utopian novel. Yet in contrast, both Atwood and Doctorow suggest that if the human is unable to tame itself without imposing limitations and controls, then true self-determination is a myth anyway. Furthermore, as the consequences of climate change continue to further impact the environment, the resulting pressures will continue to further shape and influence human society.

Far from seriously suggesting that genetic manipulation and computer modelling may be a possible 'solution' to humanity's flawed genetic disposition, the dystopian visions provided by Atwood and Doctorow instead open up a discussion on the ethics of human freedom and self-determination. Although on the surface Doctorow's narrative may suggest that the solution to solving the environmental crisis is the digitalisation of human consciousness and abandonment of the physical body, this transition is as much of a "solution" as the Crakers are. In fact, the uploading of

[320] Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), p.83

human consciousness is presented as highly problematic and many characters remain legitimately uncomfortable with the ethical and ontological implications. Instead, the reader is encouraged to engage with this future proposal, weighing up its benefits and drawbacks, in order to begin a consideration on what achieving sustainability might mean for human rights and nonhuman rights. Emphasising the 'posthuman refusal of the ontological primacy of human existence', Francesca Ferrando argues that '[p]osthumanism reflects on the terms of human sustainability, but it does not dismiss the significance of human survival: in not rejecting human or individual rights, Posthumanism differs from Antihumanism'.[321] As a result, even as it undermines and interrogates concepts of human identity and human rights, posthumanism seeks to reconfigure these same concepts. Similarly, the posthuman in Doctorow's *Walkaway* works as a hypothetical thought-experiment that, by breaking certain human boundaries, invites us to consider the human condition anew.

Responding to a question about the representation of technology in the book, Doctorow emphasises that '[t]hat sort of thing should always be looked at suspiciously as a metaphor, and not as a prediction […] Consciousness uploading in *Walkaway* is not a solution'.[322] Instead, he explains that '[n]obody really solves any problems with that. They solve problems with ethics and social movement and organizational tools, with communal living and unselfishness and commitment to abundance'.[323] Rather than a technological possibility, conscious uploading instead works as a useful metaphor 'for understanding who we are and how we relate to other people'.[324] In other words, *Walkaway* is about changing the way human beings think about and value human and nonhuman others, imagining social movements which, making use of new technological tools and communication networks, attempt to produce cultural changes and create new social structures and alternative value systems. In particular, it rejects the individualist rhetoric of the neoliberal dystopia in order to stress the need for social networks which allow people to come together to think and work towards new ideals.

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[321] Francesca Ferrando, 'Towards a Posthumanist Methodology: A Statement', *Frame: Journal of Literary Studies*, 25.1, Special Issue on *Narrating Posthumanism*, 9-18, pp.10-11
[322] Tasha Robinson, 'Cory Doctorow on technological immortality, the transporter problem, and fast-moving futures', *The Verge* (Jul 16, 2017) https://www.theverge.com/2017/7/16/15978554/cory-doctorow-interview-walkaway-consciousness-uploads-fast-moving-futures [Accessed: 20/02/2018]
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid.

It is the idea of community and interdependence which forms the narrative of resistance in the novel, an idea that will be revisited in my analysis of Peter Watt's *Starfish*. Posthumanism thus works as a critical discourse in the novel to re-evaluate conventional human practices and attitudes. Within the ecodystopian text, depictions of the posthuman aren't necessarily posed as viable or even desirable forms of future human existence, but are instead figures around which such discourses can be constructed.

If the modification or constraining of human consciousness is understood as a metaphor for using cultural and social tools to shape human behaviour, and, more importantly, human desires, then the utopian direction proposed by Doctorow is less like the Crakers and more like Atwood's depiction of the God's Gardeners. The God's Gardeners are a Christian-based environmentalist religious group that take a more liberal interpretation of the Bible, celebrating rather than denying man's evolutionary descent from primates and the 'knots of DNA and RNA that tie us to our many fellow creatures' (*YF*, 64). Like Crake, they underline the role of evolutionary biology in forming human identity. But while Crake uses humanity's equal standing with non-human life as an ethical basis for genetic alternations, for the God's Gardeners this equality translates into a philosophy of consideration and care. Led by Adam One, they aim to create new communities which live in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner, refuting narratives of human exceptionalism to instead call for a recognition of humanity's interconnection with the nonhuman environment: 'why do we think that everything on Earth belongs to us, while in reality we belong to Everything? […] we will not vainly imagine that we are set above all other Life, and may destroy it at our pleasure, and with impunity' (*YF*, p.63-4). In particular, this concept of interconnection demands a new ethics of responsibility which addresses the problematic concept of 'human-as-nature'. Although describing humanity as an equal part of 'the polyphonic symphony of Creation', Adam One also acknowledges humanity's ability to change and shape their environment. Significantly, rather than identifying this capacity as supporting the narrative of exceptionalism, Adam One locates this power within a discourse of stewardship and responsibility (*YF*, p.193; p.63, 108-9).

As previously argued, characterising humanity as an equal part of nature risks obscuring the disproportionate influence humanity has over its surrounding

environment. Adam One's approach instead stresses that equality is not about eroding the differences between human and nonhuman nature, but about recognising those differences in an ethical way. Similarly, Jayne Glover, emphasising a common ecological philosophy, argues that 'it is not so much the difference between nature and culture that is at fault in our current ecological crisis, as the way in which that difference has been used as a justification for instrumentalist approaches to the environment'.[325] The posthumanist deconstruction of humanist ideologies is thus not a denial of human uniqueness but a recognition that difference is to be valued. As Cary Wolfe argues, posthumanist ethics are not predicated on the concept that animals are in some way 'like us'. Instead, he argues that 'what's beautiful and worthy of respect is that they're not like us […] there are different ways of being in the world […] that deserve to be protected'.[326] For the God's Gardeners, the ability to recognise and value difference reformulates humanity's relationship to nonhuman nature and forms the basis for a more holistic and sustainable form of human identity.

Significantly, unlike the biological alterations made to the Crakers, the God's Gardeners seek to change and regulate human behaviour through cultural apparatus such as storytelling and religious parables which creates new symbolic structures of meaning and value. Speaking of the importance of storytelling in human society, Atwood explains that '[s]torytelling is a very old human skill that gives us an evolutionary advantage […] Primate mothers show their young, do this, don't do that, though they don't have the gift of narrative and the most attentive ones raise better equipped young'.[327] Evolution is envisaged as both a genetic and cultural process, as it is in Cory Doctorow's *Walkaway*: 'We have cultural as well as genetic traits' (W, 258). Using biblical myth, sermons, and stories, the God's Gardeners construct a posthuman ideology which encourages daily actions and behaviours as part of a sustainable and responsible existence appropriate for survival in an increasingly fragile environment. Consequently, in opposition to Crake's essentialist scientific

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[325] Glover, 'Human/Nature', p.51
[326] Cary Wolfe, 'Cary Wolfe on Post-Humanism and Animal Studies', (Video Interview) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NN427KBZlI [Accessed: 06/04/18]
[327] Margaret Atwood, 'Margaret Atwood on her novel *MaddAddam*', interviewed by Janet Christie, *The Scotsman*, June 30th 2014 <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/books/interview-margaret-atwood-on-her-novel-maddaddam-1-3069846> [Accessed: 06/09/14]

understanding, Atwood suggests how culture has a role to play in shaping human behaviour as, what Bergthaller names, 'technologies of self-domestication that deal with human beings as evolved, biological creatures so as to make them governable' and achieving 'a reconciliation of the nature of human beings as evolved biological creatures, with all the frailties and flaws it entails, with their need for an imaginary order that transcends and, as it were, extenuates these biological givens'.[328] The posthuman society of the God's Gardeners, like the modified virtual consciousness discussed in *Walkaway*, suggests how sustainability can only be achieved through the recognition that humanity is both a biological and cultural being, a creature, like all animals, that depends upon but also acts on its environment.

While dominant techno-scientific concepts of genetics present genes as biological mechanisms which provide an instruction code for the human body, Atwood and Doctorow question the implications of this idea. Although the acknowledgement that human biology directs human behaviour is not problematic in itself, the resulting belief that such genes could be altered, transferred, and deleted in order to modify this behaviour suggests a mastery over human identity that ignores external environmental forces and agencies that also penetrate and shape the human body. Indeed, whereas Crake sees culture as merely the product of human genetics, and something he attempts to eradicate, Atwood and Doctorow present genetics and culture as two mutually interdependent spheres of evolutionary influence that can both complement and conflict with each other. Human beings are shaped by the culture that they themselves produce and support, a culture which has recently been at odds with the genetic imperatives of species survival. Significantly, the ecological posthuman rejects the concept of 'natural' behaviour by questioning the concept of an internal sustainability or logic in nature. 'Getting back to nature' is thus not a viable option to achieve sustainability, and the environmental crisis is not the result of 'faulty' human biological evolution. Consequently, although the posthuman re-inscribes human identity within the biological influence of the body, it also stresses the possibility of action and agency from within those biological parameters.

[328] Bergthaller, 'Housebreaking the Human Animal, p.729; 739

PART THREE: TRANS-CORPOREAL SUBJECTIVITY

In Peter Watt's *Starfish*, this purely biological definition of human identity is also called into question. Similarly to Crake, Watts argues for a biological or mechanistic understanding of human behaviour: 'The bad news is that ultimately we can all be reduced to sparks and biochemistry. In that sense we are robots, and our behaviour is utterly deterministic. There is no free will in a mechanistic universe'.[329] However, unlike Crake, for Watts this revelation is not limiting or anti-human and he stresses that although these systems are deterministic, they are also complex and consequently unpredictable. In other words, human behaviour is determined by the body and by biology, but this doesn't preclude individuality or autonomy. Instead it offers a new footing from which to approach the idea of human identity, understanding human autonomy as something that emerges from the body as well as the mind. In contrast to Doctorow's *Walkaway*, in *Starfish* Watts highlights the significance of the physical human body and its interaction with its material surroundings. In particular, he stresses how the environment acts upon and shapes human identities, and consequently suggests how human behaviour is the complex outcome of a variety of interacting factors. For Watts however, the posthuman is not used to interrogate the discourse of sustainability, but as an explorative space for examining the impact of environmental change and crisis on the concept of human identity and agency.

In *Starfish*, Watts introduces his reader to a future dystopian society set in an increasingly polluted and fragile environment: 'Falling forests, bloating deserts, ultraviolet fingers reaching ever deeper into barren seas. Oceans creeping up shorelines. Vital ecological resources turning into squatting camps for refugees. Squatting camps turning into intertidal zones'.[330] Fossil fuel shortage has prompted the construction of deep sea geo-thermal generators, staffed by criminals and social outcasts whose traumatised backgrounds have acclimatised them to work in high stress environments. The reclusive individuals chosen for the rift program are seemingly disconnected from each other, exaggerating the alienation and disillusionment often felt by the dystopian protagonist. Using biotechnology, the bodies of the 'rifters' are adapted to withstand the high pressure of the deep sea, making them able to swim out

[329] Watts, 'Wildlife, Natural and Artificial: An Interview with Peter Watts', p.612
[330] Peter Watts, *Starfish* (New York: Tor Books, 1999), p.153 - subsequent references will be to this edition, abbreviated as *SF*

into the cold water to carry out repairs to the riskily-positioned equipment. Metal machinery is implanted into the rifters' bodies, which are further modified through the introduction of genes from the deep-sea creatures that reside by the rift. The addition of dive skinsuits and eyecaps that provide enhanced vision complete the technology that allows the rifters to move around the deep-sea environment. Consequently, the posthumans of Watt's novel are a mix of organic human, introduced genetic material, and internal and external technology, challenging the ontological hygiene of the human body. Yet the new posthuman identities which emerge during the narrative are not solely the product of these bodily modifications. Significantly, this biotechnological alteration allows them entry into a new environment, one which transforms those who are submerged within it.

The rifters initially feel uncomfortable and detached from their new mechanical body parts and threatened by the overwhelming presence of the ocean above them. The main storyline follows Lenie Clarke, a young woman who suffered abuse during her childhood and later finds herself falling into a pattern of abusive relationships before she moves to the Rift. Even as Clarke becomes accustomed to the presence of her new posthuman body, she describes the machinery inside of her as something separate to herself that makes her *less* than human: 'She's so acclimated to the chronic ache in her chest, to that subtle inertia of plastic and metal as she moves that she's scarcely aware of them anymore. She can still feel the memory of what it was to be *fully human*, and mistake that ghost for honest sensation' (*SF*, 19; italics mine). Arriving at Beebe station, Clarke is also acutely aware of the weight of the ocean above her: 'The ceiling is too low. The room is too narrow. She feels the ocean compressing that station around her' (*SF*, 25). She feels trapped, yet escaping from the confines of the station into the ocean is equally traumatic: 'Going outside is like drowning […] The ritual takes her, step by reflexive step, to that horrible moment when she awakens the machines sleeping within her, and *changes*' (*SF*, 21). The experience of the water flooding her body and her metal 'lung' taking is over is figured as a death of her human body, while the machinery as a foreign presence comes to life: 'The floor of the airlock drops away *like a gallows*' (*SF*, 21, italics mine). In these descriptions, Clarke seems estranged from her new, monstrous body. However, while her partner Ballard is quick to strip off her dive skin and eye caps once abroad the

station, Clarke becomes increasingly attached to hers as the narrative develops and she becomes increasingly comfortable out in the open depths.[331]

Starfish thus presents the subjective experience of becoming posthuman through Clarke's changing interaction with the deep-sea environment. Arguing that the human is already and always intermeshed with the non-human environment, Stacy Alaimo proposes a theory of 'trans-corporeality' which 'denies to the "human" the sense of separation from the interconnected, mutually constitutive actions of material reality'.[332] Instead, Alaimo explains, '[t]rans-corporeality not only traces how various substances travel across and within the human body but how they *do* things – often unwelcome or unexpected things', creating a 'trans-corporeal subject' which 'is not so much situated, which suggests stability and coherence, but rather caught up in and transformed by myriad, and often unpredictable agencies'.[333] Within ecodystopian fiction, one of the key ways that the environment's influence over humanity is emphasised is through the representation of contamination. Almost all ecodystopian novels present environments which have been compromised by pollution and climate change, and more importantly, most of these novels demonstrate how such environments have an impact on the daily lives of their inhabitants. John Brunner's *The Sheep Look Up* is a particularly good example, presenting a world where the air is so full of pollutants that gas masks have become a necessity for the daily commute. More significantly, this environmental pollution contaminates and invades the human body, producing an array of common skin complaints as well as more serious anti-biotic resistance diseases, and eventually results in a widespread bout of destructive madness. Similarly, as examined in Chapter Two, in Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* the mutating plagues that affect crops spread to the residents of the city, who suffer and die from these diseases or carry disfiguring cauliflower-like growths on their bodies. This discourse of sickness and contamination is spread across descriptions of both the

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[331] The character name Ballard is perhaps a reference to the author J.G. Ballard, whose novels, especially *The Drowned World* and *The Drought*, often explore how exterior landscapes shape the inner psychological landscapes of the protagonist. However, the name could equally be a reference to Robert D. Ballard, an accomplished deep sea explorer and a specialist in marine geology who discovered deep sea hydrothermal vents off the Galápagos Islands, a discovery that revolutionised the field of marine biology < https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-Ballard-American-oceanographer>
[332] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.24
[333] Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, p.146

physical architecture of the city and its residents, presenting a distinctly dystopian image of a trans-corporeal ecology. Pollution thus becomes an active force in these novels, shaping the actions and behaviours of its characters and foregrounding the contaminated environment as an actor rather than a background presence.

Similarly, the high pressure of the deep sea environment possesses a non-human material agency in *Starfish*. Out on the rift, Clarke finds herself shaped by both her new posthuman body and the surrounding environment that this body allows her to inhabit: 'The rift is the real *creative force* here, a blunt hydraulic press forcing them all into shapes of its own choosing' (*SF*, 77, italics mine). The rift is envisaged as an active, surrounding presence which acts on and changes Clarke and the others. As Clarke becomes accustomed to her new environment the experience of dropping into the deep sea becomes life-giving rather than traumatising: 'It no longer feels like drowning. It feels like being born again' (SF, 42). Stressing the materially embodied nature of the posthuman, Paul Sheenan argues that '[t]o see mutational forces as external and / or invasive is to endorse a homeopathic notion of the human, as a self-stabilising organism that keeps at bay elements from without'.[334] Clarke and the other rifters initially experience the ocean in the airlock as an external attack on the self: '[Acton's] trying *to fall in on himself*; he only falls into Clarke' (SF, 107, italics mine). Yet, when Clarke and the others later embrace their posthuman bodies, rather than a foreign or invasive presence, 'the feeling is almost sensual; her insides folding flat, the ocean rushing into her, cold and unstoppable like a lover […] She's free again' (SF, 107). Clarke's construction of a sense of agency away from her traumatised past is enabled by her interaction with the deep sea, which shapes her identity and behaviour. '*It wasn't until I came down here that I learned that I could fight back. That I could win. The rift taught me that*' (SF, 49, italics in orginal). Consequently, while dystopian narratives like *Nineteen Eighty-Four* critique the assault on the 'secure tenancy within the body', ecodystopian narratives like *Starfish* instead suggest how the disintegration this self-contained interiority has a utopian potential. Indeed, it is the environment's capacity to act upon the human and determine human identity which enables Clarke's new sense of self-determination and freedom.

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[334] Paul Sheenan, 'Posthuman Bodies', *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.245-260, (p.253)

Yet this process is not straightforward in the novel. As Clarke and the other rifters become more accustomed to their newfound existence, they also further isolate themselves, taking solo trips into the deep and wearing their opaque eyecaps so that no one can look each other in the eye. Consequently, as the Rifts acts on all of them, its liberating potential is also dangerous, which is made clear in the example of Fischer. The isolation experienced by Fischer and the other rifters is emphasised through the formal strategies of the narrative. Like many of the other texts included in this study, *Starfish* makes use of free indirect discourse in order to present a first-person focalization though a third person narrative voice, often including italicised lines of direct thought. This narrative switches focus between a few different characters, although it mainly focuses on the protagonist Lenie Clarke. Significantly, despite the use of free indirect discourse, the third-person narrative perspective does not move freely between characters, and the narrative is instead divided into different sections each revolving around a single character's perspective, further accentuating each character's isolation from the others.

While Clarke is the first resident of Beebe, the arrival of the other rifters is marked by the switch to Fischer's perspective which removes the reader's access to Clarke's internal thoughts, emphasising her remoteness from the others as Fischer struggles to read her. Fischer, a schizophrenic and convicted paedophile who joins the team on the Rift, earns the instant dislike of another team member, Brander. To avoid his beatings, Fischer spends more and more time outside, even sleeping and eating out on the Rift, but it changes him: 'Lately you're sort of gone, Fischer', worries Clarke, '[l]ike you've forgotten how to be human' (*SF*, 101). Fischer seems to surrender himself to the Rift and the sensory deprivation it provides, escaping his problems by forgetting them and eventually forgetting himself, losing the ability to speak. When Scanlon, a doctor from the surface, comes down to monitor the Rifters, he describes Fischer as 'mov[ing] in furtive starts and twitches, almost birdlike. Reptilian' and refers to him as a 'reptile' rather than a human (*SF*, 202; 203). He becomes part of his environment so completely that he loses his sense of self. As Fischer's sense of self recedes, the voice of Shadow in his head becomes more prominent. The lines in italics, usually used to demarcate direct thought, seem to switch between him and Shadow. Eventually, his perspective disappears altogether from the narrative, only re-emerging towards the end in an externalised perspective of himself as an 'it': 'It has forgotten

what it was […] It pushes on, blind and unthinking […] It's dying, of course, but slowly. It wouldn't care much about that, even if it knew' (*SF*, 287-299). Rather than a self-contained self, Fisher's sense of self becomes split, the 'Broca's area' of his brain becomes separate from his reptilian body ('Broca sends down more noise […] Broca's area knows those sounds' (*SF*, p.288).

Meanwhile, the turning point in the narrative comes when Acton decides to alter the parameters of the chemicals released to suppress brain activity (which are needed to control the neuron activity naturally heighted by the extreme pressure of the deep-sea environment). Applying Acton's modifications to themselves, Clarke and her fellow rifters enter into a new and expanded awareness of not only their surrounding physical environmental, but also the various lifeforms that inhabit it, including each other. As a result of this empathetic cognizance, called the 'Ganzfield effect', Clarke is able to feel and sense the thoughts and emotions of those around her, and consequently begins to form a new subjectivity, one built from a collective consciousness. Together the rifters, once alienated and isolated individuals, are able to form a sense of communal identity that would have been impossible for them on the surface. In the ocean, this shared process leads to and necessitates a loss of the self-bounded individual: 'Outside the feelings of the others trickle into her, masking, diluting. Sometimes she can even forget she has any of her own' (SF, 165). This sense of shared consciousness is marked by a shift in the texture of the narrative. Although the narrative remains primarily from Clarke's perspective, it now has simultaneous access to all the characters. In other words, whereas before the reader only had Clarke's guesses about the thoughts and feelings of the others rifters, the third-person narrator now directly describes their emotions. Additionally, the use of free indirect discourse occasionally includes the thoughts and emotions of the other characters, even culminating in the use of the collective first and third person: 'We're all scared. We know there's nothing to be afraid of' (*SF*, 158). The group are able to communicate without talking and respond to each other's needs, but they also share emotions, not always able to distinguish the difference between their own and those of the people around them (*SF*, 161).

This concept of the group mind, specifically the loss of individuality or independent agency it entails, is problematic within the context of the literary heritage of the dystopian novel. As explored in the opening chapter to Gregory Claeys'

Dystopia: A Natural History, the mass or the crowd functions as a key symbol of fear within traditional dystopian visions which depict the uniform nature of authoritarian society. Claeys argues that 'group psychology, focusing on the crowd, is central to defining dystopia'.[335] It is in opposition to this group psychology that the rational individual emerges, and the privileging of the individual results in the viewpoint that 'all groups are thus inherently repressive. They may raise us above our weak selves and momentarily release us emotionally by embracing us in the immensity of their power. But their main everyday function is procrustean: they cut us to size in order to suppress our deviations from the norm, and socialize us […] by way of supressing our individuality'.[336] This dystopian vision of the group mind is evident in key dystopian works such as *Brave New World*, *We*, and *Nineteen Eight-Four* where the government encourages a collapse of the individual into the group through education, rituals, and oppression. Consequently, any attempt to construct an opposing utopian collective ethos is overshadowed by the dystopian alternative.

However, the group consciousness does have utopian potential in the same way that isolation, the complete separation of the individual, can be dystopian. Initially, all the Rifters undergo the procedure except Clarke, who fears opening herself up to the others: 'Outside, she watched the others change […] She felt like the token cripple in a dance troupe. She wondered how much of her they could see, and was afraid to ask' (SF, 165). This exclusion eventually prompts her to join them, and in doing so she finds that she doesn't lose herself within the group consciousness, but instead gains something new. In fact, when they leave the water she feels the loss of this new awareness as '[e]very time Beebe takes her in, some vital part of her falls away like a half-remembered dream […] The others just *vanish*' (SF, 164). Consequently, as Naomi Jacobs argues in her analysis of Octavia E. Butler's *Xenogenesis* series, '[t]o link with others is to enter into wholeness, not to lose oneself'.[337] The interlinking of consciousness experienced by the rifters in Watt's ecodystopian novel bears an interesting similarity to the symbiotic existence of the Oankali alien race portrayed in

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[335] Gregory Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.33
[336] Claeys, *Dystopia: A Natural History*, p.37
[337] Naomi Jacobs, 'Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*', *Dark Horizons*, (eds.) Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003), 91-111, (p.103)

the *Xenogenesis* series. Both share sensory experiences with those around them, constructing a group consciousness which enfolds the individual. As Jacobs acknowledges, the concept of a group mind would be 'uncomfortably resonant with ideologies such as fascism', however the Oankali, like the rifters, are not an unthinking collective, nor a group determined by a single leader.[338] Importantly the individual is not lost and remains able to present alternative opinions and ideas that challenge the larger group consensus. Similary, Clare Wall argues that the physical and chemical alterations made to the rifters 'alters them as subjects by literally dissolving the isolated emotions of the "I" self into a matrix of others' feelings and attitudes', but it does so 'without eliminating the individual consciousness'.[339] Indeed, when Clarke feels the emotions of the others, she feels 'the rising apprehension in four *separate minds*' (SF, 159, emphasis mine). Significantly, in contrast to the Oankali, the group consciousness experienced by the rifters is entirely dependent on their surrounding environment, facilitated by the deep-sea pressure. Nature, in the form of non-human creatures and the environment, also forms part of this group consciousness.

The starfish, for which the novel is titled, becomes a central motif for exploring this concept of communal consciousness. 'A starfish […] is the ultimate democracy', Acton tells Clarke, '[t]hey walk along on all these tube feet. But the weird thing is, they have no brains at all […] So there's nothing to coordinate the tube feet, they all move independently. Usually that's not a problem; they all tend to go toward food, for example. But it's not unusual for a third of these feet to be pulling in some direction entirely. The whole animal's a living tug-of-war' (*SF*, 119). Although the starfish is largely motivated by signals from its surrounding environment, the lack of communication between individual suckers causes it to pull in different directions and consequently to rip the opposing suckers from its body or otherwise remain immobile. As 'the ultimate democracy', the starfish motif critiques societies made up of independent individuals for their failure to communicate and respond to each other's needs. The starfish takes on a second significance through its capacity to regrow, and when Clarke discovers this fact, she uses this knowledge to repair an injured starfish with the pieces of a torn-up starfish she finds nearby. The result is a monstrous

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[338] Ibid., p.105

[339] Clare Wall, 'Here Be Monsters: Posthuman Adaptation and Subjectivity in Peter Watts' *Starfish*', *The Canadian Fantastic in Focus: New Perspectives*, (ed.) Allan Weiss (North Carolina: McFarlandd & Company, Inc., 2015), p.71

amalgamation of different bodies, 'a crawling Gordian knot' (*SF*, 195), which provides a metaphor for the intractable nature of the rifters' shared consciousness, and for the rifter society, formed of broken and dysfunctional individuals, which creates an unstable but new type of community.

Addressing the difficulties of scale imposed by climate change, Timothy Clark argues that 'the challenge must be to continue and deepen the critique of individualist conceptions of identity, rights, etc., enmeshed as they are in the slow-motion catastrophes of international capitalism, without letting such a critique become an implicit endorsement of alternative, latently eco-fascistic forms of social control'.[340] In many ways, the figure of the posthuman attempts to do just that in the ecodystopian novel, negotiating the space between conventional individualism and ecologically-driven antihumanism. Neither independent nor dependent, the posthuman as presented by Butler and Watts is defined by its *interdependence*, a concept which is integral within ecocritical discourse and its aim to construct a more responsible and ecological holistic engagement between humanity and nonhuman nature. 'No longer is human will seen as the source from which emanates the mastery necessary to dominate and control the environment', argues Hayles, commenting on the reconfiguration of human subjectivity in relation to its environment. 'Rather, the distributed cognition of the emergent human subject correlates with […] becomes a metaphor for – the distributed cognitive system as a whole, in which "thinking" is done by human and nonhuman actors'.[341] As apparent in *Starfish*, this distributed agency does not result in the loss of identity, but the development of an expanded and adaptable posthuman identity. In *Starfish*, this shift from individualistic isolation to communal and environmental consciousness allows the rifters to forge a new counter-narrative against their histories of abuse and transform their exile to the rift from a position of oppression to one of power. When the inhabitants of Beebe station are faced with immanent destruction, their communication abilities give them a sense of shared trust that was unavailable to them before as isolated and suspicious individuals. Consequently, whereas the value of the individual is often celebrated in traditional dystopian fiction, the ecological posthuman takes a more cautious approach. Indeed, as Chapter Three underlines, many of these texts employ polyphonic or temporally disrupted narratives which emphasise

[340] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge,* p.109
[341] Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, p.290

the limitations of the individual. While individualism hinders any real attempt at resistance or change, fractured and multiple identities become part of a utopian counter-narrative in the ecodystopian novel. Although the individual is still valued, they are valued within a wider network where they determine and are determined by the actions of human and non-human others, including the material environment.

As already argued in this thesis, the process of globalization and the phenomenon of climate change radically restructure spatial and temporal relationships. The previous chapter explored how the sense of anachrony, emerging from the shifts in scale created by climate change, demands a reconsideration of the past and the concepts that have developed from it in the face of new, unsettling knowledge in the present. In a similar disorientation, the 'loss of externality' introduced by Woods and Morton in the introduction to this chapter enacts another temporal disruption as the future must be reconsidered in light of the present. 'The future is not what it was', argues Wood, 'for there to be hope at all, indeed for there to be life and experience, here-and-now, we have no alternative but to go back to the future, and relate to it differently'.[342] As a space of possibility and new opportunity, the future is a central arena for the expression of hope. However, in the face of impending environmental changes, pre-existing ideas of future potentialities become compromised. Unlike a political government, climate change is not something that can be opposed and torn down. In fact, the realisation inherent to the Anthropocene that much of the damage has already been done means accepting the irreversibility of certain environmental changes and anticipating their consequences as the future seems increasingly imminent. Consequently, the way in which we conceive of the future must change and adapt. For authors such as Atwood, Doctorow, and Watts, this adaptation includes our concept of human identity.

Observing the 'posthuman turn' in recent scholarship, Rosi Bradotti argues that 'the posthuman predicament enforces the necessity to think again and to think harder about the status of human subjectivity and the ethical relations, norms, and values that

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[342] David Wood, 'On Being Haunted by the Future', *Research in Phenomenology*, 36 (2006), 274-298, pp.274-27

may be worthy of the complexity of our times'.[343] In the context of the Anthropocene, this complexity stems from the fact that humanity not only continues to engineer and shape the natural environment, but seems more and more capable of engineering and shaping the human body itself. Yet, at the same time, this narrative of self-determination is undermined by ongoing environmental uncertainty which continues to challenge the viability of the human species, not only in terms of its physical survival but also regarding the narrative of human exceptionalism. Indeed, the context of climate change, accompanied by new scientific, cybernetic, and technological innovations, challenges the unique quality and value of the human body and mind. For Naomi Jacobs, the radical destabilization of human identity presented by posthumanism has both dystopian and utopian implications: 'In the most pessimistic versions of this argument, the modern subject is seen as thoroughly decentred, multiple, and fluid; its desires are entirely the product of social forces. There is no self to act or to be expressed'.[344] In other words, individual identity is nothing more than the result of competing or complementary social constructs and biologically-determined behaviours. The resulting 'loss of identity and agency', exacerbated by questions of embodiment created by new biotechnological possibilities, 'seems to bode a self so vulnerable, so permeable and unstable, that it will be incapable of agency'.[345] This problematisation of human identity is made particularly prominent in the ecodystopian novel where so many of the protagonists seem trapped within culturally proscribed roles. Despite promising greater freedom to determine their own lives, the neoliberal dystopian society instead leaves the individual powerless to recognise or challenge the structures of power around them. Worse still, scientific narratives of biological determinism like that put forward by Crake threaten the concept of human autonomy altogether by reducing human beings down to their genetic 'instructions' and proposing that free will is merely an illusion. Consequently, while traditional dystopian narratives threatened the humanist conception of the self through totalitarian

[343] Rosi Bradotti, 'Posthuman Critical Theory', *Critical Posthumanism and Planetary Futures*, (eds.) D. Banerji and M.R. Paranjape (New Dehli, India: Springer 2016), pp.13-32, (p.13)
[344] Jacobs, 'Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*', p.93
[345] Ibid., pp.93-4

control and mechanistic oppression, the concept of the posthuman in ecodystopian texts threatens to undo the concept of 'human' altogether.

However, Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston stress that 'The posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human […] Rather it participates in re-distributions of difference and identity'. Rather a physical 'evolution or devolution' of the human body, posthumanism emerges as a counter-narrative to humanism.[346] While the human as a concept functions to establish hierarchies of difference, the posthuman instead emerges from interactions between difference. Similarly, Jacobs argues that '[s]uch a concept of subjectivity as multiple and fluid opens spaces for transformative encounters with difference […] [s]uch a relational self, unlike the self-contained humanist self, does not premise its free agency upon uniqueness or separation, and thus is capable of forging a posthuman autonomy'.[347] The deconstruction of the traditional concept of human identity opens up new directions of possibility where seemingly dystopian challenges to free will and autonomy can be adopted as utopian expressions of positive and creative difference. Indeed, '[i]f "human essence is freedom from the wills of others,"' argues Hayles, 'the posthuman is "post" not because it is necessarily unfree but because there is no a priori way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an other-will'.[348] Hence the posthuman fundamentally challenges the key value of freedom within the dystopian novel, rejecting individual autonomy in order to create a new counter-narrative which recognises that such autonomy never existed in the first place. Instead, agency emerges as co-created. This stress on interaction and interconnection forms the basis for a new utopian counter-narrative that presents humanity as an environmentally situated being. As a result, the acceptance that our natural environment has been compromised by pollution, contamination, and resource extraction means simultaneously accepting that the human body has been equally shaped by these changes, and that survival also means adaptation to a destabilized concept of the human.

The figure of the posthuman is not unique to ecological fiction. In fact, the posthuman as an exploratory space which challenges the existing structures and

[346] Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (eds.), *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p.10
[347] Jacobs, 'Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*', pp.94-5
[348] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.4

ideologies of its surrounding society is prevalent in various examples of dystopian texts, as well as other science fiction novels, speaking to a current revaluation of human identity, both biological and spiritual, in the face of current technological, genetic, and cultural movements. Yet, at the same time, the posthuman carries a particular relevance for ecocritical texts in the development of concepts of materiality and trans-corporeality that characterise the human as an environmentally situated being. In this context, the posthuman becomes a way of addressing a future world incompatible with present ways of living. It suggests that preventing climate change and the dystopian societies which both cause and emerge from this environmental exploitation is not simply a matter of developing technological and political solutions, but a crisis that demands new conceptions of human identity and responsibility which are indivisible from the surrounding environment. Similarly, Alaimo argues that in the face of environmental crisis, there is a need for an ethics 'in which the environment can no longer feature as background, resource, or passive matter, discrete substances that remain below or behind the human. Instead, we can foster the sense of enfolding, in which the "outside" is always already within, inhabiting and transforming what may or may not be still "human" through continual intra-actions'.[349] The resulting posthuman identity which emerges is contingent, a status which underlines the fragility of the human race when confronted with the vast environmental changes enacted by climate change, but also offers the possibility of change and adaptation. Within the ecodystopian novel, the posthuman thus plays an important role in the educative function of the text, inviting readers to reconsider the traditional values on which our concept of humanity is based. It does not simply instruct readers to desire 'more and better' but to desire differently.

[349] Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*, p.154

CHAPTER FIVE: DYSTOPIA NOW

> 'Our only chance of transforming this world lies in becoming the protagonists in a new narrative and acting accordingly'.
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> – Tom Moylan, 'Step into the Story'.[350]

> 'Realistically speaking, if you're in the middle of the sea, you're a goner. But you tread water until you can't kick another stroke. Not because you're optimistic. If you polled ten random shipwreck victims treading water in open sea, every one would tell you they're not optimistic. What they are is *hopeful*. Or at least not hope-*empty*. They won't give up because that means death and living people can sometimes change their situations, while dead ones can't change a fucking thing'.
>
> - Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway: A Novel*.[351]

Looking back over the last few years of the twenty-first century it is clear to see that the dystopian imagination has undergone a dramatic revival. In response to issues such as increased data surveillance, 'fake news', the migrant crisis, and religious extremism, classic dystopian novels like Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty Four* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* are experiencing renewed public interest, the latter being made into a successful and popular TV series.[352] Meanwhile, the continued appearance of new dystopian texts testifies to the popularity of this form amongst authors and readers. In addition to the aforementioned political and technological themes, the growing threat of an environmental crisis has undoubtedly played a large role in this dystopian revival, as many authors attempt to imagine how the consequences of anthropogenic environmental degradation will shape our future societies. Indeed, optimism seems to falter in the face of the events in recent years: the abolition of the UK's Department of

[350] Tom Moylan, 'Step into the Story', *Dystopia(n) Matters: On the Page, on Screen, on Stage*, (ed.) Fátima Vieira (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.42
[351] Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway: A Novel* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), p.286
[352] George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* reportedly experienced a 9,500 % increase in sales and rose to the top of Amazon's bestseller list in January 2017, after Donald Trump's adviser Kellyanne Conway used the term 'alternative facts' in response to questions about inaccuracies in a White House statement on Trump's inauguration <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/books/1984-george-orwell-donald-trump.html> [Accessed: 26/07/18]

Energy and Climate Change in 2016, emerging reports suggesting systemic plastic pollution, a devastating series of hurricanes and floods from Mexico to Bangladesh, America's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, the renewed growth of carbon emissions in 2017, and, to top it all, President Trump's continued denial of the existence of global warming altogether. Many of these issues are picked up in the ecodystopian novels discussed in this study and projected further into the future in bleak visions of environmental irresponsibility and devastation.

While the emergence of an ecological or even ecocritical trend within the dystopian genre thus demonstrates an increasing preoccupation with environmental issues, the renewed popularity of dystopian fiction as a form suggests that the ecocidal imagination has a specific appeal in confronting what is often perceived as the greatest challenge facing modern society. Why is it that when faced with the threat of environmental collapse and the eradication of humanity we respond with visions that accelerate this final disaster? As the wide array of genres encompassed within the title of 'climate fiction' demonstrates, the dystopian novel is not the only genre to engage with a growing environmental anxiety. Amongst these different literary forms, the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genres have also experienced a dramatic growth in popularity alongside the dystopian novel. In tackling current environmental issues, apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic and dystopian fiction share a preoccupation with the ecocidal imagination, to the extent that these genres are often elided. The confusion between these literary forms is exacerbated by the genre-blurring employed by ecodystopian fiction, which, as the analysis in preceding chapters has demonstrated, often contains elements of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. Environmental apocalypse may play a role in the destruction of the dystopian society, or it may just overshadow the narrative as a constant possibility and threat. In other narratives, such as *The Windup Girl*, the dystopian society can be viewed as post-apocalyptic, developing out of the aftermath of environmental disaster. Meanwhile, both *The Ice People* and *Oryx and Crake* are post-apocalyptic narratives where the protagonist's perspective and memories are used to present the pre-apocalyptic dystopian world and the events or disaster that destroyed it. Yet although it is possible for a text to belong to both the apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic genre and the dystopian genre, it is precisely the combinations of features and conventions from two *separate and distinct* literary traditions that make this genre-blurring significant.

While the introduction and preceding chapters of this thesis have already laid out some of the main differences between these genres, this final concluding chapter draws together the formal strategies, politics, and conventions of the ecodystopian novel to argue for the unique significance of the intervention it makes. In doing so, this analysis explores why a formal distinction between the dystopian novel and the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novel is necessary and explores how the adaptation of apocalyptic tropes by the ecodystopian novel addresses some of the criticism levelled against the apocalyptic tradition. Building on this distinction, this chapter further summarises why the ecocritical development of the dystopian novel provides such a productive form for the consideration of the representational challenges posed by the environmental crisis and the phenomenon of climate change. Finally, this chapter revisits the concept of hope to argue for the integral and defining role it plays in the pessimistic and ecocidal visions put forth by the ecodystopian novel. In doing so, this chapter considers the renewed popularity of dystopian fiction to ask what value this literary form holds for the present moment: why dystopia? And why dystopia now?

In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell argues that '[a]pocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal'.[353] As well as an effective rhetorical strategy in contemporary politics and environmental discourse, the theme or motif of apocalypse has proved one of the most popular responses to climate change within a growing body of environmentally-concerned literature. Whether the government is trying to deal with floods, food shortages, or pollution, the encroaching non-human world works to undermine the ideology and viability of the governing state. The planet may survive, as might some living beings, but society and human government largely, if not completely, collapse. Those narratives which begin after the apocalyptic event has occurred are post-apocalyptic, portraying a dramatically changed world. These may be set in the direct aftermath of the disaster following the lives of the few survivors, such as *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy, or set sometime after the event when new forms of society have begun to establish themselves, such as in *Station Eleven* (2014)

[353] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, M.A.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), p.285

by Emily St. John Mandel or *Mara and Dann* (1999) by Doris Lessing. Often these narratives contain flashbacks or references to the world that existed before the apocalypse, revealing the nature of the disaster that took place. The post-apocalyptic and apocalyptic narratives thus serve as cautionary tales against the future which are designed to rouse the reader into preventative action in the present. They consequently share with dystopian fiction the aim of acting as a catalyst for change by drawing attention to and critiquing the society of the present through representations of a negative future.

However, although the use of apocalyptic narratives and tropes has been a popular strategy within environmental science fiction, specifically for presenting concrete manifestations of climate change, the use of apocalyptic rhetoric has also proved contentious and problematic for the creation of a productive counter-narrative against the hegemonic narrative of neoliberal capitalism. In his much quoted opening to *The Seeds of Time*, Fredric Jameson argues that it 'seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations'.[354] Rather than an effective strategy for the critique of society's current mode of production, Jameson labels apocalypse as a failure to imagine an alternative to neoliberal capitalism. If hope exists in the apocalyptic novel then it takes the form of either a belief that disaster can be averted, or that the destruction of the old world will make way for a new, and hopefully better, society. However, not only is this second option notably unhelpful in negotiating the challenges of the present, but the long-term implications of climate change mean that this second option seems increasingly unlikely, resulting in more narratives that present the apocalyptic catastrophe as a final and unredeemable tragedy.

Exploring the shift from religious to secular visions of apocalypse, Elizabeth K. Rosen labels this form of apocalyptic narrative as 'neo-apocalyptic', arguing that '[t]he result is that a story which once was grounded in hope about the future has become instead a reflection of fears and disillusionment about the present, a bleak shift in emphasis from the belief in an ordered universe with a cogent history to one in which the overriding sense is of a chaotic, indifferent, and possibly meaningless

[354] Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.xxi

universe'.[355] Consequently, instead of presenting the possibility of a new beginning, the 'neo-apocalyptic' is increasingly closed against the future, expressing the faults and failings of mankind, and undermining established narratives of human progress. In environmental fiction, this apocalypse is not only self-inflicted, but deserved, as mankind reaps the consequences of what they themselves have sown. This apocalyptic imagination without hope becomes what Krishan Kumar characterises as 'a millennial belief without a sense of the future'.[356] Indeed, both Kumar and Rosen note the modern apocalypse's retreat from the future. Instead, apocalypse becomes centred on the present, because if hope remains it is moved from the future to the now, lying in the possibility that the reader will heed the warning and can act before it's too late.

Echoing Kumar and Rosen's observations that recent apocalyptic literature represents a retreat from the future, Jameson argues 'I think it would be better to characterize all this in terms of History, a History that we cannot imagine except as ending, and whose future seems to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here'.[357] Jameson's argument suggests that apocalyptic fiction does not represent drastic change, but instead the pinnacle of the current system. Borrowing from Terry Gifford's criticism of Liz Jensen's apocalyptic novel, *The Rapture*, the danger therefore is that these novels 'merely [exploit] current anxieties without a sense of the values by which we might act to avoid its narrative outcome'.[358] The tendency towards disaster and extinction narratives betrays an apocalyptic desire that undermines any real possibility of a solution, contradicting the idea that these narratives are designed to warn and educate their reader, and instead producing the opposite effect of sensationalizing destruction and relinquishing any responsibility for action. Within a context of continued inaction in the face of the threat of climate change, this apocalyptic trend is particularly worrying. Critics such as Naomi Klein argue that environmental catastrophes, rather than undermining capitalism, have been manipulated in order to promote its growth, acting as catalysts for economic reform

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[355] Elizabeth K., Rosen, *Apocalyptic Transformation: Apocalypse and the Postmodern Imagination* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), p.xiv

[356] Krishan Kumar, 'Apocalypse, Millennium and Utopia Today', *Apocalypse Theory and the End of the World*, (ed.) Malcolm Bull (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp.200-224, (p.205)

[357] Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', *New Left Review*, 21 (2003), 65-79, (p.76)

[358] Terry Gifford, 'Biosemiology and Globalism in The Rapture by Liz Jensen', *English Studies*, 91.7 (2010), 713-727, p.726

and restructuring in a process of 'disaster capitalism'.[359] By transforming the concept of environmental crisis into manageable and profitable disasters, such capitalist practices use the rhetoric of apocalypse to sustain the very ideologies it aimed to dismantle. Consequently, providing scenarios of apocalyptic retribution for humanity's abuse of environmental resources is ineffective unless some form of ideological critique is put in place to suggest an alternative approach. If humanity is unable to imagine a future different from the current system, then it follows that it will simultaneously be unable to tackle the root causes of environmental destruction.

While apocalyptic narratives have a tendency to sensationalise the destructive potential of climate change, post-apocalyptic narratives that imagine a future beyond the destruction of society often present a vision that re-inscribes, rather than challenges, the core ideologies upon which the old system was built. In the wake of apocalyptic destruction, the individual survivor gains new found agency, beyond society's rules and regulations. Yet this position of power is not a liberation from conventional liberal humanist values, but a reinstatement of them, celebrating ideals of self-determination and preservation and creating a survival ethics which is used to justify selfish and individualist actions. Furthermore, the representation of these societies often falls back on conventional ideas of pastoral nature of wilderness. Richard Jefferies's *After London; or, Wild England* (1885) is an early example, where an unexplained event (possibly pollution related) has destroyed civilization and the cities, leaving a landscape which has been re-conquered by 'wild' nature. Similarly, in a more recent example, James Howard's Kunstler's *World By Hand* (2007) depicts a post-oil America torn apart by epidemic disease and terrorist attacks. The society which emerges is pre-industrial, a romanticised vision that endorses self-sustainability but does so through the widespread obliteration of the human population and the social structures that governed them. Where conflict arises, it is the characteristic post-apocalyptic conflict of barbarity and the defence of traditional human values. Rather than offering an effective narrative of resistance, these narratives fall back on conventional ideas of nature and a romanticised pastoral existence from which current environmental concerns are notably absent. The potential problem is that in portraying the destruction of the old world, these narratives act as a commodification of

[359] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) (London: Penguin, 2008)

resistance, effecting a temporary liberation and empowerment of the individual through the removal of society. Ironically, such narratives effectively reiterate and reinscribe the ideologies and systems they purport to question, rather than providing a meaningful engagement with the social and cultural structures they hope to change. Consequently, the problem is how to overcome this block in order to imagine a future beyond current forms of neoliberal government and environmental exploitation that doesn't resort to apocalyptic destruction; or, as Jameson puts it, 'how to jumpstart the sense of history so that it begins again to transmit feeble signals of time, of otherness, of change, of Utopia'.[360]

Through the analysis of a range of texts, this thesis has put forward the argument that the ecodystopian novel represents a potential solution to this problem, and it does so because of its particular literary form and conventions. Significantly, while apocalyptic fiction literally displaces humanity through the destruction of human society, ecodystopian texts counter this displacement by refocusing the narrative on the social functions and cultural politics of everyday living. While apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction often work as cautionary tales, warning against current practices, dystopian novels present a more complex engagement with what those practices are, the cultural and economic systems that support and enable them, and what it might actually mean to effect change, or, failing that, adapt to it. The contrast between a narrative of survival and a narrative of lived experience represents a major point of difference between the two genres, which leads to different formal strategies within these texts.

Commenting on the representation and development of climate science, Sheila Jasonoff argues that 'climate change arguably displaces the very notion of community by displacing human beings, both as a species and as a source of norms, in favour of an impersonal, but naturalised, object of concern'.[361] As the introduction to this thesis has laid out, the ambiguous nature and distributed scale of climate change exceeds the parameters of normal human experience. Accordingly, many ecocritical approaches call for an eco-centric perspective that de-values traditional narratives of human exceptionalism. However, while the ecodystopian novel does challenge the

[360] Fredric Jameson, 'Future City', p.76
[361] Sheila Jasanoff, 'A New Climate for Society', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol.27, 2-3 (2010) 233-253, (p.237)

nature/culture dichotomy to show how the surrounding environment shapes the structure and dynamics of the dystopian society, it also retains a focus on the human. As a result, even if the concepts of human exceptionalism and individualism are challenged by these narratives, the human individual within the community remains relevant. As Richard Kerridge argues, '[p]erceptions of human exceptionality may emerge from cultural traditions heavily responsible for the crisis, but it is hard to think of the rapid transformations we need as anything other than increases in human responsibility'.[362] Locating the human within nature may promote a more ecocentric perspective, but the complete displacement of the human is not necessarily a helpful strategy for forging a more responsible and self-critical literary engagemnt with environmental questions. Ecodystopian fiction thus adapts the traditional anthropocentric focus of the dystopian novel in order to contextualise human politics and culture within a global ecological network which includes both human and non-human nature.

Accordingly, the ecodystopian text addresses the tension between the larger imperative of climate change and the plight of the individual in order to suggest the difficulties of perceiving and comprehending both the miniscule and immeasurable effects of a slowly unfolding global disaster. While classic dystopian fiction privileges the subjective experience of the individual, in the eocdystopian novel liberal humanist and individualist values are challenged through literary strategies that problematise the individual's reliability and perspective. The use of multiple narrators and polyphonic literary strategies in novels such as *The Windup Girl*, *The Sheep Look Up*, and *The Sea and Summer* expresses a plurality of experience that highlights the difficulties and limitations in responding to a global environmental crisis. By having several narrative perspectives that speak back to each other, these novels suggest how a sense of shared, human agency and an awareness for the contingent nature of constructed knowledge is necessary for formulating a meaningful response to this environmental crisis. Consequently, many of these texts take a notably postmodern approach. In *The Ice People* and *Oryx and Crake*, the post-apocalyptic space plays a central part in this destabilisation as the unreliable narrators look back over a past that proves unstable

[362] Richard Kerridge, 'Ecocritical Approaches to Literary Form and Genre', *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, (ed.) Greg Garrard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.367

and malleable. This retrospective narrative becomes a way of reclaiming and speaking back to the past. 'The dead cannot be resurrected', argues Terry Eagleton, 'but there is a tragic form of hope whereby they can be invested with new meaning, interpreted otherwise, woven into a narrative which they themselves could not have foretold'.[363] Both narrative strategies consequently find hope in the expression of difference and contingency, rather than stability and totality.

This contingency is reflected in the form taken by the plot of the ecodystopian novel. Significantly, although both apocalyptic/post-apolcayptic and dystopian fiction share the characteristic of projecting the negative trends of current society, while 'apocalypse is an end', argues Riven Barton, 'a dystopia is not an end, but a struggle for continuation'.[364] Indeed, the concept of 'struggle' is central to the dystopian form and its counter-narrative of resistance. While Barton characterises this 'continuation of life' as something that takes place '*after* the apocalypse has already happened' (emphasis mine), this is not the case in many of the texts considered here.[365] Although they often employ apocalyptic tropes, ecodystopian novels do so in a self-reflexive critical strategy that aims to question apocalyptic fear and rhetoric, often subverting the reader's expectations by postponing or denying the apocalyptic event. The narratives of Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* are set both before and after the apocalyptic moment and thus undermine the world-ending rhetoric of this concept. Furthermore, *The Stone Gods* employs repetition and intertextual references in order to suggest an opening up of the text world in a postmodern expression of potential and possibility. Other narratives have a more complex relationship to the apocalyptic event, such as *The Sea and Summer* where a post-apocalyptic frame narrative encloses the central dystopian narrative, but significantly the apocalyptic event itself is never portrayed. Instead the narrative presents a dystopian society struggling with an oncoming environmental disaster. Consequently, rather than embodying the crisis of climate change within a single apocalyptic event, the ecodystopian novel questions the narrative of 'apocalypse' and

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[363] Terry Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism* (2015; London: Yale University Press, 2017), p.33
[364] Riven Barton, 'Dystopia and the Promethean Nightmare', *The Age of Dystopia: One Genre, Our Fears and Our Future* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 2016), pp.5-18, (p.6)
[365] Ibid., p.6

the way it shapes our relationship to environmental disaster. Rejecting the idea that some form of apocalyptic event might arrive that will allow humanity to begin anew from a clean slate, the ecodystopian novels that have featured in this thesis instead confront the reader with the much less appealing possibility that as environmental pressures make everyday life more and more unbearable, human societies will find ways to carry on.

In ecodystopian fiction then, the crisis of climate change is not an apocalyptic event, but an environmental and cultural phenomenon stretched over time and space. ‘The spooky thing is, we discover global warming precisely when it’s already here’, explains Timothy Morton. ‘All those apocalyptic narratives of doom about the “end of the world” are, from this point of view, part of the problem, not part of the solution. By postponing doom into some hypothetical future, these narratives inoculate us against the very real object that has intruded into ecological, social, and psychic space. As we shall see, the hyperobject spells doom, now, not at some future date’.[366] Morton’s focus on the present is significant for the ecodystopian novel, which in comparison to the apocalyptic novel presents the destruction caused by climate change as an ongoing process that cannot be exiled to some future space. Indeed, the use of the speculative future in the ecodystopian novel is specifically designed to cast a critical reflection on the present in order to highlight the fact that environmental catastrophe is already happening now. Furthermore, the use of retrospective narrative in novels such as Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People*, Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, and George Turner’s *The Sea and Summer* adds to this sense of anachrony as readers are asked to consider the past in light of new knowledge emerging in the present, creating formal structures which imitate the temporal disruption caused by the distributed causes and effects of global climate change.

By disrupting the reliability or determinacy of historical narratives, the result of this anachronistic disruption is to deny a retreat to past concepts of nature. ‘To imagine that the solution to the environmental crisis involves a return to the past ignores the fact that our understanding of the environment has come about, in large part, through the disruption of nature by agriculture and industrialism and the

[366] Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), pp.103-4

concomitant rise of science', argues Dana Philips, stating that '[w]ithout environmental crisis, in other words, there would be no environmental imagination'.[367] The irony in this argument is equal to that of the naming of the Anthropocene, an act which signals the recognition of humanity's capacity to intervene and shape the material environment at precisely that point when this capacity seems too late to manage the consequences of previous intervention. Indeed, while some critics continue to debate the historical dates and parameters of an Anthropocene era, the Anthropocene is more productively understood as a new ecological self-consciousness. Consequently, if the apocalyptic novel functions by encouraging the reader to prevent the future it represents, the ecodystopian novel is aware that such acts of prevention are already too late. 'We do not encounter revelations of sudden ruptures with past', argue Frederick Buell, 'environmental problems and constraints *are* that past'.[368] Past discourses which stress the need to preserve a natural order are exposed to be equally damaging in an environmental context and a return to past ways of life is not only impossible, but unhelpfully nostalgic. Consequently, rather than learning from the past, the anachronism of the ecodystopian novel suggests that the past has become compromised by new knowledge in the present.

Yet despite its pessimistic approach, ecodystopian fiction is not a reflection of a growing resignation to a future we increasingly seem to be unable to prevent or solve, but a continued expression of hope in the face of this adversity. Arguing that 'neither evasion nor fatalism will do', Fuyuki Kurasawa argues that 'the pervasiveness of a dystopian imaginary can help notions of historical contingency and fallibilism gain traction against their determinist and absolutist counterparts'.[369] In comparison to the traditional dystopian novel where the protagonist often finds themselves defeated by the totalitarian government, the ecodystopian novel is an example of more recent trend of critical dystopian narratives, which, as Baccolini underlines, 'by resisting closure, allow readers and protagonists to hope: the ambiguous, open ending maintains the

[367] Dana Philips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003), p.183
[368] Frederick Buell, 'A Short History of Environmental Apocalypse', *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, (ed.) Stefan Skrimshire (London: Continuum, 2010), pp.13-36, (pp.28-29)
[369] Fuyuki Kurasawa, 'Cautionary Tales: The Global Culture of Prevention and the Work of Foresight', *Constellations*, 11.4 (2004), 453-475, p.454; 458

utopian impulse *within* the work'.[370] In some cases, this ambiguity or openness is maintained, as Baccolini argues, through an open ending that gestures towards possible new directions. Such an ending is present in *The Stone Gods*, where the repetition of the narrative refutes the apocalyptic moment to instead suggest the possibility for intervention. However, in other texts it is the ambiguous ethical critique of the dystopian counter-narrative that resists closure. Although texts like *The Sea and Summer* and *Walkaway* fulfil a didactic function in critiquing current systems for their role in damaging the environment, they do not seek to offer clear-cut answers for the current environmental crisis. Significantly, whereas the disaster has already taken place in the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic novel, the ecodystopian novel, by portraying the continuing functioning of society, stresses the belief that change within the current environmental context is possible.

Furthermore, by resisting the concept of apocalyptic finality, the ecodystopian novel insists that we can't rely on the destruction of the old world in order to make way for something new. 'For there to be genuine hope', argues Eagleton, 'the future must be anchored in the present. It cannot simply irrupt into it from some metaphysical outer space'.[371] Instead, as Moylan has argued, '[o]ur only chance of transforming this world lies in becoming the protagonists in a new narrative and acting accordingly […] We need to make room to develop a new and radical (as in comprehending the whole, roots included) perspective'.[372] In the ecodystopian novel, this 'new and radical' perspective is partially developed through the figure of the posthuman, used to challenge the roots of liberal humanist conceptions of identity by questioning existing biological and philosophical definitions of the human. Traditional values of freedom and autonomy, integral to the traditional dystopian narrative, become problematic in the face of a new environmental ethics which argues that these values have been co-opted by neoliberal narratives of capitalist progress and individual success. Meanwhile, emerging concepts of trans-corporeality and ecological post humanism disrupt the idea of externality and the self-bounded individual to instead suggest new, more environmentally aware, relationships with the material environment. The development of these posthuman counter-narratives asserts the potential for difference

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[370] Raffaella Baccolini, 'The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction', *PMLA*, 119.3 (2004), 518-521, p.520
[371] Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism*, p.38
[372] Moylan, 'Step into the Story', p.42

and change in the face of existing discourses around environmental sustainability and apocalypticism. Negotiating the morally contradictory pressures between environmental sustainability and traditional human values, the ecodystopian representation of the posthuman charts the creation of a new ecocritical ethics and aesthetics which stresses the need to recognise humanity as embedded in a material environment which influences humanity just as much as humanity shapes it.

While the environmental sciences continue to work to find ways of measuring and mediating climate change, the emergence of the ecodystopian novel represents a literary attempt to create a hopeful and meaningful response to this environmental crisis that avoids the apathy of apocalyptic rhetoric. This conception of hope is exemplified by a metaphor put forth in Doctorow's *Walkaway*. Attempting to explain the rational for resistance even in the face of insurmountable danger and opposition, Seth compares it to being shipwrecked in the middle of the ocean:

> Realistically speaking, if you're in the middle of the sea, you're a goner. But you tread water until you can't kick another stroke. Not because you're optimistic. If you polled ten random shipwreck victims treading water in open sea, every one would tell you they're not optimistic. What they are is *hopeful*. Or at least not hope-*empty*. They won't give up because that means death and living people can sometimes change their situations, while dead ones can't change a fucking thing. (*WA*, 286)

Here, Seth makes a distinction between optimism and hope, a distinction which is similarly made by Terry Eagleton in his book *Hope with Optimism*: 'True hope is needed most when the situation is at its starkest, a state of extremity that optimism is generally loath to acknowledge. One would prefer not to have hope, since the need to do so is a sign that the unpalatable has already happened'.[373] For Eagleton, hope is present in both optimistic and pessimistic worldviews. However, it is more vital for the pessimist, for while the optimist believes that everything will be alright in the end, the pessimist is not so sure. What the shipwreck metaphor above demonstrates is that in the most pessimistic of situations hope not only remains but becomes more integral. In the face of climate change and a neoliberal capitalist society that seems unwilling or unable to acknowledge its unsustainability in the face of global environmental

[373] Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism*, p.5

degradation, it is reasonable to be pessimistic about the future of human and non-human survival. Yet, the function of the ecodystopian novel is not to revel in the self-destruction of humanity, but to protest the possibility of meaningful efforts for change and resistance. The confrontation with the environmental challenges of the future that the ecocidal imagination presents is not an expression of desperation, but one of resilience and courage. In an apt metaphor for global warming, each ecodystopian work is an attempt to tread water, an expression of hope that maintains that something can be done if only we're willing to try.

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