

T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES



**REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN POST-APOCALYPTIC
DYSTOPIAS: AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF MAGGIE GEE'S *THE FLOOD*, CORMAC
MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD* AND MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD*.**

Ph.D. THESIS

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Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program

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ONAY FORMU



DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study “Representations of nature and environment in post-apocalyptic dystopias: an ecocritical reading of Maggie Gee’s *The Flood*, Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood*”, which I submitted as a Phd thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (.../.../20...)

İbrahim KOÇ



FOREWORD

I would like to thank my thesis adviser Asst. Prof. Öz ÖKTEM for her ever-helpful feedback, and the guidance she has given and patience she has shown me throughout the course of this study.

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September, 2021

İbrahim KOC



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ABSTRACT

KOÇ, İbrahim. Representations of nature and environment in post-apocalyptic dystopias: an ecocritical reading of Maggie Gee's *The Flood*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* PhD Dissertation, Istanbul, 2021

This dissertation is an ecocritical examination of three post-apocalyptic dystopian novels that feature certain catastrophic events that cause mass human deaths and transform the social, political and economic structure of societies. In addition to the 9/11 attacks, occasional economic problems and military operations carried out in various parts of the world, the threat posed by environmental degradation is also seen among the reasons for the rise of apocalyptic fiction in Western societies since the onset of the 21st century. While ecocritical readings focus on the relationship between environmental problems and human activities, they often ignore the guiding effect of the economic system on these activities. However, this study aims to reveal this relationship in selected novels by making use of ecosocialist philosophy and Marxist ecology theories. The ecosocialist perspective, as an anti-establishment and egalitarian movement that defends social equality in terms of human and nature interaction, without rejecting the scientific and technical advances and economic developments, is highly critical of the progressivist attitudes in capitalist societies. Based on this theory and related concepts, this dissertation concludes that although their authors, stories, settings, and treatment of apocalyptic motifs differ significantly, all the three novels studied – Maggie Gee's *The Flood* (2004), Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of The Flood* (2009), feature details that show the connection between human and nature interaction and economic choices. Among other themes, they each demonstrate a concern for the relationship between the rise of violence due to the collapse of societies and environmental degradation.

Key Words: *ecosocialism, Marxism, ecocriticism, post-apocalyptic fiction, dystopia.*



**KIYAMET SONRASI DİSTOPYALARDA DOĞA VE ÇEVRE TEMSİLLERİ:
MAGGİE GEE’NİN *THE FLOOD*, CORMAC MCCARTHY’NİN *THE ROAD*
VE MARGARET ATWOOD’UN *THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD*
ROMANLARININ EKOELEŞTİREL OKUMALARI**

ÖZET

KOÇ, İbrahim. Kıyamet sonrası distopyalarda doğa ve çevre temsilleri: Maggie Gee’nin *The Flood*, Cormac McCarthy’nin *The Road* ve Margaret Atwood’un *The Year of the Flood* romanlarının ekoeleştirel okumaları, Doktora Tezi, İstanbul, 2021. Bu tez, kitlesel insan ölümlerine neden olan ve toplumların sosyal, politik ve ekonomik yapılarını dönüştüren bir takım felaketleri içeren üç kıyamet sonrası distopyanın ekoeleştirel incelemesidir. Batı toplumlarında 21. yüzyılın başından itibaren kıyamet kurgusunun yükselişinin nedenleri arasına 11 Eylül saldırıları, yaşanan ekonomik sorunlar ve dünyanın çeşitli yerlerinde gerçekleştirilen askeri operasyonlara ilave olarak, çevresel bozulmanın yarattığı tehditler de eklenmiştir. Ekoeleştirel okumalar, çevre sorunları ile insan faaliyetleri arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanırken, genellikle ekonomik sistemin bu faaliyetler üzerindeki yönlendirici etkisini göz ardı etmektedir. Bu çalışma ise, ekososyalizm felsefesi ve Marksist ekoloji teorilerinden yararlanılarak seçili romanlarda bu ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. İnsan ve insan dışı doğa arasındaki etkileşim üzerine toplumsal adaleti savunan, eşitlikçi ve düzen karşıtı bir hareket olarak ekososyalist bakış açısı, bilimsel ve teknik gelişmeler ile ekonomik gelişmeleri reddetmeden, kapitalist toplumlardaki ilerlemecilik misyonuna karşı eleştirel bir tavır içindedir. Bu teori ve ilgili kavramlara dayanarak bu tez; yazarları, öyküleri, ortamları ve kıyamet motiflerine ilişkin davranışları önemli ölçüde farklılık gösterse de, ele alınan, Maggie Gee’nin *The Flood* (2004), Cormac McCarthy’nin *The Road* (2006) ve Margaret Atwood’un *The Year of the Flood* (2009) romanlarının doğa-insan etkileşimi ve ekonomik tercihler arasındaki doğrudan ilişkiyi doğru şekilde kurduğu sonucuna varmıştır. Bu eserler toplumsal düzenin çöküşüne bağlı olarak yükselen şiddet ile çevresel bozulma arasındaki ilişkiye ilişkin temalar içermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *ekososyalizm, Marksizm, ekoeleştiri, kıyamet sonrası kurgu, distopya.*



1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is an ecocritical study of three post-apocalyptic dystopian novels written during the first decade after the 9/11 attacks. Although their authors, stories, settings, and treatment of apocalyptic motifs differ significantly, all three novels – Maggie Gee’s *The Flood* (2004), Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) and Margaret Atwood’s *The Year of The Flood* (2009), feature details that show the connection between human and nature interaction and economic choices. They concern themes such as the relationship between the rise of violence due to the collapse of societies and environmental degradation. Each novel emphasizes different aspects of environmental problems, yet they find common ground on crucial issues. This shared feature provides to a broad purview for an ecocritical reading.

Traditionally post-apocalyptic dystopian novels involve a particular catastrophic event that will bring the end of the world as we know it as well as the end of the capitalist economic system upon which the social, political and legal systems are built. The political aspects of dystopias are often grounded on the material and cultural realities of the time in which they were written. Sisk (1997) argued that, “Dystopian fiction is fundamentally concerned with the writer’s present society and builds its horrific power on extrapolating current trends to what the writer considers their logically fearsome conclusions” (p. 7). Literary works of this kind show how certain utopian premises can lead to disasters, while they also contain warnings and criticisms of existing governments. Although the flaws of the current system are too obvious to be overlooked, any utopian attempt to fundamentally resolve them almost always ends in disaster.

However, the novels studied in this dissertation show that when dystopian futures stem from the apocalyptic destruction of the natural environment, the true disaster would be to continue with the existing system. Recent scientific studies confirm that industrialization and consumption habits in capitalist societies cause permanent damage to the ecosystems of the world. In other

words, contrary to popular cultural propaganda, the end of industrial capitalism does not mean the end of the world, but it is slowly destroying the only known planet suitable for human life. In this context, this dissertation argues that end of the world fictions, which bear the traces of the economic, political and environmental conditions of the period in which they were written, clearly show the direct relationship between capitalism and environmental problems by revealing the oppressive socio-political situation and the socioeconomic forces at work. For this purpose, the primary focus in this dissertation is to reveal the misleading paradigm that draws a parallel between the end of the world and the end of the social order in consumption-driven societies by making use of Marxist and socialist criticisms of capitalism. In addition, this dissertation posits that end of the world fictions, whether consciously or not, provide useful tools for raising environmental consciousness by showing the real causes of environmental degradation. They invite us to criticize capitalist exploitation of nature in a number of ways.

In recent years the fear of a probable environmental disaster that would affect the whole or most of the Earth's surface has become widespread as the frequency of natural disasters and the number of people affected has increased significantly. Besides this noticeable increase, the possibility of major disasters has begun to be expressed in a growing number of scientific publications and studies (CRED 2020; IFRC 2020). In addition to this fear, a number of incidents have increased the security threats to Western societies since the onset of the 21st century. For example, the 9/11 attacks shattered the former impression that American cities were safer than those in the rest of the world due to their distance from war zones (World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and other US military operations in South America, the Middle-East and elsewhere in the world). For the American people, who were accustomed to watching the aerial bombing of cities from their comfort zone, the close threat of terror and violence (suicide attacks with hijacked planes) had traumatic consequences. Besides the 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks, the sense of loss among Western peoples due to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the negative implications of economic globalization caused these fears and concerns to spread globally through media and cultural products. Traces of

these fears and anxieties are clearly visible in all three novels; moreover, these can be followed from the statements made by the authors on various occasions and from the details included, whether knowingly or not, in their novels.

The concept of apocalypse – “the complete final destruction of the world” (OED) – which originated from ancient religious texts and has always been a part of the Western canon, has in the present period become a frequently used theme in both popular and literary fiction. As Renner (2012) argues, “the secularized use of the term apocalypse is a relatively new phenomenon, one that suggests a far less hopeful attitude about the fate of the world than the biblical usage, for catastrophe in these narratives is merely the tragic outcome of human failure or epic misfortune and promises nothing more” (p. 204). This is to say that the notion of apocalypse began to be fictionalized as a consequence of “failure” or “misfortune” for contemporary societies who employ modern science and advanced technology. In this sense, as Jeanette Winterson pointed out, “Our new pessimism no longer depends on a deity to wipe out this wicked world. Since the Manhattan Project, we have learned how to do it ourselves.” (Winterson 2009). At least since World War II, when atomic bombs were used for the first time in history, it has been understood that technology has reached a level that threatens the self-destruction of all humanity.

One of the reasons for this noticeable increase is that the writers of such novels are as affected by the general course of world events and the agenda of their societies as other members of their communities. As Tyson (2006) puts it, “Literary works often reflect the ideological conflicts of their culture, whether or not it is their intention to do so, because, like the rest of us, authors are influenced by the ideological tenor of the times” (p. 122). Another reason why these cultural productions about the end of humanity have become commodities in demand is undoubtedly, as Alterman (2004) explains it in simple terms that “the problem of fear sells very well” (p. 1331). Fear in a society moving towards a catastrophe is “an attractive proposition from a capitalist point of view” (p. 1331). Besides, for the citizens of Western countries, who started to feel the effects of global economic problems more than ever in the first quarter of the 21st century (such as rising unemployment rates, global political unrest, illegal migration, wars or worsening environmental conditions), a transition to a

totally different economic and social order in these apocalyptic stories, due to lack of resources, a meteor impact or an alien invasion, is no different from the real apocalypse. Jameson famously remarked on the affinity between the increase in apocalyptic narratives and the unlikely disappearance of capitalism in simple terms; “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism” (2003).

Post-apocalyptic novels of the first quarter of the 21st century often involve environmental concerns about the future of the natural world, increased security threats due to terrorism and other unforeseen violence, and the fear of the self-destruction of humanity as a result of advanced technology. These novels typically involve survivors of an apocalyptic event and the subsequent struggle to sustain themselves in dystopian worlds. The cause of these events may be a natural disaster such as a flood, an earthquake or a meteor impact. It could be a pandemic disease caused by a strange virus or a major nuclear war after political conflicts related to the scarcity of resources or an energy crisis. In these novels, examination of both the pre- and post-apocalyptic outlook of societies can suggest logical and realistic conclusions about the anthropogenic degradation of nature and environment – even if it is not the direct cause of the apocalypse¹.

Post-apocalyptic narratives deal with the world or a society after such disasters have taken place. After the apocalypse, with the disappearance of familiar environmental conditions, a serious breakdown in society, economic crisis or even a total collapse of civilization can be seen. These narratives almost always include speculations about the future impact of current environmental, political and economic issues and thus, by showing the fragility of human civilization and its political and economic order, they challenge traditional societal values. This means that speculating about the future of the world and humanity is not the only function of apocalyptic texts. The obvious reason why these texts are frequently used in ecocritical readings is that they also provide a solid criticism of the existing social order that facilitates the environment in which destructive

¹ post-apocalyptic.fandom.com provides a detailed list of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fictional works sorted according to their format and the causes of the catastrophic events. The information contained in this paragraph has been partially compiled from this website.

behaviours and relationships occur. In this sense, they fulfil a social mission and provide the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions we live in. As Rosen (2008) pointed out, “Apocalypse is a means by which to understand the world and one's place in it. It is an organizing principle imposed on an overwhelming, seemingly disordered universe” (p. xi).

Since the day it emerged as a religious concept, apocalypse has been considered a divine message, a revelation, about the end of the world. A frequently cited definition of this concept is as follows:

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world (Collins 1998, p. 5).

According to this definition apocalypse is a type of narrative addressed to humans by an otherworldly mediator. This narrative both involves the end of the physical world and an entry into a ‘supernatural world’ as a ‘salvation’. Nevertheless, the salvation is conditional; the apocalyptic event could be either a “punishment” or a “reward” “determined solely on one’s merits” (Jassen 2014, p. 80). In other words, salvation depends on the ‘temporal’ choices of the ‘human recipient’; in this context, therefore, apocalypse could be both a collective punishment for those who lead a life incompatible with ‘transcendent reality’ and a reward for those who live up to the revealed commands of the supreme power.

In the above sense apocalypse could function as a cure for the individual sins and collective ills of societies or a reward of eternal life in a perfect environment depending on the choices made over the course of a lifetime. In order to fulfil its function as a social criticism, an ecological reading based on concrete facts and current worldly realities can borrow and use this theological approach. In an ecosystem where human beings and other living species interact, ‘sins’ such as air, water and soil pollution, deforestation, overfishing, and unconscious consumption of water resources, that is, every behaviour

harmful to the health of the natural world is also recorded like the items of the deed-books in Abrahamic religions². However, unlike the theological belief, an earthly apocalypse will punish everyone, not only the sinners, when nature's capacity to tolerate these sins is exceeded. All three novels in this study set up an apocalypse that affects everyone equally, confirming the ecological proposition that all living ecosystems interact with each other and that the disruptions experienced in one will affect the others.

The first chapter deals with Maggie Gee's *The Flood* which features an environmental apocalypse. It is also the first of Gee's novels that distinctively reflects the impacts of the post 9/11 agenda. Racism, class conflict and fear of a global environmental catastrophe are the main questions raised throughout this dystopian novel. Gee provides a physical and social panorama of a colonialist state (an unnamed city state) where continuous rains both complicate the daily activities of its people and make economic injustices more visible. A wealthy and privileged minority suffer less thanks to the location of their residential areas, but the poor have to live in the flooded lower part of the city called the Towers, and mostly in isolation. In the meantime, the city state is at war with a distant Muslim country, echoing the West's interventions in Iraqi and Afghani territories.

In *The Flood* Gee questions the possibility of a change in the fundamental dynamics of capitalism in the case of a major environmental disaster. The existence of people who are striving to protect their assets, even in the last moments of their lives, quite clearly shows that the capitalist social structure does not create a favourable environment for both humans and nature. In this city where the strong crush the weak, the segment of society which has the capacity to make a difference, who are able to solve many of the problems, remains blind and deaf to them. The voices of those who clamour against the social, economic and environmental exploitation are ignored, if not forcibly silenced and punished. The brief 'After' chapter located at the very end of the novel depicts a world in which the conditions of the different strata of society

² Deed-book is rooted in a popular belief in Judaic, Christian, and Islamic tradition about a certain kind of angel, called recording angel, which records the deeds of all individuals for future reward or punishment.

are equalized. However, in contrast to classical post-apocalyptic narratives, this chapter represents a world after the apocalyptic event portrayed as having an ideal, paradise-like social structure in which social and environmental problems no longer exist, meaning that there is no capitalist exploitation and destruction of nature.

The second chapter of the study comprises an ecocritical reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* which is also set in an unknown time and place. Nevertheless, just as the setting of the British Gee's *The Flood* evokes the topography of Britain, from some clues given in the text, it can be inferred that the American McCarthy's novel is set in the southern parts of America, more specifically around Tennessee and North Carolina. When an unspecified catastrophe hit the world, most of the people died either immediately or during the subsequent years. Among the few survivors there are two groups of people presenting "the extreme moral dualism that divides the world sharply into friend and enemy" (Garrard, p. 86). The first group is made up of people who have to move constantly in order to look for something to eat and not to fall prey to the cannibals and murderers who comprise the second. The dichotomy here appears to correspond to Marxism's class theory. Marx and Engels' famous quote: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (1955, p. 482) seems to explain the supposedly new – it is indeed nothing other than a rearrangement of the old – power structure presented in this novel. A classical Marxist perspective can be applied to identify the cannibal gangs as the symbolic equivalent of the bourgeois in a capitalist society, and father and son as proletarians would also be consistent. In a sense, the apocalypse did not totally eliminate the existing social divisions, as it did in *The Flood*, only simplified them, enhancing the contrast and making them more comprehensible. Besides, unlike *The Flood*, which employs a large number of characters in order to present a broad look at the social relations and events, the plot of *The Road* is reduced to the survival story of an unnamed father and his son. According to Marxist theory, the social structure, inspired by the superstructure institutions, emerged on the basis of industrial capitalism and causes the exploitation of the middle and lower strata. In a similar sense, one of the components of this system, contemporary consumption culture, which has become widespread with

the influence of media and popular culture, creates a dichotomy similar to this hunter/prey relationship in *The Road*.

While a major part of *The Flood* is about the pre-apocalyptic world, *The Road*, except for a few faded memories of the father, is completely about the post-apocalyptic world. In the first half of the novel the man and the boy try to reach the seaside by constantly moving to the South and East in the hope of finding a milder climate and perhaps a place that is still to some extent civilized. Throughout their journey, the readers are informed of the apocalyptic event that caused nature lost its ability to regenerate, and in this way, humanity began to share the same fate as the extinct animals whose presence on Earth ended with the disappearance of their natural habitats. From this point of view, *The Road* contains powerful messages about the meaning of the interaction between humans and the natural environment that overlap with the modern environmental discourse.

The third novel examined in this study is Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood*, the second book of a trilogy that began with *Oryx and Crake* in 2003 and was completed with *MaddAddam* in 2013. In this trilogy, events take place in a near future envisioned in accordance with the possible consequences of scientific knowledge and developing technologies. Naturally, as can be explained by Marxist theory, the fact that transformations of the superstructure institutions occur due to changes in the means of production and technological infrastructure is among the remarkable details of these novels. The (more) advanced capitalism of the future world has compelled national states to fall under the control of multinational corporations, which now rule the world. This issue is only vaguely observed and remarked upon by a limited number of people today; however it is one of the more prominent features of the political structure of society in Atwood's fiction about the future.

In this trilogy a genius scientist of genetics and biotechnology, who frowns on the system especially in relation to political and moral matters, develops a virus that will eliminate all the people living on Earth, including himself. According to him, the source of all the social, economic and environmental problems of the time is solely the greed inherent in human nature. With the help of a radical environmentalist organization, God's Gardeners, he also develops a new species

to replace humans. These creatures, the Crakers, are supposed to live in harmony with each other and with their environment, and without repeating the mistakes humans have made. 'The flood', mentioned in the title of the novel and which separates events as being either pre- or post-apocalyptic, is used in response to the environmental apocalypse that the Gardeners expected to happen. It refers to the biblical Flood that is believed to have wiped out evil from Earth and given people a fresh start. However, the apocalypse did not occur as a result of a natural disaster as they expected, but as a result of a virus epidemic.

In this trilogy Atwood's criticism against the project of modernity is expressed in line with her feminist and environmentalist approach. The first two novels, *Oryx and Crake* and *The Year of the Flood* tell the story of the same event and almost within the same time period from the perspectives of different central characters (the daughter of an air conditioner dealer who killed himself after becoming unemployed because of his wife's health expenses; an illegal immigrant who is also a kind of artist; the wife of an executive from the privileged corporate world, and her incompatible and emotionally depressed daughter). Considering the differences in their approaches, both novels can be read and discussed independently. In *The Year of the Flood*, while relating the background of the apocalyptic event, referred to as 'the Waterless Flood' throughout the novel, Atwood also describes the experiences of a group of women from different segments of the society. Thus, unlike the rather vague pre-apocalyptic social structure in *The Road* and the narrative that prioritizes the perspective of the middle and upper segments in *The Flood*, *The Year of the Flood* reflects the differences of opinion and choice caused by social stratification more clearly. Apart from this and much more importantly, there is plenty of scope given to the representatives of environmental movements who appear only in traces in *The Flood* and never appear in *The Road*. Members of Gods Gardeners have passionate feelings about environmental issues and social justice. They reject the products of modern technology; they don't watch TV or use computers unless it is for industrial espionage or to communicate with other cells with which they are nonhierarchically related. They are strictly vegan and they grow their own food in 'the Rooftop Garden' of an abandoned building.

They believe deeply in living within the confines of nature and reject all artificial products as they are against the laws of nature. Nevertheless, they have thrown away the possibility of being a consistent alternative solution for the exploitative social structure by being deceived by the manipulations of Crake, who has made plans to destroy humanity right under their noses. The majority of the Gardeners sincerely adhere to the ideology that rejects corporate capitalism; however, they fail to develop a coherent discourse that raises awareness among the impoverished crowds.

In this context, an ecocritical reading of *The Year of the Flood*, on the one hand, reveals criticisms particularly concerning environmental and health issues such as the conservation of natural resources, industrial waste, the potentially dangerous consequences of biotechnology and the proliferation of unhealthy fast food culture; and additionally, of social justice, sexist attitudes towards women and the inadequacies of Western democracies in the face of the tyranny of multinational corporations. On the other hand, however, it provides an opportunity for introspection – a self-criticism, for individual and organized volunteers/insurgents who take responsibility for natural life and environmental issues.

An ecocritical study inspired by certain concerns of the modern environmental movement centring on social and economic aspects of environmental issues would help enrich the readings of these novels. Above all ecocriticism is seen as a reflection of increasing awareness about environmental degradation in literary criticism. More generally, it is a form of criticism which aims to investigate the cultural codes that constitute the basis of the human-nature relationship through the analysis of cultural and artistic production. According to ecocriticism theory, attitudes toward the environment are not innate, but rather constructed in part depending on cultural inheritance. In other words we know what we know by way of the culture into which we were born. During the socialization process an individual learns about the norms and beliefs that will make them a member of a certain society. They start looking at the world, at the events taking place and the people around them through the lens of that culture which has been formed by certain codes, beliefs and behaviours. In this particular case it is possible to say that any perception of the physical environment depends on the

culture rather than the objective reality itself. According to the fundamental philosophy of ecocritical studies based on this view, through the examination of works of art as cultural representations, it is possible to uncover the individual and social attitudes towards the culturally produced environment and the concepts that constitute the individual perceptions of it.

Through cultural and artistic works the social and political views of individuals such as consumption habits and political preferences can be manipulated, modified or transformed. In this sense, ecocriticism searches for a positive cultural change through literary texts in the context of the relationship between humans and the natural environment:

Implicit (and often explicit) in much of this new criticism is a call for cultural change. Ecocriticism is not just a means of analyzing nature in literature; it implies a move toward a more biocentric world-view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of humans' conception of global community to include nonhuman life forms and the physical environment. Just as feminist and African American literary criticism call for a change in culture--that is, they attempt to move the culture toward a broader world-view by exposing an earlier narrowness of view--so too does ecological literary criticism advocate for cultural change by examining how the narrowness of our culture's assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society. (Branch 1998, p. xiii).

However, history has already shown that social programming could have dangerous consequences when misused. Such practices are usually carried out by the state in autocratic countries and by business corporations in liberal capitalist countries. According to ecocritical premises, if cultural products have the power to turn people into, for example, American-style consumers, chauvinist war enthusiasts or even supporters of genocide, then the same power can be used to change them into eco-friendly citizens. In order to achieve this, popular, intellectual and academic consciousness should be activated. This is one of the main purposes of ecocriticism studies and it seems to be more meaningful considered from this point of view.

Two of the novels examined in this study, *The Flood* and *The Year of the Flood*, contain details of a cultural programming which promotes luxury consumption through print, visual and internet media. In addition, these novels have a strong tone of social criticism regarding the relationship between consumption, culture and capitalism, and their association with issues such as environmental problems and social injustice. In both novels, criticisms about capitalist exploitation related to environmental problems are not one-sided, but rather as objective and consistent as possible. In this respect, they show potential strategies to get rid of consumerist culture in order to gain environmental awareness. However, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* has only vague allusions about this prospect. The apocalypse has already happened when the narrative begins, so for the pre-apocalyptic world it is too late to raise environmental awareness. In this novel, everywhere is covered with ashes and garbage, both of which are the ultimate results of unconscious and excessive consumption. It is also the novel in which the apocalyptic event has the most severe impact on the natural environment.

The first examples of ecocriticism, as Glotfelty's definition indicates, focused on "the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, p. xviii). To this end it combines traditional literary methodologies with ecological perspectives, "Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (1996, p. xviii). According to the ecocritics, the physical environment and human culture are interwoven and there is a mutual interaction between them. Based on this point of view, ecocritics examine literary texts with an emphasis on the language that is used to describe nature and landscape. At the same time, they explore whether or not the characters and the plots of literary works are compatible with ecological principles.

Early ecocritics generally focused on environmentally oriented nonfiction narratives of American writers who give natural life a central role in their works, such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Rachel Carson, Annie Dillard and Barry Lopez. In England, the origin of such

nature-oriented literature is based on Gilbert White's *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne* (1789). This book, including observations of pre-industrial England's plant and animal world, inspired many 19th and 20th century writers. In Canadian literature Catharine Parr Traill, a 19th century English settler in Canada, is considered the first naturalist writer. Her collection of letters and journals *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) contains unique information about the nature and climate of early Canada. She is also known for the botanical book *Canadian Wild Flowers* (1865). The first ecocritics dealt with the works of the aforementioned nature writers and romantics who describe the sublime sensation of the human soul, that finds peace and integrity in wild nature; the nature that is greater and more powerful than humans. According to them, if a person is aware of their limitations and their place in the universe, they will learn to respect nature and will not harm it. This romantic understanding of nature constituted the foundations of ecocriticism and "in a sense made possible, the birth of modern environmentalism" (Mazel 2001, p. 8). Ecocriticism is a relatively new approach to literary criticism that has gained attention in academic circles since the 1990s, but it is also an extension of the modern environmental movement. In this respect ecocriticism can be seen as an intellectual response to environmental issues or a different aspect of taking responsibility for the sake of future generations. It aims not only to analyse cultural codes, but also to change them by helping the existing generation understand the roots of the present-day ecological crisis. In this context Estok (2001) argues that:

Ecocriticism, therefore, is not simply the study of Nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the function— thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise—of the natural environment, or aspects of it, represented in documents (literary or other) that contribute to material practices in material worlds (pp. 16-7).

Arguably, this lofty aim puts ecocriticism studies on a different path to the critical approaches that draw attention temporarily. William Rueckert, who coined the term, in his article "Literature and Ecology – An Experiment in

Ecocriticism” (1978), stated that “we seem to have been everywhere, seen and done everything” (p. 105), and spoke about these new methods of literary criticism and approaches that quickly became fashionable and were just as quickly forgotten. He addressed the dangers of bringing a new approach to literary criticism, yet proposed that “there must be a shift in our locus of motivation” (p. 107) and emphasized the necessity of an ecological approach to literature. He explained what he was trying to do as, “I’m going to experiment with the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and the future of the world we all live in” (p. 107).

Rueckert deals with the relationship between nature and literature in a poetic manner by referring to the laws of thermodynamics and says that “a poem is a stored energy” but unlike fossil fuels they are “renewable” and “cannot be used up” (p. 108). Reading is clearly an energy transfer as the energy stored in the poem is released and flows back into the language and the creative imaginations of the readers. In this sense ‘poetry’ could be seen as an infinite resource that stores infinite energy through language and we release it by reading. According to Rueckert, “green plants are nature's poets” and “poems are green plants among us” (p. 111). Rueckert, as a reader, a teacher and a literary critic, is aware of the fact that human existence on Earth is at risk due to pollution, rapid population growth and climate change. He gives the following advice, “We should do what we have always done: turn to the poets. And then to the ecologists. We must formulate an ecological poetics. We must promote an ecological vision” (p. 114).

In 1992, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was founded by “a group of scholars and writers interested in exploring the meanings of the natural environment and the complexities of human relationships with each other, and with the more-than-human world” (*Vision & History* 2019). One year later, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (ISLE) was established as its official journal and ecocritic Scott Slovic became the first editor. It would not be wrong to say that there has been an increase in serious academic studies in this field after the establishment of this organisation. Today ecocritical studies has a wider scope than in its early

years, dealing with all kinds of popular and high culture representations of all branches of art, from cinema to painting, music to theatre, essentially any work that has certain environmental implications. If ecocriticism is seen among mainstream critical approaches today, it is thanks to Glotfelty's efforts to produce the very first anthology of the field. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) not only provided consistent definitions for the ecological literary discourse, but also contains the first articles of many ecocritics. Since then, a number of article collections have been published such as *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and Environment* (1998) edited by Branch, Slovic, Patterson and Johnson; *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature* (1998) edited by Kerridge and Sammells; *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism* (2000) edited by Tallmadge and Harrington; *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (2000) edited by Coupe. These books enriched the ecocriticism corpus for both academic and general readers and contributed to discussions on ecocritical theory.

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach. While commenting on the representations of nature and environment in art, ecocritics, from the very beginning, benefit from knowledge of history, ecology, economics, theology and natural sciences, as well as cultural and social studies. The idea that environmental problems fall within the field of science rather than culture seems more reasonable for many people. Therefore, for example, reading (reviewing) a narrative fiction that has been reinforced with up-to-date data from different disciplines could be more convincing. Considering the role and responsibility of literature in raising awareness about environmental issues that have been high on the global agenda in the last decades, such integration is inevitable.

The Flood contains many details concerning the political events of recent history. Therefore, it does not seem possible to interpret this satirical work without addressing current political issues. In addition, the use of rich language, especially the multi-dimensional references to environmental conditions require analysis from different perspectives. In this context classical economics and marginal utility theory were particularly helpful in explaining these references

in the novel. The ecocritical reading of *The Road* in this study made use of the chemical definition of combustion (burning) to explain the consequences of excessive consumption. Besides, there are references to the foundations of Western understanding of nature based on its biblical roots and the colonial past of America, in order to clarify hostile attitudes towards natural environment. In the analysis of *The Year of the Flood*, by using data on the advertising and marketing budgets of chemical and cosmetic companies, the perception of beauty created by consumer culture is discussed. This discussion demonstrates that retailing and consumption of cosmetic products has catastrophic effects for both human and environmental health.

The notion that all people living on Earth share the same ecosystem regardless of their race, colour or religion is a common premise among all ecological philosophies. Unlike other theories that assign a central focus to the writer, the text or the reader, ecocriticism has a holistic outlook. According to Bate (2001), the most accurate ecocritical reading is a synthesis of the experiences of both the writer and the reader. He makes the distinction between good and bad interpretations of texts as follows:

We are equally in error when we moor a text solely to its author (that is to neglect its semantic autonomy) and when we cast it adrift utterly from its author (that is to neglect its human origin). Bad interpretation is either that which insists on always checking back with the author (to do so is to deprive writing of the peculiarity that makes it different from speech) or that which claims we can say anything we like about a text (to do so is to hypostasize the text as an authorless entity, which is not the condition of any text). Good interpretation is a synthesis of the two parts of the dialectic constituted by author and reader (p. 249).

The authors of all three novels discussed in this dissertation have directly or indirectly stated that the inspiration for their post-apocalyptic fictions came not only from their private lives but also from the important global events, such as wars, natural disasters and terrorist attacks. In this context, it is possible to say that the dystopic worlds created by the authors reflect the general mood of the societies they belong to, as well as their individual reactions to the rising

security concerns in contemporary Western societies shaped by advanced technology and capitalism. The ecocritical readings of these novels, as Bate underlined in his book, are made in accordance with the holistic nature of environmental problems by bringing together elements of both the imaginative and the real worlds.

Ecocriticism aims to bring environmental consciousness to literary and cultural studies and it “share[s] the common aim to synthesize literary criticism with natural sciences and literary studies with the environmental philosophies” (Oppermann 2006, p. 105). However, its practitioners differ in terms of particular methodologic and theoretical references. As stated by Tallmadge and Harrington, “ecocriticism is really less a method than an attitude, an angle of vision, and a mode of critique” (2000, p. ix). Saver (1994) regards ecocriticism as a “vague” and “misleading” term, and she rejects its being used to refer to a type of critical theory:

The emerging body of work that might be labelled ecocritical is united not by a theory, but by a focus: the environment. This ecocritical work draws on a variety of theories, such as feminist, Marxist, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and historicist. Using these different theories, the ecocritic considers how nature is reflected and perceived in literary texts. It seems, therefore, that these literary studies reflect not the science of ecology, but a broad-based environmentalist sensibility. Literary scholars who are environmentalists seem not to be creating a new critical theory; rather, they are drawing on existing theories to illuminate our understanding of how human interactions with nature are reflected in literature.

Slovic argues that, “ecocriticism has no central, dominant doctrine or theoretical apparatus – rather it is being re-defined daily by the actual practice of the thousands of literary scholars around the world” (2000, p. 161). This definition allows ecocritics to benefit from a wide range of theoretical and applied

approaches³. Environmental issues range widely across various elements of society; they have economic, cultural, psychological and political aspects, so they need to be addressed with a multi-layered approach. In ecocritical studies, perspectives of psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist or postcolonial critical theories can be used, depending on the nature of the environmental issues addressed in literary works.

The ecocritical approach in this dissertation deals with the environmental and social destruction in the selected post-apocalyptic novels by making use of Marxist criticism among others. In order to express this integrated structure, the terms eco-Marxism or ecosocialism can be used. It is certain that Marxist premises have provided a comprehensive and consistent set of critical perspectives for cultural studies for over a hundred years. In order to do it right, it is necessary to see both sides of the coin. A reliable critical analysis of industrial capitalism and Western democracies has to be scientific and rational. Clearly the history of Western capitalism coincides with the most significant improvements in science and technology, the highest living standards and increases in production. In the age of industrial capitalism, the average human life span has extended, and total wealth and prosperity have increased significantly. The history of the capitalist West, viewed from a certain

³ After more than twenty years and the significant increase in the number and variety of studies in this field both Slovic's and Saver's arguments cannot be invalidated. As ecocriticism studies increase in both quantity and variety, it is seen that the scope of this field intersects with ecology and environmental movements to a large extent. Since ecocritical studies do not have an established system of concepts and methods, such as Marxist, psychoanalytic or feminist critiques, it can be said that this situation occasionally causes a confusion of concepts. Many concepts with the prefix 'eco' such as ecologia, ecosemiotics, ecophilosophy, ecopoetics and so on, quickly gained ground in ecocritical readings, similar to the concepts with the 'post' of postmodernism once did. Ecology, one of the most frequently used concepts in ecocriticism studies, is the science that studies the interactions between living organisms and their environment. It comes from the Greek word *oikos* meaning 'house'. Ecology first emerged as a branch of biology, but it is also used in social sciences, in areas such as social ecology and deep ecology where political and ethical debates on the interrelation of life forms are undertaken. One of the important cornerstones of the environmental movement is Aldo Leopold's (1947) definition of ecology as "the science of communities, and the ecological conscience is therefore the ethics of community life" (Meine & Knight 1999, p.310) Environmental movements reflect different social and political attitudes towards bringing forward environmental problems at national and international level, discussing and taking concerted action to reach solutions. Concepts such as ecofeminism, ecosocialism or deep ecology which are associated with ecocriticism are actually different branches of environmental movements. However, many concepts within the scope of both ecology and environmental movements are connected under the label of ecocriticism. In this case, it can be said that ecocriticism, like postmodernism, got its share from the conceptual confusions of the Information Age. In other words, theoretical and conceptual discussions on ecocriticism are still ongoing. Accordingly, it should be seen as a developing critical approach that is still seeking its direction.

perspective, is the epitome of a system of continuous growth and inevitable progress. “Seen from afar, it is the system’s order that stands out” (Shaikh 2016, p. 3). However, a closer look allows us to see its corrupted nature; continuous crises of “competition” and “conflict” that are the outgrowth of a sacred individualism:

Yet the closer one looks, the more one encounters individuals wandering along entangled paths, propelled by obscure motivations toward some dimly imagined ends. Information, misinformation, and disinformation hold equal sway. Ignorance is as purposeful as knowledge. Private and public spheres are entwined throughout, as are wealth and poverty, development and underdevelopment, conquest and cooperation. And everywhere there appears a characteristic unevenness: across localities, regions, and nations, and across time, in the form of booms, busts, and breakdowns. Seen close, it is the system’s disorder that is most striking. (Shaikh 2016, p. 3)

The class system in capitalist economies precludes a harmonious relationship among the components of human ecosystems. Capitalism is driven by a powerful profit motive and thus, this continuous pressure for growth that is placed on economies creates an understanding that ignores non-human life and the natural environment. Furthermore, it is a system that creates disadvantaged social classes and leaves most underdeveloped non-Western societies vulnerable to exploitation. The global environmental crisis of the current age has generated examples of these two phenomena occurring simultaneously. John Smith in his *Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century* (2016) explains the relationship between a new type of colonialism as a means of “super-exploitation” and the environmental crisis by exemplifying operations of global companies in South East Asia. The labour of poor Asians, who are paid the lowest wages on Earth, is transformed into massive profits by a limited number of global companies who could also, by investing in countries with laxer environmental regulations, evade the financial or legal consequences of the environmental degradation caused by their polluting industries. Smith writes;

The starvation wages, death-trap factories, and fetid slums in Bangladesh are representative of the conditions endured by hundreds of millions of working people throughout the Global South, the source of surplus value sustaining profits and feeding unsustainable overconsumption in imperialist countries. The people of Bangladesh are also in the frontline of another calamitous consequence of capitalism's reckless exploitation of the living labour and nature: "climate change", more accurately described as the capitalist destruction of nature. (2016, p. 10)

Industrialization and technological growth driven by a profit-minded economic system has increased the rate of exploitation of natural resources. Irregular urbanization, environmental pollution and deforestation have disturbed the harmony between humans and nature, first in the industrialized Western countries and then in the rest of the world. During the colonization period colonizer countries exploited the natural resources of their colonies as much as possible. Through the end of the 20th century, heavy industrial facilities that were extremely harmful to the environment began to be moved to underdeveloped countries, especially to the former colonies because of cheap energy and low labour costs. Green technologies, in contrast, which are less harmful to the environment, increase production costs and reduce the competitiveness of companies. As a result of the "super-exploitation" mentioned by Smith, natural resources in less developed countries have been contaminated with toxic waste and their natural environment are under the threat of irreversible damage. Thanks to the industrial investments in less developed countries, mostly Western-based multinational corporations had the opportunity to increase their profits without the economic burden of environmental degradation⁴.

Exposing the real face of this power mechanism that exploits both humans and nature is one of the key issues for ecosocialism today. The main criticism brought by the ecosocialist philosophy to the current system focuses on the

⁴ One of the most well-known examples of this situation is the chemical leak at an insecticide plant in Bhopal-India. After the accident, known as Bhopal disaster (1984), the American company and its executives received relatively little fines for thousands of human deaths and permanent contamination of soil and water with tons of toxic waste.

misconceptions of modern philosophy about the interaction between human and environment. In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this mechanism, it is first necessary to understand the basic dynamics of this interaction. There is a constant interaction between human social systems and their surroundings. Humankind, like all other living species, is permanently interacting with the rest of the ecosystem. All beings are dependant to other beings for their survival. In ecology, this is referred to as ‘the interdependence of human beings and the environment’. Ecologist Barry Commoner in his *The Closing Circle* (1971) stated this relation as the first rule of ecology: “Everything is connected to everything else. There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all” (Egan 2007, p. 141). However, Commoner’s statement may cause some misconceptions. It does not mean that everything ‘directly’ affects everything else. Two existing things may not have a direct effect on each other but there is still a mutual benefit in interconnectedness. Each part of a system makes vital contributions to the totality of that system. In nature each organism in a community has its own functional position, and how that organism reproduces, how it protects itself and how it meets its nutritional needs directly or indirectly has an influence on the other members of the community and the totality of the ecosystem.

In a system of interrelated elements, a change in one inevitably affects the functioning of the whole system. As Evernden (1996) puts it, “Things are interrelated if a change in one affects the other” (p.93). Eisenstein (2011) explains the dynamics of this mutual interaction process, which may occur in a number of ways:

Each organism and each species makes a vital contribution to the totality of life on Earth, and this contribution, contrary to the expectations of standard evolutionary biology, need not have any direct benefit for the organism itself. Nitrogen-fixing bacteria don’t directly benefit from doing so, except that the nitrogen they give to the soil grows plants that grow roots that grow fungi, which ultimately provide nutrients to the bacteria. Pioneer species pave the way for keystone species, which provide microniches for other species, which feed yet other species in a web of gifts that,

eventually, circle back to benefit the pioneer species. Trees bring up water to water other plants, and algae make oxygen so that animals can breathe. Remove any being, and the health of all becomes more precarious (p. 16).

Eisenstein defines this principle and warns against disregarding it. This quote is also a response to the question of why humans need to care for non-human nature. He states:

In ecology, this is the principle of interdependence: that all beings depend for their survival on the web of other beings that surrounds them, ultimately extending out to encompass the entire planet. The extinction of any species diminishes our own wholeness, our own health, our own selves; something of our very being is lost (p. xvii).

Marten (2001) explains the common characteristics of social systems and ecosystems; that they are both “complex and adaptive systems” (p.42). These systems are composed of many parts and this complexity comes from numerous connections between these parts. They are also adaptive because in a constantly changing environment, in order to survive, they should accommodate themselves to the new conditions. When it comes to human communities, the character of this relationship is determined by social, economic and political systems which are directly associated with the production and distribution of goods in a society and the use of natural resources. Physical changes in the environment depend on human activities guided and motivated by society’s needs and desires, because human beings must interact with nature to meet their needs and the way a society does this is directly related to its economic, political and cultural structure.

Capitalist and socialist systems have different attitudes towards the environment; however, many believe that this difference is deeply rooted in theory. It is all too common to associate environmental problems with industrial capitalism and, as will be seen, the main argument of this dissertation is also based on this view. A number of ecologists argue that socialism is as anti-green as capitalism (for example J. Bate’s *Romantic Ecology* (1991) is an anti-Marxist reading of English Romantic poets) due to the environmental problems created by the former Soviet Union. The main source of these criticisms is, according to

Newman (2002), the negative perceptions about “Stalinist totalitarianism” (p.13). Depending on Marxist theorist Tony Cliff’s views in *The Nature of Stalinist Russia* (1948), Newman argues that Stalinist totalitarianism was “driven by economic competition with the West” so it was in fact, “a form of state capitalism, responding to the same international economic pressures to maximize the exploitation of labour and land” (p.13). Contemporary ecosocialist philosophy attempts to find consistent and scientific answers without ignoring these criticisms. For example, according to Foster (2008), there is an “intimate connection” between socialism and the ecological approach because “far from being an anomaly for socialism, ecology was an essential component of the socialist project from its inception”. Like Newman, Foster (2008) also states that, “Soviet Marxism succumbed to an extreme version of the productivism that recognized early twentieth-century modernity in general, leading to its own version of ecocide”. This explanation shows that any system organised to meet the needs of human communities and that prioritizes economic growth over human development, regardless of its name – whether socialist or capitalist, is harmful to the environment.

In the course of history, due to new inventions and technological advancement, we have seen dramatic changes in nature and our environments. Every change has led to new challenges, because every step forward in technology gave rise to new needs that must be met by new generations; like the need for additional energy sources, raw materials, new residential areas and increased food demand. The population growth rates of human societies and their effects on nature will best exemplify this relationship. On the one hand, new opportunities provided by technological advancement raised the rate of population growth; on the other hand, population growth has always brought new needs and regulations which required changes in their environment. Many societies have encouraged population growth as they needed more workers and warriors in order to gain economic, political and military supremacy over other communities. To provide for the basic needs of the growing population such as food, shelter and clothing they began to look for new strategies to maintain their position.

Paul R. Ehrlich, professor of population studies at Stanford University, sees overpopulation as the most serious problem for humanity in *The Population*

Bomb (first published in 1968). This book is considered an important and timely warning about the possible consequences of a population explosion especially for underdeveloped countries. He asserts that, “Man can undo himself with no other force than his own brutality” (1986, p. xiii). The main cause of this problem is, according to Ehrlich, none other than humans who thoughtlessly keep on consuming the limited resources of the Earth. He estimated that during the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of millions of people would starve to death. Although Ehrlich’s prediction proved to be incorrect, in a 2009 article “The Population Bomb Revisited” (co-authored by Anne H. Ehrlich) they evaluated the book by stating, “We think, with all its warts, *The Bomb* did exactly what we had hoped – alerted people to the importance of environmental issues and brought human numbers into the debate on the human future. It was thus a successful tract, and we’re proud of it” (p.69). Interestingly, Ehrlich’s views, which consist of criticisms towards the Western ideals of progress and growth, were exposed to harsh attacks from the socialist and Marxist canon. Commoner, who blames capitalism for environmental degradation, argues that Ehrlich misidentifies the source of the problem by focusing too narrowly on overpopulation.

As in the case of the Commoner and Ehrlich debate, there are different methodological and ideological attitudes within environmental movements, in terms of both defining the problem and developing solutions. Naturally, the disparity in identifying the cause also brings with it differences in application and practice with it. The most common methodological distinction is defined as being between anthropocentric (human-centred) and eco-centric approaches towards environmental or ecological issues. Among environmentalists there are groups who oppose the use of the term ‘environment’ (and its derivations), for it has an anthropocentric connotation; what is ‘enviromed’ is human beings. However, there is no clear consensus on the scope of the anthropocentrism concept; it is an ongoing discussion that is generally carried out under the heading of environmental ethics, a branch of environmental philosophy.

The society that the socialist philosophy deals with is primarily human society. For this reason, ecosocialism is generally seen as an anthropocentric philosophy. Ultimately it does not seem possible to take a non-anthropocentric

attitude when addressing humans regarding a human issue with a human language. The point where this discussion crystallizes most clearly is in considering the position of advanced technology and industrialization in relation to environmental problems. Classification often makes it easier to explain issues; still, in many cases it can cause some important details to be overlooked because it is based on the most general characteristics of each classified element. As historical records unquestionably point out, the environmental problems we experience today are a direct result of industrialization – regardless of which philosophical, psychological, religious or economical motive initiated it. However, there is a point that should not be overlooked. This claim, naturally, incriminates the driving forces of industrialization, the technological advances following the scientific revolution, its philosophical (and religious) background and the economic system that manipulated unlimited production and consumption. When the nature of capitalism-induced-industrialization is examined, it can be seen that human beings are not the central or most significant entities in the world; rather it is the capital that needs to be preserved and accumulated. In this context, an ecosocialist anthropocentrism, if one can speak of such a conception, should mean the opposite of this; it is assigning a central position to the necessary interconnectedness between humans and nature within the same ecosystem.

The natural world has been traditionally seen as an endless reservoir of resources; however, with the onset of industrialization, expanding consumption of raw materials soon demonstrated how invalid this belief was. Although it contradicted the basic objectives of the industrialists, a certain sector of society realized nature's limited capacity for self-renewal and the deteriorating balance of nature. Especially from the second half of the 19th century, humankind has tended to destroy the natural environment systematically to establish superiority over other nations and for economic progress. This is one of the fundamental arguments of the ecosocialist philosophy which relates capitalism with the anthropogenic environmental problems. In a society shaped by a market economy, technology regards all beings, as well as inanimate nature or natural resources, as though they were among the inventory of a warehouse. According to this view, poetic descriptions of nature have no meaning; the soil is no longer

a sacred material in which seeds miraculously bloom. It is part of an inventory of the mechanized food industry in which the profit margin rises as people go hungry. A river is not a place where various fish joyfully swim; it is a resource that feeds hydroelectric power plants which produce the necessary energy for consumption and industrial facilities. It is a 'standing reserve', a resource at hand for usage whenever needed⁵. This argument also reveals the contradictory relationship between environmental problems and the current economic system. Technological developments can be seen as a collective success for humanity and for many they determine the level of civilization. Since the negative effects of environmental problems started to become noticeable, human societies have almost entirely relied on modern science and new technologies to combat them. However, market expectations and profit margins make most green technologies poor investments. On this point, ecosocialism does not demonize science and technology; it acknowledges the irresistibility of development and believes that technology deployed with socialist motives can produce solutions to eliminate environmental problems.

The wish for unlimited economic growth in a limited environment which pertains to limited amounts of natural resources (Schumacher 1975, pp. 23-39 & Daly 1990, pp. 2-13)⁶, means that the mechanization of production which took place after the Industrial Revolution, and the large industrial plants emerging as a result of these have accelerated the process of transforming the natural environment. Industrialization caused farmers and independent artisans to become city dwellers and transformed them into factory workers who sold their labour to capitalist industries. Marx's observation regarding the workers' production becoming disassociated from their productions and their own labour,

⁵ Regarding this issue environmental philosophy often applies to the concept of *gestell*, which was introduced by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger in "The Question Concerning Technology" (1977, p. 3-36). *Gestell* is a word with a wide range of meanings, so it is not easy to find an English equivalent. Translators often use *enframing*, a non-standard word, to meet its meaning. Heidegger argues that the essence of technology is *gestell*, and it defines the use for everything. We should remember that Heidegger was attacking most Western philosophical traditions so he finds this process dangerous. According to this theory, technology, which is a means to an end and a human activity, enframes all beings as 'standing reserve'.

⁶ A number of theorists establish a direct relationship between the nature of economic activities and environmental problems. For example, German-British economist E. F. Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful* and American economist Herman Daly's article 'Sustainable Growth: An Impossibility Theorem' discuss the limits of economic growth and show the inconsistencies in the basic logic of capitalist economies.

which he called alienated labour, shows one of the negative effects of capitalist industrialization on human values. Another adverse effect of this process is humanity's becoming even more distant and alienated from nature, a process which dates back to a much older history than industrialization. Since earliest times agriculture has become "both the cause and the symptom of an ancient alienation from the earth that monotheistic religion and modern science then completed" (Garrard 2004, p. 60). While communities gain advantage with the modernization process in order to utilize agricultural lands more effectively and to invent time and labour saving-tools, the advent of modern agricultural techniques, despite their many benefits, can be said to have caused a dramatic loss of consciousness about nature. In the modern era this has reached the extent that "we have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves in order to exist in this new environment" (Weiner 1989, p. 46). Industrial agriculture, which is the product of modern technology, leaves permanent negative effects on the natural environment due to the use of intensive water and agricultural chemicals. Today almost all mainstream and radical environmental movements regard this spread of environmental transformation as so unprecedented that it is no longer sustainable. American cultural historian H. Bruce Franklin's accounts regarding the influence of industrial capitalism on the human-nature relationship draw attention to the same adverse effect of the problem, which is also, from Wordsworth to Thoreau, and to the German romantics, one of the main arguments of romantic tradition: that the innovations of industrialized society distanced humans from nature. Franklin (2009) briefly explains the alienation process as follows,

Under industrial capitalism, vast numbers of people were soon spending their lives working for a handful of capitalists who owned everything the people produced, including the factories, coal mines, railroads, and ships. Not only were the workers thus alienated from the means of production and their own products, but they also found themselves increasingly alienated from nature, from each other, and from their own essence as creative beings. Human creativity now appeared in the form of monstrous alien forces exerting ever-growing power over the people who had created them (p. 29).

Known for its affinity to humanism and modern science, ecosocialism, along with ecofeminism, social ecology and deep ecology, can be counted among the radical environmental movements due to its anti-establishment characteristics. It bears similarities with the social ecology movement in relating environmental problems to capitalist exploitation of human and non-human natures. These two movements are influenced by Marxist, socialist and anarchist thinkers. Ecosocialism (also called green socialism or socialist ecology) is more concerned with the views of Marx and Engels regarding political economy and communism. The founding father of social ecology is Murray Bookchin, who opposed most mainstream and radical environmental movements, such as deep ecology, for their mysticism and mythological tendencies as well as general left-wing politics. In addition to Marxism, 19th century anarchist thinkers Mikhail Bakunin and Piotr Kropotkin contributed to Bookchin's ideas and formation of social ecology theory. These two movements are in agreement concerning fundamental philosophical issues and share the same view on the causes of environmental problems. Both oppose the mainstream environmentalism that hopes for political decisions that can eliminate environmental problems by operating within the market economy. For them the main problem is the system itself and that an imminent global ecological crisis would be a result of current economic policies. Marx's analysis of capitalism can be used to support this idea. As outlined by Foster and Magdoff (2011) this analysis defines capitalism as:

an economic and social system in which the owners of capital (or capitalists) appropriate the surplus product generated by the direct producers (or workers), leading to the accumulation of capital—investment and amassing of wealth—by the owners. Production takes the material form of the production of commodities for a market with the aim of generating profit and promoting accumulation. Individuals in this system pursue their self-interest, checked only by their mutual competition and by the impersonal forces of the market. (p. 38).

In accordance with this definition ecosocialists and social ecologists assert that capitalist production is inherently ill-suited to a harmonious relationship between humans and nature because it creates a disruptive pressure on nature

through the necessity of continuous growth. The rising awareness of the issues of global warming and climate change based on environmental devastation forces policymakers to legislate some regulations to address these issues; however, it can be seen that these regulations and restrictions introduced by national and international environmental programs have been insufficient in tackling the problems effectively. The fact that in recent years environmental organizations has increased warnings about loss of biodiversity, climate change, global warming and industrial change can be seen as an indicator of unsuccessful results in tackling environmental problems. Capital continues to grow in one way or another, even at the cost of destroying nature and all life on Earth. There is another reason why radical environmental movements regard many governmental and non-governmental environmental organizations and their activities with suspicion. According to them, the main purpose of these institutions is not to prevent environmental destruction or to stop global warming, but to protect the system itself. The principal purpose of these institutions is not to extirpate the destruction of nature, but to eliminate the environmental problems that adversely affect the functioning of the capitalist system; the problems that increase production costs, reduce economic activities and repress consumption.

The following quote from Engels explains why ‘radical’ environmental movements (socialist or not) oppose the capitalist system. His words also indicate that the basic logic of the system has not changed even after 150 years:

Classical political economy, the social science of the bourgeoisie, in the main examines only social effects of human actions in the fields of production and exchange that are actually intended. This fully corresponds to the social organisation of which it is the theoretical expression. As individual capitalists are engaged in production and exchange for the sake of the immediate profit, only the nearest, most immediate results must first be taken into account. As long as the individual manufacturer or merchant sells a manufactured or purchased commodity with the usual coveted profit, he is satisfied and does not concern himself with what afterwards becomes of the commodity and its purchasers. The same thing applies to the natural

effects of the same actions. What cared the Spanish planters in Cuba, who burned down forests on the slopes of the mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertiliser for one generation of very highly profitable coffee trees – what cared they that the heavy tropical rainfall afterwards washed away the unprotected upper stratum of the soil, leaving behind only bare rock! In relation to nature, as to society, the present mode of production is predominantly concerned only about the immediate, the most tangible result (Engels 2002, p. 47).

According to Marx, “The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness” (1904, pp. 11-2). This statement is the basic roadmap for Marxist analysis and leads some practical consequences for cultural criticism. According to ecosocialist philosophy, industrial capitalism does not see nature as something that must be preserved for present and future generations. On the contrary, it sees nature as a means of accumulating profits and capital since its own existence depends on this process. For the same reason, a capitalist society, by encouraging rampant consumerism, leads to inequality among its members and extravagant use of scarce resources which ultimately causes them to be irreversibly exhausted. Besides, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* Marx criticizes the statement that, “Labour is the source of all wealth and all culture” (2009, p. 1). His response to this emphasizes that labour exploitation and nature exploitation are the same in a capitalist system: “Labour is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power” (p. 1).

Ecosocialism and social ecology movements are very close to each other in defining the problem, but they are separated in terms of reaching the solution. According to ecosocialism, in an ideal society to be formed after the proletarian revolution, environmental degradation will come to an end as well as problems such as poverty, inequality and wars. The anarchist society model that social ecologists defend is opposed to all kinds of power relations and hierarchies.

According to social ecologists, humankind's relationship with nature must be based on an understanding that does not harm the continuity of nature's ability to regenerate and to achieve this purpose it is necessary to create an ecocommunity (a commune) that is "a closely knit small community based on love, friendship, shared values and commitment to a common life" (Clark 1990, p. 9). In such a society people are given "practice in sustainable living and participatory democracy" (Garrard 2004, p.30). Ecosocialists have criticized this loose society model of social ecology on the grounds that it would not solve any fundamental problems.

In the political arena ecosocialism, social ecology and ecofeminism are represented by green politics (or ecopolitics). Green politics – having emerged in the left-wing part of the political spectrum, is an ideology shaped by participatory democracy. It emphasizes ecological and environmental sensitivities and social justice. Green parties, founded in many parts of the world, especially in Europe, participate in elections like other political parties and try to win seats in parliaments. Of course, such an approach could be in contradiction with the anti-establishment nature of these radical movements. This situation has given rise to a debate between two parties: one which takes active concerted action for the environment and one which waits for the revolution that will recover nature (and the working class). The main purpose of the Green parties is to end the exploitation of labour, man, woman and nature by creating an ecological society. Green politics is often separated, as being either 'light' or 'bright' green who look for solutions in technological and social innovations and 'dark' or 'radical' green. Radical greens, as Porritt and Winner (1988) assert,

seeks nothing less than a nonviolent revolution to overthrow our whole polluting, plundering and materialistic industrial society and, in its place, to create a new economic and social order which will allow human beings to live in harmony with the planet. In those terms, the Green Movement lays claim to being the most radical and important political and cultural force since the birth of socialism (p. 9).

Ecosocialist philosophy motivates new discussions about environmental problems on different platforms – the social and political spheres; governmental and non-governmental organisations – and opens the way for positive cultural and social change. At the same time, it can be integrated into Marxist literary criticism and used in ecocritical readings. Consequently, it is possible to identify and evaluate the relationship between socio-political issues such as class conflicts, alienation and abuse of ideologies in capitalist societies by investigating environmental issues presented in fictional works.



2. A PANORAMA OF A COLONIZER STATE ON THE BRINK OF ECOLOGICAL APOCALYPSE – AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF MAGGIE GEE’S *THE FLOOD*

The perception that the interrelation of societies and individuals with their environment and nature is influenced by the current social and economic system has a significant number of supporters among environmental movements. From a historical perspective, it can be said that changes in the socioeconomic structure of societies cause these relations to be redefined and restructured. For example, with mechanization in agriculture, which is one of the changes brought about by industrialization, rural populations decreased, cities became crowded, and people gradually began to feel distanced from nature. The new working class (industrial workers), that had been cut off from their roots in adapting to urban life, became modern urban crowds who might ignore the damages of the capitalist understanding of production that sees nature as a warehouse of raw materials for heavy industries. Regarding the environmental indifference of the working class in a capitalist society, ecosocialist Michael Löwy has written as follows:

Whether Marxist or not, the traditional labor movement in Europe — unions, social-democratic parties, and Communists — remains profoundly imprinted by productivism and the ideology of “progress.” In some cases, labor even goes so far as to defend nuclear energy or the automobile industry, without asking the necessary questions as to their effects on the global ecology. (2010, p. 127)

According to Löwy and other ecosocialists, both “the market’s profit logic, and the logic of bureaucratic authoritarianism within the late departed ‘actually existing socialism,’ are incompatible with the need to safeguard the natural environment” (Löwy 2005, p. 18). There is hardly any society in the world that has not fallen into the glamorous traps of the market economy, except for a very

few remote and isolated communities that have been able to preserve their traditional lifestyles and integrate with their natural environment without seeing themselves as separate from nature. As the world became increasingly polluted and uninhabitable during the 20th century, “ecological sensitivity has begun to emerge, notably in the trade unions and left parties of the Nordic countries, Spain, and Germany” (p. 17). This is one of the reasons why many socialists oppose the term ecosocialism, stressing that socialism is already an environmentalist, i.e. a green movement.

Modern environmentalism, emerged with the contributions of socialist thought and benefits from the knowledge provided by ecology science, but in addition, it does not ignore the usefulness of cultural products, which are known to have a significant effect on social and individual behaviours and attitudes and can thus make a substantial contribution to combating the environmental crisis. This understanding constitutes the core of ecocriticism studies which have become one of the fields of study in Western universities since the 1990s. Practitioners of fields such as cultural studies and literary criticism began reviewing the works of artists who have environmentalist perspectives. Theoretically all kinds of art work can be subjected to this kind of reading; however priority is given to the works of artists with an environmental consciousness who are aware of the importance of sustainability and of leaving a healthy planet to future generations.

It would not be wrong to say that writers who are conscious about nature and the environment have recently been using environmental themes in their novels more often. In addition to environmental nonfiction and the long-standing nature writing tradition, fiction writers have also included worsening environmental problems in their works. In this way they produce ‘fictional’ stories inspired by the ‘real situation’ of the world, and perform an important social mission that nonfiction cannot do. Reading works that have an environmentalist perspective creates an integrative effect that overlaps with the general objectives of the environmental movements. One of the writers who understands that literature has an important function in the process of social change and transformation and who is not insensitive to local and global social, political and economic issues is English novelist Maggie Gee. Gee can be said

to be a writer conscious of and critical towards the social and cultural changes caused by the political atmosphere in Britain in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Sears (2004) in “‘Making Sorrow Speak’: Maggie Gee’s Novels”, evaluates the writer’s overall *oeuvre*. He argues that Gee’s novels critically address the changes England has gone through in cultural, political and social fields with a “compassionate humanist feminist” perspective. According to Sears,

Her work examines the lives of characters (who are, for the most part, traditionally realised) and their interactions with others, with institutions (notably social and domestic) and with social phenomena that metonymically constitute the fabric of England and motivate myths of Englishness, myths that constitute the background to and provide the texture for the novels. (p. 55).

Özyurt Kılıç listed the social problems that the author frequently discusses in her works as follows, “unemployment, global warming, violence, homeless people, militarization, the threat of nuclear war, infertility, childcare, gentrification, cuts in social services, the lowering of standards in publishing and commercialization of culture and current literary ideals” (2014, p. 3), most of which can be seen as current issues both locally and globally. Judging by this list, it is clear that Gee has an interest in the current problems of her country, but also, considering the globalizing effects of these issues, the planet as a whole. In her novels, on the one hand, she tries to present a rich narrative embellished with modernist techniques, and on the other, she always has “one eye on reality” (Gee 2011, p. 175). In her autobiography, she expresses the notion that although she takes modernist writers (such as Woolf and Nabokov) as her “literary models”, she is critical of modernist aesthetics because “it isolates the author from the world” (p. 175).

In *The Flood* (2004), Gee makes use of a collection of characters imported from her previous novels. Due to the common themes and cast of characters, this novel can be said to harmonize with Gee’s past works. In particular, it has obvious similarities with *The White Family* (2002) which mostly deals with racism, violence and domestic family issues. Events in *The Flood* take place in an unnamed city state similar to London in many ways (though it is never

named as such). The novel begins with a chapter named “before” and continues for eighteen more chapters and more than three hundred pages. In this part of the novel, an unnamed narrator tells the events until the apocalyptic event, a catastrophic tsunami caused by a meteorite impact which quickly floods the whole city. As it is only a few pages long, the “after” part does not contain much detail, but it is long enough to understand that after the apocalypse, everyone who had lived in this city (there are very few details about the rest of the world and nothing about what happened to other countries after the apocalypse) died and opened their eyes in a heaven-like place which has significant differences with the one described in the biblical canon; a new order is established in which all social, economic and political dynamics are different, wherein issues such as class conflict, economic and cultural differences, racial discrimination and homophobia have disappeared.

The political and cultural debates of the period in which it was written (2003-2004) are featured in a way that can be seen as a kind of Swiftian satire. There are comic references to popular public figures such as well-known politicians, TV scientists and other celebrities. Except for this and the apocalyptic event at the end of the novel, people, institutions and events are handled in a realistic manner; there are normal people living through mundane events, feeling pain, joy, love and hate, hoping for better lives, and becoming jealous of others. The connections between the characters (there are more than sixty named characters except for the celebrities featured at the City Gala) who differ in terms of race, religious belief, socioeconomic class, sexual preferences, and political views, and are positioned within families, friendships and professional relationships in ways that fit the usual flow of daily life.

A brief summary of this whole complex network of the relationships of the most frequently mentioned families and their members is as follows: The Seagall family is representative of the wealthy upper class in the novel. The family consists of Lottie and Harold Seagall and their teenage daughter Lola. Davey, Lottie’s adult son from her first marriage, is the host of a TV science programme. The White family (transported from Gee’s previous novel *The White Family*), is comprised of May, “a white haired widow” (Gee 2005, p. 11), who recently lost her park keeper husband Alfred, and her three children and

grandchildren. May loves to read poetry and mythology books, and she sometimes looks after her grandchildren and frequently has nostalgic thoughts about her racist husband, who occasionally inflicted violence on her. Their children are Darren (a radical journalist living abroad), Shirley and Dirk. The Edwards family, who are black, white-collar middle-class, include Delorice, Viola, Winston and Elroy.

Elroy, a medical doctor working for the Social Services of the City, is married to Shirley, a housewife who is afraid of getting old and being cheated by her husband. She takes care of their house and their twin sons, and is, at the same time, “trying to get a degree” (p. 47) from the City Institute (Lottie attends the same school, though she is not as enthusiastic a learner as Shirley). Elroy's brother, Winston, was murdered by Shirley's brother, Dirk. It is said to be a hate crime; Winston was gay and black, while Dirk was influenced by his racist father. Early in the story Dirk is in prison; when he is released, he joins a radical religious community called ‘The Brothers and Sisters of the Last Days’ (they also call themselves ‘One Way Brothers’ or just ‘the One Way’) and begins living in the poor district, the Towers, in the southern part of the city. Dirk sometimes commits burglary for their cause; he breaks into Lottie's house twice and steals expensive artworks. There is a romantic relationship between Davey and Delorice who has “a *first class degree* and a posh job in publishing” (p. 168). Delorice has a five-year-old daughter who is cared for by her grandmother, Sophie Edwards. There is no information about the father. Viola is a lesbian swimming instructor who also lives around the Towers. At the same time she looks after her nephew, Elroy's son from his first marriage. Other than these there are the single mothers, Faith (an Irish woman working at Lottie's house as a cleaner), Angela Lamb (a famous writer and unsuccessful mother; Angela's daughter and Shirley's twins are classmates.) and Paula Timms (a radical journalist; her daughter, Gracie, and Lottie's daughter, Lola are best friends from high school). Characters such as mentally deranged Moira (she is Angela's biography writer and a well-known academic), ex-convict Bruno (the spiritual leader of the One Way – a radical religious community that finds adherents from the poor and marginalized segments of the society), wealthy advertising agent Gloria (Lola and Gracie take their first anarchist action at her

house), eccentric painter Ian, who loves animals and speaks with “a strong Scottish accent” (p. 48), gay art dealer Isaac, Viola’s lover Zoe (an anti-war activist) and her father Paul (a lecturer at the City Institute) are also related to each other in various ways. Finally, there are Mohammed and Rhuksana Habib, a young middle-class couple from the Muslim minority. They are educated people who migrated from a far country called Loya, against which the City was carrying out imperialist military attacks.

The story of these (and other) characters takes place in a setting characterized by increasingly deteriorating environmental conditions. Months of heavy rains have made life more difficult for the people of the City. Most of the infrastructure services have been disrupted, and this situation caused difficulties in the supply of some goods and services. While the people try to carry out their daily routines in such an atmosphere of great environmental and political uncertainties, inequality between the rich and the poor becomes more apparent. In some parts of the city, albeit rather weak and ineffective, protests have started to occur. The government headed by President Bliss (who is a caricature figure similar to Swift’s Lilliputian Emperor rather than a more recognizable representation of a president of a democratic Western country) has decided to organize an impressive entertainment called The City Gala to boost public morale (of course, the main reason for this expensive event is to divert people’s attention from the negative effects of the extreme weather events and the military operations that will shortly resume). Meanwhile, the water levels in the flooded districts begin to drop temporarily due to the decrease in the severity of the rains. This partial subsiding reveals more pollution, and unleashes unpleasant smells and an unidentified pandemic. There is not much information about the disease that is called ‘flood sickness’, because doctors have “been told to keep it quiet by the government” (p. 281). Meanwhile, local scientists warn the public and the authorities of a meteorite approaching the Earth. However, the City people are more concerned with tabloid press rather than serious scientific issues.

The author informs her readers about the last moments of life on Earth; we know what everyone is doing when the apocalypse strikes. Mohammed decides to become a suicide bomber after his sister is killed during the military

intervention in Loya. Zoe and the other anti-war activists gather in front of the government building to protest the resumed war. Mohammed is also there to blow himself up. May goes to the Towers to see her son Dirk, after she hears on TV that he has been released from prison. Faith's teenage daughter, Kilda has been kidnapped by the One Way cult and she is sentenced to death for treason (They found her guilty because she was invited to the City Gala to tell the fortunes of wealthy people and politicians). Davey and Delorice rush to a hill and try to climb a tree as the waters rise. None of the characters succeed in whatever they plan to do; in the end everyone dies because of the flood.

Considering its content and themes, *The Flood* can be seen as a suitable text for both ecocritical and Marxist readings because it touches on environmental and social issues that are directly related to current economic realities. Dillon (2007) makes a list of the fundamental themes of the novel that "reflect those of contemporary Western society" (p. 385). According to Dillon *The Flood* covers "such issues as racism, homophobia, global capitalism, the ever-increasing disparity between rich and poor, religious fundamentalism, humankind's destruction of the environment, pre-emptive wars in the name of national security, and fears of terrorist response" (p. 385). In this novel, insensitivity to social problems is criticized with satirical references to the current global political agenda. Even the environmental crisis in the City, the risk of a natural disaster on a global scale and the preparations for a war that should have international consequences do not raise significant awareness among the country's politicians, media and society.

The underlying reason for this problem, however, is not the individual differences or psychological conditions of the characters; the main issue is the negative effect of the economic structure that defines social relations and facilitated the consumption habits that have become part of their identity. In other words an ecosocialist reading of *The Flood* shows the direct relationship between capitalism and environmental problems by revealing the oppressive socio-political situation and the socioeconomic forces at work and presents a perspective compatible with the general argument of this study. This is abundantly evident when the anti-socialist attitudes of the middle and upper classes, such as rugged individualism and insensitivity to social justice and

environmental degradation, are taken into account. In this regard this chapter, in the first place, aims to address the real-life counterparts of the problems or characters presented in the novel, in order to highlight the relationship between man-made economic and social systems and environmental problems, i.e. production-consumption relations, economic structure, income distribution and related social stratification. Besides, in order to address the Marxist elements inherent in an ecosocialist analysis, this chapter seeks an answer to whether *The Flood*, in the ideological sense, explicitly or implicitly raises the sufficient degree of awareness in terms of the environmental problems that are directly or indirectly caused by capitalism.

According to Johns-Putra (2018) *The Flood* is “set in near future(s) dominated by climate change (though, this is never named as such)” and she categorizes the novel as “dystopian” because it “adopts a conventional dystopian motif” (p. 91). The most important part of the storyline involves a flood disaster that devastates the city and its inhabitants, and for this reason, the novel “might also be termed apocalyptic” (p. 91). Dillon (2007) attributes this apocalyptic event to “the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition” (p. 375) since the story is narrated from the perspective of a “new age” (p. 376) that comes after the end of the world as we know it. Additionally, in *The Flood*, the apocalypse brings about the end of the world and allows everyone in the city (as can be understood from the ‘After’ section of the novel) to live in a heaven-like world where all social relations and identities have been redefined.

It is certain that the inhabitants’ new world not only has a different physical appearance, but is also in a different location. The narrator informs the reader of this by saying, “The earthly city, down on the plain” (Gee 2005, p. 7). It is “A city hovering over the darkness. Above the waters that have covered the earth” (p. 7). This detail is significant to an ecocritical reading, because it evokes the total destruction of material surroundings; in other words, an environment that had required protection and did not survive. Besides, the apocalypse in *The Flood* is not imagined as a punishment or a reward for what is done in the material world; there is enough evidence for us to think that the flood that killed everyone in the city (except for those who escaped by helicopters, but there is no information about their fate) arose as a natural phenomenon: a tsunami

caused by a meteorite impact. The fact that there is no direct relationship between the apocalyptic event and the destruction of nature makes it difficult to establish a relationship between human activities and natural disasters from an ecocritical point of view. However, the pre-disaster environmental conditions, which are described in the predominant part of the novel, expose the difficulties and problems which have arisen due to global warming and climate change, especially for the lower classes of the society. In this context the apocalyptic discourse of the novel contributes to highlight the defective aspects of the contemporary world, but the fact remains that by erasing all these defects it also allows humans to reset the world without punishment.

After the apocalypse, the characters who couldn't escape the city before the flood devastates everything are all there in Gee's fictional heaven, regardless of whether they are privileged or unprivileged, thoughtless, disrespectful, good or evil; for example "Winston and little Dirk are playing football with Mohammed" (p. 323). Before the apocalypse Dirk killed Winston because he was black and gay; and Mohammed was a suicide bomber who planned to kill the warmonger President Bliss. After the apocalyptic flood, the racist killer, the thief, the religious fanatic and those who were entirely 'innocent as doves' open their eyes in the 'Kew Gardens' which "represents an earthly interpreting of heaven" (Özyurt-Kılıç 2014, p. 156). In *The Flood*, this relatively optimistic post-apocalyptic projection blends in an unusual way with the author's critiques of contemporary Western society. In this sense what makes the reading of this novel more meaningful, from a Marxist perspective, are Gee's social and political satires. In other words, it does not seem possible to formulate a consistent critique of capitalism based on the 'end' of the story. Considering the apocalypse that brings a total solution to the problems faced by the characters in the 'Before' section, it would be difficult to deliver a criticism about oppressive socioeconomic forces; nobody learn any lessons from their experiences, nor does anybody get punished for what they have done. Instead it seems that, an ideal order has been established in which all inequalities are eliminated. It would be more prescient to develop an understanding of *The Flood* by focusing on the nature of the political and social relations to the extent that they were handled with a satirical manner by the author, and not by focusing on how the

story or ‘the world’ considering the apocalyptic event ends. Thus, Zirange (2014) regards the novel as “a socio-political satire in the apocalyptic mode” (p. 1). According to him, Gee, “satirizes the Western society for its racism, the religious fundamentalism, imperial jingoistic politics, political oppression, the divide between the rich and the poor, the fear of terrorism” (p. 7). To this list by Zirange, we can add unconscious consumption (buying habits that harm our environment and hence ourselves) stimulated by global capitalism and the resulting environmental destruction.

The Flood offers vivid and realistic examples of global warming and climate change that can be considered one of the negative consequences of the interaction between humans and nature. However, the novel touches upon many current themes and offers much more than eco-fiction novels usually do; it shows the relationship between environmental problems and political preferences and makes them clearly recognizable to those who have experienced these problems themselves. Thus, before moving on to the analysis of environmental messages in *The Flood*, it is necessary to clarify some points about the political and social atmosphere in which the events take place, because the background of this apocalyptic satire is intensely informed by real events. In this way the author’s criticisms of the social and individual behaviours of British society, that are made from a British, a first-world, Western perspective, would be meaningful.

The damaging effects of the real natural disasters that have taken place in Britain contribute to the apocalyptic tone of the novel. Besides, it could be related to the political atmosphere of the period in which it was written. *The Flood*, published in 2004, bears the traces of the uneasiness in Britain and in the Western world following the events of 9/11. For people of the present time who usually refer war concept as a familiar theme of historical documentaries or as an unpleasant event taking place in remote countries, and that can only be viewed on TV screens, this kind of terrorist attack, suicidal hijackings of passenger aircrafts, revived the idea of apocalypse (i.e. apocalypticism), which has been “a dominant theme in Christian culture for over two thousand years” (O’Leary, 1994: 7). In other words, 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks, in a sense, brought war to Western cities, to their very homes and has brought recent

generations face to face with the possibility of an impending end, the cold facts of a world that is becoming increasingly fragile. In addition to this, the economic and social problems of the working class, who face the risk of losing their jobs as industrial production has relocated to Third World countries that offer cheap labour and more flexible environmental legislation⁷. It can be seen that this situation has had direct and indirect consequences for the manner of cultural production. In other words the close threat posed by jihadist terrorist organizations has been feeding those instinctive ‘fantasies’ associated with the end of the world and so caused them to have taken a significantly increased role in literary representations. As fears about the state of world affairs increase, emotional and intellectual familiarity with apocalyptic scenarios does the same. “Post-apocalyptic narratives bring the spectator into new worlds that presage what this world might look like after another cataclysmic event such as 9/11—and at the same time suggest that, in very meaningful and horrific ways, these fictional worlds are our world, our past, present, and future.” (Mantoan 2018, p. 164).

In *The Flood*, the narrator tells the story after the apocalypse, but the vast majority of the events related, take place in the pre-apocalyptic period. In other words, this novel (unlike McCarthy's *The Road*) does not focus on the consequences of the apocalypse, but on the process of moving towards the end. In this context, as the quotation above puts it, it is possible to establish a direct relationship between the fictional world of *The Flood* and the real world. After all, Gee has clearly stated the relationship between her novel and the events of 9/11 in an interview with Judith Palmer published in London's Independent newspaper in August 2005. She stated the following in this interview: “*The Flood* was the first book I'd written since September 11, and there was this feeling of fragility, that London could be destroyed. I suppose some unconscious part of me thought it could be my last book” (Palmer 2005). Based

⁷ “The traditional industries have generally been associated with fairly labor-intensive technologies. Because of persistently low wages in the Third World and the relatively low investment needed to begin to produce these products, these industries have led the burgeoning exports of manufactures produced in developing countries. The high-tech industries, in contrast, depend for their success on access to the specialized resources required for research and development and highly complex production processes. These industries have therefore been located in the industrialized countries. As products mature and technology diffuses, high-tech products eventually become traditional products, and production moves to more competitive locations abroad”. (Gamboa 1988, p. 87)

on her statements here it can be said that *The Flood* “was directly influenced by the events of that day.” (Dillon, 2007, p. 374). Gee’s mention of a “feeling of fragility” refers to various fears and concerns that actually exist intrinsically in the West and were revived after the 9/11 attacks. Among these fears and concerns, in addition to environmental destruction are cultural corruption, social injustice, racial and religious intolerance, sexism and homophobia, each of which can be thought to be related to political and economic choices.

Apart from a rise in apocalyptic narratives, 9/11 and subsequent events have a variety of consequences for social and cultural life. Given the developments to date, despite the war started in the Middle East by various states led by the USA, at least for the majority of Western people, seeming to have resulted in the absolute victory of the ‘free world’⁸, it can be observed that this so-called ‘war against terrorism’ has had many unfavourable psychological, sociological and economic unfavourable effects on both parties. Despite representing only a small minority of Muslims, the terrorist activities and their social media propaganda posts have caused widespread fear around the world, and their threatening messages and subsequent suicide attacks having fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment in the West. This situation has caused serious pressure on Muslim minorities and it is said that this is one of the reasons why there are so many citizens of European countries among the militants of terrorist organizations such as ISIS and Al Qaeda⁹. Ordinary people in Western countries were disturbed by the civilian casualties of terrorist attacks and by their own military casualties during the so-called ‘war against terrorism’ in the Middle East or elsewhere in the world. These humanitarian tragedies have made it easier for governments to get public support for additional security measures at the cost of restricting freedoms and increasing defence budgets.

It should be noted that this situation can also be confusing; in *The Flood* completely opposite reactions can be given in reaction to terrorist attack threats.

⁸ The Free World is a propaganda term primarily used during the Cold War to refer to the Western Bloc. More broadly, it has also been used to refer to all non-communist countries.

⁹ According to the European Parliament “In 2015, it was discovered that at least 5000 jihadists with European passports (European citizens holding travel documents issued by EU Member States) travelled through Greece to reach the Middle East (Syria) in order to fight alongside the so-called Islamic State or ISIS forces.” (Parliamentary Questions, 2019).

For example, relating to “a bomb scare” at the zoo, Elroy is “cynical” because he thinks that “they came from the government” (Gee 2005, p. 43), while Headstone publishing company “had wanted a Muslim on their staff”, since, “they hoped to start an Islamic list, which would surely save them from terrorist attacks” (p. 129). Ironically, after a while that person (Mohammed) decides to become a suicide bomber. The cultural influence of terrorism and the confusions that come with it is closely related to the “feeling of fragility” that Gee referred to in the interview; it is, eventually, not only about environmental destruction, but also about a society in which people become loveless, insensitive, and intolerant of each other, reluctant to maintain common values and more eager to regard strangers with hostility.

The events in *The Flood* take place in a world dominated by the cultural and military hegemony of a superpower called Hesperica which clearly suggests the USA¹⁰. This detail in the novel reflects “the widespread fear of Americanisation which had been current in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century¹¹.” (Bradshaw 2005, p. ix). In other words this allusion can be seen as a manifestation of the fear of becoming a cultural and economic colony of one of its own ex-colonies. The characters live in an unnamed city state which can be seen as an allusion to London. This city is a “part of the satellite lands of the Hesperican empire” (Gee 2005, p. 54), and both the economic and cultural effects of the imperialist power can therefore be seen in many areas of life. In this city where ‘the dollar’¹² is used as the official currency, actors, actresses, journalists and writers who have achieved success in their professions continue their careers in Hesperica. Young people cheer themselves up by “singing along with the Hesperican voices that took them over when they sang, and when they bought, and when they ate” (p. 54), which makes it clear that they got their consumption and entertainment habits from Hesperica. The politicians cannot ignore either their president’s or Hesperican outlook on an issue when they

¹⁰ This is more than an allusion because it is clearly stated (only once) in the book that Hesperica is the USA. While Davey and his girlfriend Delorice were out together to see an opera, he tells her that, “America is really Hesperica, of course.” And she replies, “That’s obvious” (p. 140).

¹¹ ‘Fear of Americanisation’ which is one of the concerns voiced by Gee in *The Flood*, has been used as a theme by many British authors in the past. The quote is from David Bradshaw’s introduction to Aldous Huxley’s *The Devils of Loudun*.

¹² This word occurs eight times in the novel as the official currency of the City.

make political decisions. This shows that this city state has an imperialist structure and conducts cross-border military activities on the one hand, and on the other that it is also under the hegemony of this larger and stronger country. For example, during a cabinet meeting in which domestic and foreign problems of the city state are discussed, the government's spokesman asks President Bliss, "What is the thinking in Hesperica?" (p. 38). Bliss' answer, regarding a decision to go to war against an overseas country, shows that they are politically guided by them; "Mr Bare's very much onside. We're thinking May. Provisionally. But if things worsen, we could go in April." (p. 39). In this statement 'we' means Bliss and the president of Hesperica. During the same meeting Bliss decides to turn the crisis – "the restless people around the Towers" – into "a historic opportunity" by launching a new attack against the enemy country that they have already "been bombing for years", based on a "pragmatic note" by "one of the inner circle" members who declares that "a common enemy will unite us" (p. 38). The declaration of war shows the close relationship between Hesperica and its satellite city, and it can also be interpreted as an example of how politicians avoid their responsibilities by taking advantage of the nationalist sentiments of their peoples, by associating two unrelated events to each other. In one of the later chapters, Harold, Lottie's husband, makes a statement confirming this view. He says, "Mr Bliss and Mr Bare make use of the flag of the Hesperican empire" (p. 141).

This and many other details in the novel can be seen as satirical allusions to the political stance of the British government, which gave full support to the military operations launched by the United States, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq after the events of 9/11. According to a BBC report published in 2003, the UK is "The most pro-US European nation" and despite all international objections and questionable information about the Iraqi armament program it "is fully committed to military action - if necessary, without a further UN resolution" (BBC News, 2003). Over time, it turned out that this war¹³ lacked any legal basis; weapons of mass destruction have never been found in Iraq and, above all, the relationship between the Iraqi administration at that time and the

¹³ Officially it was called the "Second Persian Gulf War" and the "Iraq War", or more informally, the "Second Gulf War".

jihadist terrorist groups has never been proven. Instability in Iraq and its surroundings continued for many years, and new terrorist groups have emerged, which have increased fear and anxiety by causing new problems for the world. Meanwhile a number of soldiers of allied armies and many more civilians from the ‘target’ countries have lost their lives; besides this, the living conditions of the millions of traumatized survivors has deteriorated significantly due to destroyed houses, failed infrastructure, economic recessions and disruption to the supply of goods and services. The political actors of that period were subjected to harsh criticism by a certain segment of societies of the invading countries. Similarly, in *The Flood*, the behaviour and decisions of President Bliss, which are ridiculously incompetent, lead the readers to question his reliability.

Another detail from the novel that the author could possibly have taken from real life events is the pigeon (or its equivalent ‘dove’) problem. For the readers, this detail might serve as the inspiration for a multifaceted discussion about public health, the caring for and feeding of stray animals, and the negative consequences of human-nature interaction; on the other hand, it can also be seen as an allegorical reference that exemplifies the political divisions in the city. In the very first pages of the book, we learn that the city government has taken a series of measures to keep pigeons away from the city centre; “Mr Bliss set hawks to reduce the pigeons, but rebellious old people turned up with sacks of birdseed and pop-corn to woo them back. The arrests were partial and inefficient. The city-dwellers liked their pigeons” (Gee 2005, p. 8). Based on this event in the novel, it can be observed how the increase in human population and the number and total surface area of human settlements constitutes a serious transformation of wildlife and the environment.

Pigeons/doves are a species that have adapted to be able to live in a wide variety of climates and vegetation. It has been observed that the pigeon population increases uncontrollably thanks to their capacity for adaptation which has both economic and hygienic effects. Pigeons can produce up to 12 kilos of excrement in a year, the ammonia and uric acid in which is proved to cause serious damage to the outer surfaces of historical buildings (Haag-Wackernagel & Geigenfeind 2008, p. 715). City administrations in various parts of the world have taken

serious measures to deal with this problem. One of them is imposing restrictions on selling birdseeds around city squares, and the other is, as exemplified in *The Flood*, the use of birds of prey, especially hawks who are natural enemies of pigeons. For example, in New York City trained hawks had been used to chase off pigeons from urban parks. For the same reason, in London, birdseed sales were banned and trained hawks were released around Trafalgar Square. Despite all the objections of the environmentalists, London city administration implemented the project of getting rid of pigeons by using birds of prey. There were many reports and comments on this issue in British newspapers at the time, from which it can be learned that, the mayor allocated a considerable budget to get rid of the pigeons, which he described as “rats with wings”, and was consequently subjected to criticism and accusations of cruelty of animals by his political opponents, various environmental organizations and animal rights advocates (Kelso 2001 & Barras 2016). It is clear that Gee refers to these kinds of measures by including the issue about pigeons in the storyline.

As mentioned above, the pigeon-hawk interaction transferred from real life situations can also be read as an allegorical reference to the political divisions in the City. Doves, or interchangeably in this context, pigeons and hawks are metaphorical concepts used in political discourse to characterize pro-war and anti-war attitudes. The use of ‘hawk’ to characterise warlike politicians dates back to the 19th century, when it was used to describe the American congressmen who advocated war against Great Britain (Hatzenbuehler 1976, pp. 1-3). On the contrary, dove analogy is made for those who support a democratic solution, i.e. those who want to avoid war. Hawks are wild birds of prey, so they are associated with war and violence, while ‘doves’ have long been a symbol of peace and love. On some special occasions such as public ceremonies, weddings and funerals white doves are released. Hawk or ‘hawkish’ are, on the other hand, used to connote aggression in everyday language. Therefore, the disagreement between the elders concerning the use of hawks against pigeons can also be seen as a reference to the pro-war policies of both the fictional and real politicians; Tony Blair, who was the head of the British Government at the

time¹⁴, gave full support to the president of the US, George W. Bush, just as President Bliss supports Mr. Bare, President of Hesperica in *The Flood*.

As one of the first definitions of the term points out “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glottfelty 1996, p. xviii), it is necessary to continue this ecocritical reading by looking at the impact of climate change on the environmental conditions and the people of the City in *The Flood*. Furthermore, an understanding the different aspects of environmental degradation in *The Flood* will contribute to the discussion on the relationship between environmental problems and economic preferences, and the capitalist understanding of production/consumption relations from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Gee, as she did with the political issues, has benefited from some real life events to show the impact of environmental problems on society. The details about the physical setting, especially the environmental conditions of the city, constitute the novel’s speculative aspects and make it an example of eco-fiction by speculating about the eco-realities of today’s world. The number of major floods that may cause loss of life and property has been on the rise in the last three decades due to growing populations, rapid and disorganized urbanization and, most importantly, the climate change that has started to have an increasingly noticeable impact in recent years (CRED 2020)¹⁵. It is known that England, which is located in a geographically rainy region, has already experienced many major flood disasters since the earliest times in history. Not long before the publication of *The Flood*, there were a few major floods in England which caused serious loss of life and damage to property. For example, during the spring rains of 1998, the disaster known as the Easter Floods killed five people and thousands of people living in central England were forced to leave their homes. The autumn 2000 flood, affected the whole of Western

¹⁴ Tony Blair was both the PM of the UK and the leader of the Labour Party which is known for social democratic and socialist views. Consequently, his public support decreased considerably due to the support he gave to American President George W Bush regarding the Iraq war. This is similar to the support for Bliss who was severely criticised after the City Gala (they launch the air strike on Loya that night).

¹⁵ “a sustained rise in climate-related events (mainly floods and storms) pushed total occurrences significantly higher. Since 2000, EM-DAT recorded an average of 341 climate-related disasters per annum, up 44% from the 1994-2000 average and well over twice the level in 1980-1989.” (CRED 2020, p. 7).

Europe, and is known as the all-time worst for England (POST 2012). The water levels of rivers such as Thames, Trent, Severn, Wharfe and Dee rose to a record level and large parts of the country were affected from severe floods. It can be seen that there are similarities between the images that emerged during these natural disasters and some of Gee's descriptions in *The Flood*. After the publication of *The Flood* there have been more flood disasters almost every year and these have reach catastrophic level every few years. For example 13 died during the floods in 2007, and in 2012 precipitation levels broke new records.

Similarly in *The Flood*, climate change is manifested mostly as rainy weather of increasing frequency and severity. (in Loya, the underdeveloped Muslim country – perhaps an ex-colony – climatic conditions are the opposite. In this country, a severe drought negatively affects human life). The word 'rain' is used more than a hundred times, including in different parts of speech and derivatives such as 'rain-washed', 'rain-drenched' and 'rain-drop'. The words 'water', 'wet', 'moisture', 'damp', 'drizzle', 'drench' and, of course, 'flood', are also mentioned many times. A few examples that imply the amount and effect of the rains are: "That year in the city it was always raining." (Gee 2005, p. 9); "After months of rain, the sun broke through." (p. 11); "Light shears between blackened towers in the east, scraping against the rain-washed sky." (p. 16); "the drenched car park" (p. 28); "The sun had disappeared. It was raining again." (p. 29); "Some of the paths were blocked off, with the flooding." (p. 63); "The drenched grass round the lake" (p. 48); "Some time after sunset, the rain began" (p. 74); "more rains predicted" (p. 81); "More rain was forecast for later that day" (p. 105); "the floods threatened Headstone House" (p. 115); "the waters had risen above the doorstep. Letters and papers had got wet; boxes of documents were actually afloat" (p. 130); "the city was sinking into the flood" (p. 149); and "the flood-waters entered the lower floors of the city prison" (p. 246).

Due to the constant rains, rivers overflow, the sea level rises, the city's drainage system fails, and the lower floors of the high-rise residential buildings and the streets between these buildings are covered with water. Throughout the novel, with frequent use of certain words that evoke rain, wetness, and floods, the author keeps the reader's attention alert to the physical conditions of the city.

Especially in the low lying neighbourhoods, “basements [are] left flooded” and “drains left blocked” (p. 81). On the other hand, the northern part of the city is at a higher altitude, and people living there also have economic means that make them less vulnerable to these problems. In some cases the differences between these two classes are so great that they can be explained by the concept of “Two Nations” living in the same country, as in the well-known analogy from the novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1845) depicting Victorian English society. Gee’s fiction, by selecting details that are in accordance with real life examples illustrates how economic inequalities in society become more dramatic during environmental crises and how anthropogenic climate change causes other social problems to become increasingly visible.

The climatic conditions do not affect everyone with the same severity; when the signs of this “modern-day Noah’s flood” begins to be noticed, as Liz Hoggard (2004) stated, “The rich are safe on high ground, while the poor founder in the drowned no-man’s land of the Towers”. In the city, especially in the poor districts “Some schools were shut because buildings were flooded. All over the city, houses felt smaller, mothers were more desperate, more children got slapped, because the rain was closing schools.” (Gee 2005, p. 115). During the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdowns, we have seen similar situations in many parts of the world. The rich were able to find some fun leisure activities to spend their time and they did not have much trouble running their businesses from their homes. In contrast, it has been reported that the poor have had many difficulties in terms of housing and other vital needs during the lockdowns. In times of epidemic diseases, as well as the natural catastrophes such as those in *The Flood*, socioeconomic inequities become more visible. Certainly, the poor did not have perfect facilities before the floods; yet, it can be observed that, as in reality, the deteriorating environmental conditions due to climate events have caused serious difficulties in housing, nutrition, transportation, public health and education opportunities.

In the schools that are still open, children plays “have to be wet play” (p. 114)¹⁶ due to the flooded playgrounds. Teachers occasionally complain about this situation because on rainy days children cannot go out during the breaks, they have to spend time in closed areas, and they “missed the break they usually got while the children roared around the playground outside” (p. 115). It is known that sudden climate changes cause psychological problems as well as various health problems. The fact that children cannot spend enough time outdoors due to extreme climatic conditions is of course a serious depravation not only for their teachers and their families but also for their intellectual and physical development. In *The Flood* the children, who are generally neglected politically and economically by policymakers, experience various problems depending on the deterioration of climate. This likely situation, which did not escape the attention of the novelist, in a novel published in 2004, has emerged as a reality with the suspension of face-to-face education in schools in 2020, when we encountered the global outbreak of Covid 19. It is frequently stated by experts that children who have had to stay at home during the lockdown have had their healthy development interrupted. Gee, with this and similar details, increased the visibility of both the issues of childcare and climate change, by establishing a direct relationship between them.

There is a more important aspect of the wet play days at schools that illustrates the nature of the social issues Gee handles in this novel. It draws a tangible image of the negative effects of extreme rainfall due to climate change, while at the same time there is a hidden detail regarding the opportunity gap in this society; even under these extraordinary conditions, while some schools had to stop education, the children of the middle and upper class are not affected by the adverse consequences of school closures. Although they have to spend their recess time inside the buildings, they are not completely deprived of educational opportunities. The schooling prospects of the children of a medical doctor (Elroy and Shirley’s twins) or an award-winning author (Angela’s daughter Gerda) would not be the same, as is the real case in any parts of the world, with the children who live around the Towers, the poorest and the lowest-lying part

¹⁶ “wet play” is not a game in which children get wet; they are games played in indoor spaces during the break time. They are called “wet” because they are only played when it is wet outside.

of the city. With this example it is seen that the class structure in a capitalist society creates a cultural diffusion that blinds us to the real reasons for such differences. Based on this, the negative effects of environmental conditions and economic inequalities on school education can be clearly demonstrated.

Except for a nameless girl carrying passengers among the buildings in a small boat, possibly to contribute to the family budget, there is no direct example of the situation of the poor children living in the Towers. In a few other places in the novel there are examples of child poverty that are given without being associated with the Towers region. The children in these examples are again nameless. Readers mostly need to base their understanding about the living standards of the poor on the observations of May, a 70-year-old melancholic woman, which are often in the form of sighs – some of which were voiced directly by the old woman, the rest are reported as free indirect speech narration – about how environmental conditions, that are already deteriorated due to floods, are below her middle class standards. When she is about to reach the Towers with the boat, she thinks that “she is stepping off the edge of the world” (p. 214). It is clear that she shares the outlook of the privileged in her society; theirs is a different world from that of the poor.

In the first chapter, while thinking about her son-in-law, Elroy, who “had a good job in the public health service” (p. 13), May adds a comment, “the poor old struggling Public Service” (p. 13) in a way that expresses her sympathy with those receiving health services from there. In the next paragraph, there is a comparison between the poor and rich parts of the city: “Away in the prosperous north of the city, nobody uses the Public Service. There is higher ground, better services” (p. 14). While Public Services for the poor suffer from funding problems, the services that rich people benefit from include:

...trichologists, reflexologists, manicurists, chiropodists, naturopaths, osteopaths, homeopaths, and chic small shops with tiny pots and parcels of exquisitely expensive animal parts, lungs, roes, embryos, fractions of hoof and horn and tail, which people offer each other as gifts; and silvered or gilded brocade clutch-bags, minuscule cards with jokes and mirror-lets, frail silk peonies, porcelain teddy

bears, toys too delicate and dangerous for children. Because there is money, objects can be useless. (p. 14)

This paragraph draws attention to the health care gaps between rich and poor segments of the society; and furthermore shows another aspect of unbalanced distribution of income; luxury consumption businesses. These are organised to make wealthy people spend more money for objects and services they do not need. *In Capital Volume II*, Marx defines such expenses as “Articles of luxury, which enter into the consumption of only the capitalist class and can therefore be exchanged only for spent surplus-value, which never falls to the share of the labourer” (1956, p. 246). Such consumption habits increase demand for energy and raw materials and thus the pressure on natural resources. Luxury consumption not only increases environmental damage, but also brings additional difficulties to the lives of those who lack the financial means to cope with the effects of environmental problems.

At the beginning of the fourth chapter, there is another example of the opportunities rich and poor families can offer their children. This part describes how Lottie's daughter, Lola and her friend Gracie spent time after returning home from school, which, in its still being open, indicates that it is in a location not affected by the floods. They were “ecstatic to discover” that they were alone “in the cavernous house” because it means that “they could eat mountains of ice-cold cheesecake, sample the juices, the smoothies, the thickies, plunder the chocolates, catch up with their e-mails, and watch TV at deafening volume” (Gee 2005, p. 51). A comparison with the other half of society is given in the next paragraph; “(Elsewhere, south and east of the city, children come home to cold houses, rattle the tin for cheap biscuits, care for other, younger children, put the washing on to please their mothers, then watch TV at the same volume. TVs blink and blare all over the city.)” (pp. 51-2). This sentence, separated from the main text by putting it in brackets, deemphasises the information it conveys and could be read as a symbolic reference to the lesser-importance of the poorer people in this society. The named characters of *The Flood* are generally from the middle and upper classes in the socioeconomic context. Tyson, in *Critical Theory Today* (2006), defines “the poor” as a socioeconomic group, “whose limited educational and career opportunities keep them struggling to support

their families and living in fear of becoming homeless” (p. 55). None of the main characters in *The Flood* precisely matches Tyson’s definition.

Among the main characters the only poor family consists of Faith, a single Irish mother serving as a maid for wealthy families and from time to time committing minor thefts from the houses she works in, and her daughter Kilda. However, Gee does not give much information about how Faith has raised Kilda, who is a teenager in the timeframe of events, and there is no indication that they live in poverty as in the above definition. It is known that there are poor people living in this city and elsewhere in the world, but they are mentioned either without names or in brackets. Another example of the inequality of opportunity among children caused by imperialism, a product of capitalism, is a fictionalized version of a human tragedy that we have occasionally seen on TV, during the Gulf War and the conflicts that have followed. Mohammed’s young sister, Jamila, who lives in Loya, has “been shot through the head in a ricochet from a soldier’s bullet, walking through the streets in search of bread” (Gee 2005, p. 252). Gee takes a brief look at Jamila’s story in several places of the novel, but the author allocates more space to the break time problems of the middle and upper class children, and much more space for the teenage problems of Lottie’s daughter, Lola, who belongs to one of the richest family in the city.

The author might not underestimate such important problems on a universal scale; rather this approach stems from the fact that Gee focuses on issues from the perspective of her own society. To put it more clearly, it’s possible to say that Gee’s realism deals with the more hygienic problems of the developed Western societies of the 21st century, such as being unable to go out during the breaks, and by adopting this style, the novel exemplifies the indifference of the society (the middle and upper classes) to the problems of the lower classes or global issues such as climate change and global warming. Although there are some hints and short references, Gee’s novel does not primarily give voice to the problems of minorities or ‘othered’ social groups; on the contrary, it is about the privileged (Caucasian) subjects such as Lottie who has inherited a great fortune from her merchant father; or Shirley, who has a comfortable life with her new husband and twin sons with the money left from her ex-husband; or May who leads a decent life with her grandsons, among her poetry and mythology books,

and memories of her racist husband; (or the Great Britain which is still one of the few countries that believes it has some control over parts of the rest of the world based on the legacy of its colonial ancestors).

The floods have a serious impact on the transportation system of the city state; “The City Airport” is flooded and closed to all flights: “the planes had vanished”, “no more planes coming into the city. The skies had gone back to clouds and birds.” (p. 112). Instead, helicopters, which are the only available air transport, become a life and death issue towards the end of the novel. Inside the city most public transport has been cancelled and the inhabitants have to start using watercraft instead of land vehicles. Some subway stations have been closed because of the floods, “there aren’t any trains. The track was flooded” (p. 105). This situation complicates the living conditions for those who have to use the subway to go to work or home. In some places rich people are transported by “the gondolas” (p. 138), between the flooded buildings and un-flooded streets, or to their land vehicles, while the poor should take “Derelict water-buses” (p. 188). In the Towers due to the flooded streets, people can only board these boats from the windows of upper floors of the high-rise housing estates. The floor on which the pier is situated changes depending on the water level.

The Flood informs the readers about how insufficient the water buses included in the public transport system as a temporary solution are. These boats are used to travel to the Towers from different parts of the city, but since the neighbourhood is completely covered with water, a separate system is needed for round trips between the buildings. The residents find a solution for this: transportation between buildings is provided by “the local taxi” (p. 214) service, the only example of which is given from May’s perspective while she is searching for her son. We understand from May’s observation that a girl is carrying passengers between the buildings in a small boat: “The amount she mentions is pitiable. Her boat is tiny and ramshackle; there is a silt of dirty water in the bottom” (p. 214). This description also shows that the state does not provide the same service for poor and wealthy neighbourhoods. We can see another example of the same issue during a conversation between Delorice and her sister Viola. While chatting in Viola’s apartment in the Towers, they are also listening to the radio, which informs them that it would be easy to reach the

Gala from any part of the city; the voice goes on to say that people can travel with the “fancy river buses” for this purpose. Viola reacts in a bad-temper: ““Did you hear him?” asked Viola, derisive. ‘He goes, “We’re going to do whatever it takes to get our people to the Gala.” So who is this “our people” they’re goin’ on about? Where are these fancy river-buses? I can’t even go to work on time” (p. 166). Examples like these show that climatic conditions in *The Flood* have changed the usual flow of life; constant rains and the subsequent floods have an effect on the psychological states and decisions of the characters.

It can be said that Gee, when describing climatic conditions, gives the words she chooses pragmatic significance which informs us about different aspects of social, political and cultural contexts of the novel. For example, when talking about Lottie, in order to emphasize her beauty and wealth Gee wrote, “blonde and voluptuous, rain-drenched with diamonds” (p. 139). We learn that Lottie, a middle-aged woman who is the heir to a great fortune, is not shy to display her wealth. The figure of speech in “water-drenched with diamonds” does not seem to be a random analogy; it would be more meaningful when we consider several issues from the novel in a holistic way: the source of the diamonds, more precisely the source of the Segalls’ wealth, the shortage of clean water that can be caused by the polluted floodwaters, and in cruel contrast the shortage of water caused by scarcity of rains in Loya which is at war with the city state in the book.

The first fact here about Lottie that we should keep in mind is that her “wealth had come from fur” (p. 52). The financing for Lottie’s comfortable and luxurious lifestyle, and the self-confidence that comes with it, comes from the fur trade, an emblematic capitalist interpretation of the availability of nature for exploitation: “her father having made millions in the trade long before people disapproved of it.” (p. 52). In ancient times, when the world population was low and wildlife areas were relatively large, hunting fur animals for various human needs probably did not exert any pressure on the balance of nature. This, however, ended in the post-industrial era. The number of endangered animals has exceeded normal limits due to destruction of the natural environment – in other words a deterioration of the balance of nature – due to accumulated

pollution (air, soil and water), overfishing/hunting and, perhaps most importantly, the narrowing of the natural habitats of wild animals as a result of human population growth. The healthy existence of living things depends on the harmonious relationship between the natural environment and other living species. Factors that disrupt this – fur hunting is obviously one of them – weaken the ecosystem and jeopardize the existence of the organisms within it. Thanks to the studies of ecologists that clarify this issue with reliable scientific data and the untiring efforts of environmental activists, fur hunting has been limited by strict rules and fur production has declined in most parts of the world. In fact, although it is ‘disapproved of’ today – as it is in the novel, the fur trade was an important step in the development of capitalism in Western countries. For example, the Hudson’s Bay Company, the first and largest company to pursue fur trade in North America (founded in London in 1670), is also among the oldest trading companies in world history (Ray 2009). Since fur was not obtained from ‘farms’ as it is today, establishing colonies was one of the first phases of the fur trade. The Company controlled a significant part of the continent (larger than the total area of many countries) and served as a role model for colonial activities. Huge profits obtained in North America inspired the expansion of European colonialism and led to the circulation of new trade goods and a significant increase in trade volumes. As can be seen, ‘fur trade’ has a more significant meaning when it is ascribed to Lottie’s wealth, not only due to the destruction it causes to the natural environment, but also because of its contribution to the spread of capitalism globally; the primary source of inequalities and exploitation in history.

Another point that draws attention in the “rain-drenched with diamonds” analogy is the use of diamonds, being the symbolic of Lottie’s wealth, which have been associated with beauty and wealth throughout history. Diamonds are probably one of the best known materials that would assure that being “rain-drenched” would never be a problem. Although, for instance, water is a crucial substance for human life, storing water is a costly and difficult task, so there is not much profit in having more of it than is needed because it would then have significantly less value. In economics, it is explained by the marginal utility theory; according to which, in simple terms, as the amount consumed of a

commodity increases, the benefit taken from each unit of that commodity decreases. In this case, although its use value is high, having extra 'water' would not be so desirable. In contrast, the exchange values of precious metals and stones which have a low use value, such as diamonds, are extremely high. That is, under normal conditions they are more valuable than the substances abundant in nature, such as water. Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith, who is regarded as the father of the classical economic school, explained this connection in his famous book as 'the paradox of value' or 'the diamond-water paradox'. According to Smith (1976),

The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and, on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use. Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce any thing; scarce any thing can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any value in use; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it. (pp. 44-5).

What actually creates this paradox of value is the scarcity of the commodity in question, rather than its use value. A common example used to explain this is that of a rich merchant lost in the Arabian Desert. For a person under such circumstances, the price of water would be excessive, such that he would exchange all the diamonds he has for a drink of water. Considering the city state in the novel is inspired by the author's homeland, a clear relationship can be established between Lottie's being "rain-drenched with diamonds", whose source of wealth is the exploitation of nature, and England, one of the countries mainly responsible for global environmental destruction since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, being literally "rain-drenched". The diamonds, which can be purchased at the expense of destroying nature (the fur trade), and the country (England), which is flooded by the extreme rainfalls caused by the climate change resulting from that destruction, perfectly complement each other.

All Lottie's possessions, her "five floors (some rarely used) house" full of expensive paintings and other "objets d'art" (Gee 2005, p. 95), her diamonds and other items of symbolic meaning that individualise her and her family and differentiate them from other people, could not save the Seagall family from a

fatal end. A society is a community consisting of individuals; therefore the general characteristics of a society would be the average of the total characteristics of each individual. However, it is a sociological fact that the common values of a society are effective in the formation of individual characteristics. In this context, the argument that the attitudes and behaviours of the Seagall family are the product of the social structure blended with a production-consumption understanding of industrial capitalism as well as their individual characteristics would not be wrong. At the end of the novel, the helicopter they boarded to escape from the city crashed to the ground due to overloading and all its passengers die. They allowed “five other people” to board with them “who paid so much they could not be left behind, but the helicopter is overloaded” (p. 312). Here we can see another aspect of being “rain-drenched with diamonds”. All valuable stones and other items with a high exchange value and low use value are actually meaningful (and valuable) in a system that is completely artificial and not directly related to basic human needs. On the eve of the apocalypse all symbolic values become meaningless and a life and death struggle begins. However, at this very moment the corruption of human values caused by the economic structure based on private property can be clearly seen; in such an atmosphere we see how the greedy pursuit of material wealth alienates people from their own material conditions. Many rich people who have access to helicopters prefer to take their valuables with them instead of saving a few more lives:

They are fleeing, fleeing; they are falling over; they are dragging trunks and boxes of paper; they are telephoning taxis, airports, heliports, rushing the banks, rifling their storerooms. The rich are trying to leave the city. The rich believe they can always leave, that money will always get them away; but most of the phones aren't answering, most of the taxis have already gone, and the helicopters hang there, sky-born, swinging dark bellies over the city, droning, droning, deafening.

Frightening the people who do not leave. The poor believe they can never leave. There is no escape; life simply happens, the wheels roll

forward, crushing them or sparing them. The helicopters hang there above them.

The rich have choices. What will they save? Jewellery, art, their Slim Jim Shoos, those silvery slender kid-glove stilettos that will surely dance to dry land again, the gliding wheels of their Rollon watches, their Verso shirts, their Parade purses. (pp. 303-4)

It is understood that nature is not an endless store of raw materials; facilitating human life is not a unique function of nature, potentially it is not a function of nature at all. Nature has its own laws (natural laws), and whatever must happen happens according to those laws. The apocalyptic event in *The Flood* demonstrates that natural laws invalidate the basic principles of the capitalist system. It seems that Lottie and her family were not satisfied with the number of their possessions. Instead of displaying the rational behaviour of the merchant in the Arabian Desert who exchanged his diamonds for some drinking water, the Seagall family waste the opportunity to escape from the city for a little extra money. Their choice cannot be explained simply by their being 'greedy'; they were merely fulfilling the requirements of the system that created them. The behaviour of the Seagall family alludes to the situation of the upper classes in general. They are in the pursuit of constant economic growth, but not for the purposes of reducing poverty or improving the quality of life for all. As the living conditions in the world continually deteriorate due to environmental degradation, those who have the most responsibility, in other words, the segment of society who consume the most and therefore pollute the most, turn a blind eye to the facts before their eyes in order to continue increasing their wealth.

Nature is a common property and its resources belong to everybody and every society, to those living today and those who will live in the future. The following quotation from American economist Henry George exemplifies this: "The equal right of all to the use of land is as clear as the equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of existence. For we cannot suppose that some have a right to be in this world, and others no right" (2006, p. 186). It is self-evident that this theoretical and optimistic perspective does not conform to today's neoliberal economic policies. There is an inconsistency between

those who are guided by the laws of nature and the individuals guided by an unnatural understanding of capital accumulation. There are no borders in nature; as British naturalist Gerald Durrell (1986) once said “There is no first world and third world. There is only one world, for all of us to live and delight in.” (p. iii). The borders created between countries are human-made and these have no relevance especially when it comes to natural and climatic events.

Due to the disastrous rains in *The Flood*, clean and dirty water sources have been mixed and the amount of clean water can therefore be expected to decrease. Although there are a few details about the pollution and the pandemic disease that is called “flood sickness” caused by the withdrawal of flood waters, there is no information that this city state has clean water shortage in general. On the other hand, there are many examples of how the marginal utility of water decreases as the amount of it increases. When the marginal utility of water reaches the zero level, which is what happens in *The Flood*, and the total utility then reaches its maximum. At this point, according to this theory, when one more unit of water is consumed, the marginal utility will decrease to negative, that means it will no longer be beneficial; water thus turns out to be a harmful substance. Difficulties in the daily activities of the inhabitants of the City can be considered as examples of this phenomenon. In conversation between Viola and Delorice, the one who is more directly informed about the realities of everyday life (Viola) says:

‘It’s been horrible here,’ she told her sister. ‘We couldn’t get milk, or papers, or nothing. We, you know, bartered, some days, for food. That wasn’t in the papers, was it? The government did fuck all for us. And then they’re surprised when there’s a little bit of trouble. It’s like, “Violent Riots”, and “Towers Mob Rule”. In any case, let’s hope it’s over. I’d started to think it would rain for ever’ (Gee 2005, p. 170).

From this, it is understood that there are difficulties in accessing some basic products, yet not clean water. However, it is obvious that the cause of such a supply problem is due to excessive water. Another example that could be seen as a result of the negative marginal utility of water arises when Mohammed and Rhuksana are eating take-away Chinese food:

There was a pause while they ate their Chinese Chicken, listening to the whisper of the rain on the window. Lots of the takeaway menu had been crossed out; ‘suppry plobrems’, the man explained. No sweetcorn, no Chinese Leaves, no carrots; everything came with water chestnuts. Mohammed wondered if the chicken was fresh. (p. 132).

While people of the City “had been oppressed, by the rains, by the shortages” (p. 149), in Loya, which is under military attack by imperialist states, the same economic theory is manifested in a different way:

[Rhuksana Habib] was thinking about her sister-in-law, her husband Mohammed’s beloved Jamila, whose city Mr Bliss was attacking. Last week her water had been cut off. It was back on now, but her tree had suffered, which Jamila usually watered every day, the desert rose that grew in her courtyard: the first pink flowers had fallen off, leaving it ‘grey as an elephant’. ‘I hope it’s alive,’ she had written. ‘If only we could have some of your rain.’ (pp. 114-5).

Mohammed’s home country Loya is associated with fundamentalist terror groups and their terrorist acts; at the same time it struggles with poverty, imperialist attacks and drought. It is undoubtedly a very different place to the Western state hit by the floods. Nevertheless, when ecologists study the issues of climate change and global warming caused by environmental degradation, they look at Earth itself, that is, nature itself, not the political views of those living on a piece of land. The boundaries separating people from each other do not exist in nature. “Although it is well accepted that Earth consists of many different ecosystems, human societies much less readily recognize that Earth itself is an ecosystem, dependent on interacting species and consisting of finite resources.” (Vignieri & Fahrenkamp-Uppenbrink 2017, p. 259) Therefore it is difficult to ignore that the environmental problems in both countries are in mutual interaction. Excessive consumption of resources by one half of the world will inevitably lead to the deprivation of the other half. The history of industrialization and colonialism already proves this. Thanks to colonial policies most of the world’s limited resources are used for the welfare of Western societies. Nevertheless, although the destruction of nature is

approaching an irreversible level, very few people demonstrate a will to give up the opportunities they have. In other words, referring to Adam Smith's story about the rich merchant, it is seen that the people of the City have no intention of sharing their diamonds, nor exchange them for the wellbeing of nature or society. In this regard this study's ecocritical reading from a Marxist perspective finds close links between Lottie's being "rain-drenched with diamonds" and Jamila's being shot in the street looking for bread; between the excessive rains, floods and supply problems in the city state and the water scarcity and war in Loya. This relationship, which increases the marginal utility of essential needs for human life in one part of the world and decreases it to zero on the other, also reduces the value of human life into an equation that can be measured in precious stones.

"Environmental problems require analysis in cultural as well as scientific terms, because they are the outcome of an interaction between ecological knowledge of nature and its cultural inflection" (Garrard 2004, p. 14). As a consequence, ecocriticism emerged as a multidisciplinary approach that makes use of both social and natural sciences, especially ecology, while examining cultural products. In *The Flood* global warming manifests itself with major floods, and so far the discussions in this chapter have been dealt with the relationship between climate change and the capitalist/imperialist exploitation by using concepts of economics, history and political science. However, it is also possible to approach the same subject using a different branch of science.

Thermodynamics is a branch of physics that focuses on heat, work, and energy relations. According to the Zeroth Law of thermodynamics 'thermal equilibrium between systems is a transitive relation' and this transition must continue until a balance is reached between the systems. That is, the warmer object continues to give heat to the cooler one until equilibrium is reached. There is no need for complex experiments and complicated formulas for a scientific explanation of global warming; for a basic awareness on the issue this simple law of physics seems sufficient. Thus, although it is considered as a closed system like all planets, there is constant heat transfer to the Earth from the sun. This process continues with the Earth transferring cumulative heat to space. However, carbon emissions accumulated in the Earth's atmosphere limit this heat transfer; the

carbon-containing materials consumed to generate energy prevent the natural cooling mechanism of the planet to a certain extent. Especially with the increasing fossil fuel consumption after the Industrial Revolution, this excess of carbon gas has been increasingly warming the planet. Research has found that with the increase in average temperature values, permanent changes are observed in the climate. Excessive rainfall in Britain or elsewhere and droughts in other parts of the world can be seen as a result. Based on this explanation, a direct connection can be established between the situation in Loya (droughts and poverty) and the Western city state (heavy rainfalls and better financial opportunities). There are also visible links between the war launched against Loya and the immigration issues, rising xenophobia and terrorist threats in *The Flood*. However, studies on climate, national security and immigration have produced data on how droughts, whatever the reason for their occurrence increase the probability of conflict.

In addition to the debilitating effects of industrial agriculture policies, drought disasters due to climate change have become a serious issue on a global scale. Studies show that even if global warming increases within the limits proposed by intergovernmental agreements to mitigate it, droughts will continue to cause significant damage until the end of the 21st century. This means that even, in the near future droughts would also be seen in regions currently not regarded as water poor, for example certain parts of Europe, at problematic levels (Spinoni et al. 2018, pp. 1722-23). Studies conducted in drought-prone regions around the world show that it not only affects agricultural production and quality of life, but that there is a significant relationship between climate change and poverty, between poverty and migration, and between security threats caused by migration and conflicts at both national and international levels.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the security threats and conflict risks caused by the climate crisis, especially droughts. For example, in *Climate Wars* (2010), Dyer predicts that frequent natural disasters, rise in sea levels and increasing droughts will put the whole world into a rapidly spreading destabilization process, including not only third world countries but also developed Western countries. Starting from a basic reality, such as whether rich or poor every human being has a need to feed and drink water, considering the

scarcity of resources and the rapidly increasing world population, the climate crisis can put the world on a path of no return. Dyer (2010) argues that, “The first and most important impact of climate change on human civilization will be an acute and permanent of food supply. Eating regularly is a non-negotiable activity and countries that cannot feed their people are unlikely to be reasonable about it.” (p. 8). Energy security expert Jon Powers also draws a dark picture regarding the same issue: “In the security world, decisions are made by a careful evaluation of risk. And climate change is the mother of all risks”. Powers also states that climate change is a “threat multiplier” for national security and emphasizes the importance of “clean energy innovation” (Powers 2015). Marc Levy, Deputy Director of the Center for the International Earth Science Information Network at Columbia University, shares Dyer and Powers’ relatively pessimistic outlook. Levy, the leading author of the human security chapter in the report prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, argues that the future projections about global warming should go beyond the social science perspective: possible military consequences should also be taken into account. In his presentation titled, “Welcome to the Pressure Cooker: How Climate Change is making our World More Violent and Less Secure” (2015) Levy included graphs, news and media images that establish causal relationship between the increase in average temperature values and the rise in violent events in various parts of the world. The threats of immigration, poverty, drought and terrorism (both real and as a government manipulation) in *The Flood* can be explained by the arguments Levy has put forward. According to him, “Climate stress is causing people to move involuntarily and that’s creating problems”. Therefore, he concludes, climate and conflict are “undeniably linked” and “at least we can say societies that are suffering from violent conflict are more vulnerable to climate change” (Levy 2015).

Creating a direct relationship between climate change and conflicts poses an important risk; since we cannot stop global warming, it would come to mean that conflicts and wars are inevitable. However, there are also experts like Buhaug (2016) who believe that the impact of climate change on conflict risk would be “indirect and conditional” (p. 334). In an article on the same relationship, Buhaug (2016) evaluates the “recent progress in scientific research

on climate and conflict” (p. 331), argues that, “Climate change won’t cause armed conflict... But impacts of climate change might.” (p. 333). Buhaug argues that conflicts and violence are dependent on multiple factors and that showing these issues directly related to climatic conditions would be a deterministic attitude that would cause other issues to be ignored. He explains this idea with the following example:

the conflict potential of drought depends on local land use (e.g. agricultural production, residential area, undeveloped rugged terrain), the affected population’s vulnerability and coping capacity (e.g. access to ground water and irrigation systems, market forces, alternate modes of livelihood) and, of course, the response by the state (relief aid, subsidies, price control, etc.) (pp. 333-4).

Buhaug emphasizes the multidimensionality of environmental problems and points out that their impact can be relieved by state aid. Societies have ways to cope with the effects of global warming before conflicts and violence occur. However, we need to see that most of these methods are related to the preferred economic structure. Buhaug’s example becomes clearer when evaluated in comparison with the capitalist/imperialist government in *The Flood*. It seems that the political and economic choices of the city state tend to promote the continuation of the war rather than ending the economic inequalities on its own territory, especially regarding the flood damage that have hit the city’s infrastructure and affected mostly the poor. In order to gain public support for the war, President Bliss and his cabinet try to manipulate public opinion by leaking fake news that the flood damage was due to sabotage by Muslim foreigners.

On the radio now, a government spokesman was saying the worst of the floods was over. A full inquiry had been launched into apparent failures of emergency planning, with particular reference to the ‘alleged’ lack of pumps and boats around the Towers in the east. The government was ‘unable to substantiate’ rumours that sabotage had been involved. ‘Links to a foreign power’ should be ‘treated with caution’. (The government habitually denied its own rumours, so the item must be a government leak. The ‘foreign power’ would

obviously be the one they were at war with.) But ‘the rioters’ voices would be fully heard’; the government was meeting their leaders today. ‘Full and constructive’ discussions were expected. (Gee 2005, pp. 148-9)

While the government blames “foreign powers” instead of fixing the damaged infrastructure, crime rates, along with acts of violence, is increasing noticeably. For example, Mohammed’s suicide bombing plan, the violence inflicted on Kilda by Father Bruno and his cult, Dirk’s breaking into homes, and property damage and acts vandalism by Lola and her friend Grace indicate the stress society is loaded with by the effects of the floods. However, instead of solving social and economic problems and reducing the negative effects of climate change, the government tries to distract attention with media manipulations. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the government is completely unsuccessful in the business of media manipulation; except for a tiny segment of the society no one cares about the war or poses a serious opposition.

Two points are deliberately left to the end of this chapter since they concern all of the issues discussed so far. The first is the City Gala. It is perhaps the second most important event in the book, after the tsunami which causes the main flood at the very end. From chapter eight, preparations for the Gala, with an emphasis on its significance and history, begin to be reported in the news and heard about in people’s conversations, and there is a fairly long chapter entirely about the event. The Gala event is notable for this study in two respects: first, the government tries to distract people’s attention from the war against Loya and the physical destruction of the city by turning the event into an important tool for the media manipulation they carry out. At the same time, it is an example of the social problems and environmental damage caused by luxury consumption.

The City Gala is a big party that has been planned for a long time to celebrate an urban redevelopment project: “It marked the twenty-fifth year since the city’s docks had been turned into a pleasure zone for international tourists” (p. 149). It is understood from the discussions and reactions of the government that in the background of this event there is a construction project which was carried out by ignoring the wishes of local residents as well as the conditions of the workers: it is also “the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dockers’ riots, in which

ten people had been killed, though no one was keen to remember that” (p. 149). This information unveils the nature of the public expenditure policy of the government. Additionally, it can be seen that developing effective social policies becomes a lower priority especially when a democratic country commits dictatorial violence against its own people in order to ensure the continuation of the economic system.

Although “the rioters had demanded it, celebrities swore they would not attend, firemen and ambulancemen threatened a boycott, media pundits said it was tasteless with war boiling up in the lands around Loya, safety experts said it was pointless” (p. 149), the Gala is not cancelled. It is certain that only a small portion of the City’s inhabitants is really uncomfortable with it, the rest “in their heart of hearts, expected celebrations to be held” (Zirange 2014, p. 3). Zirange interprets this situation as the fact that the Gala is held at all costs despite the bad conditions, and the lack of objections as the “hypocrisy of the middle classes, who are driven more by pleasure principle than any public good” (p. 3).

The Gala chapter, which tells of the guests and other participants, the entertainment activities and the protests outside the Government Palace, begins with this sentence “The Gala! The city must have its Gala” (Gee 2005, p. 232). Given the enthusiastic attitudes of the people of the city and the ineffective opposition to it, it can be said that this sentence reflects the general public opinion. After the introduction of different opposition groups, famous and rich participants and other guests – a lucky minority consists of middle class professionals – are introduced. Gee’s narrative in this section occasionally approaches poetry, though the content is more satire. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there is a social panorama of the whole city on the first few pages of this chapter: from the radicals, the angry, the innocent and the desperate, the minorities who live on the fringes and are somehow disturbed by the system they live in, to the representatives of the passive conformist middle class, and finally, to the privileged ‘cream layer’ that consumes most of the energy of society. Some of them are inside the Government Palace, some of them are outside it, but all of them somehow take their place in this historic meeting:

All the protesters have come tonight. The anti-war lot are out in force, with whistles and hooters and drums and megaphones, furious, howling with their longing for justice, trying to deafen Mr Bliss into peacefulness. 'BLISS OUT!' say dozens of rainbow banners of the blissed-out anti-drug-law protesters. A long-haired boy waves 'GALA IS LA-LA'. 'WHY DO YOU NEED TWO SKINS?' scream the placards of the anti-fur protesters. 'DISS THE BLISS!' shout the teen-friendly slogans of the anti-government campaign. 'BLISS A DEAD LOSS' shouts a hand-lettered poster. 'PISS OFF BLISS' says a turquoise banner. (pp. 233-4)

Outside the Gala there are also more silent protesters. Among them, an unnamed "thin-faced woman" carries a banner that says "NO HOME, NO MONEY, NO HOPE" (p. 234). At this point, the perspective of central intelligence turns towards the inner world of this woman. The words describing her thoughts can be considered as a serious social criticism, and from the perspective of this study, this paragraph can be said to best describe the social injustice in the whole novel:

It hurts her to see so many happy people, it hurts her to know they don't see her. She thinks that the people invited to the Gala must all have nice homes, and hope, and money, she believes they are smiling, not just for the cameras, which go off round the foyer of Government Palace like a lightning storm against the indigo sky, but at themselves, in invisible mirrors that whisper to them what their lives amount to; theirs are enormous, hers is nothing. (pp. 234-5).

Among the guests, there are also people from different walks of life who do not approve of President Bliss and his policies but still choose to remain silent and enjoy the party. For example, May's eldest son, Darren White, a journalist in Hesperica, is known for his works critical of the Bliss government. Still, he is invited, perhaps because of his close friendship with Anwar Topping, President Bliss's right-hand man. It is possible to read this detail as an allusion to the relationship between media and politics. However, regardless of their opinions the prime guests of the Gala are well-known people:

Only the *crème de la crème* have been chosen, the people the city defines itself by, the rich, the celebrities, the people who count, the styles and the faces that are known and copied, stars, actors, leaders, beauties, all the names baptized in the tabloids, famous chefs and fashionistas, ballet-dancers and fancy hairdressers, horoscope-writers and football-players, game-show hosts and TV presenters, all the showmen who make people happy... (p. 235)

The indifference of middle class is associated with the consumption culture and nature of the idealized lifestyle in this society. In this Western city state dominated by Hesperican (American) culture, the ideology that a beautiful life can only be achieved through consumption – and presenting it as an accessible dream for everyone – has been imposed on the society and makes them blind to their real material historical conditions; just as it has attracted the American middle class and made them blind to the unfair distribution and other evils created by capitalism. Through media and popular culture, a large middle class has been created that idealizes the glittering and luxurious lives of the famous and the rich. In a society where the American Dream operates as a repressive ideology, the unfair economic system underlying the economic privileges of a small minority, the upper class, can barely be noticed. The organizers of the City Gala bring together the middle class, who are unwittingly in favour of the system that ruins them, and the upper class, who take advantage of this. In addition to the *crème de la crème* the party guests also include:

a salting of ‘real people’ like Elroy, people who have climbed to the top of something worthy, firemen, ambulancemen, doctors, police, who are glad and embarrassed to see the celebrities, staring at them hungrily, sharply assessing, wanting to laugh, to sneer, to wave, sharing space-time with them at last, the dream-figures, the screen-figures ... (p. 235).

This group of people seem not to care about the demonstrations and protests around the Gala hall, the problems caused by the floods elsewhere in the city, the country’s war in an overseas country or the so-called threat of terrorism.

And yet, they are proud the celebs are here. All the guests have a glow, as they mount the stairs, their shoe-soles massaged by the

rouge-red carpet, and caressive little thoughts flit around like bluebirds – ‘everyone who’s anyone is here, my dear’ – and they are here, thank God they have made it; the bluebirds of happiness perch on their shoulders; against long odds, home safe, home free; anyone who’s anyone, my dear, is here. (p. 235)

In this chapter it can be seen that the lower social strata, the working class and the poor, are allocated more space than in the rest of the novel. After the guests to the Gala were given in a long list, the list of those who were not invited, those who could not be “anyone”, is also given. This list shows how social stratification in capitalist societies creates distinction, even in one of the richest countries of the world, which is also belongs to the so-called most advanced civilization.

The builders’ labourers, the rat-catchers (though the rats are there, just beneath the floor, in the U-bends of the staff lavatories, and round by the bins, in a frenzy of activity, sniffing and whiffing at the wonderful plenty, the prawn heads, the chicken skins, the lambs’ feet, the creamy shell of cooling fat skimmed off the gravy); the door-to-door vendors of dish-cloths and oven gloves; the sanitary engineers, the plumbers; the bus conductors with their ticket-machines; the lice inspectors with their nit-combs; the primary schoolteachers (no one wants to be told things); the hospital auxiliaries, the midwives. (p. 245).

With the above list Gee mentions the names of the individual working-class groups who are subject to discrimination. It is followed by references to other disadvantaged groups, each of which is associated with some bitter realities peculiar to them; for example “The babies: the future hasn’t come to the party”, “the illegal immigrants... with their stuttering vehicles... their second-hand clothes” and “the mini-cab drivers... their humbling knowledge that none of their passengers ever remembers their names or faces” (p. 246). Other than these, “the past ... the old, the dying”, “the bin-man”, “the cleaners” and “the young offenders” (p. 246) are also mentioned with references pointing to their real situation in society. Groups such as discredited celebrities, “the has-beens” (p. 247), and opposition politicians are also not included. Gee describes those

who are either inside or outside in detail. By doing this she refutes the claim of the organisers that the Gala guest list presents a broad cross-section of society. Indeed, it excludes the majority.

After providing an inventory of the guests, Gee begins to describe their reception into the Government Palace. Meanwhile, readers have the chance to observe those who are fascinated with the articles of luxury consumption and how society is polarized on the basis of inequality of opportunity and income. This part the narration is accelerated in a way to reflect the atmosphere of the party; the fluidity of the text increases. Gee writes long sentences in which adjectives and nouns expressing splendour and glamour appear one after the other;

In the soft bright light from the high chandeliers, under the opalescent glaze of good makeup, everyone looked like film stars; the women had shining, perfect skin, set off by thick milky swags of pearls or dewy filigree wreaths of diamonds, borrowed stones, spectacularly bright; no one was grey, or dusty; the colours of the clothes were luminous, brilliant, the colours of flowers against a summer sky, honeysuckle, morning glory, bougainvillaea, the best dyes on the best fabrics, wool, cashmere, satin, silk, the clear, confident colours of money. Their hair was set like sculpted glass; their nails smooth as bevelled gem-stones. (p. 239).

The opulent outfits and weird behaviours of the celebrities, the heavy use of drugs and alcohol, and the overall atmosphere of the Gala in which female sexuality is at the forefront are described in detail. The “Half-naked and gorgeous” (p. 252) bodies of the two teenage girls, Lola and Gracie, increase the visual pleasures enjoyed by the party-goers. The crowd is ready to try out every possible entertainment to avoid being considered dull. The entertainment and level of consumption are extreme; the people of city are enjoying the last moment of fun in their lives, unaware that they will all die the next day. “Their appetites doubled by drugs and alcohol; the party-goers want to keep on climbing, they want to be bigger, higher, more, they need the pleasure rush to come faster” (pp. 252-3). It is not only alcohol or drugs which intoxicate people’s minds and makes them act unconsciously, but also their fascination

with the capitalist consumption culture. It seems they feel compelled to taste all possible experiences; however, the fear of missing out on any pleasure or entertainment that would make them 'different', in time, brings sameness, not differentiation. Baudrillard defines this level of consumerism in *Consumer Society* as follows:

You have to try everything, for consumerist man is haunted by the fear of 'missing' something, some form of enjoyment or other. You never know whether a particular encounter, a particular experience (Christmas in the Canaries, eel in whisky, the Prado, LSD, Japanese-style love-making) will not elicit some 'sensation' (1998, p 80).

Considering the content of the Gala, it can be seen that entertainment industry causes blindness to both social injustice and the damage to the environment and nature. In Tyson's words, "When we are being entertained, our guard is down, so to speak, and we are especially vulnerable to ideological programming" (2006, p. 60).

While the Gala is in full swing,

Hundreds of faces flush with alcohol; drink trickles through into their brains, their spines, at first a stimulus, later a quietus; thousands of blood-vessels circulate the alcohol that livers are too overloaded to deal with; dozens of brains start a pleasant short-circuit; laughs get louder, gestures wilder; on the fourth or fifth drink, speech slurs, eyes blur, but the drinkers are still feeling pretty terrific. Dozens of endangered species are eaten, flown in for the occasion from all round the world, plucked or skinned, pulped or tenderized, smoked or grilled, glazed or in paté, marinated, macerated, boned, done, their animal nature vaporized. (Gee 2005, p. 250).

Among the guests are prominent writers, politicians, artists and middle class professionals of the society; however, they all seem to be in full harmony with this environment. Even when they consume the meat of extinct animals, there is no statement that any one of the guests is disturbed by this. In this chapter, there are two more references to endangered animals. One is the performance of "the

Bengal tigers” (p. 251). The use of these rare animals for entertainment purposes at a party (organized by the state) with the *crème de la crème* of a civilized society is another reference to the exploitation of natural life. This so-called unique, elite, sophisticated and exciting activity is found particularly entertaining by the participants. The other is a similar reference to the “rain-drenched with diamonds” metaphor. Here, attention is drawn to the situation of rapidly devastated wildlife. When the presenter of the Gala, Freddy Flatter, already drunk, after inviting President Bliss to the stage, trips on the microphone wire and his toupee falls off, “lying on the floor like a lost bit of wild-life” (p. 254). Undoubtedly the sudden appearance of the bald head of this oddly-dressed TV celebrity involves a subtle criticism against the lifestyle of upper classes, but at the same time the “a lost bit of wild-life” simile could be directly related to the “dozens of endangered species” (p. 250) consumed at the Gala. According to the 2018 Living Planet Report of the World Wild-Life Fund,

On average, we’ve seen an astonishing 60% decline in the size of populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians in just over 40 years, according to WWF’s Living Planet Report 2018. The top threats to species identified in the report link directly to human activities, including habitat loss and degradation and the excessive use of wildlife such as overfishing and overhunting.

This level of damage to wild nature is not something that can be done with limited financial means. In real life the working class or the poor, or even the middle classes of most societies cannot have the opportunity to watch an entertainment show of Bengal Tigers or feed themselves with endangered species. Hunting wild animals for meat or fur is hardly an activity to meet the basic needs, but it’s almost always done to meet the ‘distinguished’ tastes of the rich. The details from the Gala event can be seen as a re-enactment of this reality in a fictional story; articles of luxury consumption are among the main threats to wild life. They are, directly or indirectly, responsible for the destruction of natural world. Similarly, the fact that these activities are carried out with the participation of an elite minority of the society – the residents of The Towers are not invited – shows the effectiveness of consumption culture in sanctifying entertainment and difference.

The final discussion in this chapter will concern the details of the reactions of the characters to environmental issues, which is a key requirement for ecocritical readings. First of all, it should be stated that, there is no single character referred to by name in the novel who is an active participant in environmental organisations or anyone that can be considered as an exemplary character in terms of non-repressive ideologies – anyone who sees the causation between capitalism and environmental problems. Apart from a few protests, the motivations for which are not clearly expressed, there is no information about ‘organized’ groups of citizens responding the environmental damage in the city. For example, on the day of the Gala, there is a group of protesters carrying banners and shouting slogans in front of the government palace. The number and the profiles of the protestors are not known; at the same time, it is almost certain that they are not engaged in an action that would disturb the Gala guests. There is also a TV report about the masses protesting the dam construction in Varna, which is one of the few details about a foreign country other than Loya in the novel. Normally this circumstance could be read as an obvious flaw from an eco-Marxist perspective. However, it is clear that Gee maintained a satirical air in terms of the attitudes of the characters towards nature and the environment as she did with other social issues. In other words, by satirizing the lack of awareness of the characters, *The Flood* strongly implies that there is a lack of awareness regarding these issues in British society.

The best-organized anti-establishment group in the novel is the One Way Brotherhood, a radical religious cult led by Bruno Janes, a former convict jailed for attempted murder (who is relocated to *The Flood* from *Grace* (1989) in which he appeared as a split-personality private eye). This cult, details of whose members and their activities occupy a significant part of the novel, “claimed to unite Jews and Christians and Muslims because they all shared the same sacred texts” (Gee 2005, p 35). With his apocalyptic prophecies, “the end is coming” (p. 17), Bruno indoctrinates his followers with the idea that they should abandon mundane tasks as soon as possible and prepare for the afterlife. Among the known members of this cult are Dirk, a racist and sexist murderer, who later commit crimes of theft and kidnapping; Kilda, a 15-year-old babysitter, who soon leaves One Way and starts to tell fortunes for the upper class people;

Susannah, a young woman with multiple sex partners, who has grown up with her gay art dealer brother because they were abandoned at a young age by their parents; and Moira, a writer and critic with serious psychological problems, who initially saw One Way as a group where she could socialize and possibly find a sex partner. This fundamentalist group, who probably make the strongest criticisms against the situation in the state, exclaim that, “the world has become corrupted, for all men are living corrupt lives on earth” (p. 30) and are involved in occasional acts of violence, have not developed any discourse on environmental issues; on the contrary, frequency of their activities and the number of their followers increase rapidly with the deteriorating environmental conditions and increasingly visible effects of climate change. They can recruit more followers in bad weather and “They were doing very well, though, where people were poor” (p. 35). However, no one takes them seriously on sunny days and around rich neighbourhoods. For example, Kilda, one of the young members of the cult, left them as soon as she started to make more money.

Another rebellious character in the novel is lesbian swimming instructor Zoe, who was imported into *The Flood* from Gee’s 1994 novel *Lost Children* along with her college lecturer father, Paul Bennett. It is reported that Zoe got pregnant “when she was sixteen. She had run away from home, and had an abortion” (pp. 163-4). Her character and behaviours give the impression that she could have had a problematic relationship with her mother in the past. Zoe’s protests are not about environmental issues, but rather against the government’s warlike policies. She openly identifies herself with an anti-war political stance and actively participates in demonstrations. She “marched, she protested, she always had, but she didn’t enjoy it, or entirely believe in it. It was anger that motivated her, not hope. War was such a stupid waste of human time and effort. War kept her and Viola apart” (p. 163). Zoe’s character traits do not seem to be about her being raised as a conscious citizen, but rather might depend on the unconscious manifestation of unresolved childhood traumas and an unfading anger specific to her personal life. Possibly, she takes them out on something else with those anti-war protests.

The most and perhaps the only eco-centred character of the novel¹⁷ is Scottish painter Ian. However, it is not fully understood whether Ian is a pacifist environmentalist or an apolitical conformist. On the one hand, he has a close friendship with the art dealer Isaac, who engages in illegal dealings, such as mediating the sale of stolen artworks, and with Bliss, the city's dictator-like president; on the other hand, he is a merciful animal lover who grieves for the zoo animals locked in cages. On the last day of his life, he goes to the zoo and tries to save the birds in the cages instead of running away from the city which emphasizes his position as the only character in the novel to display environmental awareness. He seems to be a sensitive man considering his dialogues with children in the park and his interest in natural environment; however, one cannot ignore the fact that he is a wealthy artist who is among the honoured guests of the City Gala. When he meets Shirley at the park, he tells her the following story about his past, "I don't like cities, I came here when I was a lad of seventeen. My life went wrong. There were a lot of lost years. Too young to be a barman, I suppose. I went crazy. Tried to smash up a hotel. Then I kicked the bottle and went to art school." (p. 50). When Isaac tells the rest of his story, we learn how Ian's painting technique and themes became popular among high society and eventually how they made him a rich man. Clearly, even though it requires him to live in a city that he does not like, criticising the luxurious lifestyle of the upper class by painting things like 'penguins with dinner-jackets' seems to be enough to satisfy his environmentalist conscience. His story might therefore be noteworthy but it is barely exemplary.

The only character in *The Flood* who is determined to take decisive action on the issues of environmental destruction and social injustice belongs to a family which is, quite ironically, representative of the upper class, Lottie's 16-year old daughter Lola. Not much different from the girls of the same class and age group, Lola "had been raised with lots of money" (p. 52) and therefore, she has a comfortable and safe life. Thanks to the inheritance left to her family, we see that she spends her adolescent years shopping and entertaining herself, without

¹⁷ Shirley, who grows flowers in her front yard, would be the second after Ian that can be said to be environmentally aware, but this is not enough to categorize her as an eco-centric character. Besides, she crushed and killed a cat with her car and showed little sign of sadness.

any concern for future; she can study at a private school, splurge thousands of dollars on luxury and expensive pleasures; she can be lazy, angry, shallow, or a spoiled kid; she can be whatever she wants. She can even become an anarchist activist, without getting into any trouble. Her political activism has nothing to do with an obligation, need, or anger at the injustices she faced in her life. She becomes a socialist/anti-capitalist environmental activist for a while. She and her friend Grace start dealing with political issues as a whim or as a new hobby that will make them look 'cool' among their friends: "They had both become anti-capitalists. This had lasted a long time; at least two weeks" (p. 57).

Grace's new passion for politics probably comes from her mother, a radical journalist, Paula; "In Gracie's house, most things were political" (p. 56). As to Lola's new area of interest, it is most probably inspired by her father, Harold, who has been working on a non-fiction book about the concept of time for almost 20 years. Harold is a handsome middle-aged man with an interest in philosophical matters; however, he does not do much other than smoke weed, listen to jazz and have sex with his wife, a type of man who enjoys life after marrying a wealthy woman. While talking about her father, Lola says, "He definitely says he's a socialist. He didn't actually do anything socialist." (pp. 56-7). It is understood that like Lola who was persuaded to go to school, which she described as "just another capitalist institution" (p. 98), in exchange for extra pocket money and chocolate cake she received from her mother, Harold is sensitive to the injustices of the world and in his country, but remains disinclined to change his comfortable and privileged life.

Lola and Gracie search for world news on the internet, thinking that there are not many exciting events in their home country; "All the exciting stuff was in other cities. Protests in Varna where a massive new dam was said to be threatening the whole coastline. A chunk of the island as big as a city could apparently fall into the sea. Eco-protesters envisaged tidal waves, global disaster, millions drowned" (p. 57). Apart from the drought in Loya, this is the only information about environmental problems in a foreign country. News like this attracts their attention and prompts them to do more research. They consult Lola's half-brother, Davey (a TV astronomer), on environmental and political issues. Influenced by the news reports about environmental destruction and

what they learned from the websites of possibly some kind of radical environmental organization (no names of these organizations are mentioned in the novel), they agree on taking action: a “protest thing”, their “first protest” (p. 70). Later on they decide to “hit at commerce” such as “Banks. Shops.” (p. 70). However, since they like shopping, and Lola “got her allowance from a bank” (p. 70), they change their target to the advertising industry. Lola says, “Advertising, I suppose, it’s The Great Evil, like the web-site says. It sells powdered milk to Africa” (p. 70).

The two shallow and conceited teenage girls see, probably by chance, a connection between global capital groups, banks, TVs and advertisements that encouraging consumers to spend more on luxury goods increases the pressure on the balance of nature, but, unfortunately, they neither have sufficient knowledge about these issues nor do they have any idea what to do about it. They finally decide to sneak into the house of Lottie’s friend and next-door neighbour Gloria, an advertiser, and destroy her furniture and other belongings. One night, they dress entirely in black to put their plan into action; they erase all the data from Gloria’s computer and write rude, anti-capitalist slogans which they have possibly seen on the website they follow. When Lola is performing her first anarchist action, farcically, a real burglar, Dick enters their house from the open door and steals her mother’s expensive jewellery and a painting.

Lola and Gracie, despite their upper class privileges, show a determination to take action in the face of social injustice. It is certain that they do not have much of a chance to succeed with the methods they have chosen. Lola and Gracie’s political action passed unnoticed because of Dirk’s burglary next door, yet they did not give up immediately. As their second anarchist action they planned to sneak into the City Gala to protest against President Bliss. Once more things did not go as they planned; this time they lose themselves in the music, dance and entertainment and forget their main purpose. Besides, they managed to be among the favourites of the Gala with their half-naked, sexy dancing.

While Lola and Gracie were at the Gala, Dirk was among the protesters in front of the Government Palace. These characters, seemingly quite different from each other in terms of social class, education, age, at the same time, and at very

close by locations commit various illegal acts for a purpose they consider greater than themselves. However, neither Dirk, who burgles houses to provide financial support for the cause of the Brotherhood and its half-mad spiritual leader Bruno, nor Lola, who becomes engaged with radical activism on a whim, succeed in their goals (the Bonnard painting Dirk steal from Lottie's house turns out to be fake).

While environmental degradation and climate change make human lives increasingly difficult, the state still uses its resources for uncertain wars. Additionally, public resources are not shared fairly among all segments of the population. In such an environment, the rise of various opposition movements from the society seems reasonable. However, the experiences of the modern environmental movement over the last fifty years have shown that no significant gains can be made from disorganised or individual responses; it seems unlikely that positive progress can be made in combating environmental problems without organized action, public participation and political support. In addition to this, as can be seen from the examples given above, the protest methods chosen by Lola and Dirk cannot possibly solve any of these problems; on the contrary, such actions lead to new and more complicated problems in society; there is an increase in crimes such as violence, theft and vandalism. These are also examples of the security risks created by the environmental problems discussed above.

It seems possible to associate the failure of protesters with the widespread insensitivity in society, especially the middle class who actually have the ability and resources to make a difference. Thanks to its economic superiority, which is mostly based on colonial activities and heavy industries, Britain, and other industrialised Western countries, is able to offer comfortable and safe living conditions to the working classes and the other social classes in general. Although the poor experience some difficulties due to deteriorating environmental conditions, it can be said that the citizens of the City in *The Flood* have better conditions than much of the rest of the world. This is probably why protests and demonstrations have limited participation and efficacy. In *The Flood*, the citizens of the City do not care about the precautions that should be taken while the weather is fine; even a cheap fireworks show

during the Gala, is enough to distract the public and draw their attention in a different direction. The servitude of the majority for the comfort of a few is one of the natural consequences of capitalism. The relative advantages of the ordinary people in Western countries such as employment security, Mediterranean vacations and comfortable retirement make them close their eyes to economic inequalities and in many ways to the deterioration of nature.



3. A QUEST OF HOPE IN A GODLESS WORLD – AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD*

One night in 2003, American novelist Cormac McCarthy looked out of the hotel window during a visit to El Paso, Texas. His younger son John was sleeping beside him. He was thinking about the little child sleeping peacefully and the future: what would the world look like fifty or hundred years later? Like every parent who is not satisfied with the state of world affairs and worry about the future of their child, McCarthy thought about his son and worried. As the author of a number of dark and terrifying tales McCarthy is far from being an optimist and while he was looking over the hills of the scenery, he had visions of a devastated world on fire. The initial notes he had taken after this first inspiration turned into a whole novel, *The Road* (2006), within a couple of years, once the occasional conversations he had had with his son were included in the text. He dedicated it to his son, John Francis McCarthy, and insisted that he is the co-author of the novel¹⁸.

The story of *The Road* is that of the emotional relationship between a father and his son, which many readers and critics regard as one of the most pessimistic and gloomy stories written to date. It tells the journey of two unnamed survivors of an unspecified catastrophe that destroyed the world and killed almost all living nature. In this post-apocalyptic world, everything is covered with ashes, and everywhere littered with burned corpses and rusty motor vehicles. McCarthy's beginning the story *in medias res* hints at the form of an epic, but there is little detail about the pre-apocalyptic world; what little there is, is mostly suggested through the man's dreams and childhood memories. Some

¹⁸ Authentic resources regarding McCarthy's private life and his own thoughts about his novels are rather limited. The author preferred to live privately, away from the public eye. He has been careful not to make contact with the literary circles and especially the press. McCarthy biographies are mostly based on the information gathered from the very few interviews with the press. According to CormacMcCarthy.com there are a total of only seven interviews in more than fifty years (CormacMcCarthy.com 2014). McCarthy identified the experience described here as the inspiration for *The Road* in his first and only TV interview with Oprah Winfrey in 2007.

time previously, when the mother committed suicide (he does not tell how), like many of the survivors, the man decided to take his son, born after the event, and move to the South, to the seaside, in the hope of finding a friendlier climate and some food. After the apocalyptic event all agriculture and husbandry activities have come to an end, and the food left in the markets have been looted years before. Along their journey they have three major difficulties; the first is the weather conditions which are almost always wet and cold. They have to walk and push the shopping cart in which they carry their food and other possessions (blankets, binoculars, gas stove, etc.) in mud and occasionally over snow-covered roads. The second is hunger. They have very little food which they mostly scavenge from abandoned houses. The third is the cannibals and marauders ("bloodcults"), by whom to be eaten is the greatest fear of the father and the son. The father's plan in the probable event of capture by the cannibals is to kill his son and commit suicide to avoid being eaten.

Although they try to keep away from other people as much as possible, for a variety of reasons, they have a few inevitable encounters with strangers. Before finding a bunker full of food and survival equipment, they were almost starving to death because they consumed all their food supply days before. They decide to stay there for a while, before setting off towards their final destination. However, the shoreline is like everywhere they have walked through, it is far from the father's expectations. They discover an abandoned boat on the shore and take a few things that could be useful, and then move away. At that time they are robbed but succeed in getting back their goods; the child gets sick but soon begins to heal; the father is wounded with an arrow but kills the one who injured him. After a while, the father's condition begins to deteriorate; the wound is deep and his body is weak. Just before he dies, he has an emotional conversation with his son and tells him that he could talk to him in his prayers. In the end a family with two children finds the boy and adopts him probably with good intentions¹⁹.

¹⁹ Before approaching the boy, the family waited until the father's death. When they finally decide to contact the child, they do not show any other attitude than warm and loving parental behaviour. However, given the harsh realities of this post-apocalyptic world in the novel, there is no evidence to make us think that this family would never harm the boy, i.e. eating him for dinner after a while.

There is no doubt that both in terms of content and style there are more differences than similarities between McCarthy's *The Road* and Gee's *The Flood*. While depicting the pre-apocalyptic world, *The Flood* offers a fictitious world that allows for direct relationships between environmental problems and socioeconomic conditions. On the other hand, *The Road* is comparatively restrained about the true, physical, cause of the apocalyptic event and the fundamental dynamics of the pre-apocalyptic world. Therefore, it seems more difficult to establish a direct link between human activities and the apocalypse. At the same time, *The Road* does not place a clear emphasis on socioeconomic inequalities that intensify the negative effects of the climate crisis in the pre-apocalyptic world. However, as many of its readers would agree, this novel also offers a story that allows readers to reflect upon the relationship between humans and nature. Considering that in today's world the majority of the human population live away from nature – in cities surrounded by concrete buildings and constructed spaces²⁰ – *The Road* offers a different perspective on one of the basic dynamics of human life; that nature and wildlife are integral parts of our environment.

Humans and other living things are connected, more importantly are dependent on each other to sustain their existence. This view is the main inspiration for an ecological approach to literature. Ecocriticism generally deals with the human–nature relationship which humans have to align with harmoniously in order to survive on Earth. In this context Commoner's first rule of ecology, "Everything is connected to everything else" (2020, p.33) appears to be a valid inference considering the world in *The Road*. The characters are in a desperate struggle to survive. The catastrophic event has caused big fires and everything that grew from the soil has vanished forever, and this eventually eliminates the mutual relation between humans and nature which is the basic dynamics of maintaining life on Earth.

A critical analysis of the novel would suggest that by showing the interconnectedness of life on Earth, *The Road* can be seen as a suitable text for an ecocritical reading. *The Road* has been described as "the first great

²⁰ According to www.statista.com the percentage of the urban population in 2020 was 82% in North America and 75% in Europe. (08.01.2020)

masterpiece of the globally warmed generation”²¹ (O’Hagan 2010) and as “the most important environmental book ever written” (Monbiot 2007). With the disappearance of both the artificial and natural systems that surround and give specific meanings (roles) to humans, the characters of the novel are faced with the barest state of existence, bereft of any meaning. In this case, political and economic systems, as well as concepts that regulate social relations, such as religion, family, social bonds and even the meaning of time have to be redefined: “No lists of things to be done. The day providential to itself. The hour. There is no later. This is later. All things of grace and beauty such that one holds them to one’s heart have a common provenance in pain. Their birth in grief and ashes.” (McCarthy 2006, p. 54). In such an environment, the father’s desperate journey to the South can be seen as an effort to preserve a part of the collapsed order that has actually lost its function. Yet, it is a futile effort. The father does not realize the obvious truth; the main responsibility for the ruined state of the world is precisely the collapsed order he wants to go back to.

In view of the setting and the characters’ situation this chapter argues that the ash-covered earth in *The Road* evokes the destructive impact of capitalist consumption culture on the natural environment. In the post-apocalyptic world of *The Road*, the absurdity of the vain struggle of the survivors parallels the inconsistency between the natural environment, in which human beings gain meaning as an integral part of it, and the liberal/capitalist economic system underlying the social structure that defines them as individuals. Despite all the radical changes in the natural environment, the social structure based on the relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed continues. In this context this chapter will also show that the cannibals and the other hunter- prey dualisms in the post-apocalyptic world share the same basic dynamics as the class stratification in a capitalist society. Considering both explicit and implicit details in the novel it is clear that *The Road* gives important messages in the context of the ecosocialist perspective and provides useful tools for raising environmental awareness in society by emphasizing the relationship between

²¹ This quotation from Andrew O’ Hagan has appeared on the back cover of the 2010 Picador edition.

environmental problems and the capitalist ideology that encourages continuous consumption.

The Road on the one hand offers an uncomplicated sequence of events narrated with plain, almost naked language; on the other hand it provides an opportunity for multiple interpretations by presenting both a realistic and an allegorical narrative. As they do not ignore the interaction of humans and environment, this ecocritical reading has benefited from these different interpretations. First, despite its pessimistic atmosphere, *The Road* is a text that has the potential to create environmental awareness in its readers. In this context, for example, De Bruyn (2010), by drawing on ecology theorist Robert Pogue Harrison's works, *Forests* (1992) and *Gardens* (2008), in which he developed a "specific mode of reading environmentally sensitive texts" (p. 777), discussed the ecological content of *The Road*. He deals with certain representations of nature in McCarthy's novel and argues that the devastation of nature is a representation of the loss of "cultural memory" (p. 777). The parallel between disappearing natural life and cultural memory is established especially in the last paragraph of the novel, which is about "brook trout in the streams" (McCarthy 2006, p. 287). McCarthy wrote about these fish, which were once a living part of nature, "On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again." (p. 287). On account of this, according to De Bruyn (2010), *The Road* shows the importance of "sustainable ecology" (p. 777).

Lawrence (2011) has developed an "eco-Marxist reading of cannibalism" in *The Road*. He focuses on the human drives that have "potentially terrifying consequences" and views the novel as an "implicit warning" against "socially and environmentally oppressive and allusive behaviors" such as cannibalism (p. 162). In the novel, some of the survivors start eating other people so as not to die of starvation, because they have already consumed all other creatures, such as cats, dogs, mice or birds. From an environmentalist perspective the similarity of the relationship between these two enemy camps (hunter and prey), with the social classes in an industrial capitalist society, oppressors and the oppressed, cannot be overlooked. Though Lawrence has reservations on qualifying "the cannibals as the post-apocalyptic bourgeoisie and the man and boy as being

representative of the proletariat (as they do not perform waged labor for the cannibals)” (p. 165), in a text full of symbolic references like *The Road*, the similarity between the two groups is clear enough. In today’s societies there are the modern bourgeoisie on the one side, who strive to dominate the natural resources to use for capital accumulation and profit, on the other there are those who strive to sustain their lives mostly with low incomes. Considering that the current environmental crisis mostly affects middle and lower income groups, it is an unquestionable fact that environmentalism requires class consciousness, and ecosocialism can contribute to these groups as a non-repressive ideology.

Regarding the issue of the exploitation of natural resources Marx (1976) wrote that, “all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility.” (p. 638) Harming nature, to which we owe our existence, for the sake of profit based economy, for the increase of wealth, purchasing luxury or any corporeal goods is a kind of cannibalism; however, it is a far worse version than the cannibalism driven by the survival instinct in *The Road*. According to Lawrence (2011), the capitalist understanding of production and an economic system that pursues ever-increasing profits is still the biggest threat to nature:

From a purist ecocritical standpoint separate from socioeconomic considerations, McCarthy’s cannibals can be read as a representation of the most difficult foes environmentalists face in combating our planet’s diffuse environmental issues; namely, the diffuse self-perpetuating hegemonic systems that rely on the harvesting of limited natural resources for what is supposed to be ever-expanding profit, and are spearheaded by self-interested and rapacious individuals. (p. 166)

The cannibal gangs, which emerged after the social and environmental collapse of the world, “have resorted to eating their young, and even impregnating some of their female slaves for the implied purpose of eating the babies once they are born” (p. 163). This is probably the lowest level of moral corruption humanity could ever fall to.

Throughout history we have changed the environment in accordance with our purposes and needs by ignoring the fact that this change must be in proportion to, and at a speed that will not disturb the ability of nature to balance it. In the industrial capitalism period, facilitated by modern science and technology, the transformation of the environmental has been so rapid and so effective that it has brought some unforeseen consequences for humanity, such that people of the modern age now have to change themselves in order to adapt to the changes in nature. Ironically, science and technology are now used more to preserve nature rather than to change it, inasmuch as there is increasing evidence that in the near future these uncontrollable changes in nature will have devastating consequences for humanity. In this context, from an ecological perspective, *The Road* can be regarded as a story about this turnaround. It is the natural surroundings that keep humans alive. If life on Earth, other than humans ceases to exist, they can turn into greedy cannibals and soulless beasts.

As the destruction of nature reaches a level that can threaten the existence of human beings in the world, in literature, terms such as ‘anti’ or ‘post’ pastoral has become widespread to describe recently published dystopian novels. Gifford (2014) discusses the semantic change in the meaning of the term in the context of Western cultural history, and develops a post-pastoral theory of fiction. As he reminds us, long before ecocriticism emerged as a contemporary concept, that is, before “countryside” turned into “environment” and “nature” to “ecology”, the concept of pastoral was used for completely different meanings (p. 17). Therefore, it must be restructured to refer to a new situation where nature no longer exists. According to Gifford, “the most common contemporary anti-pastoral texts are dystopian novels of a future in which humans have devastated the environment to such an extent that it threatens their own survival” (p. 29). Accordingly, he sees *The Road*, along with Atwood’s *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and Maggie Gee’s *Ice People* (1999), as examples of post-pastoral fiction and asserts that because of the devastated settings, they represent a departure from the conventional understanding of nature. According to Gifford’s approach, *The Road* and similar novels can manipulate readers to recognize the importance of the global environmental crisis by highlighting the absence of nature.

Ecocritical readings of *The Road* often refer to the similarities of this novel with some important works of American and world literature. For example Kollin (2011) compares *The Road* to John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) in terms of being closely related to the issues and debates of its time. She writes, "*The Road* may be considered an apocalyptic version of *The Grapes of Wrath*" that "Both texts chronicle the plight of characters facing environmental and economic disaster in an America whose dreams of possibility and progress called into question" (p. 158). Steinbeck's novel is about the economic and social problems of working-class families after The Great Depression (1929-1939). People who lost their jobs due to closure of businesses had to become agricultural workers. In addition to the social and economic difficulties they faced, the negative effects of the economic structure on the working class and the poor were compounded in an unfavourable natural environment. In this context Kollin argues that, "In both novels the characters face what is clearly a natural as well as a human disaster" (pp. 158-9). *The Road* was published a short time before the 2008 financial crisis, which is generally seen as the worst since the Great Depression. Many people lost their houses and jobs which worsen their life conditions. For many U.S. citizens who were accustomed to luxury and excessive consumption, this represented something akin to a personal apocalypse. An increase in the number of people affected, as well as the frequency of extreme weather events due to global warming are among other important issues occupying the global agenda during the same period (2008-2009). In this sense, it can be said that both novels were published during times of crisis, when apocalyptic discourse was widespread due to both economic and environmental disruption.

The prevalence of apocalyptic elements in literature has its basis in ancient religious beliefs about apocalypse or the end of the days which is foreseen as a punishment for collective sins against the commands of a god or other higher power during a lifetime. This belief is integrated into most Western and non-Western cultures. Throughout history, events such as epidemic diseases, great wars, famines and natural disasters which caused mass fatalities were regarded as divine punishments. Such interpretations of events have also had cultural consequences inasmuch as they have also become a frequently used theme in

secular literature over time. In this context the relevance of the two novels established by Kollin (2011) can be seen as a result of a broader cultural movement effective in both periods. Heller (2015) refers to the issue observing that, “Ever since the breakout success of Cormac McCarthy's 2006 novel *The Road*, America has been degraded, devastated, and decimated time and time again — at least, on the page.” In fact, there has been a considerable rise in the publication of literary post-apocalyptic novels generally, especially in English speaking countries over the last two decades. Hicks (2016) regards this issue in terms of their “treatment of the episteme of modernity” (p. 2). According to Hicks,

these books reflect a set of historical and epistemological transformations—the globalized economy intensified by the end of the Cold War; the international recognition of the menace of anthropogenic global warming; the attacks of 9/11 and subsequent War on Terror; the growing disavowal within intellectual circles of postmodernity as a category of periodization; and the international resurgence of the concept of “modernity”. (p. 2)

Western intellectuals who realized that humanity could not reach the promises of enlightenment and modernity during the period of conflicts, threats and tensions that characterized the 20th century or, in other words, after two world wars and several genocides, enthusiastically welcomed postmodernity which eliminates the necessity to seek any given meaning in anything. In such an atmosphere the narratives about the end of modernity and those about the end of the world inevitably bear some similarities. To explain the relationship of post-apocalyptic novels like *The Road* with the broken dreams, future anxieties and pessimistic mood of the early 21st century, Walsh (2008) relates these current themes in literature with “the dystopian sensibility which has informed the nation’s imaginative consciousness in the aftermath of September 11th, the sorry mess of a war in Iraq which constitutes a grim episode in the history of American exceptionalism, the spectre of global warming and ecological disaster, and the implications of economic globalization and trans-nationalism” (p. 48). According to Heller (2015) these novels also allow us to face our fears. He explains this situation by stating, “Post-apocalyptic books are thriving for a

simple reason: The world feels more precariously perched on the lip of the abyss than ever, and facing those fears through fiction helps us deal with it. These stories are cathartic as well as cautionary.” Finally Lawrence (2011) refers to the situation of ordinary people in a capitalist society in a manner reminiscent of the perspective of Kollin (2011) in reflecting that we read more of these stories, “as greater proportions of the global population find themselves battling socially and economically abusive hegemonic systems” (Lawrence 2011, p 162). By the onset of the 21st century new concerns and fears about the future of the world were activated and in such an environment the increasing number of fantasies about the end of the world could be seen as reasonable. As one of the first examples of this period, *The Road* can be said to set a precedent for later post-apocalyptic dystopias.

In the relationship between the characters and the setting of *The Road* we can clearly see the feeling of weakness and nakedness that human beings experience when they move away from their habitual environment. In the novel, there are numerous descriptions of natural environment that create these feelings on the characters, one of which is: “By day the banished sun circles the earth like a grieving mother with a lamp.” (McCarthy 2006, p. 32). “The banished sun” and “a grieving mother” imagery conjure up connotations of loneliness and desperation, which is what a person will feel when faced with environmental conditions that make it difficult to meet vital necessities, and if they are deprived of external influences to support them. A certain number of daily activities which need to be carried out for survival involve strategies to obtain the products required. According to Marxist theory these activities are related to the ‘modes of production’ and their effect is central on cultural institutions and common values. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx argued that,

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society -
- the real foundation, on which rise legal and political

superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. (1904, p. 11-12).

The experiences of people who migrated and settled in new and untouched regions in the past provide concrete examples of superstructure values that are forced to change when there is a radical conversion in material conditions. Mass migration has happened to many human societies since ancient times. For these people sustaining life and meeting basic needs could become challenging tasks; because of this, on many occasions nature was seen as an enemy rather than the source of life. In this respect, considering the death of nature in *The Road*, difficulty the characters experience in undertaking the day to day necessities of survival and their disillusionment with their environment in a distinctly American setting can be taken as an allusion to current environmental problems; besides, it is possible to compare these hostile attitudes of migrants to completely foreign lands to the experiences of the first European settlers in North America who ruled and ‘civilized’ the continent by means of capitalist ideology from the very beginning.

The perception of nature as a dangerous or even an enemy territory is related to accumulated experiences and compounded beliefs that reach to the depths of Western cultural memory. Regardless of whether there had been an established civilization or not, Western countries have reorganized each region they colonized according to their culture and needs. For this reason the worldwide colonization process of the non-European parts of the Earth almost always resulted in the destruction of local cultures and local lands. Africa, Asia and America, even the smallest islands in remote parts of the oceans, were subjected to the same treatment. This means that while Western civilization transformed every location it set foot according to its own worldview and beliefs, it also exploited these places in accordance with capitalist principles.

Another explanation for hostile attitudes towards nature can be understood more clearly by looking at the understanding of nature held by the first European settlers in America based on their religious beliefs. Besides the profit-minded abusive approach originated from capitalism, the perception of nature as a

dangerous place is also related to religious beliefs that show the world as a temporary refuge for humans. The first immigrants in America were highly religious and they defined nature as a “howling wilderness”, which was based on a statement from the Bible; “He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.” (Deuteronomy 32:10). God found Jacob in a wild, deserted place occupied only by wild creatures, and by keeping him away from there he rescued him from the dangers of that place, i.e. nature itself. With this it can be understood that the sharp contrast between human and non-human nature (the wilderness) confers a great privilege and superiority to humanity. The wilderness became a dangerous and unpleasant entity which needed to be transformed by human hands, and nature would become an artefact that ‘environs’ humans; it is therefore a built landscape and defined by the word ‘environment’.

In *The Road* the man and the boy confront an unfriendly environment that is no longer suitable for sustaining life; similar to that experienced by the Jews escaping from Egypt and the first settlers in America. When the life energy of nature is exhausted, the man witnessed the extinguishing of its spirit and thought that ‘God had totally abandoned the world’. At the beginning of the novel McCarthy establishes the general mood of the story and perhaps gives some clues about the desperate ending. The man wakes up “with the first gray light”, looks through the road they will pass along in a while, and then defines the landscape as “barren silent godless” (McCarthy 2006, p. 4). For the man, there is hardly anything left that can be attributed to sacredness or spirituality that gives meaning to his life, but a weak child around nine years old who is likely to be eaten by cannibals sooner or later. The man looks down the valley with binoculars and describes the scenery as dark and hopeless as a Christian preacher in Colonial America would define what sinners would deserve to see:

Everything paling away into the murk. The soft ash blowing in loose swirls over the blacktop. He studied what he could see. The segments of road down there among the dead trees. Looking for anything of color. Any movement. Any trace of standing smoke. He lowered the glasses and pulled down the cotton mask from his face and wiped his

nose on the back of his wrist and then glassed the country again (pp. 4-5).

If being exposed to wild and untamed nature could be seen as a dangerous or inhumanly experience, all kinds of activities that attempt to tame it, such as urbanizing, civilizing, improving landscapes for economic activities, industrializing and colonizing it would emerge as a legitimate right. The first European settlers in America suffered from poor harvests and starvation before they managed to establish a self-supporting system by utilizing the experience of the natives. In this period many colonists got sick and died because of the unhealthy living conditions. One of the first colonial governors, William Bradford, asked this rhetoric question to draw attention to their situation, “What could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men” (2002, p. 62). America was a wasteland in which death, despair and sorrow were all around. Like the initial status of America, every region in which Western civilization and its social, political and economic systems were not established has been subjected to similar treatment by the colonizers. An important part of the concept of ‘uncolonized’ nature comprised of these elements: “wilderness symbolized the wild, untamed world that needed civilization and religion that needed saving” (Hamilton & Jones 2013, p. 31). According to this belief any evil, including wild territory, must be conquered in order to complete God’s half-finished work.

As human domination over nature increased thanks to rising populations and technological advances, roughly from the 19th century when industrialization began to take effect, wild nature has continued to be seen as a form of punishment sinners would have to face in the afterlife. Further than this, there has been a new tendency to see nature, in the Platonist sense, as symbolic of the absolute entity beyond the visible world, the world of phenomena that cannot be comprehended and measured with rational thought. When compared with seeing wild nature as an evil territory in need of being transformed, characterizing it as a representation of the Supreme Being that is beyond the capacity of reason can be seen as a positive development, and moreover, this point of view has been a temporary source of inspiration for the modern environmental movement that emerged in the 20th century. However, both views, New England Puritanism and

romanticism, are problematic when viewed from the perspective of modern environmentalism.

Romantic philosophy raises nostalgic feelings for an unspoiled past that has both integrity and harmony, which is, according to Marx and the modern ecosocialist philosophy, an unattainable ideal. Although “Marx employs certain elements of the romantic critique”, he did this “without the aspiration to return the past” (Löwy in Martin 2018). Hence, neither a metaphysical integrity that the romantics look for nor the religious viewpoint that sees wild nature as an enemy provides a correct explanation for the discussions on human-nature relationship. From the ecosocialist viewpoint nature is not a sacred entity outside of human experience, or a prison where sinners pay a price. Nature is indifferent to human purposes; it exists and operates according to its own order. Hurricanes, earthquakes or other destructive natural events are not nature’s punishment of humankind; they have always occurred and will continue to occur. No evil can be attributed to the usual flow of nature. However, it is a fact that the possible consequences of human-induced global warming will become a part of our lives and there is certainly little goodness to be seen in them. Evil relates to the human behaviours that are outside of nature’s normal functioning. In this context, from an ecosocialist perspective, we cannot speak of the existence of evil independent of humankind.

In almost every period of history humans have ascribe meanings to nature’s operating systems. Modern ecology has proved that unrealistic views of nature appeared as a result of falling into anthropocentric ways of thinking. The alternative of this human-centred approach, ecocentrism, one of the major notions in ecological philosophy, is the belief that human and nonhuman natures have equal value and importance. Defining humanity as a separate entity, separate from all other living beings or as the masters of the world, caused the emergence of an understanding in which human nature²² is morally prioritized. In this case, one may begin to perceive nature as a competitor or an enemy. When humans believe that nature means them harm with its unsympathetic and overwhelming forces, as it is in the ‘howling wilderness’ concept, that is, when

²² Human nature here refers to the parts of living nature that humans see in themselves, including their own bodily integrity, as well as their pets and backyard plants, etc.

they do not accept what fate – in actuality the laws of nature – determines, then they should pay a heavy price. Similarly, we have seen that regarding these unsympathetic and overwhelming forces as a representation of a Supreme Being has not been helpful in protecting nature. Although there have been many practitioners in art and literature describing the sublime beauty of wild nature, the other point of view seems more opportune for the executives of capitalist production, the offspring of the ideology of taming nature through colonizing it. In other words, although Western culture values romantic art, it seems that the majority of human beings in North America preferred to follow the path of their Puritan ancestors. In this way they have chosen to position themselves as the other party to a great war with nature. As Hubert Reeves once said, “We are at war with nature. If we win, we are lost.” (Reeves in Lalonde 2009) Regarding the same issue, Schumacher (1975) wrote that, “Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle, he would find himself on the losing side.” (p. 14). The losing party of a war between humans and nature has always been and will always be humans. In this war, humankind is the loser even if it wins. The point here is to not get into that war in the first place.

In *The Road*, McCarthy fictionalized an expiration date for life on Earth. The natural life that exists in our environment ensures the continuation of life and constantly renews itself. The laws of nature allow for the existence of humans, but this existence is not a necessity for nature. American diplomat and politician Adlai Ewing Stevenson argued that, “Nature is indifferent to the survival of the human species, including Americans” (1952, p. 27). The end of the story in *The Road* is quite different from the endings of popular Hollywood movies in which a superhero suddenly appears and saves American people and perhaps the rest of the world. In this regard I find it necessary to express my disagreement with the view that sees the existence of the family that takes the boy with them after the father’s death as ‘a light of hope’ for the future. This view transforms *The Road* into an American epic in which the good always wins over the evil; however I prefer to read it as a tragedy, a universal tragedy of humankind that needs to invoke catharsis in the readers and to warn them of similar situations.

On one condition, a parallel can be drawn between the man and the boy's desperate journey towards their destiny and the sinners, who have not obeyed the orders and prohibitions communicated to them: this time they pay the price for the crimes humanity has committed against nature, not against the divine rules. It is the consequence of material conditions, not a divine punishment. Additionally, a reading of evil as a natural entity involves contradictions according to the environmentalist perspective. As in Stevenson's famous quote, "Nature is neutral. Man has wrested from nature the power to make the world a desert or to make the deserts bloom. There is no evil in the atom; only in men's souls." (Stevenson in Sanders & Anderson 1999, p. 191) evil is not natural, it exists only because there are people who prefer doing evil; it is a conscious decision and with the same mechanism – free will, they are able to choose not to perform the same behaviour; it would be a contradiction if a belief system considers evil to be a natural flow of events.

From this point of view the state of humanity in *The Road* can be perceived as the price to be paid for attributing unreal meanings to nature and burdening it with exploitation above its carrying capacity. According to the causality principle that connects natural phenomena, everything that happened in the past will cause what will happen in the future. For that reason, the devastated world in *The Road* and the miserable situation of humanity should be a result of what has been done in the past. The part in the book that best describes this situation is the conversation between the man and Ely, the old man they come upon during their journey. It is certain that both men are aware of the absurdity and hopelessness of their present condition. Nonetheless, when Ely says, "People were always getting ready for tomorrow. I didnt believe in that. Tomorrow wasnt getting ready for them. It didnt even know they were there" (McCarthy 2006, p. 168), we can see that this unusual man finds 'humans' responsible for their miserable situation and for the darkness of the future.

The perception that everything in the universe exists for the benefit of human beings not only leads to a false consciousness about nature, but also creates great confusion about human existence in the world. From a Marxist perspective, in the post-industrial period, the capitalist modes of production and consumer society have become concepts that complement each other, and such a

relationship reduces humans to mere consumers. Individuals in free market economies do not have much freedom other than involving themselves in the system as consumers. As a result of these circumstances, a correct form of consciousness (individual, social or class) that involves the knowledge of the real material and historical conditions of human beings does not seem possible. The confusion caused by this situation is one of the realities of today's world. It is in the root of alienation in the Marxist sense and it supports pessimistic projections about the future of the humanity.

The physical setting of *The Road* can be approached with regard to several different contexts. For example Cant (2009) discusses the image of 'waste lands' in McCarthy's works and he argues that this image "has recurred throughout McCarthy's previous novels and is an intertextual reference to Eliot" (p. 186). Eliot's *The Waste Land* is usually considered one of the most important modernist poems of the 20th century. According to Cant, in *The Road* the image of waste lands "is reasserted more powerfully than ever before", and that the dominant features of the setting in this novel: "the ash, the dust, the ubiquity of death, especially the death of nature, all contribute to this image" (p. 186). *The Road* is full of death and destruction imagery; at the same time its narrative has been described by many critics as poetic prose. It is almost entirely composed of the meditations of a father trying to keep his son alive in a dangerous world. The undivided narrative, simplicity of the language (that the characters use) and emotionally-laden imagery bring *The Road* closer to poetry than to a traditional narrative of a novel. In this context, the relationship that Cant established between the two works seems reasonable; *The Road* can be seen as a novel about the physical and spiritual destruction of the world, told in a poetic language.

In *The Waste Land* Eliot "delves into themes of war, trauma, disillusionment, and death, illuminating the devastating after effects of World War I" (Ananthi 2017, p. 32). It would not be wrong to say that *The Road* was also written after a devastating war; it was published in 2006, when the multinational military operations launched after the 9/11 attacks were still continuing. This fact leads to a consideration of the connections between the physical and moral degeneration in the world and the inevitable drive for violence among human

beings. Similarly in Eliot's poem, "the life in modern waste land is a life-in-death, a living death" (p. 33). *The Waste Land* in fact has no explicit reference to "ash" or "ashes" which are the most prominent feature of the setting in *The Road*, but there are plenty of "dead" or "dusty" things. In *The Road* the world has literally burnt along with everything in it. McCarthy's description in the following quotation is undoubtedly reminiscent of the "decayed hole among the mountains" (Eliot 2001, p. 18) and the spiritual degeneration of Western Civilization in *The Waste Land*:

They passed through the city at noon of the day following. He kept the pistol to hand on the folded tarp on top of the cart. He kept the boy close to his side. The city was mostly burned. No sign of life. Cars in the street caked with ash, everything covered with ash and dust. Fossil tracks in the dried sludge. A corpse in a doorway dried to leather. Grimacing at the day. (McCarthy 2006, p. 12)

Because of the fires, everywhere except the remaining indoor spaces is covered with ashes. All the buildings have been abandoned and inside those buildings that have remained after the fires were destroyed by the desperate survivors. The apocalyptic disaster killed all natural life and sent survivors to a kind of hellhole. In addition to the bleakness of the landscape, another issue that makes the journey of the man and the boy more difficult is the extreme climatic conditions, which are almost always wet and cold. There is nothing good and beautiful in this world; beauty remains only in memories. The man speaks of colours other than black, white and grey only when he is talking about his dreams and memories of the pre-apocalyptic world, whereas the boy does not have any knowledge of these because he was born after the apocalyptic event. They feel cold and scared, but they keep on walking. They cannot stay longer than a week in any place they shelter because they need the leftovers of the old world in order to survive; they constantly search abandoned houses and shops in search of something to eat. Besides, the terrifying cannibal gangs are everywhere, looking for humans to eat. This is more or less the final state of humanity, who used to think that they had achieved a great victory against nature with industrialization and advances in technology: the wastelands created by the collapse of civilization.

The phrase “covered with ashes” is the most used descriptive expression for the setting in *The Road*. Throughout the novel McCarthy used the word “ash” 71 times (14 times in the plural form as “ashes”). Longman Dictionary defines the word as, “the soft grey powder that remains after something has been burned”. In this context, a relationship can be established between consumed natural resources and the environment in *The Road* which has dried up and been covered with ashes. Ash is a product of a combustion reaction consisting of the remaining inorganic substances after an organic substance burns. Burning organic matter consumes oxygen, which is a necessary gas for most living organisms, and releases poisonous gases, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. In other words, ‘combustion phenomena’ (burning events) – the only way to produce ash – come to mean consuming a number of substances necessary for life. It can be concluded, therefore, that the cause of the ashes covering everywhere in *The Road* is literally overconsumption; humanity consumed all the resources of nature thoughtlessly, and they realized too late that what they consumed by burning was actually themselves. Considering the final state of humanity in the novel and from an ecosocialist perspective, it is evident that the ideology of capitalist consumerism has turned humanity into cannibal killers who are willing to eat even their own children.

The survivors of the apocalyptic event have to wear “masks and goggles” (p.28) in order to filter the ash-laden air. They are constantly walking through “the ashes of the late world” (p. 11). Ashes make “their masks ... gray at the mouth and their eyes darkly cupped” (p. 159). When they are tired, “they sat in the ashes by the side of the road” (p. 159). Ashes are present all the time and everywhere, despite the fact that it rains or snows almost every day. It becomes such an inseparable part of their life that the only thing that comes to the man’s mind to simulate the smell of rain is the smell of wet ashes:

And it may rain.

How can you tell?

I can smell it.

What does it smell like?

Wet ashes. Come on. (pp. 231-2)

The maintenance of the capitalist economic system depends on the existence of a market where new consumer goods are constantly demanded and supplied. This necessity makes consumption the most crucial activity of the system. However, overconsumption poses a great risk for human health as well as causing permanent destruction to nature and the environment. Rapid urbanization – expansion of urban areas in parallel with rapid growth of population, has destroyed natural habitats in many parts of the world. Destruction of natural forests to produce lumber and agricultural land has led to permanent damage to soil structure and the climate. The greenhouses built in the process of meeting nutritional needs of the growing population occupy arable green areas. Even if they provide economic benefits, industrial agricultural products grown with the overuse of clean water resources and agricultural chemicals increase the pressure on the environment caused by pollution. Industrial livestock production carried out to meet the need for meat, milk and other animal products, has reached an enormous scale globally, contributes to many environmental problems such as global warming and climate change and also increases water, soil and air pollution. All mining operations, especially oil exploration and mineral extraction practices, dry up the green vegetation of the lands they are working on, and pollute seas, as well as underground and surface water. Building more hydroelectric and steam power plants provides the required electricity for the use of many electronic devices that make our lives more comfortable. Likewise new motorways and bridges are constructed to reduce traffic jams and enable people to travel safely. On the other hand, despite so much investment in the energy sector and in transportation infrastructure, energy demand and traffic jams are constantly increasing. The truth is that many of the environmental technologies advertised by multinational corporations and the consumer goods marketed with an ‘environmental’ (eco-friendly) product label are nothing other than more products to stimulate consumption and to facilitate the operations of the capitalist system. For this reason the capitalist enterprises such as so-called ‘green consumer products’ or ‘industrial organic agriculture’ are criticized severely by radical environmental movements such as ecosocialism and social ecology. Consequently, the affinity between the world “covered with ashes” – the scenery of the burned trees, blasted cities and charred human remains – and excessive consumption is too obvious to ignore.

The Road's environmental content, in a sense, reveals the misleading promises of capitalism with the pessimistic view it creates about the future of the world.

With the end of natural life in *The Road*, the system of values that shape the fields of religion, politics and art, and determine the nature of social relations as well as the general consumption habits are partially redefined. The system of values in a society enables people to organize their lives. Marx mentioned the relationship between the changes in the value system while economy undergoes a major change, as well the order which underpins capitalist consumption habits. With the onset of capitalist society, consumption started to be defined as "spending tangible and intangible values that are ventured to meet some demand, whether real or fake" (Arıkan Saltık et al. 2013, p. 183) by moving away from the notion of spending on the products needed for subsistence. Marx (1956) defines consumer products as "articles of consumption, which enter into the consumption of the working-class, and, to the extent that they are necessities of life" and "articles of *luxury*, which enter into the consumption of only the capitalist class and can therefore be exchanged only for spent surplus-value, which never falls to the share of the labourer" (p. 246). In his time, Marx and other economy theorists, in the context of the commodification process, sought a relationship between use value and exchange value. However, in the modern world, symbolic value is more important when determining the value of consumer products, that is, their ability to associate the consumer with a certain social status. The concepts Baudrillard defined in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* as "the differential logic of sign value" and "the logic of symbolic exchange" (1981, p. 121), are generally seen as the complementary aspect of Marx's theory in terms of modern consumer societies. Baudrillard's contribution to this theory is summarized by Koch & Elmore (2006) as follows:

Sign exchange is a process in which goods are exchanged as commodities, but with the new element of symbolic value, or status, they provide the consumer. Symbolic value presents a new explanatory tool in the discussion of value and is designed to augment the explanatory power of use value and exchange value in a consumption oriented society (p. 557-8).

In *The Road*, it is seen that all characters act only with the urge to survive, so the concepts mentioned above no longer have any meaning. Accordingly, the

interest in luxury consumption products with high symbolic value has disappeared. No one scavenges for technological devices nor tries to sell or exchange them when they find them. In *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic world things are no longer commodities. The man "carried his billfold about till it wore a cornershaped hole in his trousers. Then one day he sat by the roadside and took it out and went through the contents. Some money, credit cards." (McCarthy, 2006, p. 51) There is no market for exchanging goods and money no longer has any value. With the disintegration of the capitalist society and the disappearance of capitalist production, the symbolic values have vanished. There is no medium of exchange, so the meaning and value of objects depend on their use value, which usually varies from person to person. And, most importantly, there is no hope that one day in the future the old order will be reconstituted. Certain goods that we use, but seem trivial today such as shopping carts, blankets, shoes, canned foods, gas lamps and hand tools are the only products that enable them to survive for a while. In a properly functioning environment, things will be different to a post-apocalyptic world. Here we come to one of the most important messages in the novel; we do not really need many of the products and technological devices we use today in order to sustain life. We can survive and even live a happy life by consuming less and thereby contributing to the preservation of the balance of nature.

At this point a brief discussion on the role and impact of science and technology, which is the only means that enables humankind to increase their dominance over nature, seems necessary. Our capacity to harm nature and the environment has increased in direct proportion to progress in science and technology. This perspective clearly contradicts the belief that science and technology can help humanity build a better future. In this context the human condition depicted in *The Road* opens up a space where we can discuss whether urge for progress can be a source of evil. Many different views within the modern environmental movement, including ecosocialism, are against the progressivist aspect of modernist philosophies. It has been a long time since humanity lost faith in progress that would make humanity happier and richer with the reforms and developments implemented in social, political and economic fields as well as science and technology. However, it is certain that

humanity have benefited from scientific studies and new technological developments in many ways, including that millions of people have survived from epidemic diseases or natural disasters. Many of us believed the futurist notion that, “Men are only so good as their technical development allows them to be” (Orwell 2021, p. 40-1). We expend less energy and time on daily routines and activities. Undoubtedly we have better life standards; for example, we have won seemingly great victories against the obstacles that nature puts in our way. In *The Road*, even many years after such a catastrophic event people can survive thanks to the technological advances made before the apocalypse. For example, the man and the boy, and most probably the other survivors, have been living on canned food for years.

On the other hand, thanks to science and technology, we have managed to make the planet increasingly uninhabitable, especially in the last two centuries. This creates a dilemma which many scientists and philosophers have expressed opinions about and can be encountered in discussions on television, social media and even in textbooks. Overuse of the phrases and quotations about the role and impact of science and technology have inevitably made this topic a cliché and this frequent exposure may have lessened its impact. Constant repetition of certain phrases is also a method of cultural conditioning; the more we see or hear about something, the more we get used to it. Therefore, in order to bypass such conditioning, it is important to select ideas that accurately represent the relationship between technology and natural degradation. In the famous report, *The Limits to Growth*, Meadows et al. (1972), it is determined that:

Technology can relieve the symptoms of a problem without affecting the underlying causes. Faith in technology as the ultimate solution to all problems can thus divert our attention from the most fundamental problem – the problem of growth in a finite system – and prevent us from taking effective action to solve it (p. 154).

An economic system that seeks continuous growth, in other words, a system that encourages unlimited growth in a limited environment, will eventually lead to the exhaustion of the resources and dysfunction of the system. Considering that the capacity of technological advances to prevent this deterioration is limited

and also too expensive for every society to acquire, the belief that advances in science and technology would make the whole world a better place may not have as many followers as it used to have. Thus, independent scientists, to a large extent, no longer maintain this understanding. However, the cultural propaganda of progressivism as an ideology continues because the continuation of the capitalist system is associated with the continuity of economic growth and capital accumulation. In order to change the belief system that sees science and technology as a means to offset the ravages of progress, we need to choose a path that is both more compatible with nature and satisfies our needs adequately, rather than choosing one that provides us with bigger, more luxurious and expensive commodities which, eventually will cost us the balance of nature. Based on this requirement, an ecocritical reading of *The Road* necessarily calls for a wisdom that “demands a new orientation of science and technology towards the organic, the gentle, the non-violent, the elegant and beautiful” (Schumacher 1975, p. 34). In that case, how can we define wisdom of this kind and, more importantly, where can we find it? According to Schumacher, “it can be read about in numerous publications, but it can be found only inside oneself. To be able to find it, one has to first liberate oneself from such masters as greed and envy. The stillness following liberation – even if only momentary – produces the insights of wisdom which are obtainable in no other way” (p. 38).

It can be argued that the man in *The Road* has this kind of wisdom, based on the interaction he has with his surroundings, and particularly his consistent position concerning ethical issues. After the apocalyptic event, most of the world’s population died immediately, and many of the rest died in the consequent turmoil and chaos. The man went on a long and difficult journey with his child who was born after the disaster, and therefore, had no experience or knowledge of the previous world order. The fact that the man struggles to survive with his little child without joining the “marauders” that murder the survivors for their food or the “bloodcults” who commit acts of cannibalism can be explained by his moralistic and defiant personality. He continues the struggle to survive until the last moment. Even if the end of the story is different from his initial plans, considering their desperate plight he can still be seen as having been successful.

This success can be explained by way of the man's harmonious relationship with nature and his knowledge of natural life, which we learned from his childhood memory about the lake where "he and his uncle used to go in the fall for firewood" (McCarthy 2006, p. 12). Among his pre-apocalyptic memories, those about his experiences in nature demonstrate that the father had an affinity for nature that proved an advantage in the struggle to survive and this is a potential signal of the form of wisdom needed to achieve a mode of progress in harmony with that which the natural world can withstand.

After the apocalyptic event the man and the boy started a nomadic life; they were ceaselessly searching for food and a safe place to spend each night. Their lives have a strict pattern, thanks to which, in practice, they owe their survival. This pattern consists of not staying in the same place for a long time, avoiding the main roads, and taking the roads less travelled by. From an environmentalist perspective the man and the boy's way of organizing their daily lives is meaningful; living in harmony with the current state of the environment increases their chances of survival. The fact that many people gave up and passed away in a short time, whereas the father and son were able to continue their lives, can be explained by this. It should always be kept in mind that the resources that nature offers are not limitless and if we want to keep on living in this world, we have to organize our lives accordingly.

Throughout the story we repeatedly read the same descriptions and behaviours of the characters. However, the presence of danger in this routine creates a sense of continuous excitement and gives more fluidity to the narration. While the cannibal gangs are roaming around, the man and the boy always need to be on alert. There is a potential for violence during these repetitive travel routines; a possibility of facing a deadly threat at every turn. Considering this situation one can find similarities between the world in *The Road*, in which people strangle each other for the scarce food sources left, and the real world. It is an indisputable fact that circumstances have a determining effect on people's attitudes and behaviours. Throughout history, wars for possession of land and natural resources have had catastrophic consequences for millions of people. Survivors of civil wars have been forced to live in environments that are just as 'post-apocalyptic' as that experienced by the survivors of the war between

humanity and nature in *The Road*. The inevitable domination of violent and evil forces in the world McCarthy has portrayed has often been manifested with the mass murders committed during the great wars of history. For example, from the available images of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, we can visualize the streets where the man and the boy travel along, or from the photographs in which we can see the fear on the faces of people awaiting death in the Nazi concentration camps, we can imagine the feelings of the people captured by the cannibals in *The Road*.

Dividing society into two classes of good and the evil in order to assign the cannibal gangs to a particular camp (or the Nazis, or the US Air Force) is of limited utility. Normally people act according to the circumstances; their opportunities and constraints. Considering, for example, the above discussion on the nature of technological developments that both facilitate human life and potentially bring it to an end, such a classification of the cannibals in *The Road* as evil would lead to an equally ambiguous conclusion. Studies have shown that cannibalism is extremely rare, except in unusual situations such as a famine due to a war or a disaster, which is to say that cannibalism, in most cases, is caused by the lack of resources required to meet basic needs. Cormac Ó Gráda's detailed research, "Eating people is wrong: Famine's darkest secret?" (2013) argues that, "several well-known and well-documented historical episodes highlight how desperate people can be driven to cannibalism during life-threatening food emergencies" (p. 7). Of the long list of reported cases of cannibalism, a majority happened during and after wars and catastrophic natural disasters when people had difficulties meeting daily nutritional needs (pp. 7-15). Human beings, like all other creatures, do what they have to do to survive. When options are limited, circumstances directly determine the nature of behaviours. Similarly, individuals in a society shaped by industrial capitalism have limited options in terms of the interaction between humans and nature. The incidence of cannibalism, which was previously categorized here with the hunter-prey analogy, is determined by the system which facilitates it. Just as in a system where neither nature nor humans are exploited by industrial capitalism, there would not be any bourgeoisification, there would not be any

cannibalization in a natural environment where - as historical records show - basic needs can be met.

A critical question arises in relation to the incentives of the characters in *The Road*: if the current conditions force people to do evil, like eating their own species and, considering the main characters, there is no such thing as goodness except the love between a father and his son, what is the point of struggling to survive? This is one of the most difficult questions that *The Road* brings to mind; with the death of nature and the destruction of human values, and social and cultural structures, what remains to give people any desire to live? In such a world what can motivate one to go on living and struggle against the hardships of life? While this existential doubt occupies the readers' mind, the man gives a practical and somewhat ambiguous answer to this: "we're carrying the fire" (p. 83). McCarthy has not been clear about the exact meaning of this phrase, just as he has not clearly voiced the real cause of the catastrophic event. If we take it as a phrase left to the reader's interpretation, drawing upon the father's pre-apocalyptic memories, which imply that he had a close relationship with nature, an environmentalist insight could be applied to make sense of it. Aside from the potential philosophical implications of "we're carrying the fire", it is clear that the father used this idea to motivate his son and give him hope and faith.

We're going to be okay, aren't we Papa?

Yes. We are.

And nothing bad is going to happen to us.

That's right. Because we're carrying the fire.

Yes. Because we're carrying the fire. (p. 83)

Here it is possible to regard the phrase as one of the innocent lies a parent could tell a child about a truth that is hard to explain: they were soon going to die. How could a parent easily inform a young child about this uncomfortable fact? On the other hand, it is also certain that the boy 'fires' the man's spirit. His son gives the man the motivation to continue the struggle. When the boy asks him, "What would you do if I died?" the man responds, "If you die I would want to die too" (p. 11). Yet, the man is going to die sooner than the boy; in his last

conversation with his son he remains loyal to the “carrying the fire” concept and the story he has made up:

You have to carry the fire.

I don't know how to.

Yes, you do.

Is it real? The fire?

Yes it is.

Where is it? I don't know where it is.

Yes you do. It's inside you. It always was there. I can see it. (pp. 278-9)

From this dialogue it is understood that ‘fire’ concept connotes the belief in a better future. However, ironically, no matter how instinctive it may be to expect things to improve, what the characters in *The Road* must know for certain is that this is total delusion. It seems that the only power that can prevent evil people from doing evil is the existence of other evil people; it is without doubt a vicious circle. It is like starting a war to prevent one or committing murder to prevent a murder. In the world of *The Road* good people, in other words people who do not try to eat other people, are nothing more than the shadows in the dark or a piece of straw blowing in the wind; entirely inconsequential. If they are lucky enough, they will die naturally or of starvation without being raped or eaten by the cannibals. In such a world hope “...is in truth the worst of all evils, because it protracts the torment of men” (Nietzsche 2007, p. 45). Hope is generally accepted as the most important feeling required for clinging to life; but, if hope is built on empty promises, disappointment and frustration will eventually result. This is ultimately what will happen in the story of the man and the boy.

An industrial capitalist society searching for permanent happiness based on consumption and temporary pleasures is similarly built on empty promises. For the people who are dependent on expired canned food to maintain their lives, pursuing the pleasure of a can of coke shows the desperate situation of the survivors. Besides, this lifestyle is clearly unsustainable because of the scarcity of non-renewable resources. The deduction from this example is that like the

father's vain hopes of a better future, consumption culture offers temporary happiness to the members of society like the boy's momentary joy in drinking a can of coke or eating a bar of chocolate. In both cases grim realities will sooner or later overcome the false sense of happiness and consolation.

McCarthy shows the final situation of the culture that is trapped by consumption and loaded with violence; it is the ultimate end we will eventually face if we continue to do what we have done so far, against each other and against nature. Throughout human history we have experienced many disasters that we need to take lessons from. The survivors managed to hold on to life, and the human race has continued to exist. Today the arms race still continues, and despite all the precautions taken, nature is being harmed continuously. Few of the 7.8 billion people in the world are directly responsible for this situation (Current World Population 2021). For example, World War II, which caused the death of millions of people and serious environmental damage, was allegedly decided by a handful of people, politicians and their partners in financial markets. It is necessary to express that ordinary soldiers and civilian people who accept the decision to go to war without questioning are not innocent at all. The same attitude applies to environmental problems. The manufacturers of polluting substances are the main culprits in the degradation of nature; however, the consumers of those substances are not fully excluded from liability. Once again, a classification of either good or evil has ambiguous consequences, and would, moreover, be unhelpfully reductionist.

Whether consciously or not, humans aspire to a purpose, a meaning or an ideal in their lives; they fight for it or sacrifice themselves for it. Sometime between the apocalyptic event and the beginning of the novel, the father decided to "carry the fire" with his son. In the flow of the story the readers are informed that the mother chose to move in another direction. Keeping his son alive is the man's last remaining goal in life. However, the other parent chose another way. Apparently she did not want to continue living in a world like this. She rejected the man's idea about moving to the South for a chance to survive. The man recalled her saying, "We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film" (McCarthy 2006, p. 55). She admitted defeat; admitted that human beings have lost the battle against nature or God or themselves. The mother's

behaviour can be interpreted as indicating selfishness or cowardice. However, considering their circumstances, it can be said that the woman actually made a logical choice that required a great sacrifice; by choosing to die on her own, the woman increased her husband and son's chances of survival. She also gave them the opportunity to choose a more comfortable death, one that they would decide for themselves.

She is physically and emotionally distraught when her husband is preparing for their departure and knows her weakness will make the trio vulnerable to attack from the bad guys. She also knows that after eight years of survivalist living, her husband has only two bullets left in his .22. The family lives in constant fear of being captured, raped, killed, and eaten. The two remaining bullets are a last resort. The father can use them to kill the boy and then himself. (Greenwood 2009, p. 78)

Both the man's and the woman's behaviours are inspiring and instructive from an ecocritical viewpoint. The end of the novel undermines the cultural and ideological teachings that provide hope for the establishment of a better and more beautiful world after every catastrophic event, and the belief in apocalyptic writings that say when a world is destroyed, a better one would be set up. In a world where all natural life except humans is destroyed, it seems impossible to speak of such a hope. Similarly, according to McCarthy's vision, in a world where Lester Ballards, Judge Holdens and Anton Chigurhs live (the author's extremely wicked and shockingly evil antagonists of his previous novels who are ready to use unlimited violence at any time), the fact that the only hope is believing in the existence of good people, who are obviously more fragile than the others, prepares the reader for a tragic end.

The man carried the fire; he preferred not to kill, rather he did his best to keep alive, and fought for the good until the last moment of his life. It turns out, however, that all his efforts are in vain. At the beginning of the journey he had planned to walk to the South until they reached the seaside. When they finally reach it, he is disappointed to see that it was no different from the other places. The journey was long and tiring; he is exhausted and has probably lost his will to fight. Shortly after this event, he is dead. Before he dies, he cannot not think

of leaving his son to in the care of another adult (this is probably because he hasn't met anyone even remotely suitable), or as he once unwillingly envisioned, the possibility of the worst scenario, that he would not be able to kill the boy himself. On the other hand, the behaviour of the woman carries a more important message: by instigating her own death in addition to providing an advantage to her husband and son in terms of scarce resources, her decision is also more compatible with the laws of nature, because when nature loses its regenerative ability, there appears nothing left to live for. That women, who have generated all human life on Earth, would be more likely to have made a sacrifice of this kind has clear significance in view of the lifelessness of the setting the novel presents.

Hierarchical structures and power relations in societies are another conditioned belief that the novel makes a subject of discussion. Today we are so familiar with this idea that without someone to rule us, a monarch, a dictator, members of parliaments or any other sort of authority, the world would teem with burglars, murderers, and looters. In the case of *The Road*, there are also the cannibals. This belief contradicts the basic assumptions of social ecology and ecoanarchism, radical environmental movements which have some common aims as ecosocialism such as opposing private capital ownership. Socialism upholds the ideal of abolishing private ownership of the means of production; instead their control is given to either a centralized administration (the state) or to loosely linked workers associations. However, according to anarchists, most of the problems we face are because of the rulers, governors, and legislators, that is, any form of mass control over society. One of the leading ecoanarchist philosophers, Murray Bookchin argues that, "as long as hierarchy persists, as long as domination organises humanity around a system of elites, the project of dominating nature will continue to exist and inevitably lead our planet to ecological extinction" (1980, p. 76). Today many independent ecologists and environmentalists think this way; the more we believe in the necessity for a governing system, the less chances we have of solving the problems it creates. Although there are some ideological differences between environmental movements, it can be said that they have a common attitude towards those who start the wars, command genocides, pay for the weapons of mass destruction,

and use public resources to finance wars, and are, therefore, responsible for unfair income distribution, and the spread of poverty and ignorance; in other words, those who force the masses to live under certain conditions by determining the rules of the game. Clearly environmentalism regards such crimes against humanity as also destructive behaviour against nature and the environment.

When evaluating the socio-political atmosphere in *The Road*, it is important from which perspective this issue is viewed. It can be considered that there is a form of causality between the collapse of social structure and the rise of barbarism. From an ecocritical standpoint this will lead readers to a false consciousness about the real source of the problems. It is neither the inevitable evil that resides inside humans, as an overall analysis of McCarthy's work apparently shows, nor the lack of legislative regulations. At the very core of the problem there is the exploitation of nature. Building a dystopian world in which barbarism occurs in the absence of capitalist governments, as in many dystopian novels associated with major Western literatures, comes to the same thing as legitimizing the system of exploitation by using cultural productions.

Another part of the superstructure values that are transformed with the disappearance of natural life is religion. Although there is no statement in the book about the existence of religions, clergy and sacred places, the man seems to have continued his belief in God. The man's "thoughts convey a torturous and desperate internal monologue with and about God" (Greenwood 2009, p. 78). He regards protecting and sustaining his son as a kind of divine command. He has developed a type of moral mechanism that directs all his behaviours in accordance with this command. This solid moral stance at first seems to be inconsistent in such a world bereft of any moral humanitarian, religious or judicial organisations. The man proves that even without the pressure of organized religions, humans can preserve their ethical codes. However the majority of the survivors begin acting on their survival instincts, because they were freed from all social norms or the constraints of the superego. Although the father's behaviour seems to be derived from his deep affection for his son, it is possible that some other instinctual and human motivation may underlie his preferences. Remoteness from state authority, lack of social conventions or the

restrictions of religion has not led to barbarism or cannibalism: McCarthy's tragic hero preferred goodness in this "barren, silent, godless" (McCarthy 2006, p. 4) world. He did not show any tendency to rob other people, to kill them or to eat them. In this context, it can be concluded that the man's preferences seem reasonable and are in harmony with the philosophy of social ecology.

Radical environmental movements often deconstruct prevailing political and social views, implying that the real cause of environmental problems lies in the system itself. In this context, regarding the dilemmas faced in *The Road*, we need to ask one more question; how can the depletion of a system, or escaping its influence, reveal such barbarisms, when that system is the main reason for evil and the exploitation of others? In the case of *The Road*, the majority of the people should have been in solidarity, because this is the only way to increase people's chances of survival in a post-apocalyptic world. The obvious message of the novel, that when the state order collapses, people begin to turn on each other, is strongly implied; state administration, even if it tends to create pressure and violence for its citizens and is infected with rampant corruption, is something we all need. In fact scientific studies of human behaviours have determined that pro-social behaviours are more commonly seen after major catastrophic disasters. For example according to Quarantelli (1996), "disasters can and do create a supportive social setting". Heide (2004) argues that, "dysfunctional and antisocial behaviours can occur in disasters. For example, people can panic, and one should not expect that crime will completely disappear in high-crime inner-city areas when there is a disaster. The point is that antisocial behaviours are uncommon in typical disaster situations" (pp. 341-2). Despite popular post-apocalyptic dystopias usually telling the opposite when a society disintegrates after a war or a major environmental disaster, this has actually happened thousands of times in the world history, it is more likely that a majority of the survivors will be reorganized in solidarity.

This reading of *The Road* exposes ongoing cultural and ideological programming with respect to the causes and consequences of the belief in apocalyptic interpretations of environmental problems. Regarding the fear, anxiety and panic among the survivors, the collapse of the social structure and rise of barbarism and violence, as well as behavioural disturbances like

cannibalism, as expected results, even after the apocalyptic event in *The Road*, is a result of cultural programming, since scientific studies show that the opposite is true. American sociologist and disaster researcher Fritz (1996) points out that,

a careful study of the literature on panic, found that, contrary to expectations, panic proved to be an extremely rare response in disasters... Disaster victims rarely exhibit hysterical behavior; a kind of shock-stun behavior is a more common initial response. Even under the worst disaster conditions, people maintain or quickly regain self-control and become concerned about the welfare of others. Most of the initial search, rescue, and relief activities are undertaken by disaster victims before the arrival of organized outside aid. Reports of looting in disasters are grossly exaggerated; rates of theft and burglary actually decline in disasters; and much more is given away than stolen. Other forms of antisocial behavior, such as aggression toward others and scapegoating, are rare or nonexistent. Instead, most disasters produce a great increase in social solidarity among the stricken populace, and this newly created solidarity tends to reduce the incidence of most forms of personal and social pathology. (p.10)

That the survivors in *The Road* fall into great fear and despair, and engage in looting and theft could be seen as possible consequences of systemic collapse, the extreme barbarism and violence in the absence of the state authority are inconsistent and problematic from an ecocritical perspective.

Confusion about the concepts of good and evil in a “godless” world – one without state and legal restrictions - is revealed in the man’s conversations with the only character with whom, other than the boy, he communicates in a friendly manner. The man’s conversation with the old man Ely consists of discussions on ethical and religious issues. According to Hage (2010), Ely is “like a character in a Samuel Beckett play” (p. 143); physically and mentally degraded and also extremely pessimistic. That he has remained alive under these circumstances pushes the limits of credibility in the novel and perhaps adding an absurd tone to it. The survival of an old man alone in such a world is so

unreal that it surprises both the readers and the man who stumbles upon him by chance. The man initially thought that Ely, the only conventionally named character in the novel, is being used as bait to trap the wanderers like them. As the conversation progresses between them, even this concern is partially over, he “complicates the protagonists’ binary model of good versus bad” (Gwinner 2011, p. 149). During their brief encounter the man and Ely exchange some statements about religious issues. Ely speaks first:

When you die it's the same as if everybody else did too.

I guess God would know it. Is that it?

There is no God.

No?

There is no God and we are his prophets. (McCarthy 2006, p. 170)

The last sentence uttered by Ely is in itself a meaningless statement. If there is no God, there should not be a messenger to transmit his commands and correct people’s mistakes. Who, then, is referred to as “his” here? In a godless world “his” would refer to a non-existent being. Undoubtedly it might provoke both confusion and differences of interpretation from the reader’s standpoint. A possible meaning of this sentence may refer to the people who are the prophets of this belief that rejects all deities, i.e. atheism. This expression can also be understood in the sense that God ‘no longer’ exists. Given one of the man’s earlier thoughts about the disappearance of goodness, he at least seemingly believes in God, making Ely’s nihilistic expressions sounds more meaningful. The man says, “On this road there are no godspoke man. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world. Query: How does the never to be differ from what never was?” (p. 32). According to the man there were good people before the apocalypse who had moral values and believed in God, all of whom have gone. As discussed above, the father’s solid moral codes and their mission to “carry the fire” do not fit in with the world they live in anymore. The only source of his goodness, seemingly, is his son. In this sense, for the father, anything that helps him in his holy mission is good, the rest is evil. And if we come back to Ely’s interpretation of God and his prophets, we come to understand that once there was a God/state authority, but He/it has abandoned

the world and this is the main cause of the chaos. If there are still good people in the world like the man and the boy, it means that even though God does not exist anymore, there are still those who represent a moral life and goodness.

The creative and destructive forces of nature, however, are also associated with the concept of God. Thinking of natural life that has lost its ability to regenerate alongside the 'no longer existent' God is the approach that a mainstream ecocritical reading would most likely prefer. With this in mind, it is necessary to draw attention to the fundamental difference in approach of radical and mainstream environmental movements. For the governmental and most non-governmental environmental organisations, seeking solutions compatible with the basic dynamics of political and economic systems to which we owe most of the advances and developments throughout history is the only way to fight the current environmental crisis. In contrast, ecosocialism and social ecology (as well as deep ecology and ecofeminism) defend the view that the solution lies on a resolute challenge to the system itself which is responsible for the problems. As a consequence of the good versus evil discussion and its relation to the disappearing of the hierarchical society based on industrial capitalism, considering the inadequacy, fragility or weakness of the good people, *The Road* continuously gives the same messages: 'humanity' has turned into a meaningless concept with the disappearance of the only system in which its existence is meaningful. It is not the political systems that bear hierarchical society; human beings, like all living things in the world, are a part of nature and with the disappearance of natural life they have been cut off from their roots.

After the ecocritical reflections on physical conditions and social relations which emerge in the post-apocalyptic period in *The Road* and the characters' attitudes towards this situation, a discussion on the probable (physical) causes of the apocalyptic event might be meaningful in the context of examining its relationship with environmental problems we face in our daily lives. As often mentioned in critical readings, views concerning the end of humanity that were implicitly implied in McCarthy's earlier works are portrayed more clearly in *The Road*. He moves beyond suggesting the end of days and finally presents the post-apocalyptic world with all its details: "the landscape littered with corpses,

the sun blotted out, flora and fauna dead, the seas poisoned” (Hage 2010, p. 141). What brought about the end of the world in *The Road*? Was it a natural consequence of the normal order of earthly affairs, one of the logical results of the autonomous mechanism that controls the universe; or was it the dominion of greed and envy over human lives, the collective loss of wisdom; or an unforeseen consequence of a technological development? The real reason behind the apocalyptic event is perhaps the most controversial subject of the novel.

McCarthy did not express the cause of the catastrophe clearly, but he provided a number of clues that would allow different interpretations. He rarely talked about this issue whenever he was asked about it in interviews. For example the 2007 interview in the *Rolling Stone* magazine shows that though not completely rejecting the possibility, he does not believe climate change or environmental disaster would be the end for humanity. Kushner (2007) wrote that, “While McCarthy suggests that the ash covered world in the novel is the result of a meteor hit, his money is on humans destroying each other before an environmental catastrophe sets in. ‘We’re going to do ourselves in first,’ he says.” On another occasion, during *The Wall Street Journal* interview, McCarthy said that, “A lot of people ask me. I don’t have an option. At the Santa Fe Institute I’m with scientists of all disciplines, and some of them in geology said it looked like a meteor to them. But it could be anything-volcanic activity or it could be nuclear war. It is not really important. The whole thing is, what do you do?” (Jurgensen 2009). These quotations seem to weaken the arguments of ecocritical readings of the novel that aspire to relate the event to global warming and the probable global environmental crisis. It is clear that McCarthy is not predominantly critical about environmental destruction and posits environmental problems like climate change as spontaneous natural phenomena. Nonetheless the assumption that humanity will bring about its own end still makes an ecological disaster caused by human influence one of the possibilities concerning the apocalyptic event.

The probability of a global environmental catastrophe due to global warming and climate change is not a superstition, a paranoid fear or rumour; it is based on scientific facts revealed by modern scientific approaches and methods.

Modern ecology studies proved that viewing environmental degradation simply as an unavoidable natural phenomenon would be ignoring the direct relationship between environmental problems and human activity, and underestimating the scope of the issue. Accordingly, it is a contradiction that McCarthy seems to believe that humanity will somehow bring about their own apocalypse, and at the same time rejects the notion that manmade climate change and environmental disasters could be the cause of this. Environmental problems are natural in the first place; however, the issue that should be mentioned here is that there is a change that is accelerating and/or changing the direction of the normal functioning of nature due to human influence. Therefore, whatever explanation we may prefer in terms of McCarthy's assumptions here, the plight of humanity in *The Road*, whose hope of survival has been exhausted in a completely destroyed natural environment, prevents the exclusion of environmental catastrophe from the set of possibilities; nature is a self-activating system, but the current environmental crisis did not emerge on its own.

McCarthy's interest in spending time among scientists rather than literary communities is a publicly known fact. When he was living in New Mexico, he was a regular visitor at the Santa Fe Institute where he had the opportunity to obtain first-hand information on many scientific subjects. McCarthy is additionally known for his great attention to the scientific coherence of physical phenomena; the accuracy and the correctness of the events in his novels. Based on this view Greenwood (2009) writes that, "*The Road* draws on conversations that McCarthy had with paleobiologist Doug Erwin on the subject of extinction and the potential results of a nuclear holocaust" (p. 10). One of the few remaining memories of the man in *The Road* about the initial moment of the catastrophe is as follows:

The clock's stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions. He got up and went to the window. What is it? she said. He didn't answer. He went into the bathroom and threw a lightswitch but the power was already gone. A dull rose glow in the windowglass. (McCarthy 2006, p. 52)

Here “a long shear of light” and “a dull rose glow in the windowglass” may point to a nuclear war on a global scale. These images indeed suggest the nuclear bomb explosions recorded remotely. Besides, McCarthy’s readers know that the theme nuclear is nothing new to the author. There is a Nuclear Weapon Test at the end of one of his previous novels, *The Crossing* (1994). In that case, what is the likelihood of this scenario? Can an equivalent of this possibility be found in real life?

Although the readers in the post-cold war period are at least emotionally distant to this possibility, even with open source intelligence – the internet, press, databases, television, etc., we can see that, there are still enough nuclear warheads²³ on earth capable of the destruction presented in *The Road*. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970) could not stop the amassing of nuclear weapons and the possibility of a nuclear holocaust. Moreover, during the Cold War, besides the two superpowers very few other countries had this technology, while in recent decades it is known that a number of additional countries have acquired or are close to acquiring this technology. The tension related to nuclear weapons between the US and Iran, and recently North Korea, can be regarded as developments that embody these once seemingly remote threats. Given the changing nature of the military, economic and political balance of powers, it is not possible to say that today a nuclear war is seriously negligible compared to fifty years ago.

As nuclear technology is mostly used for peaceful purposes today, the risk it poses for catastrophic environmental damage is mostly ignored. Nuclear energy, which has been actively used since the 1950s, has become widespread after the energy crisis of the 1970s. Although its supporters claim that it is the cleanest and most secure way of generating electricity (EIA 2020)²⁴, nuclear energy has never become a major source of energy like coal and oil. Even the smallest

²³ There are roughly 13500 nuclear warheads today (as of February 2021), 9600 of which are in military service, the rest awaiting dismantlement. Although there are minor differences between different sources (from 14200 to 16000), the number is seriously high even when compared to the estimated number of 70000 in the cold war years. According to the Arms Control Association website, nine countries, some of which may be potential enemies to each other, have nuclear weapons today. (Davenport 2020)

²⁴ “A major environmental concern related to nuclear power is the creation of radioactive wastes such as uranium mill tailings, spent (used) reactor fuel, and other radioactive wastes. These materials can remain radioactive and dangerous to human health for thousands of years.” (EIA 2020)

amounts of radioactive substances produce radiation at dangerous levels; any technical failure during the operations in a nuclear power plant or natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis could cause irreversible damage to nature, kill thousands of people and have a permanent effect on future generations²⁵.

Cant (2009), however, reflects on the possibility of a nuclear attack in *The Road* and finds it unlikely,

the general scale of the destruction of not only a large area of the United States, but of the world as a whole, suggests the need for a more considered interpretation. If this was a post-nuclear holocaust world then ubiquitous radioactivity, especially in the ash and dust, would have long since killed everybody, the “event” whatever it may have been, having occurred some years prior to the main action of the text. None of the characters encountered in the novel have any of the symptoms of radiation sickness (pp. 185-6).

McCarthy tells us only a short part of the man and the boy’s journey after many years have passed since the event, and there is no suggestion in the novel that there are still habitable places in the world. This and other uncertainties about the cause of the disaster, the final destination of the main characters and the situation of the rest of the world, bestow an absurd aspect to the novel. In this sense, *The Road* appears as a narrative woven with symbols, and gives the readers the opportunity to find counterparts of the ‘event’ from the real world. Indeed Cant (2009) argues that even if we consider the apocalypse a true “nuclear holocaust”, it “is itself a metaphorical explanation for the state of the world that McCarthy creates as his wider metaphor for the condition of man in the realization of his cosmic insignificance” (p. 186). In other words, the post nuclear war theory concerning the apocalyptic event fails because of the aforementioned inconsistencies, yet some critics argue that there is already no

²⁵ There is no perfect energy source in the world. Despite the opposition of many environmentalist groups, the pro-nuclear movement argues that nuclear power is a sustainable energy source that reduces carbon emissions. Furthermore, according to the World Nuclear Association, with the new technological developments it has become safer. For the history of civil nuclear power technology and details of the accidents in nuclear power plants see the article, ‘Safety of Nuclear Power Reactors’ (World Nuclear Association 2021)

need for such a theory in the context of relating it to current environmental issues.

Another much-discussed possibility is a catastrophic meteorite impact. Scientists point out that a meteorite of sufficient size could start a new ice age. It is known that throughout its history Earth has experienced climatic and geological changes as a result of impact events. However, none had the size and scale to extinguish almost all life on earth, as happened in *The Road*. Just because it hasn't happened yet though, does not mean it never will. Astronomical studies seem to confirm the impact theory for the total destruction of life on Earth; if a meteorite of sufficient magnitude strikes the Earth, "many species of animals – including the human race – will die out, either in the initial catastrophe, or in the ensuing years due to lack of food and the general devastation of the environment" (Scharringhausen 2015). On the other hand, in the case of the catastrophic event in *The Road*, we can eliminate the possibility of a meteorite impact. There are two reasons for this; a meteorite that caused a flash of light at a distance that the man was able to see ("A dull rose glow in the windowglass") is unlikely to destroy the rest of the world if it did not cause the death of those within sight of it. Secondly, and indeed a more convincing piece of evidence is McCarthy's view about the nature of the human race being in itself responsible, which he also mentioned in his interviews (although he described it as only one of the possibilities). He is relatively pessimistic about humanity and clearly blames society and its culture which constantly gives rise to violence and destruction. Considering the laws of physics and the author's philosophy, "We're going to do ourselves in first", the meteorite theory can be discarded among the possibilities.

The terrifying scale of nuclear bomb explosions and the unpredictable nature of the impact events have been the most pronounced possibilities that stimulate the imagining of the apocalypse in *The Road*. In an ecocritical reading that takes into account the effects of the current global ecological crisis, with an objective and purely scientific approach, the above discussion shows that both possibilities can be disproved. It is a disaster that, as defined by the author, left humanity in a "borrowed time and borrowed world" with "borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it" (McCarthy 2006, p. 130). Concerning the reason for the

destructive event in *The Road*, a salient explanation can be found for an ecocritical reading; McCarthy provides his readers with a new track for the imagining of disasters and the global environmental crisis by including inspiration about how to build a new society based on a harmonious relationship between nature and human beings that will never allow a disaster like this again.

It is commonly understood that the negative effects of environmental problems are not immediately evident. In *The Road*, however, a devastating event happens all at once, creating a chain reaction that possibly led to more devastating events. In the context of environmental criticism, the first question that should occupy our minds is whether environmental disasters caused by the increasing frequency and intensity of meteorological events due to the change in climate systems reach to the extent that one day in the future they will bring the world to an end. The major disaster in *The Road* may not have anything to do with environmental problems, as McCarthy has stated. On the other hand, many scientists are in agreement that natural disasters that could kill millions of people instantly and permanently change the living conditions of billions would not be a remote possibility, if the average rate of global warming increases by one or two more degrees.

Research by Rockstrom et al. (2009) on “Planetary Boundaries” shows that “Anthropogenic pressures on the Earth System have reached a scale where abrupt global environmental change can no longer be excluded”. Based on the data obtained from current scientific analysis, observations, measurements and experiment results, their research determines the threshold values and boundaries of the ecosystems “within which we expect that humanity can operate safely”. The researchers identified a total of nine boundaries and examined their effects both individually and in the context of their relationship with other boundaries. These are “atmospheric aerosol loading”, “biogeochemical nitrogen cycle”, “chemical pollution”, “global freshwater use”, phosphorus cycle, “stratospheric ozone”, “land system change”, “biological diversity loss” and “ocean acidification”. They reached the conclusion that in the process that started with The Industrial Revolution, human activities have reached a level that pushes the boundaries of the planet and “transgressing one or more planetary boundaries may be deleterious or even catastrophic due to the

risk of crossing thresholds that will trigger non-linear, abrupt environmental change within continental- to planetary-scale systems.”

Given the limited resources of the world, the consumer society that emerged in industrialized countries after World War II has proved to be unsustainable in the last few decades. The world economy, dominated by liberal/capitalist systems, creates a production–consumption chain that evidently causes significant damage to nature and the environment. This situation may not cause a sudden or near future apocalypse, as in *The Road*, but in the long run, by hastening the depletion of limited resources and reducing the capacity of nature to regenerate, it has the potential to transform the world into a place where no life can exist. However, whatever event causes the ash-covered streets of *The Road*, the current situation shows that the economic choices associated with modern life have already caused the world to be covered with ash, all kinds of waste and unnatural pollutants. In addition to this, the globalization of capital flows has turned the environmental degradation into a planet-wide crisis. As the extent of pollution and other environmental problems intensifies, this issue becomes a concern for all humanity.

It is also possible to relate the catastrophe that brings about the end of the world in *The Road* to the catastrophic scenarios that can be related to instinctual fears. In fact, given the ambiguity over the physical causes of this event, this impression is also given impetus by the fact that the causes of this event are obscure and ambiguous. Fear is an emotion that drives our imagination and constitutes the most basic motivation for human behaviour. In this sense, it has the power to determine the choices we make. Our fears lead us to anticipate a future based on the projection we have created, we make plans, take measures, become hopeful or descend into pessimism. In this respect, Kollin (2011) discusses the environmental collapse in *The Road* in terms of its contributions to the “imagination of disaster” (p. 164). Kollin appeals to Susan Sontag’s resolutions about the disaster fantasies in post-World War II science fiction novels and disaster films. According to Sontag (1966), disaster narratives reflect the social paranoia of the Cold War period and allow the readers “to participate in the fantasy of living through one’s own death and more, the death of cities, the destruction of humanity itself” (p. 212). In this context it is possible to say

that fear of mass death, which has almost turned into a widespread epidemic, especially in western societies after the 9/11 attacks and the threat of nuclear war during the cold war years would have similar effects. Moreover, in recent decades the fear of global environmental disaster has clearly increased the anxiety of humanity with regard to the number of potentialities to be fearful about. In addition to its physical causes, the meaning of the event that brought about the apocalypse in *The Road* could be related to whichever scenario we fear the most and therefore choose to believe.

The Road “presents a world that, in the wake of some unnamed, apocalyptic catastrophe, has dissolved into a primordial condition devoid of nature, culture, law, personal identity, government, economics, territorial borders, agriculture, literature, commerce, art— or any recognizable feature of the world in which we live” (Hage 2010, p. 140). The survivors live in a condition of stalemate, in an environment where the forests and all plant cover have been destroyed, no new products grows from the soil, and all animals have become extinct. A meteor impact, a nuclear war, a volcanic eruption or a global meteorological disaster; whatever caused the situation in *The Road* has made the natural environment uninhabitable. In this sense the destruction means the end of time for human beings. What brings about the apocalypse is not the death of the majority of the living species in the first place, but the loss of the regenerative capacity of nonhuman nature. When the soil loses its green cover, the animals feeding from the flora cannot survive, and the novel, therefore, also highlights the fact that the increase in endangered plant and animal species threatens the ecosystem as a whole. With each species that goes extinct, the natural system becomes more unstable. In this context *The Road* shows us the consequences of ignoring the gravity of this ongoing phenomenon.

In the last part of this chapter, in accordance with the characteristics of Marxist and ecosocialist readings, there will be a brief discussion on the consequences of socioeconomic inequalities in the case of mass environmental destruction. As well as contributing to the underlying reasons for environmental disasters, economic and social relations lead to significant differences in terms of the consequences of such events. Studies show that the uneven effects of natural disasters are closely related to socioeconomic differences. After events such as

earthquakes, major floods and tsunamis, we have witnessed human tragedies spurred by unequal income distribution. According to the Marxist worldview, supporting the situation that promotes unequal opportunity for rich and poor classes in a capitalist society is a repressive ideology fostered by the dominant culture. For example the housing facilities of the underclass and lower class are usually of poor quality and more likely to collapse during an earthquake or to be flooded during heavy rains. Radford's (2009) research based on a United Nations survey (UNDRR 2009) shows that, "When earthquakes hit, it's the poor city dwellers that die". The same is true for the loss of life suffered during floods, landslides and typhoons. Radford compares "death" and "economic destruction" figures after major natural disasters which clearly show that poor people are more likely to suffer loss of life and property during and after disasters.

The relationship between natural disasters that have increasingly adverse effects on human life and the distorted natural equilibrium caused by excessive consumption demonstrates that natural catastrophic phenomena are indeed not so 'natural'. As the title of Hartman and Squires' (2006) book, *There is No Such Thing As a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina* implies that natural disasters, in terms of their consequences, are unnatural and socially constructed events. As Hurricane Katrina, and in fact many other events in history have demonstrated, people of certain races, classes and ethnicities suffer more from such disasters, because of poor quality housing, careless city planning and inadequate infrastructure. Hartman and Squires state that, "Racial disparities and poverty are not the result primarily of individual actions. They are the cumulative result of a long history of institutional arrangements and structures that have produced current realities" (p. 3). Similarly, environmental devastation and natural disasters related to global warming are not recent news. They are the result of pollution due to increased use of fossil fuels, nuclear tests and excessive consumption that increased with industrialization and only started to be felt more acutely in the 20th century. On the other hand, *The Road*, published a year after Hurricane Katrina, posits a more egalitarian disaster that affects all humanity without distinction of nationality, sex, class, education, or status. Although economic superiority and the associated privileged lifestyle

provide partial protection in the case of minor environmental disasters, financial means provide no protection in the case of large-scale disasters on a global scale.

The emotional relationship between the man and the boy makes *The Road* one of the most memorable father-son stories ever told. Their journey through the barren paths to the South, in the hope of finding a warmer climate is a totally desperate one; it is effectively a journey to nowhere. They scavenge food from the abandoned houses and try to move on by avoiding contact with other people. Nevertheless, their efforts and determination seem to be of no use; by doing this they are only extending their painful lives a little longer. The man plans to kill himself and then his son with the last bullets in his pistol if they get captured by the cannibals, which is likely to happen eventually. Though many readers prefer to see the end of the story as hopeful, for the reason that there are still survivors with good intentions and the boy was adopted by a family seemingly of that sort, this is a purely sentimental interpretation, and it has been shown with the discussion and arguments in this chapter that it is also incompatible with the circumstances the novel portrays. In a world where nothing is left to eat except expired canned food and human flesh, the survivors of the apocalypse are only waiting for their death, which will surely occur in a short time. American novelist William Kennedy is among those who find signs of hope in this novel. Kennedy (2006) first emphasizes the central interest of McCarthy's novels, when he writes, "The overarching theme in McCarthy's work has been the face-off of good and evil with evil invariably triumphant through the bloodiest possible slaughter" and then argues that *The Road* differs from his previous novels in terms of the struggle between good and the evil; "But evil victorious is not this book's theme. McCarthy changes the odds to favor the man and boy, who for a decade have survived death by fire and ice, and also cannibalism, which has become the most grievous manifestation of evil's waning days". It is difficult to agree with this point of view since the reason why there are still survivors almost a decade after the apocalypse is the resources remaining from the pre-apocalyptic world; they consume dried and canned foods, street animals, and when everything runs out, begin cannibalizing one another. It is an

allegorical interpretation of how humans overconsume the resources of the real world.

In an ecocritical reading based on scientific fact, there are lessons that can be taken from the story of the father and son who could survive in such an environment. *The Road* was written in such a way as to allow for various readings like most other great works of literature. One of these readings is closely related to the current environmental issues concerning the future of the world. In the early years of the 21st century, when worries about climate change and environmental degradation came to the fore, some other events like the 9/11 attacks and the 2008 global financial crisis revitalized the notion of apocalypticism, a religion-based belief pertaining to the imminent end of the world. Scientists and environmentalists have expressed their concerns that global warming and climate change threaten the existence of the human race on Earth, as well as the existence of all other living species. In the same period, the influence of this cultural atmosphere began to be seen in the literary world, among writers, critics and readers. *The Road*, in which this influence is clearly seen, handles the relationship between humans and nature in a striking way and therefore has not escaped the attention of ecocritics. In the context of ecocriticism it can be seen that certain elements of the novel can be useful in creating environmental awareness, yet it also includes some details that can cause false consciousness about environmental issues.

First of all, human nature is represented as the source of evil and this situation evokes the feeling that evil on Earth is inevitable; for this reason it could lead to the conclusion that humans deserved this apocalypse. In the novel, people who are determined to be good, that is, those who are satisfied with what they find and who try to preserve their lives without harming others are extremely selfish, frail and weak. They are reluctant to share what they have, and highly biased against being in solidarity with others, and too unstable. On the other hand, the cannibal gangs that represent evil are a group of people who practice division of labour and display solidarity, possibly sharing what they have seized among the group members. While we do not know much about the in-group dynamics, the author, by associating good human traits such as solidarity and sharing with the ravenous cannibals, prevented his novel from having a stronger content on

environmental issues in this sense. Environmentalist approaches recommend solidarity and coordinated work among people. There may be vague connections between human activities and the catastrophic events, but the final apocalyptic event happened suddenly and is assumed to be an inevitable end for humans, similar to other texts in the Western canon. However, as is well known, environmental problems do not arise suddenly, and environmental devastation is a result of the mistakes made over a long period of time. In this regard the event in *The Road* supports the understanding of apocalypse in religious texts more than it does environmental interpretations.

The Road, nevertheless, positively demonstrates how human life depends on nature. When nature loses its ability to regenerate itself and nonhuman nature is completely destroyed, there is no way for human beings to survive. Today, the comforts of human life are mostly facilitated by non-renewable energy sources. It is well known that these resources are finite and will eventually be exhausted as long as we continue to use them in this way. In *The Road* “the unnamed father and son push a shopping cart through the wasteland of global consumerism” (Blasi 2014, p. 91). In this regard the novel has a strong message about the interconnectedness of natural resources and human life. We must change our current lifestyles which will eventually bring the end of nature and the end of human race. Of course, this lifestyle is created by a cultural programming that is designed to perpetuate consumption at all times and which is at the heart of capitalist economic system. It makes people buy things they do not really need. Rampant consumerism is one of the main reasons for the destruction of nature and also one of the main causes of inequality and tension among people.

Once the social structure has collapsed, it seems that belief systems are also abandoned. Even though the man, who still maintained the habits of the pre-apocalyptic lifestyle, speaks with God at every opportunity, after his death the boy chooses to talk to his father instead of God. This shows that the boy will not maintain the habits of the old world. With this and similar examples the novel shows the relationship between social structure and religions. When God has abandoned the world, money has lost its meaning and the processes of commodification have been totally removed. When vital needs are met, it is

seen that people can hold on to life for a while, but these feelings – the will to survive, faith and determination – are not enough to provide favourable conditions for life on Earth. Human life depends on a healthy and well-functioning natural environment. In this context *The Road* provides useful tools for raising environmental awareness: it proves that there will be no human life without nature.





4. SPECULATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITALISM – AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF MARGARET ATWOOD’S *THE YEAR OF THE FLOOD*

French romantic Chateaubriand once said “Forests precede civilization; deserts follow”. This statement is related to the rapid destruction of forests in Europe in order to meet the increased need for fuel (due to a coal shortage) that accompanied the rapid urbanization after the onset of the Industrial Revolution. In common usage the term civilization refers to human societies with a high level of technological and cultural advancement. Etymologically, the word comes from the Latin term *civitas*, or “city” (Serraos 2012, p. 32)²⁶. In this sense one can say that the words ‘civilization’ and ‘urbanization’ (growth of cities) have a history of meanings and usages that evoke each other. However, the urbanization process, in addition to providing many positive benefits for humanity, also caused some negative consequences. For example, “Rapidly increasing populations coupled with increased food demand requires either an expansion of agricultural land or sufficient production gains from current resources” (Fitton et al, 2019, p. 1). “Agriculture expansion is the most important immediate deforestation driver” (Rosengren 2010, p. 32), and poses a serious threat for the world’s ecosystem.

More specifically, ‘urbanization’ and ‘civilization’ are among the major causes of the destruction of forests that presently cover approximately 30 percent of the Earth’s surface. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2020), during the decade 2010-20 the average forest loss was 4.7 million hectares per year (p. 2). This figure represents the difference between the total deforested areas and the total afforested areas. In other words, it shows the difference between the forest loss caused for economic reasons or

²⁶ “Etymologically, civilization comes from the Latin term ‘civilis’ (civis [= citizen / fellow-citizen] + -ilis), an adjectival modifier describing him/her/it who/which concerns/influences public/political life (public/political). The word ‘civilis’ is, furthermore, directly connected with the word ‘civitas’, which means ‘city’, or ‘city-state’” (Serraos 2012, p. 32).

natural disasters and the wooded lands produced by afforestation activities. It is known that the quality of planted trees and their contribution to the ecosystem would not be the same as those that have been naturally regenerated (due to their contributions to biodiversity). Compared with the previous report (FAO 2010) of the same institution – 8.9 million hectares between 1990 and 2000 and 7.3 million hectares between 2000 and 2005 (p. 340) – this rate shows certain signs of the rate of forest loss slowing down, yet there is still a decline in “forest growing stock” (FAO 2020, p. 10) and in “total forest carbon stock” (p. 11). These figures show that although there has been a decrease in the rate of deforestation, the capacity of new forests (including those allocated for industrial use) in reducing the negative effects of global warming, i.e. their capacity of carbon sequestration is relatively low. Despite rising concerns about a global environmental crisis in recent decades, findings of recent field research point out the apparent failure of the current economic system in finding solutions to deforestation, which is one of the main visible causes of climate change. Even the figures for the last 20-30 years reveal results sufficient to cause concern about the future; it is possible to say that they would have been much higher if this research had covered the rates of forest loss in Africa and South America since the 17th or 18th centuries when colonial activities started, or at least since the 19th century when industrialization began.

A scientific explanation of the meaning of forests for the environment, and especially for the ecosystems in which humans occupy a unique position, can be made as follows:

Vegetation and precipitation are interdependent: Plants draw soil moisture up through their roots, stem, trunks, and branches and emit water vapor from their foliage. The process, called evapotranspiration, influences cloud formation over land masses. Thus deforestation generally leads to a decrease in rainfall. Plants sequester carbon dioxide, which in excessive amounts (along with other greenhouse gases) destabilizes the climate. Hence the biodiversity embodied by forests and other plant communities has provided the tolerable climate and water cycles that life depends on. (Mills 2010, p 101).

Deforestation is only one of the consequences of destroying nature for economic gain. Capitalist societies, believing in the necessity of economic development in order to establish superiority over one other, have been relentlessly destroying nature for centuries to achieve their goals. For example the Amazon rainforests, described as the ‘lungs of the world’, as holding “one-fifth of the world’s fresh water” and producing “more than 20 percent of the world oxygen”, “are being destroyed because the value of rainforest land is perceived as only the value of its timber by short-sighted governments, multi-national logging companies, and land owners” (Taylor 2019). Therefore, in the context of its effects on the climate and environment, the Amazon rainforests can be considered as a vital part of the ecosystem, not only for South America, but for the whole world. Rapid deforestation of this area for the sake of short-term economic interests is the cause of many current and possible future problems.

Similar to the situation of Amazon rainforests, as a result of the human impact on ecosystems, such as deforestation, pollution, overpopulation and overurbanization, there are more floods all over the world; more soil erosion and faster desertification take place. Global warming and climate imbalances cause the extinction of species and as our habitats are increasingly transformed into deserts, this process gradually turns into a process of self-destruction for humankind since it is not possible for human beings to survive in a depleted environment. Considering the ongoing deforestation process it is clear how strong the motivation is for capitalism to generate profit.

Mainstream environmental movements and governmental organizations generally underestimate the relationship between environmental problems and the dominant economic system, yet the above discussion shows the undeniable and direct link between them. In this context, the claim that global warming, climate change and other environmental problems are too comprehensive to be explained by a traditional Marxist approach to issues such as class discrimination, income inequality and exploitation of labour and raw materials does not reflect the current situation of the world.

Chateaubriand’s prediction becomes clear when we see this truth: as human civilization becomes widespread, Earth will turn into an increasingly unliveable desert. Here what is characterized as ‘desert’ is not only about the lands covered

by sand; it is also the places we have to desert because of the air we cannot breathe and the water we cannot drink. The inspiration for most post-apocalyptic dystopias, in which the apocalyptic event is directly or indirectly related to environmental deterioration, comes from this potentiality of an inhospitable environment. Although, this genre has been criticised and even blamed for encouraging the projects that help the establishment ensure and reproduce its power, the works related to ecological disasters gave a different perspective to the environmental discourse by showing mistakes in the current course and the seriousness of the situation. Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic themes essentially originated in a religious belief and have always had an important place in popular culture. Fiction writers in the 21st century, with the inspiration of a number of human tragedies and by taking into account scientific studies about the impact of human activities on nature and the environment, increasingly use these themes with respect to a global environmental disaster. Berger (1999) defines this as a, “pervasive post-apocalyptic sensibility in recent American culture”. And he offers the following explanation,

It seems significant that in late twentieth century we have had the opportunity, previously enjoyed only by means of theology and fiction, to see after the end of our civilization – to see in a strange prospective retrospect what the end would actually look like: it would like a Nazi death camp, or an atomic explosion, or an ecological or urban wasteland. We have been able to see things because they actually occurred (p. xiii).

Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy, started with the publication of *Oryx and Crake* (2003), continued with *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and concluded with *Maddaddam* (2013)²⁷, is a work of this kind. Evoking the process of ‘losing forests’ with the growth of cities, the common theme of this trilogy is what we have lost as science, technology and so-called ‘civilization’ developed. In this context, the direct involvement of scientific issues in the storyline constitutes the aspect that crystallizes its difference with the other two novels in this study, Gee’s *The Flood* and McCarthy’s *The Road*.

²⁷ In the remainder of this chapter, the novels in the trilogy will be abbreviated as *OC*, *YF* and *MA*, respectively, whenever possible.

Therefore, this ecocritical reading of the second novel of the trilogy, *The Year of the Flood*, emphasises the role and meaning of technical improvements in terms of their effects on environmental issues. Besides, the *MaddAddam* trilogy, with its characters and storyline, provides rewarding themes for discussion about the interrelation between the environmental crisis and concepts such as modern technology, economic structure and belief systems. In line with the general objectives of this dissertation, this chapter discusses the direct relation between environmental problems and economic preferences in order to uncover the novel's criticisms of capitalism.

According to Bouson (2011) Atwood reflects, "not only on feminist concerns but also on humanist and posthumanist concerns, as she questions the very survival of humankind in an era of environmental destruction, excessive consumption, unregulated biotechnological experiments and pandemic viruses." (p. 10). In this trilogy, Atwood simultaneously unfolds the process leading to the doom of humanity and the struggle of post-apocalyptic survivors. In the meantime, she introduces her own advanced technological post-humanity project (The Crakers). The apocalyptic event here has an indirect connection to environmental problems; the apocalyptic event – the so-called Waterless Flood – is a bio-terrorist attack by a genius, misanthropist scientist. However, environmental destruction, especially in the pre-apocalyptic world, always remains in the background and makes its presence felt, just as in the author's other well-known dystopian work, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Thanks to this and the other prominent themes, such as the problems related to excessive pollution and the mismanagement of natural resources, it can be said that in the *MaddAddam* trilogy the sense of environmental destruction goes beyond the flooded streets of Gee's *The Flood*.

For the high-tech future community of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, scientific knowledge becomes the most important commodity and the single source of political power and authority. Knowledge as a capitalist commodity is not a new concept. Even if "sometimes it has been stated that knowledge, and more specifically scientific theories, cannot be commodities because of public good characteristics of knowledge" (Kauppinen 2014, p. 2), universities, technology institutes or independent researchers sell their "research results through patents

to some (transnational) corporation to generate external revenue by licensing the product to some particular corporation” (p. 14). In his famous remark about the state of knowledge in the postmodern period, Lyotard stated, “Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange” (1984, p. 4). According to this understanding, in which market conditions are idealized rather than the ‘grand narratives’, “as innovation comes closer to being the sole means to survive and prosper in highly competitive and globalised economies” (David & Foray 2002, p. 11), the process of producing new knowledge in the ‘late capitalism’ period has become a precondition of meeting the needs of companies to provide products that are appropriate to market demands. An alternative approach to this is based on Marx’s understanding of the nature of scientific knowledge as a public (not private) good. He argued that,

We must distinguish here, incidentally, between universal labour and communal labour. They both play their part in the production process, and merge into one another, but they are each different as well. Universal labour is all scientific work, all discovery and invention. It is brought about partly by the cooperation of men now living, but partly also by building on earlier work. Communal labour, however, simply involves the direct cooperation of individuals (Marx 1981, p.199).

As can be understood from this, according to Marx, the emergence of new knowledge is only possible by virtue of the knowledge produced in the past. In this sense it is not produced by a single individual, but produced by “universal labour”.

However, Atwood’s speculative implications of the current condition of knowledge as a commodity tell a different story. The ultra-liberal economic structure shows its most serious debilitating effect – in terms of social, economic and environmental issues – in the pleeblands (in comparison to the other novels of the trilogy the Pleeb is mostly mentioned in *YF*) where unprivileged, non-Corp, non-affluent people live. The tragedies of the people living there and their struggle for survival show the flaws of the social and economic structure. In this respect an ecocritical and Marxist reading of *YF*

reveals the socioeconomic conditions of contemporary societies and the writer's criticism of capitalist ideology. In addition to this, in light of Marxist discussions about religion ('the opiate of the masses' attribution to religion), this chapter includes analysis of Atwood's way of dealing with the issue of belief systems and their relation to environmental issues.

The origin of the story of this novel trilogy and the writing process, based on the first-hand expressions of the author, might illuminate the issues to be discussed below. Margaret Atwood is best known for her deep environmental sensibility both in her literary career and personal life. In other words Atwood not only "comes from a great tradition of environmental writers" (Messer 2007, p. 16) but she has also led a life that proves her environmental activism in every area of it:

In 1995 Atwood gave up her house in France after President Jacques Chirac resumed nuclear testing. In 2000 she donated a significant portion of her Booker Prize money to environmental groups. In the last 10 years she has used her book tours to promote environmental activism, ensuring that travel on these tours is carbon-neutral, and particularly promoting shade-grown coffee to protect the migratory songbirds of the forest canopy. Since 2006, she and her partner Graeme Gibson, an avid birder, have been joint honorary presidents of the Rare Bird Club within Bird Life International (Bowen 2016).

The *MaddAddam* trilogy is widely regarded as Atwood's most environmentally sensitive work. Naturally it would not be wrong to say that these novels are the writer's reaction to contemporary environmental issues like the deterioration of the balance of nature due to pollution, the exploitation of nature, global warming, the depletion of natural resources and the extinction of species. Atwood shared the inspiration for her trilogy in *Perfect Storms: Writing Oryx and Crake* and in some interviews. Briefly, she mentions her family members' affinity with science and how she follows the scientific literature to "be able to keep up with the family dialogue and maybe throw a curve or two" (Atwood 2003). Due to such a family background, she has always "been thinking about 'what if' scenarios" since her early childhood (Atwood 2003). She clarifies the rest of the question in an interview; what if science is not used for benevolent,

but for malevolent purposes? She points out that, “Science is a way of knowing, and a tool. Like all ways of knowing and tools, it can be turned to bad uses. And it can be bought and sold, and it often is” (Atwood in Bateman 2003). In the course of the trilogy there are many details about this issue, of which she also gave her opinions clearly in the same interview; science “is not itself bad. Like electricity, it’s neutral. The driving force in the world today is the human heart – that is, human emotions. Our tools have become very powerful. Hate, not bombs, destroys cities. Desire, not bricks, rebuilds them” (Atwood in Bateman 2003).

In 2001 Atwood was on a visit to “the monsoon rainforest” of Northern Australia and during a birdwatch, it was “while looking over the balcony at the red-necked crakes scuttling about in the underbrush that Oryx and Crake appeared [...] almost in its entirety” (Atwood 2003). She started making the first notes for the book that night (The name of this water bird became a pseudonym for the main antagonist of the trilogy). Atwood clearly stated that while shaping the plot she was affected by the current problems of the world; “I wrote several chapters of this book on a boat in the Arctic, where I could see for myself how quickly the glaciers were receding” (Atwood 2003). In the course of the writing process, the 9/11 attacks took place while she was waiting at Toronto Airport to fly to New York. That event caused a brief stop to her writing because she thought that “it’s deeply unsettling when you’re writing about a fictional catastrophe and then a real one happens” (Atwood 2003)

There is an unconventional relation between the first two novels of this trilogy. According to novelist Marcel Theroux, “Together, they form halves of a single epic” yet “each can be enjoyed independently of the other” (Theroux 2009). Although it has been marketed as a continuation of and has a pattern shaped by the same events as *OC*, *YF* can be read and studied independently in the context of demonstrating the effects of capitalism and environmental problems on society and individuals. In contrast to the catastrophes driven by the male-dominated Compounds in *OC* (both due to the apocalyptic event and the deteriorated balance of nature before it), in *YF* there is the maternal survival struggle of two silent female characters. In order to highlight this aspect of the novels, Jameson (2009) wrote that *YF* “is neither sequel nor prequel, but rather

both at once, in what might better be called a parallel narrative". Le Guin (2009) expressed an ambiguous agreement about this. She says *YF* is "a continuation of, not exactly a sequel to, *Oryx and Crake*". It is not the same story that continues in *YF*, but a new one with some common characters and organisations and with a totally new perspective. The author herself explains this relation as "it's not a sequel, nor a prequel, but a 'simultan-eul'" (Atwood in Akbar 2011) as it deals with events that happened roughly at the same time period.

OC begins just after a mysterious pandemic destroyed almost the entire human race. In the beginning Atwood introduces Jimmy and the Crakers. Jimmy (also known as Snowman) is a young man who has immunity to the virus and is understood to be the only surviving human until the last part of the novel, and the Crakers are a group of genetically modified humanoids who were designed by Crake as a replacement for humans. Crake is a prominent scientist from the Compound world, whose real name is Glenn, but calls himself Crake after a by then extinct bird. Although they have totally different personalities, Jimmy and Glenn have been each other's best and only friends since their school days and into their adulthood. As the novel progresses, with Jimmy's recollections of his past life, the readers, on the one hand, observe the progression of his mental instability caused by loneliness and the traumatic event of witnessing the death of everyone he knows, together with the rest of humanity; on the other hand they learn the details of the world before the disaster.

Many people helped Crake during the preparation and execution phase of the apocalyptic terrorist attack. Undoubtedly he received the greatest help from his fellow scientists who are also members of an anarcho-environmentalist-religious sect (The MaddAddamites – the name of the group is derived from their leader's alias, MaddAddam; however, the organisation's name in this form only occurs in the last book of the trilogy). A genetically engineered super-virus was sold all over the world, hiding in a drug (BlyssPluss) that had quasi-miraculous effects. There was a worldwide rush on this drug which promised longer life (even immortality) and unlimited sexual power. After a certain period of time the virus was activated, spread rapidly by air, and began to show its lethal effect. Jimmy, as the only human survivor, is considered a kind of mentor for the

Crakers to adapt to life outside the 'Paradise dome', the facility that they were created in. At the end of *OC*, while Jimmy/Snowman is on the way to the Compounds, the gated communities that precisely separate the living spaces of the rich and the poor from each other, he encounters other survivors. The events that take place after this stage more directly connect the first two novels, *YF* and *OC*, than the rest of their stories.

In the second book of the trilogy, *YF*, Atwood sheds light on the lower section of the social strata (not much is mentioned in *OC*), which is quite distinctly segregated. Rich elites and scientists live in special residential areas – the Compounds – protected by high-tech security. The isolation of the Compound people is reminiscent of medieval towns surrounded by thick walls. The residents; the executives and employees of the corporations and their relatives can meet their needs without the need to go outside. However, the setting of *YF* mostly consists of the 'city', the so-called pleeblands, where the majority, the working class and the poor, live. While there is a third person narration that has the perspective of Jimmy/Snowman in *OC*, *YF* largely tells the stories of two women, Toby and Ren, who are ex-members of an environmentalist religious sect, God's Gardeners. This anarcho-pacifist organization is governed by a board of experienced members called Adams and Eves. Besides, there are the sermons of Adam One, the spiritual leader and founder of the Gardeners, given on the Saint's and feast days that are interspersed among the chapters. These two women who are quite different from each other in terms of their character, appearance, age and origin, somehow survived the apocalyptic event that is called the 'Waterless Flood' by the Gardeners. While presenting their stories through flashbacks to different periods of their lives, the novel also gives details of the beliefs and lifestyles of the other members of the Gardeners.

The last book of the trilogy, *MA* first provides a solution to the last scene of the first two books, the event of Amanda (a bio-artist, climate refugee and an ex-member of the Gardeners) being abducted by the Painballers (the vicious criminals who compete to kill each other for their freedom in a commercial reality show) and then sheds light on the life of Zeb (He is Toby's lover and Adam One's half-brother; once he occupied an important position within God's Gardeners as 'Adam Seven', later he took the name 'Mad Adam' as the leader

of the MaddAddamites). Atwood, in the closing book of the trilogy, brings the surviving Maddaddamites, God's Gardeners, Jimmy/Snowman and Crakers together, and then shows how they meet their basic needs, such as housing, nourishment and protection, under majorly changed environmental conditions. *MA* unveils the details of the new order which there is an attempt to build on the ruins of a destroyed civilization; in the meantime it clarifies the uncertain points from the first two novels. In the end, Atwood puts a strong emphasis on the effects of technology that have caused a lasting transformation in nature and the environment by having a Craker narrate the final section.

As the above plot summaries indicate, the *MaddAddam* trilogy can really be considered a satire that discusses current global issues as well as its vibrant and colourful fictional world which drags its characters into comic, adventurous and tragic situations. However, various genre discussions have been had, especially regarding the scientific consistency of the details of the events and the everyday tools used by the characters. Therefore, a brief mentioning of these discussions may be necessary to determine the consistency of an ecocritical reading.

Atwood insists that the *MaddAddam* trilogy cannot be labelled as a work of science fiction. For her the trilogy fits in a more specific genre that deals with the possible results of the scientific studies already begun; she describes her novels as speculative fiction²⁸ because they do not deal with anything that has not been invented yet. Reading this trilogy in consideration of Milan Kundera's "human possibilities" concept from his *The Art of the Novel* might clear up Atwood's speculative fiction-science fiction distinction. Kundera (1988) argues that:

A novel examines not reality but existence. And existence is not what has occurred, existence is the realm of human possibilities, everything that man can become, everything he's capable of. Novelists draw up the map of existence by discovering this or that human possibility. But again, to exist means: 'being-in-the-world'.

²⁸ The term is often used in conjunction with the science fiction and fantasy genres, but is also used for 'more' literary fiction works. "The term 'speculative fiction' may be applied to fiction which contains some fantasy/science fiction elements, but which is considered more literary than anything else" (The Editorial Department 2016).

Thus both the character and his world must be understood as possibilities (p. 42).

In genetics the scientific studies that will enable new (lab created) living species, similar to the ones in Atwood's novel, have already been started. While debates about the ethical implications of these studies have not ended, scientists have already begun, for example, to create animals with improved nutritional value. There are also animals with human characteristics created for laboratory experiments to find treatments for certain diseases and to prolong the lifespans for humans (Gottlieb & Wheeler 2011, pp. 8-15). Speculation about the future results of current environmental degradation and the increasing rate at which species are going extinct are also familiar today. The IPBES 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services provides strong evidence that human activities are the main cause of the destruction of nature. According to this report almost one billion species are at risk of extinction due to factors such as deforestation, overfishing, poaching, pollution, climate change and invasive alien species. A National Geographic article based on this report draws a dark picture that does not give any hope for the future:

In parts of the ocean, little life remains but green slime. Some remote tropical forests are nearly silent as insects have vanished, and grasslands are increasingly becoming deserts. Human activity has resulted in the severe alteration of more than 75 percent of Earth's land areas, the Global Assessment found. And 66 percent of the oceans, which cover most of our blue planet, have suffered significant human impacts. This includes more than 400 dead zones—where scant life can survive—that collectively would cover the state of Oregon or Wyoming (Leahy 2019).

Considering the above examples, Atwood's fiction seems to investigate the logical outcome, a later stage, or the inevitable future of what is happening today. In a sense, Atwood has written about the "human possibilities" that Kundera referred to. However, fantasy and science-fiction writer Ursula K Le Guin openly opposed Atwood's perspective on this genre discussion. According to Le Guin, in the context of the genre discussion of a fictional work that has a

detail such as ‘the Crakers’, a ‘not-science fiction’ labelling would not be meaningful:

It is no comfort to find that some of the genetic experiments are humanoids designed to replace humanity. Who wants to be replaced by people who turn blue when they want sex, so that the men’s enormous genitals are blue all the time? Who wants to believe that a story in which that happens isn’t science fiction? (Le Guin 2009).

She interprets Atwood’s choice as a preventive action “designed to protect her novels from being relegated to a genre still shunned by hidebound readers, reviewers and prize-awards” (Le Guin 2009). According to Le Guin, Atwood most likely does not “want the literary bigots to shove her into the literary ghetto” where novels are written “in which things happen that are not possible today” (Le Guin 2009). It is clear that among the novels covered in this dissertation, *YF* (and the whole trilogy) is the fiction that includes science most. Nevertheless, it has a story with extremely realistic characters that deals with issues which are currently on the agenda of the world, rather than prophecies for the future. In other words the story of this trilogy, which seems to be a dark future projection, includes the trends, lifestyles and concerns based on current realities and a rich scientific knowledge.

Apart from the possible misuses of technology and the negative effects of environmental degradation on natural life, another current issue that Atwood includes in the novel is the decline of nation states which is usually seen as a later stage of the current political system. Unrestrained capitalism, globalization, and the dominance of multinational corporations cause the spread of conflicts at national and international levels. The future world uses the media and entertainment industry as a solution to this; they create a moderate and harmonious society by removing its ability to comprehend the real material historical conditions. The environmental situation is not the only thing that makes Atwood's scenario a distressing future fiction, it is also the lack of understanding that society has fallen into that has emerged with the transformation of the political structure. About this predicament, which Mengüç (2017) describes as “pathetic”, climate fiction novels such as the *MaddAddam* trilogy “offer a type of relief from this bigotry”; they imagine “that one day

such idiocies will be washed off clean, and the Earth will continue its adventure — probably without us”.

Unlike *The Road*, which gives no information about the rest of the world, and *The Flood*, which is quite discreet about this issue, the *MaddAddam* trilogy contains comprehensive information about the conditions of many parts of the world, especially about the extent of environmental disasters. For example, a story from Zeb’s past, which was occasionally mentioned among the teenage members of the Gardeners, is also important in terms of drawing attention to the relationship between global warming and biodiversity. With this story about Zeb who used to work for an institution that carries food by helicopter to save polar bears from extinction, the readers are informed that there is almost no glacier left in the Arctic; “The concept was simple: the polar bears are starving because the ice is almost gone and they can’t catch seals any more” (Atwood 2013, p. 59).

Rising sea levels due to melting glaciers is mentioned often throughout the trilogy to highlight the effects of climate change and global warming. In one of his sermons Adam One says, “a change in ocean temperature and salinity caused by the great downpour of fresh waters did harm to some Species unknown to us” (2009, p. 124). Likewise the Gardeners constantly express their romantic aspirations for both endangered and extinct animals and in so doing, refer to the risks posed by environmental degradation in different parts of the world at every opportunity. In the same sermon, Adam One emphasizes the relationship between desertification, deforestation and human activities:

any further cursing of the ground would be done not by God but by Man himself. Consider the southern shores of the Mediterranean — once fruitful farmland, now a desert. Consider the ruinations wrought in the Amazon River basin; consider the wholesale slaughter of ecosystems, each one a living reflection of God’s infinite care for detail ... (p. 125).

Apart from these instances, the novel makes references to climate related issues from certain parts of the world that are no longer suitable for human habitation. For example, “The abandoned towers in the distance” (p. 3) and the “deserted high-rises standing in the offshore water” (p. 567) show the rise in sea levels

which required that coastal cities that had to be moved to in-land regions. Due to the massive “droughts” (p. 106) in Texas and the subsequent “hurricanes” (p. 106), people living there had to migrate to the North. In the meantime, “the Wall” (p. 118) built on the border has made this migration extremely challenging. Although the other novels of the trilogy do not contain much detail about this wall, it is quite evident that *YF*, published in 2009, foresees the building of what is known as ‘Trump wall’, built on the U.S. border with Mexico, which was the former American President’s promises for his 2016 presidential campaign.

In addition to the excessive pollution in both urban and rural areas, water and air pollution have a negative impact on human life. Because of the “bad air” (p. 199) everyone in the cities must wear a “nose cone” (p. 134). In another sermon in which he makes abundant references to marine life, Adam One refers to water pollution as a result of human activities, “We hold in our minds the Great Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico; and the Great Dead Zone in Lake Erie; and the Great Dead Zone in the Black Sea; and the desolate Grand Banks of Newfoundland, where the Cod once abounded; and the Great Barrier Reef, now dying and bleaching white and breaking apart” (pp. 173-4). Such details, well-interspersed throughout the plot, serve to keep the environmental conditions alive in the reader’s mind.

Atwood, in *OC*, conveys this situation to the reader through a mother’s words to her son. Jimmy/Snowman’s mother’s complaints about the deterioration of nature are a summary of the state of the world that Atwood addresses. Leaving her luxurious and comfortable life among the privileged, she joins a radical environmental organization located in a poor district. Before she leaves her family, she occasionally talked 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 and quite a few of the eastern coastal cities when the sea-level rose so quickly, and then there was that huge tidal wave, from the Canary Islands volcano. And she used to snivel about her grandfather’s Florida grapefruit orchard that had dried up like a giant raisin when

the rains had stopped coming, the same year Lake Okeechobee had shrunk to a reeking mud puddle and the Everglades had burned for three weeks straight (2004, pp. 71-2).

In all three novels, while touching upon the effects of environmental destruction in North America and other parts of the world, the author also includes the social, political and psychological dimensions of this issue:

Remember when you could drive anywhere? Remember when everyone lived in the pleeblands? Remember when you could fly anywhere in the world, without fear? Remember hamburger chains, always real beef, remember hot-dog stands? Remember before New York was New New York? Remember when voting mattered? (p. 72)

The trilogy provides a realistic impression of a ‘near future’ dystopia by including current global environmental and political issues, and scientific developments. By implication, the readers are informed that it is still the 21st century, without any exact dates being given. However, Atwood was more selective than it might seem regarding the current issues and scientific breakthroughs that she references in her story. In other words, when speculating about the possible future consequences of contemporary developments in science and technology, some important issues are never mentioned. It is understood that the author made this choice consciously; she has focused on technologies suitable for the messages she intends to deliver. For example, there is no mention of artificial intelligence and related technologies. In this high-tech future world there aren’t any humanoid robots, unmanned vehicles, or nanotechnology devices that can be integrated into the human body. There is no cure for cancer yet (Pilar/Eve Six, dies of cancer) and there is no mention of human cloning. There is no mention of intergalactic or interplanetary spaceflight, or the colonization of the planet Mars. Flying cars have not yet been invented. The increase in the use of electric vehicles, solar cars and bullet trains, which are technological developments that are already frequently used in today’s world, can be said to be the most important innovations in transportation. There is also an air vehicle called “airship” (p. 376), which is an expression often used for zeppelins, but there is no information about what it looks like or how it differs from today’s aircraft. Tiny music players [Sea/H/Ear

Candies (p. 91)] “stuck into ears to hear music,” (p. 91), bracelets [jellyfish bracelets (p. 99)] with tiny aquariums and “the tiny jellyfish” (p. 99) in them and colourful “burning-bright” (p. 99) cell phones among the technological innovations that young people are eager to have. Selling and using firearms are prohibited by the Compounds; instead sprayguns and stun guns are used by the security forces.

Technologies of the future included in the novels seem to be consistent with their environmental message; in this future world there has been a lot of progress in gene splicing technology. Many hybrid species are produced generally with the purpose of human and industrial use. For example there are “pigoon” (p. 306), a nickname for the pigs spliced with “human brain tissue” (p. 472) for harvesting human organs, “Mo’Hair” (p. 42) for making transplantable scalps with hair of any colour that customers prefer, which are sold with the advertising slogan, “More hair with Mo’Hair” (p. 329), “Liobam” (p. 129), “the lion-sheep splice” that was commissioned by a religious group (Lion Isaiahists) “in order to force the advent of the Peaceable Kingdom²⁹” (p. 129), “rakunk” (p. 5) that is “half skunk but without the smell, half raccoon but without the aggression” (p. 305) sold as pets, and the luminous “green rabbit” (p. 5) “filched from the iridocytes of a deep-sea jellyfish in some long-ago experiment” (Atwood 2004, p. 109) when they “slipped their cages and bred with the wild population, [they] become a nuisance” (p. 110).

According to Atwood’s fiction, unlike the popular science fiction cliché, machines with artificial intelligence or humanoid robots will not bring about the end of humanity. Instead, considering Crake’s meticulous plan, it can be said that Atwood sees biological sciences and the biotechnology industry as more serious threats. Atwood’s speculative fiction occasionally deals with the hard sciences, but clearly it has a perspective more in keeping with the humanities. From this perspective technological innovations are the products of speculative studies on the nature of living beings. As a result of this rather than the

²⁹ According to the Bible - Isaiah 11:1-9 – The Peaceable Kingdom - in the coming messianic kingdom, is not only for humans, but all God's creatures, who will live together in peace and harmony. In *YF* two religious cults, Wolf Isaiahists and Lion Isaiahists are “at odds over whether it was the lion or the wolf that would lie down with the lamb once the Peaceable Kingdom had arrived” (Atwood 2009, p. 53).

technical details of the experiments carried out, the social, individual and environmental impacts they have caused come to the fore.

The same goes for Crake, the Victorian-like crazed scientist, and his studies. Throughout the trilogy, two of his research projects are principally mentioned, however little technical information is given about them. Thanks to his studies on immortality, Crake creates financial resources for his 'Paradise' project. Readers of *OC* know that the product that came about after these studies, the BlyssPluss pill, is actually setting the scene for the products of the Paradise project, the Crakers. This miraculous drug, which can be seen as a reference to "Soma" (Annas 2014, p. 127), one of the most famous fictional drugs of literature from Huxley's science fiction classic, *Brave New World* (1931), is also used to caricature the American dream, by promising wealth and happiness to a small group in society and in turn guaranteeing the unhappiness and poverty of the majority. Indeed, the real problem here is whose dream comes true and who gets hurt by this dream.

According to Gessert "the central problem with biotechnology is not that it goes too far" (2004, p. 417). Technologic developments allow Crake to implement his own solution to the problems caused by humanity. But here "the central problem is" as Gessert argued that "it can realize human dreams" (p. 417). Not only those that are "useful", that prolong human life and improve living conditions, but also the dreams "that rise out of the infantile and mineral depths, dreams to radically improve the race, or avenge stolen lives, dreams of an emptied world, and of the ecstasy of destruction" (p. 417). Crake knows that physical pleasures have always been a strong source for motivation. In *Brave New World*, societal control was ensured, among other means, with a type of narcotic drug, Soma. It causes people to feel extremely happy, so they cannot think about the realities of the oppressive regime ruling them. Despite the similarities, the short-term happiness provided by the BlyssPluss pill turns out instead to be the first episode of a story that ends in total disaster. Quite obviously both drugs are metaphors for the American lifestyle, which promotes excessive consumption, which in turn is the most important agent of environmental destruction, the cause of humanity's probable end.

Considering the aforementioned explanations, the *MaddAddam* trilogy has features of both science and speculative fiction, but apart from these, can be seen as an example of contemporary satire that makes serious criticisms of the value judgments, consumption, political choices and lack of sensitivity in modern societies. Technological innovations and the scientific issues in general that the author included in the storyline were used to serve this purpose. The characters of these novels occasionally make comments about the current predicament of the world. Adam One often talks about the consequences of the misuse of science and technology; “all those scientists and business people were destroying old Species and making new ones and ruining the world” (Atwood 2009, p. 203). Some of these lab-created plants and animals are either intentionally or unintentionally released into nature. Therefore, these biotechnology products could suppress natural species and became invasive alien species. These artificial life forms are among the main reasons of the extinction of species. After humanity left the stage, their population had increased in an uncontrolled manner and had a seriously disturbing effect on the balance of nature. One of the examples of this situation is from Toby’s isolation memories. Toby, at the garden of AnooYoo Spa, was thinking about the “exotic spliced vegetables” and “bright-blue kudzu-moth caterpillar” (p. 21) that was “developed as a biological control for invasive kudzu” (p. 21). In the meantime she notices the increase in the population of “the green rabbits and bobkittens and the rakunks” (p. 21). To her, “it’s astonishing how quickly they’ve been multiplying” (p. 21). This is definitely an “uncontrolled experiment” that might bring “unintended consequences” (Atwood 2004, p. 267).

There is another, perhaps more meaningful, example of the same issue from Jimmy/Snowman’s reflections towards his observation of a hybrid species in OC:

Already the weeds are thick along the curbs. The street is circular; in the island in the middle, a clutch of shrubs, unpruned and scraggly, flares with red and purple flowers. Some exotic splice: in a few years they’ll be overwhelmed. Or else they’ll spread, make inroads, choke out the native plants. Who can tell which? The whole world is now one vast uncontrolled experiment – the way it always was, Crake

would have said – and the doctrine of unintended consequences in full spate (p. 267).

Throughout the trilogy, the future of waste management and recycling technologies are often mentioned as examples of greenwashing. Besides, at times these issues are related to the consequences of misuse of technology and rampant consumerism as a product of capitalism. For example, there is no statement on the use of gasoline (nor gas, petrol or petroleum) in *YF*. As we can learn from *MA* “accessible oil became scarce and the price shot up” (Atwood 2013, p. 111), thus instead of petroleum a form of biofuel called “Carbon Garboil” (Atwood 2009, p. 48)] is used extensively. In *OC*, we find traces of use of petroleum in a few memories of Jimmy. From his childhood he remembers a bonfire made by using gasoline; “an enormous pile of cows and sheep and pigs” (Atwood 2004, p. 18) were burned “to keep [the disease] from spreading” (p. 22). The car of Uncle Ed, who took Oryx from her village and sold her as a child sex worker, “was the gasoline kind” (p. 145). Finally, while Jimmy was “hiking” to the (RejoovenEsense) Compound to find food and various things that he can use like knives, matches, a cooking pot, spraygun and bullets, he sees “trucks and vans, fuel-cell models and also the old gas or diesel kind, and ATVs” (p. 259). In Atwood’s future world, however, it can be seen that contribution of limited petroleum use to the environmental pollution has been far less than expected. The vehicles powered by electric or other energy sources do not seem to have reduced environmental problems.

When comparing environmental attitudes of developed and underdeveloped countries or the rich and poor classes of a society, the details about environmental technologies from the trilogy reflect the current realities of the world. Inhabitants of the Compounds believe that their economic superiority and use of high technology could make them more environmentally conscious. Likewise, in today’s world, goods and services that are labelled as environmentally friendly are generally purchased by people with better financial resources, as they cost more than products obtained through traditional production processes. “The houses” in the Compounds are built “with solarskins”, “they had the latest tech” and, as Wakulla (one of Jimmy’s ex-lovers), points out, “*they’re so much more truly green than those purist*

Gardeners” (p. 298). Citizens of developed Western countries owe their regular, clean, prosperous, and greener cities to their advanced level of civilization and culture which has come about largely due to scientific and technological superiority. Citizens of underdeveloped countries, in contrast, who labour for industrial production on behalf of the shareholders of multinational corporations suffer the resulting environmental pollution, economic inequalities and poverty.

In *YF* recycling and (so-called) green technologies are ineffective in eliminating the visible effects of environmental pollution and related climate change, besides details related to this issue demonstrate how class structure and economic inequalities are closely associated with the current state of the world. The petroleum substitute “Carbon Garboil was made from any sort of carbon garbage — slaughterhouse refuse, old vegetables, restaurant tossout, even plastic bottles” (Atwood 2009, p. 105). All types of organic waste can be transformed into biofuel. Even if it is forbidden, dead human bodies (collected from the Pleebbs) are used for this purpose. Another important evidence of the effect of rapid population growth and environmental degradation that lead humans into a process of self-destruction is the consumption of all kinds of animal protein sources for nutrition. In a sense people have come to regard every kind of edible material as food. In poor neighbourhoods not only street animals such as cats and dogs but also dead human bodies are probably ‘recycled’ and consumed as fast food: “The meat grinders weren’t 100 per cent efficient; you might find a swatch of cat fur in your burger or a fragment of mouse tail. Was there a human fingernail, once? It was possible.” (p. 45). For this reason the restaurant chain that sells such food to the poor crowds is called ‘SecretBurgers’. These details show that Atwood apparently satirizes the concept of recycling in modern societies, which is usually found to be ineffective in protecting the environment. Ecology experts argue that recycling alone cannot be an effective way to deal with environmental problems.

Everything is connected to everything else in nature is the first and most known rule of ecology. According to this understanding, the cause of an event is the result of another event, and this connects everything in a chain. Atwood clearly associates the environmental problems with human actions: rampant consumerism, unlimited desire for technological development and the capitalist

economy, which are primary reasons for environmental degradation and negative human behaviours like a lack of kindness and empathy in society, the rise of selfishness and sexual exploitation. In this respect the forces that dominate human behaviours both socially and individually should be taken into consideration. Atwood's reflections about environmental degradation and related social destruction and irregularities are the potential future consequences of economic inequalities and exploitation that also exist in today's world, and which can also be seen as the hypothetical implications of unethical scientific and technological progress. In this context the life stories of the female characters Toby, Ren and Ren's best friend Amanda include many examples of this perspective and are worth looking at more closely.

YF starts in the same manner as *OC*, with a catastrophic pandemic which kills the entire human population and the story of the only survivor (as far as she knows) starts. However this time the survivor is able to keep her sanity; she's pretty sure that "there must be someone else left, though; she can't be the only one on the planet" (p. 6). Unlike Jimmy/Snowman, Tobiatha/Toby does not know much about the real cause of the disaster, yet she was prepared for it thanks to the teachings of the Gardeners. By means of flashbacks at irregular intervals she relay her recollections of different time periods of the pre apocalyptic world.

There are similar details about the initial days of the disaster to which readers of post-apocalyptic dystopias with major outbreaks are accustomed to: people kill each other, the shops are looted and a great chaos erupts everywhere. What remains after the event is also similar in physical characteristics, "The air smells faintly of burning, a smell of caramel and tar and rancid barbecues, and the ashy but greasy smell of a garbage-dump fire after it's been raining. The abandoned towers in the distance are like the coral of an ancient reef — bleached and colourless, devoid of life." (p. 3). Here Atwood hints at the effects of global warming with "the abandoned towers in the distance", as she does in many parts of the novels, but it is seemingly also a conscious preference of the author to give very little information about the course of the disease. Although some details have been shared by Jimmy in *OC*, for he was the closest friend of Crake, in *YF*, considering that the events took place in an environment full of

scientists and conscious environmentalists, it can be said that there is limited information about the technical characteristics of the virus. This allowed the storyline to focus more on characters' past lives and their relationships with each other and living nature.

Toby is located in a kind of beauty centre (AnooYoo Spa) where she works (and has been living) when the pandemic breaks out. We do not know the exact date and city or country name; the only information at this stage comes from the title of the first chapter: "the Year Twenty-Five, the Year of the Flood". The other employees leave the spa centre during the first outbreaks, but Toby prefers to stay there (except for a short excursion) and she survives thanks to this. From the first page, it is understood that Toby has an environmental and religious awareness as a result of the influence of her past life as an environmentalist cult member. She remembers a tenet about vultures, "Vultures are our friends, the Gardeners used to teach. They purify the earth. They are God's necessary dark Angels of bodily dissolution. Imagine how terrible it would be if there were no death!" (p. 4). Considering the new state of the world, she is doubtful about such teachings, but it does not bother her much because she has more serious problems. After the disappearance of humans, nature constitutes a new state of equilibrium. Normally she would not even hurt an ant, as an ex-Gardener she respects the right to life of every living thing in nature. For example, she apologizes when she accidentally kills insects; "feeling remorseful, she makes a thumbprint grave for them and says words for the feeling of the soul and asking of pardon" (p. 21). Yet, she kills a 'pigoon' (pigs with human brain tissue) that are roaming around the beauty centre in a threatening manner. This behaviour undoubtedly represents the overriding power of how the survival instinct overrides any internalized respect for natural life. In Toby's case self-preservation emerges as a more effective source of motivation than environmental awareness. The pigoons were likely to harm the vegetables she has grown in the garden. Because of this, she sees her action as "self-defence" (p. 25).

It can be argued that Toby's behaviour contradicts the principles of a radical environmental group such as the Gardeners; it is known that there are environmental philosophies with strict principles regarding anthropocentric

behaviours. However, an ecosocialist approach would justify Toby in these circumstances. According to Marx's thoughts on the relationship between human nature and basic needs, "Man is directly a natural being. As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand endowed with natural powers, vital powers – he is an active natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities – as instincts" (Marx, 1988, p. 154). According to this insight, Toby's behaviour, even if she was the only human being at the spa centre, shows that she is nothing but an active natural being. This is not locating humans in a different dimension with the non-human nature, but it is seeing human beings as a part of it.

There are different criticisms on Marx's approach towards non-human nature, perhaps because he left very few writings about this subject. It is also known that there are certain criticisms towards Marx's lack of interest in animal liberation and respect for animals. However, Wilde (2000) argues that, "Marx has a respectful attitude towards animals and non-human nature in general. This is an intrinsic feature of his humanistic philosophy, which is grounded in defining the human essence by comparing humans with other animals". According to Marx humans are a part of nature, therefore human life directly depends on non-human nature. As in the case of Toby, self-preservation should be considered a basic need rather than a moral principle. Marx continues as follows:

On the other hand, as a natural, corporeal, sensuous objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. (1988, p. 154)

The story of Toby and her family shows the debilitating effects of capitalism and environmental problems on society and the individual. In the first days of the outbreak, she leaves the spa and goes to pick up the rifle, "a primitive weapon — a Ruger 44/99 Deerfield" (Atwood 2009, p. 32), which was buried in the garden of her last home with her family. Meanwhile, she recalls her childhood years and memories with her family. The fact that she lived a close

and harmonious life with nature in her childhood obviously facilitated her adaptation to the Gardeners and increased the chances of survival after the catastrophe. Toby spent a lot of time in nature with her father who taught her how to shoot and hunt. From this memory we also learn that Toby spent her childhood in a time when genetically modified creatures were not released in nature as an uncontrolled experiment, and in a city that still had green areas:

They'd been living in the semi-country, before the sprawl had rolled over that stretch of landscape. Their white frame house had ten acres of trees around it, and there were squirrels, and the first green rabbits. No rakunks, those hadn't been put together yet. There were a lot of deer; they'd get into her mother's vegetable garden. (p. 32)

Her parents story – their family tragedy – which was shaped by the material/historical realities of the society that they belonged to is a good example of the novel's ideological point of view. Her mother got seriously ill because of the drugs and dietary supplements she was constantly using. Doctors applied new medicines and treatment methods for her disease, but they could not cope with it. The family's health insurance did not cover the costs of these treatments, which were quite expensive.

She took more supplements, but despite that she became weak and confused and lost weight rapidly: it was as if her body had turned against itself. No doctor could give her a diagnosis, though many tests were done by the HelthWyzer Corp clinics; they took an interest because she'd been such a faithful user of their products. They arranged for special care, with their own doctors. They charged for it, though, and even with the discount for members of the HelthWyzer Franchise Family it was a lot of money; and because the condition had no name, her parents' modest health insurance plan refused to cover the costs. Nobody could get public wellness coverage unless they had no money of their own whatsoever (pp. 34-5).

Toby's father gets into huge debt to cover his wife's medical expenses. He "took out a second mortgage and poured the money into the doctors and the drugs and the hired nurses and the hospitals. But Toby's mother continued to wither

away.” (p. 35). They had to sell their house at a price below its real value and move into a smaller house. Meanwhile the father was fired for spending a lot of time away from work to take care of his wife, “then the furniture disappeared, piece by piece” (p. 35). The American dream collapsed once again; unrestrained and a corrupted free market economy darkened the life of Toby and her family and threw them out of the system. Eventually, when her mother died she was left a wreck, both emotionally and physically:

Her mother’s funeral was short and dreary. After it, Toby sat with her father in the stripped-down kitchen. They drank a six-pack between them, Toby two, her father four. Then, after Toby had gone to bed, her father went into the empty garage and stuck the Ruger into his mouth, and pulled the trigger. (p. 36)

There are two aspects of this story that exemplify the debilitating effects of capitalism. The first is that companies such as HelthWyzer are mixing various kinds of disease-making agents into the dietary supplements they produce to sell therapeutic drugs afterwards. Toby, years after becoming a member of the Gardeners, learns the story about Glenn’s father’s death from Zeb. This unfortunate man, who was one of the top experts of the Corps (occasionally used instead of ‘the corporations’), died as a result of a ‘suspected suicide’ after learning the implications of company practices, “he got unhappy when he found out they were seeding folks with illnesses via those souped-up supplement pills of theirs — using them as free lab animals, then collecting on the treatments for those very same illnesses. Nifty scam, charging top dollar for stuff they caused themselves.” (p. 338). Considering that corporate capitalism in the novel brings a system where even children are forced into prostitution (as in the case of Oryx in *OC*) when it comes to their benefit; it sounds understandable that for the continuation of the very same order, they cause the death of innocent people without any scruples. The second aspect exemplifying capitalism’s debilitating effects is somewhat ironic, but more closely related to current realities. Toby’s mother sells the pills that made her terminally ill: she “ran the HelthWyzer supplements franchise in the nearest shopping area” (p. 33). This part of the story reflects the truth of today’s world, rather than being a speculation about the future. It is evident that the substances used for health and beauty, in

addition to the operations carried out for this purpose, have turned into a serious economic activity. Today, especially in developed countries, these sectors seem to be under strict inspection by governmental health organisations, but they still cannot be prevented from causing individual, social and environmental damage. However, it is clear that in Atwood's dystopian future where multinational companies have taken power from the nation states, public health and environmental problems have been replaced by other priorities. Although the damage caused by the pharmaceutical and dietary supplements industry to the environment is, compared with the other sectors, relatively limited, this issue, which is also covered in detail in *YF*, constitutes clear examples of how the system works. Here, Atwood's partially exaggerated descriptions should be regarded as a polite satire for what is happening today.

With the increase in average life expectancy (due to declining fertility and mortality rates), more and more people all over the world have started to use various nutritional supplements and cosmetic products to look young and beautiful. It can be said that the cosmetics and dietary supplements sectors are among the most profitable business areas globally. These sectors, which are constantly expanding their product diversity and trade volume, are under the control of a handful of large producers^{30,31} just as they are in Atwood's trilogy. Global companies develop new marketing strategies and advertising campaigns to increase their market share in this profitable sector. According to a market analysis report (Orbis Research 2018), "The global cosmetic products market was valued at USD 532.43 billion in 2017, and is expected to reach a market value of USD 805.61 billion by 2023". For its part, "the global dietary supplements market stood at US\$ 132.8 billion in 2016. Witnessing a tremendous rise during the period from 2015 to 2021, the revenue in this dietary supplements market is set to reach US\$ 220.3 billion by the end of the forecast period" (Zion Market Research 2018). Considering these figures, it is not

³⁰ According to www.statista.com "The production of cosmetics and beauty products is controlled by a handful of multi-national corporations – L'Oréal, Unilever, Procter & Gamble Co., The Estée Lauder Companies, Shiseido Company, and Lancôme to name a few." (07.02.2021)

³¹ "Bio-Botanica Inc., Bayer AG, BASF SE, Ricola AG, Herbalife Ltd, and Integrated BioPharma are some of the key vendors of dietary supplements across the world." (Zion Market Research 2018)

difficult to foresee that this profitable and growing sector will expand its domain of influence in the future.

Having a young and beautiful appearance not only creates psychological pressure due to high social expectations, but also the products used for this end cause serious health problems in many cases. Based on historical records and descriptive and field studies, Calogero et al (2007) show in detail how the perception of physical beauty has changed from past to present. In this study, it is argued that women's discontent with their external appearance has been a standard situation in almost every period of history. In order to fit the beauty standard of the period women make cosmetic changes to their bodies. These changes may include operations that cause pain or disrupt body integrity (for example permanent physical problems caused by the use of corsets). "Ample empirical research is available documenting associations between idealised images of female beauty and negative effects on women's physical, psychological, and social well-being" (p. 260). This situation, has accelerated with the effect of industrialization and capitalism. Before the 20th century, there had been a certain standard of beauty or physical appearance that women felt obliged to follow during their lives, but with the rise of consumption culture and the new level of late or multi-national capitalism, the frequency of changes to new beauty standards has increased.

In *YF*, there are many examples of the beauty standards of the future and the physical modifications made to this end. Toby briefly worked as an advertising brochure distributor because her presence among the Gardeners was under threat. "Inside a wodge of fake fur" (Atwood 2009, p. 359) (of an extinct animal) she "was wearing a sandwich board and handing out brochures (p. 360)". On the board was written; "UGLY DUCKLINGS TO LOVELY SWANS AT THE ANOOYOO SPA-IN-THE-PARK! Goose Your Self-Esteem!" (p. 360). On the brochures it is written; "Epidermal enhancement! Lower cost! Avoid gene errors! Fully reversible!" (p. 360). The beauty centre's advertisement is an allusion to the fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen, which describes the exclusion of an individual who does not fit the concept of beauty of the society to which they belong. Many fairy-tales are criticized by feminist critics because of their passive heroines, since "in these stories, the only women

who try to shape their own fortunes are scheming stepmothers and witches” (Livia 2018). It is believed that such content infuses the patriarchal order, which reduces women to submissive roles, to new members of in society from an early age. In *The Ugly Duckling*, although the main character is male, he is initially excluded from society, but at the end of the fairy-tale it is revealed that his difference is in fact a reward. The ugly duckling (actually a cygnet) is transformed into a beautiful swan after it matures. The AnooYoo Spa promises this kind of transformation to its customers. It gives the message that anyone who pays a fee can become as beautiful as the swan. It also means that this beauty cannot be achieved without procedures performed at the beauty centre.

The brochures that Toby distributes to passers-by have information about the operations and services offered at the beauty centre. We learn that at this facility “epidermal enhancements” (Atwood 2009, p. 360) such as skin colour change, which is probably one of the most demanding procedures, can be made at a low price. According to the third-person narrator, this application is not a “radical or permanent” application like “gene therapy” but, a “fully reversible” and “more superficial treatment” (p. 360). Later, Toby had to change her skin colour, hair and facial features in addition to her fingerprint and voiceprint in order to hide from Blanco, the director of the fast food restaurant who sexually assaulted and abused her before she joined the Gardeners. This transformation seems to be compulsory to ensure Toby’s security; however, it can be said that for the others in the novel the choice of this procedure is the result of aesthetic concerns only.

Today in many parts of the world due to dissatisfaction with skin colour many people use skin-lightening products to reach the unrealistic beauty standards set through the media. Such applications have become a profitable sector thanks to people who want to be the opposite of what they are. This phenomenon has a close relationship both with social expectations and the economic system that governs these expectations. Several research projects have indicated that skin colour is one of the determining factors of one’s sociocultural level in a society (Glen 2008; Xie & Zhang 2013). Sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glen investigates the correlation between skin colour and socioeconomic status in “Yearning for Lightness: Transnational Circuits in the Marketing and Consumption of Skin Lighteners”. According to Glen (2008), “skin colour is a form of symbolic

capital that affects, if not determines, one's life chances" (p. 282). Especially in the non-Western parts of the world (not surprisingly it occurs more frequently in the former European colonies) the cultural legacy of colonialism devalues physical appearance of the natives: light skin colour gives social privileges and it is an advantage in both business and private lives. Skin-lightening (or bleaching) with the intention of having a European-like appearance seems ironic because the term 'Caucasian' used for white-skinned people of European origin has an implicitly racist, if not entirely racist, meaning. American geneticist Razib Khan (2011) presents a clear idea on this: "it was postulated that the natives of the Caucasus exhibited the idealized physical appearance so the Caucasus were believed to be the birthplace of mankind. The logic behind this idea — the assumption that Whites exhibit the best physical appearance — is implicitly racist". While light skin colour is associated with "modernity" and "cleanliness" (Glen 2008, p. 294) with racist undertones, the skin-lightening process by means of various chemicals carry a high risk of causing some health and environmental problems such as mercury poisoning and pollution. It is known that production and consumption of such products is harmful not only to human health but also to the environment; however, they are still being used even in developed countries. "In Africa, consumers seeking low-cost lighteners can easily purchase mercury-laden creams that are still manufactured and used in parts of Latin America" (p. 293). Glen also refers to outbreaks of mercury poisoning in several US states.

The ecosocialist perspective of this study emphasizes the correlation between unnecessary resource use and debilitating effects of consumer culture that by advertising campaigns of cosmetics companies and beauty centres create an association between skin colour and happiness. While light skin is thought to be socially beneficial for various reasons, there are products that these sectors will sell for white skinned 'Caucasian' people. Toby darkened her skin and became "less angla, more latina" (Atwood 2009, p. 363). Although the primary goal of the procedure was not to glamorize her, she is aware that darkening her skin transforms her into a more attractive woman based on the reactions of people around. Research has shown that women (from non-European origin) who have dark skin want fairer skin, while (European) women with white skin want darker

skin³² (Xie & Zhang 2013). Interestingly the darkened (by different tanning processes) white skinned women are seen as more sexually attractive than actual black or dark skinned women³³ (Miller et al 1990). Most people are not satisfied with what they have, and how they look; this has become a habit among modern men and women. Historically, it can be said that the fashion of having a tanned skin is a new trend that has become widespread among white Europeans and Americans since the early 20th century, coinciding with the rise of 'globalisation' and 'neoliberalism' which can be characterised as the new phase of capitalism.

In pre-industrial and early industrial time, the light skin was a class symbol, indicating the bearers were exempt from hard manual labor. As the US transformed into a post-industrial society, the darker skin has instead become the hallmark of the luxurious and leisure lifestyle enjoyed only by the affluent few.” (Xie & Zhang 2013, p. 549).

In this context, we should not miss the following connection: there is a relation between dissatisfaction with physical appearance, which can reach an obsessive level, and the development of cosmetic and chemical industries that produce beauty products, when considering that both became important sectors as a result of the proliferation of a global culture. Those who want to have darker skin generally prefer to suntan; however for those who do not have the time or opportunity, many commercial products have been put on the market to achieve the same effect. It can be inferred that skewed perceptions about the value of physical appearance have been exacerbated by the advertisement campaigns and other media strategies to establish a lucrative market for a variety of products that cause environmental damage in their production process due to unnecessary natural resource use.

³² Xie and Zhang's cross cultural analysis of American and Chinese versions of several fashion magazines determined that in Asian countries fair skin is more desirable whereas in the USA tanned skin is preferred in terms of beauty perceptions. Although these two terms (white-skin and fair-skin) may be used interchangeably, there are slight differences between them. According to English dictionaries, fair skin means pale or (relatively) light skin and used for people of yellow or olive undertone complexions. Fair alone also means acceptable and appropriate and can be used for attributing beauty to women. On the other hand, white (Caucasian origin) people have white skin. It is used for a member of a race who usually has pale skin.

³³ Social-psychological research on sun tanning by Miller, Ashton, McHoskey, & Gimbel (1990) shows that tanned skin is fashionable and desirable among women from North America and Europe. This research underlines the relation between physical attractiveness and having a tanned skin.

In *YF*, there are other examples of the pressure of consumer culture and perceptions of beauty on women. In this novel this issue is pointed out by the introduction of The AnooYoo Spa (the name of this spa centre is used 53 times only in *YF*) and its services for women. Apparently, they are taking advantage of all the means to make women spend money on their bodies. Toby who remains at the spa centre after the apocalyptic event, has the idea pass through her mind that, “There’s no shortage of mirrors in the Spa: the ladies needed to be reminded by harsh light of how bad they looked, and then by soft light of how good they might yet appear with a little costly help.” (Atwood 2009, p. 131). In this way, according to Muffy, who arranged the job for Toby, “They feel they look better afterwards. People will pay a lot of money for that.” (p. 366).

One of the reasons for the tragedy that happened to Toby and her family is the mistakes in her mother’s personal choices. The process that led to the destruction of the whole family began with her mother’s falling into the trap of the beauty industry. “Internalized beauty ideals and objectified gazes create a context in which women are vulnerable to the ubiquitous cultural messages regarding female beauty. The beauty industry renders women even more vulnerable by portraying real women’s bodies as deficient and in constant need of alteration” (Calogero et al 2007, p. 270). This constantly changing and hard-to-reach beauty ideal has turned into an invisible means to pressure and oppress women.

In a capitalist economy “the producer is ignorant of needs and resources, of demand and supply. He sells when he wishes, when he can, where he wishes, to whom he wishes, at the price he wishes. And he buys in the same way” (Marx 1988, p. 48). According to Marx, in this system needs become abstract. The emergence, and meeting, of a need depend on the accessibility of commodities; therefore, the only real need is money, the abstract form of wealth.

The need for money is therefore the true need produced by the economic system, and it is the only need which the latter produces. The quantity of money becomes to an ever greater degree its sole effective quality. Just as it reduces everything to its abstract form, so

it reduces itself in the course of its own movement to quantitative being. (p. 116).

In accordance with the logic of the market economy, it is a necessity to build a mechanism of unlimited needs in order to obtain money – the means of exchange – which is a constant need. Thus, each individual, to become a part of a culture, feels obliged to consume, otherwise they would be regarded negatively, like the members of God's Gardeners, and they would be excluded from society. This society constantly creates a series of needs beyond the control of individuals. Being an active consumer is a prerequisite of the system; it is presented as an ideology that includes the understanding that a direct relationship between consumption and freedom can be established. However, consumption culture is a repressive ideology, and in the long term brings about a great destruction both individually, socially and in terms of nature and the environment.

After Marx, many contributions have been made on the subject of the relationship between the capitalist system and consumer culture by the thinkers who have followed Marxist thought. There are some conflicting views among these views, yet the basic mechanism is the same and traces of it can be easily discerned in Atwood's dystopic novel. The necessity of consuming the 'overproduction', that is, exchanging commodities for money which is itself a commodity, has reached the point where a culture is being created in which consumption habits are constantly changed in order to ensure unlimited consumption. A society in which consumption, the driving force of the capitalist system, becomes compulsory to become a member of it is called 'consumer society'. In Marxist discourse, the most important criticism of consumer society came from the Frankfurt School thinkers "who focused on the way in which the mass media debased culture through the production of cultural commodities designed to turn people into disciplined and passive consumers" (Featherstone 1983, p. 5). In a capitalist society, the primary aim of an individual is not to realize and develop human potential; it is not to work less in order to increase the value of free time without the obligation to consume, but rather to work more to buy more commodities for a goal that can never be reached.

According to capitalist premises it is taught that free market economies can best serve the interests of a society. To achieve this goal, it creates competition among the market players in order to provide the best service or the highest quality products at the most affordable prices, since the consumers, behaving rationally, will prefer such companies and their products for their personal interest and happiness. The freedom to choose between different products and services is one of capitalism's most cherished features. Even in societies where there is no freedom of thought and expression, it is the only freedom that citizens have. On the other hand, the competitive nature of markets, which seems to be an advantage for the consumers, can turn into a disadvantage over time. This is one of the features of capitalism that Atwood criticizes in the *MaddAddam* trilogy. Multinational companies have completely taken control in many sectors as a result of the globalization process. According to the classical economics school of thought (though partially outdated still valid on basic issues), the state should remain in the background; in other words it should, as much as possible, not interfere in commercial activities in order to create a free environment for individual enterprises and companies. In Atwood's speculative fiction these companies – owners of the capital or the agents of production – have also taken over control of the state's executive, judiciary and law enforcement activities over time.

Under conditions of ruthless competition profitability is reduced and causes small firms to be removed from the markets over time. It is not unthinkable that at the end of such a process, the companies in Atwood's speculative fiction first gained control over the markets and then the ruling power. In *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* Marx explained the nature of "accumulation of capitals and the competition among the capitalists". This is highly important and deserves a lengthy quotation from Marx. He argued that,

competition is only possible if capital multiplies, and is held in many hands. The formation of many capital investments is only possible as a result of multilateral accumulation, since capital comes into being only by accumulation; and multilateral accumulation necessarily turns into unilateral accumulation. Competition among capitalists increases the accumulation of capital. Accumulation, where private

property prevails, is the concentration of capital in the hands of a few, it is in general an inevitable consequence if capital is left to follow its natural course, and it is precisely through competition that the way is cleared for this natural disposition of capital.

We have been told that the profit on capital is in proportion to the size of the capital. A large capital therefore accumulates more quickly than a small capital in proportion to its size, even if we disregard for the time being deliberate competition. Accordingly, the accumulation of large capital proceeds much more rapidly than that of smaller capital, quite irrespective of competition. But let us follow this process further. With the increase of capital the profit on capital diminishes, because of competition. The first to suffer, therefore, is the small capitalist. (Marx 1988, pp. 41-2)

It is possible to explain this mechanism with the following concrete example: assume that there are ten coach companies providing passenger transport between two cities. If one of the companies with the strongest capital structure decreases its profit margin and so the fares, other companies will also have to discount to avoid losing customers. If this situation continues for a while, small firms that do not turn a profit with the new fares will inevitably experience financial difficulties. As private actors pursuing their own interest, small companies that can no longer make money will either terminate their activities or be bought by a large company. At the end of this process, as the competition disappears, the company remaining in the market will have the opportunity to determine the price and service conditions at their convenience. The free market logic of capitalism creates a system that protects the interests of the powerful companies, not the benefit to individual consumers. Besides, this is not the case for the next stages of capitalism as in Atwood's fiction or the modern capitalist conception of today, but has rather been an integral part of its nature from the very beginning. Almost a century and a half ago “Marx and Engels in their critique of capitalism pointed out that ruthless competition and heartless pursuit of money are immoral as they create exploitation of the masses by the very few privileged ones” (Kowalczyk 2015).

Toby, as a lonely young woman, joined the Gardeners having had no choice as her life was in danger. After her parents' death until her participation in the

Gardeners, she had some stressful and dangerous experiences. She was left alone and life became more difficult for her; “she longed desperately to be back there in the past – even the bad parts, even the grief – because her present life was torture” (Atwood 2009, p. 51). She tries to think about her deceased parents as “guardian spirits” but this did not really help because of the complexity of her situation: “she saw only mist” (p. 51). The social order in the pleeblands is no different from a jungle in which ‘the survival of the fittest’ ideology prevails, somewhat reminiscent of the unrestrained capitalism of the 19th century, but it is apparently worse. As it could be recalled in the city state of Gee’s *The Flood* there is a social service though it is emphasized that it provided insufficient and poor quality service. However, there is no evidence for the existence of the state aid programs or the welfare state in *YF*. Even worse than that, the public constabulary forces were replaced by a private company called the CorpSeCorps (Corporation Security Corps) “when the local police forces collapsed for lack of funding” (p. 34). Any law enforcement forces other than this company are not mentioned in the novel. They have the power to “impose overt totalitarian rule, since they were the only ones with weapons. They were even running the army.” (p. 369). It is a type of business that has a priority to profit in accordance with the logic of capitalism, so the “Corporations still wanted to be perceived as honest and trustworthy, friendly as daisies, guileless as bunnies. They couldn’t afford to be viewed by the average consumer as lying, heartless, tyrannical butchers.” (p. 370), because they “have to sell, but they can’t force people to buy ...not yet.” (p. 370).

Ensuring the security of the country, preventing crimes and solving the ones committed are not among the primary objectives of this company; as a business institution that needs to make profit in order to survive in this jungle, CorpSeCorps would try to use any means to collect debts owed by Toby, even if she was a young and unemployed woman who has recently lost her family. It is known that the company employs debtor women as sex workers in order to retrieve what they owe. She was also in great trouble because of the rifle her father had committed suicide with, since all firearms had been banned by CorpSeCorps. Therefore, she buried his father’s dead body and the rifle in the backyard and burned her identity documents, then started living in the poor

outskirts, where the company was not so much interested as they did not see much profit in those neighbourhoods. She already knew that, soon after her family's financial hardships, she would have to leave her boyfriend and the school where she had been studying holistic healing, the Martha Graham Academy (Jimmy and Ren also studied at this college), "a third-rate institution" (p. 43), which she could afford with "a meagre scholarship" (p. 36).

The parts of *YF* in which Toby's experiences in the depths of the pleeblands are described contain many examples of the environmental destruction caused by capitalism. The effects of environmental degradation in this socio-economically backward region are clearly evident. Due to the demand for high profit, low cost businesses, the forces of production, had been largely shifted to backward areas where labour costs were lower. Besides, in these regions the motivation for environmental protection and the penalties for environmental destruction are also lower. Those who benefit the most from environmental damage live in more carefully preserved environments, such as the Compounds in *YF*, not in those regions that are significantly affected by environmental degradation. From this point of view, it can be said that The Towers area in Gee's *The Flood* and the pleeblands of *YF* have similar characteristics.

Toby rented "a room of her own" (p. 40) in one of the worst pleeb which was called "the Sewage Lagoon" (p. 41) by the locals. She was sharing "the bathroom with six illegal Thai immigrants" (p. 41). In the same building "there was an endangered-species luxury couture operation called Slink" (p. 41). Rare animals are killed there and their skins and furs are made into costumes for the rich people. The meat of these animals was also transformed into luxury dishes that only the rich could eat.

The skinned carcasses were sold on to a chain of gourmet restaurants called Rarity. The public dining rooms served steak and lamb and venison and buffalo, certified disease-free so it could be cooked rare — that was what "Rarity" pretended to mean. But in the private banquet rooms — key-club entry, bouncerenforced — you could eat endangered species. The profits were immense; one bottle of tiger-bone wine alone was worth a neckful of diamonds. (p. 41).

Here Atwood represents the insensitivity of rich people who can afford to purchase the products that result from the slaughter of rare and exotic animals. The damaging effects of capitalism to nature and the environment stem from seeing nature as a commodity and consumers' relationship with commodities:

For Marxism, a commodity's value lies not in what it can do (use value) but in the money or other commodities for which it can be traded (exchange value) or in the social status it confers on its owner (sign-exchange value). An object becomes a commodity only when it has exchange value or sign-exchange value, and both forms of value are determined by the society in which the object is exchanged. (Tyson 2006, p. 62).

People's clothing is often seen as a sign of social status. Therefore the sign-exchange value of an outfit, which determines the exchange value, is more important than its use-value. Consumer habits tend to be dependent on the brand and the designer of clothes. It should be remembered that in *The Flood*, there is a chapter emphasizing the same issue, the one about the City Gala. Similarly in *YF* the demands of the rich for clothes made from the fur of extinct or endangered animals can be considered a satirical exaggeration of the rampant consumerism of today's world. Daan P van Uhm's article on the illegal wildlife trade, "The social construction of the value of wildlife: A green cultural criminological perspective", puts forth how wildlife, exotic animals in particular, have been seen as objects of consumption in every period of history. According to the author there has been a rising trend in this attitude since the 20th century:

In contrast to earlier periods in time and influenced by significant socio-economic trends, such as population growth, consumption patterns and improvements in social mobility, never before have so many exotic animals been traded globally. The 20th and 21st centuries present how 'commodified' animals were traded commercially and consumed on a massive scale for both social and symbolic purposes. (van Uhm 2018, p. 391).

In spite of all the pushback of environmentalists and defenders of wildlife, in certain parts of the world hunting of endangered animals is done for the purpose of keeping some ancient traditions alive rather than for economic reasons. For example, the Japanese, although they do not need it economically, continue whaling because it is historically a part of their culture. Likewise, it has been recorded that similarly unnecessary hunting activities continue in some local communities in Asia, Africa and South America where the traditional lifestyle prevails. On the other hand, this is a serious source of income for the rest of the world. In *Sold into Extinction: The Global Trade in Endangered Species*, Schneider (2012) points out that “The illegal trade in wildlife is now thought to be second in volume only to the illegal trade in drugs” (p. xv). The international trade of endangered animals, which the author describes as a transnational crime, takes place as a result of the establishment of a global network that connects the most backward regions, which are the natural habitats of most extinct animals, with the developed regions where rich people who can afford the high prices for these products live. Schneider made a list of the endangered animals subject to illegal trade that contains 62 species, most of which are native to third world countries (pp. xxvii-xxix). Besides the illegal trade, Schneider argues that, “a great deal of the trade in wildlife is legal and provides a great deal of income” (p. 5). Some first world countries also take part in this seemingly legal trade although they have received negative reactions from the rest of the world. For example, Margaret Atwood’s (and many other distinguished environmentalists’) homeland, Canada, is the country where commercial seal hunting is most common. According to PETA, “Each year, the Canadian government allows sealers to beat and skin hundreds of thousands of seals. Baby seals, some merely weeks old, have their skulls smashed in or are shot for their fur.” (PETA 2010). “Canada’s annual commercial seal hunt is the largest slaughter of marine mammals on the planet (UN The Humane Society 2018).

Unlike *OC* in which Jimmy/Snowman remained the only known survivor until the last part of the novel, the readers of *YF* soon understand that Toby is not the only survivor. The second main character of the book, Ren (Brenda), emerges immediately after a few pages and tells a significant part of the story. She is

also a former God's Gardeners member like Toby. They went to the same college at different times (Martha Graham Academy) and both had to drop out before graduation. When the pandemic started, she was in the 'Stick Zone' section, a kind of quarantine room created to keep infectious diseases under control, of the 'Scales and Tails', a high-end prostitution ring where she was working at that time. This room, where the air and water are filtered off, has a password-protected entrance. Ren describes her experience in this place as, "I'd been in isolation with a double virus barrier protecting me. I was in the safest place I could be." (p. 387). Thanks to this protection, she was not exposed to the virus and could survive. Considering that the value of human life had been declining due to scarce resources and overpopulation, provision of such a high-tech and possibly quite expensive service for a woman of Ren's type shows that she is a profitable investment for the Scales, the leading luxury entertainment brothel. She is described as a beautiful and talented young trapeze dancer. She entertains rich customers and makes serious money, and the company therefore maintains its capital in accordance with market conditions. In many parts of the novel mention is made about people who have been kidnapped for their organs or children abducted and used as sex workers (Child pornography can be viewed on the internet for a fee. The story of Oryx in *OC* is about this). Sex clubs come to colleges, make presentations to female students and give job interviews to those who can work in this field in the future. Ren learned about the job opportunities in the Scales from such an activity:

My Dance Calisthenics teacher said I should talk to Scales and Tails. I was a good enough dancer, and Scales was part of SeksMart now, which was a legitimate Corp with health benefits and a dental plan, so it wasn't like being a prostitute. A lot of girls went into it, and some of them met nice men that way and did very well in life afterwards. So I thought I might try for it. I wasn't likely to get anything better without a degree. Even a Martha Graham degree was a lot better than none. And I didn't want to end up as a meat barista at some place like SecretBurgers. (p. 408).

Besides sexual abuse and the prevalence of violence against women, with this exaggerated normalization of the commodification of women and children's

bodies by the market economy, Atwood satirises contemporary corporate capitalism the destructive effects of which, on the environment and human life, have been increasing in parallel with their domination over significant areas of the economy. In the novel, there are many other examples of the extreme application of the private enterprise economy.

The power of the Corps is dependent on the technological knowledge they produce (and keep to themselves) for this reason important scientists are often kidnapped in order to leak information and sometimes for ransom: “That was happening more often: they kept it out of the news, but there was gossip at HelthWyzer. Sometimes they got the kidnapped scientists back, sometimes they didn’t” (p. 306). Frank, who was “a senior vice-president” (p. 407), “had been kidnapped by a rival Corp somewhere to the east of Europe” (p. 405). The kidnappers forced him to inform them about the secret operations conducted, “HelthWyzer had been sticking a slow-acting but incurable gene-spliced disease germ inside their supplements so they could make a lot of money on the treatments” (p. 406). In this way, we also learn how the mechanism made Toby’s mother fatally ill. The kidnappers say that they will release Frank in exchange for the formula of this disease. Otherwise, they threaten to share Frank’s confession with the public and his “head would have to kiss his body goodbye” (p. 406). According to Lucerne, “HelthWyzer had done a cost-benefit analysis and they’d decided the disease germs and formulas were worth more to them than Frank was” (p. 406). In this case it is not hard to conclude that he was murdered by the kidnappers. Ren explains how the company will cope with the bad advertising when this information spreads, “they could squelch it at source, since the media Corps controlled what was news and what wasn’t. And the Internet was such a jumble of false and true factoids that no one believed what was on it any more, or else they believed all of it, which amounted to the same thing” (p. 406).

The Corps refused to pay a ransom for Frank, and left him to die. Similarly, it appears that there is no social security scheme for the surviving wife and child of the deceased senior employee. In a sense, both were left to fend for themselves. Here, we see another one of Atwood’s predictions about the future consequences of current problems; the difficulties experienced by social

security institutions in carrying out their work in an inhumane economic system. When her husband died, “Lucerne had lost her top-wife position at HelthWyzer, and the house along with it, and under the circumstances, which were unfortunate, she’d decided to move to the CryoJeenyus Compound and take up housekeeping with a very nice man she’d met through the golf club, whose name was Todd” (p. 406). This example reveals that whether a senior employee or an ordinary person, nobody's life is guaranteed in the hegemonic world order of multinational corporations. Everything has an exchange value which is determined by a profit and loss analysis. The rigid materialist attitude here is quite different to the scientific materialism of Marxist understanding. With the exaggerated evil of the Corps world, it can be said that Atwood criticises the American culture that considers doing everything to make money to be a virtue, in other words the basis of the American Dream.

When Lucerne remarries, Ren loses her mother’s financial and moral support and she has to leave the Compound. At first she gets a low level job in AnooYoo Spa which is run by Toby (Tobiatha, according to her new identity) who changed her identity and physical appearance after leaving the Gardeners. Meanwhile, her love for Jimmy/Snowman, whom she was in a relationship with during high school years, causes her to make some bad decisions. When she learns that her best friend Amanda and Jimmy are having a love affair, she leaves the spa centre for a job at Scales and Tails. At this stage, Ren makes another contribution to the main story of the whole trilogy. She meets Glenn/Crake at Scales and Tails and gives him valuable information about the disciples of the Gardeners and about the ideas of Adam One. These include the rituals of daily life, the views of the relationship between man and nature, and the belief in the Waterless Flood. The seed for the idea of bringing about the end of the human race with the drug he develops in the future (The BlyssPluss pill) is probably planted during these conversations.

Both in terms of character and physical endurance Ren is delicate and fragile; she spends the rest of her life as a vegetarian (as far as possible) and is eco-friendly as a result of the influence of the Gardener teachings. However, when she was among the Gardeners, she used to long for the comfort of the Compounds. She wanted to have electronic devices and new clothes. She

wanted a room of her own. She says, “I really wanted to go back there. I wanted my real father, who must still love me: if he’d known where I was, he’d surely have come to take me back. I wanted my real house, with my own room and the bed with pink bed curtains and the closet full of different clothes in it” (p. 88).

In addition to certain ethical reasons, the Gardeners are also reluctant to use mobile phones, computers and the internet for security concerns. For them, luxury consumption and demanding more than basic needs increases the industrial production and overuse of natural resources that cause deterioration of the balance of nature. When she was among the Gardeners, Ren had an education that raised her environmental awareness and when she returned to the Compound, she saw for herself that consumption does not provide freedom as she once believed.

Besides Toby and Ren, Amanda’s story also contributes significantly to the novel’s environmental content. Due to the desertification in many regions, many people become climate refugees, one of whom is Amanda. Although she is not given much space in the novel, both her life and thoughts deserve a closer reading. *YF* actually works as a prequel for Amanda’s story because readers of *OC* know her from her relationship with Jimmy. She is one of the few characters in the novel trilogy that the author gives a full name, for she is the only person who shows a consistent and complete personality trait from the very beginning. Her life is harder than that of Toby and Ren; and except for Oryx, probably more so than all the other women in the entire trilogy.

She has to learn many ugly truths of life at an early age; ‘you have to give something in order to have something’; therefore, she sees life as a business activity in which she trades what she has with what she needs. Before joining the Gardeners, she used to pickpocket and prostitute herself on the streets. From an early age she got used to adapting easily to all kinds of difficult conditions. In the end, she begins to express herself through art. In this way, she was able to get a place among the artist community and was able to create a circle of fans consisting of few but quite rich people. Although there is no information about her age, it is understood that she Amanda and Ren are almost peers or she is at most only slightly older. Her real name is “Barb Jones” (p. 118), but she is an illegal immigrant and she also has to live without an ID, like Toby and Ren.

However, unlike them, she insists that no matter how bad the situations she falls into, what she does always has to be her choice; no one could force her to do anything and she chooses to live with that name. After the environmental disaster in Texas, they “lost their Happicuppa coffee franchise and couldn’t sell their house” (p. 117) because the economy collapsed due to the droughts. Under these conditions, her family cannot find a job to earn a living so “they’d ended up in a refugee camp with old trailers and a lot of Tex-Mexicans” (p. 117). Then the hurricanes began, their refugee camp was destroyed and her father was killed in an accident. She and her mother had to have sex with a group of thieves in exchange for saving them from there. After this time, she learns what she could trade in order to meet her needs; it’s her own body. Her mother got sick and died from the dirty drinking water in the football stadium where the victims of the disaster sheltered. She survived because she traded for clean drinks.

Amanda had more challenges to overcome before reaching the liveable areas in the north. Attempts of rape, abuse, kidnapping, assault and similar threats became ordinary occurrences for an unprotected lonely girl on the roads; nevertheless, she could manage to overcome all these obstacles. In the course of her migration the most difficult challenge was passing “The Wall”. The State ruled by CorpSeCorps built it “to keep the Tex refugees out, because just the fence wasn’t enough” (p. 118). In spite of their high tech systems and sprayguns, the Corps security forces cannot prevent the illegal immigrants from passing the border; they still find a way to pass it through tunnels. With these details, it can be seen that Atwood touches upon the issue of illegal immigration, which has been discussed in the context of economic and political problems by the USA and other countries of the region. According to a report by Gonzalez-Barrera and Krogstad, by the year 2017, 43% of the 11.6 million immigrants from Mexico to the USA were illegal. These figures also show that illegal immigration is declining due to the strict measures taken under the Trump administration (Gonzalez-Barrera & Krogstad 2019).

Although certain reports and studies argue that there is a downward trend in illegal immigration on the Mexico-USA border which is, as far it seems, the original inspiration of Amanda’s story in the novel, the immigration issue has

always been on the world agenda. Throughout history there have been people who left their homelands and migrated to other places usually for better incomes and living conditions and for their political and religious freedom. Especially in the last few decades, due to civil wars, economic problems and natural disasters millions have had to migrate to countries where living conditions are more favourable, mainly from the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans and certain parts of Asia. Therefore, the issue of migration is still a pressing concern for both governmental and non-governmental organizations, for economic and political decision makers, and for cultural analysts.

Amanda's experiences, on the other hand, open up a discussion about the immigration issue as it relates to the environmental crisis. In recent years, a growing number of people have had to migrate from their countries due to climate change and environmental problems. European Commission President, Juncker (2015) has indicated that, "Climate change is one of the root causes of a new migration phenomenon. Climate refugees will become a new challenge – if we do not act swiftly". According to European Parliamentary research titled "The concept of climate refugee", "The number of international migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in recent years, reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000" (Apap 2019, p. 2). An average of 26.4 million people "have been forcibly displaced by floods, windstorms, earthquakes or droughts" every year since 2008 (p. 1). The number of environmental refugees varies widely by years and regions. For example in 2008, 36.5; in 2010, 42.4 and in 2016, 24.2 million people migrated. 67.8 % of people migrated due to climate change in 2016 come from East Asia and the Pacific region whereas only 0.2 % of them come from Europe and Central Asia. From these statistics it is understood that as much as the regional distribution of environmental disasters, differences in economic progress also have an impact on migration.

It is not known exactly how many people have died while attempting to migrate; however, experts confirm that the number of unrecorded deaths could far exceed the number of recorded cases. According to the Migration Data Portal (2020), "since 2014, more than 4,000 fatalities have been recorded annually on migratory routes worldwide" and since 1996, a total of 75 thousand deaths have

been recorded. Survivors, on the other hand, face challenges that in many ways parallel those of Amanda. According to CTDC (The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative) reports (2019), migrants are often subjected to inhumane treatment such as forced labour and sexual abuse of women and children in the countries where they took refuge. Based on the stories of the surviving migrants, it can be concluded that the primary goal of these people is escape away from the political, economic and environmental problems. Relevant statistics show that migration is substantially an issue directly related to the environmental destruction caused by industrialization, the economic and social inequalities which arose after colonialism and imperialism, and which eventually have become permanent with the process of globalization. In this case it can be said that Amanda's story in *YF* is analogical with the current state of the world. As in the world of Corporations in the *MaddAddam* trilogy, world leaders try to keep the immigrants, who are forced to migrate due to problems they caused, away from their borders.

Considering their circumstances, it cannot be said that Toby, Ren or Amanda are radical environmentalists from their hearts. They often take a critical approach towards some of the Gardener practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, thanks to their years of experience as Gardener members, in the course of time it is seen that they get into the habit of displaying certain Gardener attitudes. For this reason, there is also a need to have a closer look at the theory and actions of God Gardeners, and from a wider perspective, the relationship between the phenomenon of religion and the socioeconomic irregularities associated with environmental problems.

Atwood's speculative fiction trilogy, mostly in *YF*, provides topics for discussion about the key position of religious groups in society and their reactions to the problems of the era. She not only creates a new belief system with a set of principles and practices, but also aims criticism towards today's environmentally insensitive theological groups with her satirical style. Besides the God's Gardeners, "a lot of fringe cults worked the Sewage Lagoon, trolling for souls in torment" (p. 52) such as "PureHeart Brethren Sufis" (p. 52), "Ancients of Day" (p. 52), "Hare Krishnas" (p. 52), "The Lion Isaiahists and the Wolf Isaiahists" (p. 53). Aside from these cult groups that address themselves to

the poor people in the pleeblands, there are also “rich-people religions” (p. 52) such as “The Known Fruits” (p. 52) and “the Petrobaptists” (p. 52) which are fairly influential among the privileged Corps people. CorpSeCorps often allows the activities of religious minorities. The reason for that is, according to Adam One, “They claim to respect the Spirit and to favour religious toleration, as long as the religions don’t take to blowing things up: they have an aversion to the destruction of private property.” (p. 66). There are also other environmentalist groups in the pleeblands such as “the Fernside Collective, the Big Box Backyarders, the Golfgreens Greenies” (p. 195) that sell or exchange the organic products in a market called “the Tree of Life Natural Materials Exchange” (p. 194). The Gardeners are portrayed as more radical in terms of both practice and faith. For this reason the “ecofreak” (p. 54) label is used to humiliate them in the streets.

God’s Gardeners, who have a spiritual lifestyle, do not turn their back on the positive aspects of contemporary science. According to Adam One humans “could not achieve their goal of reconciling the findings of Science with their sacramental view of Life simply by overriding the rules of the former” (p. 333). Therefore, in the context of radical environmental movements, an analysis on the discourse of the Gardeners on the role of religion and science seems necessary. There have been many debates on the relationship and contradictions between religion and science from the emergence of modern sciences to the present. Even though, throughout modernity, science is said to be one step ahead in this fractious relationship, in contrast to the predictions of many 19th and 20th century thinkers, the effect of religion on social, economic and political fields has not disappeared. In this context, we should not underestimate the ability of religions to survive in the contemporary world. From the days when Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God, we have witnessed that the religious discourse survives by transforming itself in accordance with the spirit of the time.

More recently, environmental problems have begun to be discussed within these two dissimilar fields. These discussions are shaped around two opposing views that are related to how religions define anthropocentrism. According to monotheistic religions (especially Christianity should be considered here) God

created nature to serve people. It can be considered that this notion causes anthropocentrism and eventually leads to ignorance of nature. On the other hand, it is also possible to approach the same concept from a different perspective. To see nature as a creation of God, unlike the *nature morte* (dead nature) envisioned by the Cartesian perspective (Callicott 1992), paves the way to see it as a subject in itself, like human beings. In this context, a common point is reached with the discourses of radical environmental movements such as Deep Ecology which is a politically marginal movement advocating the restructuring of political institutions to achieve a nature-centred lifestyle. In Christianity, nature is alive and full of life. Yet, the ultimate subject for Christians is God, not man. God has created nature, and by extension the environment, and entrusted humans to take care of it. The Bible says, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” (Genesis 2:15). From this point of view, a nature-centred view of monotheistic religions can be inferred alongside the more commonly understood God-centred perspective. In *YF*, God’s Gardeners and their leader Adam One try to fulfil such a mission of combining these two perspectives and establish a religious doctrine that sees all other creatures as subjects and respects non-human nature since it is also a creation of God.

Ecology as a field of science is the most closely related with environmental problems. It is predicted that the data provided by scientific experiments and observations, as their potential persuasiveness is considered higher than other information sources, will facilitate voluntary participation in the fight against environmental problems. Although it sounds like a logical expectation, it only corresponds to a situation that can occur if society, at least the majority, behaves rationally. Looking at the state of the world, it can easily be said that hoping for rationality in the behaviours of the majority would itself not be a rational behaviour. Scientific studies contribute to the fight against environmental problems, yet it can be seen that scientific knowledge is not enough to affect behavioural change. Commonly, people act in different ways and have different motivations, resources and sensibilities. For example, many scientific studies have been carried out about the damage caused to nature and the environment by plastic packaging waste. However, it is still heavily used

and poses a significant threat for today's and future generations. This example shows that, although there are differences between cultures, a significant proportion of people do not have environmental awareness about their consumption habits. It cannot be ignored that as forms of symbolic production, literature and religion have a wider sphere of influence than science, and are therefore able to compensate the short-comings of science in terms of raising awareness of environmental issues.

YF contributes to this debate by showing the consequences of current environmental degradation. Religious groups that give importance to natural life, like God's Gardeners, are not Atwood's invention. The utopian agrarian communes mostly established by American romantics throughout the 19th century can also be seen as a kind of religious anarchist movement³⁴. There are many similarities between God's Gardeners and these groups, which can be considered marginal minorities because they reject established societal norms of the time most of which are the cause of our environmental problems today. The Gardeners also have some similar characteristics with the environmental movements and religious groups of modern times.

One can argue that environmentalism, which includes a system of thought and action, has become a kind of religion. Like all religions it aims to trigger a change for the whole world. Adam One in one of his sermons in which he constantly uses religious references, explains the Gardeners mission based on a teaching where humans and nature are equally important and valuable. There is love and respect for all creatures created on the basis of this thought. Adam One says,

By covering such barren rooftops with greenery we are doing our small part in the redemption of God's Creation from the decay and sterility that lies all around us, and feeding ourselves with unpolluted food into the bargain. Some would term our efforts futile, but if all

³⁴ The founder of the Fruitlands commune (1840) in Harvard, Massachusetts, Bronson Alcott, is known as an abolitionist and for his opposition to paying taxes, even before H. D. Thoreau's famous act of civil disobedience. "Alcott was jailed in 1843 in the same prison in which Thoreau was later jailed in 1846" (Fiala 2013, p. 2) because of his refusal to pay his taxes. According to Andrew Fiala New England was a region of "American non-resistant Christian anarchism" (p. 2) in the 19th century. Besides Fruitlands there were other utopian religious communities such as Brook Farm (1841) and Hopedale Community (1842) both founded in Massachusetts.

were to follow our example, what a change would be wrought on our beloved Planet! (p. 15).

In the Western world the attitudes of religions towards modernization, progress, democracy and capitalism show parallels with their attitudes towards environmental issues. By the end of the 20th century the gradual decline of their popularity led religions to attempt to interfere in some areas of civil society. From this period onwards, divisions between civil society and state provided new areas of work such as feminism, gay rights, human and animal rights, minorities-related issues, and environmentalism for non-governmental organizations. Of course, religions cannot be expected to show the same interest towards all of these areas. In the developed western countries where traditional religions have been weakened, it is known that many churches are interested in environmental problems. However, according to some environmentalists, religious institutions benefit from this situation and are not sincere about their environmental awareness. At this point, Lynn White's criticism of Christianity should be remembered. White, in his article 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' (first published in 1967) argued that "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (1996, p. 9), and therefore the environmental crisis was partly a result of the Christian world view that dominated the Western world.

It can be observed that there is a rising trend in new religious forms that have more mystical and spiritual aspects. For Watling (2008),

Alongside 'traditional' religious visions, there are emerging 'new' ones. In particular, science is seen to offer resources for understanding the cosmos and humanity's role in it, as well as combating environmental problems by suggesting new, possibly more environmentally friendly, ways of acting. (p. 473).

Whether or not this situation will reach the level of the Reformation of Christianity will be understood in time. However, if we speculate in the manner of Atwood, we can say that new religions can survive to the extent that they can offer solutions to the problems experienced by contemporary societies. Here it is necessary to draw attention to another connection between the *MaddAddam* trilogy and the contemporary world we live in. Considering the socioeconomic

problems among underdeveloped countries and the underclasses of developed countries (remember the wide variety of religious groups in the Towers district of *The Flood*), it is seen that religions are strengthened by the deterioration of peace, trust, security and economic prosperity. Emma Tomalin's (2018) article, "Religions, poverty reduction and global development institutions" determines that,

While the Western-led modern global development institutions that have emerged since the Second World War have tended to be secular in nature, over the past decade or so there has been an apparent 'turn to religion' by global development institutions, as well as in academic development studies. This reflects the realization that modernization and secularization do not necessarily go together, and that religious values and faith actors are important determinants in the drive to reduce poverty, as well as in structures and practices that underpin it (p. 2).

Based on this view, we might expect that a religious organisation like the Gardeners would appeal most to the people who are the most vulnerable to the economic and social problems of society. However, Atwood's approach to this is far from straightforward. She presents the doctrines of the Gardeners from the point of view of two women who have not participated in this group voluntarily and who regard them critically.

Atwood reveals the details of the characters, the setting and the events sparingly. In the course of the novel, from the occasionally interspersed crumbs of information, we learn more about the Gardeners. They try to explain the biblical texts about creation and natural processes on the basis of hard sciences. They define their belief system as a scientific religion in which actions are more important than beliefs. The leader of the group once explained this to Toby as follows: "In some religions, faith precedes action. In ours, action precedes faith. You've been acting as if you believe, dear Toby. *As if* — those two words are very important to us. Continue to live according to them, and belief will follow in time." (p. 234).

The Gardeners believe in both evolution and God. They are strict vegans and most of their food comes from the rooftop gardens they establish on the roofs of

abandoned buildings in the city centre (There are many vacant buildings as the rich have left this part of the city and moved to their high-walled and tightly secured compounds). The spiritual leader and founder of the group, Adam One, was an epidemiologist: “I was a scientist. I studied epidemics.” (p. 54). This humanist scientist used to think that “man was the measure of all things” (p. 54). It seems that at one point he gave up this belief and began to think that, “We cannot know God by reason and measurement; indeed, excess reason and measurement lead to doubt.” (p. 325). He was, in his own words, once “a materialistic, atheistic meat-eater” (p. 54) and then turned into an anarcho-pacifist who aims to initiate an economic and social structure with those who will survive after the irreversible environmental apocalypse that is compatible with nature (There’s not much detail about his transformation process in *YF*. This issue is clarified in the last book of the trilogy.) They believe in an apocalyptic event they call the ‘Waterless Flood’ which will wipe humans off the face of the Earth, just as the biblical flood did the non-believers according to the Abrahamic religions. During one of the sermons which Adam One traditionally gives on Saint’s days (the Gardeners have established a pantheon of ecological saints based upon the names of naturalists and environmental activists) and Feast days, in which he says; “we know that Comets and nuclear holocausts are among the possible tomorrows, not to mention the Waterless Flood, that we fear looms ever nearer” (p. 325). Adam One and other Gardeners believe that the path chosen by humankind will lead them to a great disaster, because they are thoughtlessly damaging nature without which no one can continue living.

Adam One tries to recruit new members by preaching on the streets and opens branches in different cities and countries by increasing the number of their members. He proclaims, “Spare your fellow Creatures! Do not eat anything with a face! Do not kill your own Soul!” (p. 54). When the Gardeners met Toby during such an event, she was working for a SecretBurger fast-food restaurant. Adam One made one of his usual speeches: “Every day you stand here selling the mutilated flesh of God’s beloved Creatures, it’s injuring you more. Join us, my dear — we are your friends, we have a place for you.” (pp. 55-6). After

many years, when Toby became Eve Six on Pilar's death, she described the structure of the Gardeners as,

For the Gardeners, it seemed, were no longer a tiny localized cult. They were growing in influence: far from being confined to the Sinkhole Edencliff Rooftop Garden and its neighbouring rooftops and the other buildings they controlled, they had branches in different plebs, and even in other cities. They also had cells of hidden Exernal sympathizers embedded at every level, even within the Corporations themselves. The information provided by these sympathizers was indispensable, according to Adam One: by means of it, the intentions and movements of their enemies could be monitored, at least in part.

The cells were referred to as Truffles because they were underground, rare, and valuable, because you never could tell where they might appear next, and because pigs and dogs were employed to sniff them out. Not that the Gardeners had anything against actual Pigs and Dogs, Adam One made haste to explain — only against their enslavement by the forces of darkness. (pp. 264-5).

It is understood that the Gardeners movement has gained strength by finding positive confirmation from the middle and lower classes, and especially from the oppressed women of any class. This is the reason why their activities were eventually declared illegal and their headquarters were raided by CorpSeCorps forces. Yet, the organization has not disappeared completely, provided that they carry out their activities underground. Certainly, behind this success of the God's Gardeners, there is a persuasive analysis of environmental degradation, climate change, moral degeneration, socioeconomic problems, poverty and unfair distribution of income. Adam One, who has modelled himself on the example of Jesus in many respects, has succeeded in adapting for the Gardeners' doctrine the egalitarian discourse of early Christianity, which saw material wealth as worthless as can be seen in Proverbs 22:2, "The rich and the poor have a common bond, The Lord is the maker of them all". At the initial stage of Christianity, the movement primarily included the poorest and most oppressed groups of society. Engels wrote the following on this subject:

The history of early Christianity has notable points of resemblance with the modern working-class movement. Like the latter, Christianity was originally a movement of oppressed people: it first appeared as the religion of slaves and emancipated slaves, of poor people deprived of all rights, of peoples subjugated or dispersed by Rome. Both Christianity and the workers' socialism preach forthcoming salvation from bondage and misery; Christianity places this salvation in a life beyond, after death, in heaven; socialism places it in this world, in a transformation of society. (1990, p. 447)

Here, Engels focuses on the similarities between early Christianity and communism³⁵. Jesus himself acted among the poor and the dispossessed; and frequently attacked the rich. When he entered Jerusalem, it is no coincidence that at first he expelled the usurers from the temple. The communism of the early Christians can be seen in the fact that there was common ownership of all the wealth in their community. Any person who wanted to join them first had to give up their worldly possessions. About the Fellowship of the Believers, Acts 2: 44-45 says, “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need”. In the same way, the Gardeners have an egalitarian structure that despises material wealth. Adam One says, “Money is a terrible temptation. It is sickness.” (p. 211).

There are also significant parallels between the teachings of the Gardeners and Marx's opinions about spiritual life. He wrote that, “to develop in greater spiritual freedom, a people must break their bondage to their bodily needs – they must cease to be the slaves of the body. They must, above all, have time at their disposal for spiritual creative activity and spiritual enjoyment” (Marx 1988, p. 29). Marx and later Marxists are generally known for their critical attitudes against religions. In fact, Marx was not primarily concerned with the concept of religion, but with what people did using religious institutions (organized religions). Marxist criticism underlines how religion has turned into a repressive ideology; “an ideology that helps to keep the faithful poor satisfied

³⁵ It is worth remembering that there are profound differences of opinion between left-wing and right-wing Christians on this subject. This is because they are based on different scriptures.

with their lot in life, or at least tolerant of it, much as a tranquilizer might do” (Tyson 2006, p. 59). Marx, in his “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” in which he made his famous analogy between religion and opium, begins with the definition of religion and his criticism of religious institutions. For him, “criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism” (Marx 2010, p. 175). Obviously, Marx rejects mystical views about the creation by saying, “Man makes religion, religion does not make man” (p. 175). He discusses the issue as an historical and social phenomenon from an “irreligious” perspective. “Religion” as “an inverted world-consciousness” has been turned into a weapon in the hands of the clergy who have served as the agent of the ruling class for centuries (p. 175). In this way religious doctrines have become the main reference for comprehending existence for the masses. For this reason “The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion” (p. 175). Marx’s analysis does not include a negative attitude towards religious feelings or individual connections to divine powers, but a realistic interpretation that recognizes the importance of spiritual life. He continues,

Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

To abolish religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is to demand their *real* happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of tears*, the *halo* of which is religion (pp. 175-6).

If the works of art, according to Marxist premises, that raise the consciousness of the working class and thus serve the proletarian revolution are not seen as repressive, in the same way the Gardener doctrines that instil environmental awareness and love in its members within the paradigm of contemporary science cannot be regarded as repressive either.

The Gardeners often transform biblical concepts into their daily practices. For example, they regularly pile up food and supplies in several secret places for the

use of post-apocalyptic survivors. They call them ‘Ararats’. Adam One explains this as, “with the essential items we must include in our Ararat storerooms in preparation for the Waterless Flood.” (Atwood 2009, p. 123). Toby also created one after she got a job at AnooYoo Spa. Although organic/vegan nutrition is obligatory for every Gardener, they are also aware of the fact that they will eventually need animal protein sources after the Waterless Flood. Therefore, they implement a rigorous training program for their members that includes hunting and survival skills. Almost all routine activities of the Gardeners aim to improve their ability to survive after a major disaster.

By presenting the God’s Gardeners by means of the critical observations of Toby and Ren, Atwood draws attention to the challenges and advantages of a green civilization. On the other hand, there is another group called the MaddAddamites that has its roots within the Gardeners. Although there is some information about this group in *YF*, the details of their activities are only given in *MA*. The separation between the Gardeners and the MaddAddamites is a result of Adam One and Zeb’s disagreement over the nature of the organization’s activities. Besides, this separation also represents similar disagreements within modern environmental movements. The MaddAddamites do not approve of the passive resistance philosophy of Adam One; they believe in direct action to bring change to society and the world order.

The dialogue below clearly illustrates their conflict. A group of Gardeners, including Zeb, are involved in “a scuffle in the Sewage Lagoon” (Atwood 2009, p. 347). When they returned to Edencliff Rooftop Garden, the disagreement comes to light,

“I hope there was no lasting damage,” said Adam One. “Much as we deplore the very existence of SecretBurgers, and the depredations of this — this unlucky individual, we want no violence.”

“Booth overturned, meat thrown around. All he suffered was cuts and bruises,” said Zeb.

“That is unfortunate,” said Adam One. “It’s true that we sometimes have to defend ourselves, and we’ve had trouble with this — with him before. But on this occasion, do I have the impression that we

attacked first?” He frowned at Zeb. “Or provoked an attack? Is this correct?”

“Asshole had it coming,” said Zeb. “We should be getting medals.”

“Our way is the way of peace,” said Adam One, frowning even more.

“Peace goes only so far,” said Zeb. “There’s at least a hundred new extinct species since this time last month. They got fucking eaten! We can’t just sit here and watch the lights blink out. Have to begin somewhere. Today SecretBurgers, tomorrow that fucking gourmet restaurant chain. Rarity. That needs to go.”

“Our role in respect to the Creatures is to bear witness,” said Adam One. “And to guard the memories and the genomes of the departed. You can’t fight blood with blood. I thought we’d agreed on that (pp. 348-9).

The MaddAddamites make contact with each other through a secret online communication network. They also work together with Crake on the Paradise project, unaware of his ultimate intent. Among their actions there are “strange outbreaks of new diseases, or peculiar infestations — the splice porcubever that was attacking the fan belts in cars, the bean weevil that was decimating Happicuppa coffee plantations, the asphalt-eating microbe that was melting highways” (pp. 375-6) and “the mice that attacked cars” (p. 462). Actions similar to those of the MaddAddamites fall into the category of ‘ecotage’, which means performing various criminal acts (such as vandalism, arson, and threats) against the people, institutions and organizations that harm nature and the environment. Although its practitioners regard ecotage as a type of action that never harms humans, it is described as terrorist activity by law enforcement agencies and is often used synonymously with the concept of ecoterrorism or environmental terrorism (Wagner 2008, p. 25). According Zeb/the Mad Adam, “if you could destroy the infrastructure then the planet could repair itself. Before it was too late and everything went extinct.” (p. 462). They never intend to kill any living beings; their aim is to destroy infrastructure facilities causing environmental damage and to block the capitalist mode of production that facilitates consumerism.

Considering the end of the trilogy, it is not easy to determine whether Adam One, Zeb or Crake is correct in their proposed solutions. In a sense, it can be said that the story raises questions rather than provides answers. Adam One expects a final catastrophe for humans, a sort of blend of judgement day and the biblical flood that will bring about the end of humanity much like the early Christians expected the apocalypse, but in the meantime he does not ignore the possibility of being saved along with the other Gardeners since they are the true believers of this destiny. He seems to make a correct diagnosis of the social and political state of the world, one which had been heading towards a painful end due to environmental devastation. Under these conditions he prefers to carry out a pacifist strategy; instead of encouraging people to struggle with the system that caused the problems, he prefers to save as much as he can from the coming Flood.

However, most of Adam One's predictions came true, and after the outbreak, the survivors were able to establish a new order thanks to the trainings and philosophical doctrines of the Gardeners. Adam One, on the one hand, sees the world after the outbreak as a "disappointment", because "the debris left by the Waterless Flood is not attractive"; on the other hand he is satisfied with "how much clearer the air is, now that man-made pollution has ceased! (p. 509); he is certainly hopeful that nature will renew itself after a while. This point of view mirrors Deep Ecology's philosophy of showing equal love and respect for every creature in nature, whereas it would be incomplete and flawed for ecosocialist philosophy, which aims primarily to eliminate the source of environmental destruction through class consciousness and joint struggle.

The Gardeners project has failed in relation to certain issues. Some of the Adams and Eves, who are supposed to be experienced and dedicated members of the Gardeners, are not committed to their mission. For example, Burt/Adam Thirteen was secretly growing and selling cannabis in cahoots with the Corps agents. Lucerne had no ties with the group, except for her affectionate relationship with Zeb. The premises controlled by the Gardeners were seen as a shelter for people without an ID, like Toby and Amanda; they were there because they had no other place to go. In addition to this, although Adam One has managed to establish a spiritual lifestyle, in harmony with nature, he could

not put forward a solution and action plan that would attack the very root of the problem: the world of the Corporations that rule the world. He has created a vague apocalyptic vision that is a mixture of his accurate observations of circumstances and biblical myths. In a sense he has envisioned the ultimate solution as a punishment perpetrated by supernatural powers.

The MaddAddamites are not flawless either; they were working with Crake in the Paradise Dome for a long time, but none of them could conceive of his secret plans. That Crake accomplished the BlyssPluss project without being noticed, not even by Jimmy/Snowman and Oryx, shows that the MaddAddamites are too short-sighted to see what is right in front of them. These highly intelligent scientists could not prevent Crake's secret plans; on the contrary, they unwittingly made a major contribution to his extermination project. The real success of this group, from a radical environmentalist perspective, is their sabotage activities against infrastructure and industrial facilities, which were unlikely to be continued for a long time due to the security risks they create, however, they have certainly made a significant contribution to the rate of the process of regeneration after the outbreak by accelerating the decomposition of the artificial structures that damage nature.

Consequently, it is clear that both the God's Gardeners and the MaddAddamites represent the different tendencies and trends within real-life environmental movements. In this context, the failure and inefficiency of their reactions and suggested solutions for environmental problems, expressed explicitly or implicitly throughout the trilogy, can be interpreted as reflecting the author's criticisms against contemporary environmental organisations, whose failures, alongside the successes, might provide insights into how to shape the future of environmental movements.



5. CONCLUSION

The analyses and interpretations made in this work are based on the assumption that the relationship between humans and nature is largely determined by dominant culture in societies which shape the way how people work, interact, produce and consume, as well as having an effect on determining values – what the majority of the society considers right and wrong. In this context, a study of these values is necessary in any analysis of the increasing impact of environmental problems for which human behaviours and activities are seen to be responsible. According to this view, an examination of the environmental contents of Maggie Gee's *The Flood*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* clearly revealed that in order to develop an understanding about the direct relationship between human activities and environmental problems, deficiencies of the cultural structure need to be uncovered.

For this purpose, the perspectives of various radical environmental movements, mostly ecosocialist philosophy, have been used. At the same time, since the concept of 'human activities' also refers to economic activities such as production, distribution and consumption of products and services, Marxist criticism of the capitalist economic system – also known as the free market economy or liberal economy – has inevitably been included in the reading of the novels. According to the presuppositions of Marxist ecology and ecosocialist philosophy, an economic system that is obsessed with productivity and seeks continuous growth, in other words, a system that encourages unlimited growth within the limited ecosystems of planet Earth, will eventually lead to the exhaustion of the resources and dysfunction of the system. In this regard, environmental problems such as pollution, global warming, deforestation, endangered animals and depletion of natural resources can be determined to be the direct result of economic activities which should be the main issue of focus.

A reminder about the overall perspective of this dissertation, in which the economic structure is criticized and shown as the source of many problems, seems essential for the consistency of the evaluations of the novels: Ecosocialist philosophy is not strictly opposed to economic developments; rather it notices a necessity to suspend the economic activities that prevent healthy functioning of ecosystems. In the most basic sense, economic activities can be defined as providing people with the goods and services that they need for survival. However, the logic of the capitalist economy encourages people to consume more, purchasing goods and services that are not actually needed, which, in many respects, constitutes the core of today's economic activities. In this way, the capital accumulated in the hands of certain social groups or individuals turns into an instrument of political power. This power also enables the determining of the dominant ideologies in societies and the manipulation of cultural institutions.

The advances in technology and industrial production have accelerated this process in favour of the owners of capital. Additionally, modern sciences and technologies, in other words the knowledge and skills acquired throughout history as a means to master nature, have given humans the power to modify their environment in a way no other species has achieved. This power, in addition to the numerous opportunities and advantages it provides, has also placed great responsibilities on the shoulders of humanity. Therefore, modern humans are seen as being mainly responsible for the transformation of the natural environment that has accelerated with the industrialization process and has reached the uncontrollable dimensions it has today. With this understanding, a crucial question comes to the fore: Is it necessary to give up thousands of years of scientific development and hundreds of years of industrial production experience in order to be true environmentalists?

Ecosocialism is not against science, technology, or industrial production; it is against the way they are conducted according to capitalist understanding. Practitioners of this philosophy try to instil the necessary wisdom that economic activities need to be carried out in harmony with nature and the environment in a way that does not threaten the common future of humanity. As E.F. Schumacher (1975) states,

From an economic point of view, the central concept of wisdom is permanence. We must study the economics of permanence. Nothing makes economic sense unless its continuance for a long time can be projected without running into absurdities. There can be “growth” towards a limited objective, but there cannot be unlimited, generalised growth. It is more than likely, as Gandhi said, that “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not for every man's greed.” Permanence is incompatible with a predatory attitude which rejoices in the fact that “what were luxuries for our fathers have become necessities for us.” (1975, p. 33)

Unfortunately the cultural evolution of humankind has been far behind in fostering the consciousness required to change its unsustainable behaviour. The same determination can be made regarding the economic preferences in the post-apocalyptic novels examined in this dissertation. The unlimited growth inspired by industrial capitalism is in contradiction with the reality that the Earth's resources are limited and that it is primarily responsible for environmental destruction. The ecosocialist reading of these novels clearly reveals the flaws in the cultural structure and concludes that literary works of this kind will contribute to the cultural evolution process that will eventually lead to the kind of wisdom described by Schumacher, by causing the emergence of new ideas and providing positive awareness in societies on certain social, political and, most importantly, environmental issues.

Accordingly, in parallel with the principles of Marxist ecology and ecosocialist philosophy, this dissertation has shown that all three novels contain overtly-expressed or concealed messages that can create social awareness about the meaning of the natural environment and its benefit to human beings. These novels, on the one hand, raise the salient concerns of modern environmental movement such as global warming and climate change, industrial and urban pollution, inefficient use of water resources, rapid population growth, deforestation, desertification, polar melting, endangered animals and illegal hunting, importance of environmentally friendly technologies, conservation of biodiversity and implementing sustainable agricultural practices, on the other

hand, they make references to the social, economic and political relations that underlie these problems.

Naturally, each of the novels deals with these problems with their own unique approach. In *The Year of the Flood* the ecological crisis is caused by uncontrolled industrialisation and population growth which is revealed in almost all its detail. In this novel, rapid population growth is presented as one of the main reasons for environmental problems which has also had a direct impact on unconstrained consumption of natural resources and the deterioration of the environment. *The Year of the Flood* additionally includes references to a wide range of environmental problems, from climate refugees to biological and chemical pollution which are on the agenda of environmental activists today. It also points out the possible dangers of genetic research potentially disturbing the balance of nature. Consequently, it can be argued that environmental problems caused by human intervention are one of the primary themes of this novel.

The Flood, on the other hand, includes one of the visible impacts of global warming, the irregular precipitation that increases the risk of sudden floods. The city-state, in which almost the whole story takes place, experiences the effects of climate crisis as water covered streets. Gee's narrative primarily explores social problems by using environmental problems as a catalyst. Although the author constantly refers to environmental conditions throughout the novel, she does not place it at the centre of her story.

As for *The Road*, which is quite different from the other two novels in terms of its dark and pessimist tone, the ash-covered streets and the world deprived of green vegetation and non-human nature provide a convenient context for ecocritical readings by evoking the debates on deforestation and endangered species. Although most of its reviewers highlight the dark and bleak atmosphere caused by both the general characteristics of the setting and the man and the boy's desperate living conditions, *The Road* clearly emphasizes how indispensable the natural environment is for human life. In this novel, the story begins at least seven or eight years after an unspecified catastrophe. During this time, humans have consumed almost all of the food stock left from the pre-apocalyptic period, in addition to the other living creatures in nature. All the

trees and vegetation have dried up; there are no fish left in the oceans. As can be understood from the context, the apocalyptic event has eliminated nature's ability to regenerate, in other words, the destruction of nature has reached a level that could threaten the existence of human beings. In this way, *The Road* proves the validity of the first rule of ecology, that 'everything is connected to everything else', by emphasizing the invalidity of the humanist view that sees 'man as the centre of the universe'.

However, unlike other ecocritical readings of these novels, this study has emphasized the social, economic and political aspects of environmental problems holistically. Numerous reports by governmental or non-governmental organizations – some of which have been referenced – make it clear that the current state of the world causes great inequalities in terms of susceptibility to environmental problems. The disadvantaged sections of society who live in adverse socioeconomic conditions such as the unemployed, immigrants, ethnic minorities, elderly people and children are more vulnerable to environmental threats than privileged groups. All three novels, in perfectly reflecting the spirit of the time and the texture of their societies, inevitably employ a series of events that highlight these socioeconomic inequalities.

The Year of the Flood and *The Flood* shine a bright light on the impact of economic inequalities. In order to represent the pre-apocalyptic social stratification both novels depict the outskirts of the cities in detail. Gee's pre-apocalyptic London is strictly divided between the rich neighbourhoods in the North and the Towers, which suffers poverty and misery as well as the brunt of the floods, in the South. Such a division is obviously reminiscent of the current state of the world; the divide between the (rich) North and the (poor) South is a global phenomenon. The juxtaposition of the physical conditions of The Towers and those at the Gala event – an entertainment party for the city's *crème de la crème* – offers the clearest picture of the impact of human activities on the environmental crisis. The lavish consumption during the City Gala is proof of how capitalist exploitation is destroying wildlife, natural environments and resources that are the common heritage of all humanity.

Similar to the poor Towers/the prosperous North dichotomy in *The Flood*, in *The Year of the Flood* the privileged people of the Compounds isolate

themselves from the rest of society by means of gated communities. Multinational companies, which gather all administrative authority with the economic power provided by scientific knowledge and technology, have built hygienic utopias behind the walls, away from the pollution and dangers of the cities. These cities, the Pleeblands, are where the environmental problems caused by rapid population growth and uncontrolled industrial production make human life increasingly difficult. While biological and chemical pollution and depleted resources worsen the living conditions in the Pleeblands, the security forces of the Compounds keep society under strict control in order to prevent any rebellious or anarchist initiative. In this speculative future fiction, the whole order has been created according to capitalist logic. All actions that encourage people to spend more are permitted, regardless of whether they are morally correct or not.

The Road is not as straightforward as the other two novels on this issue; it addresses socioeconomic inequalities with allegorical implications. This novel tells of the desperate journeys of the survivors through the great mysteries of post-apocalyptic North America. In the meantime the social structure is divided between good and bad people according to the main character's practical point of view. The novel puts the meaning of human life, moral codes and social conventions into question by shedding light on the inner self of humanity, which is almost out of context for our modern civilized world. When all other living species with which they shared same ecosystem disappeared, some people turn into vicious monsters, the cannibals eating even the new born babies. In a Marxist reading, the man's distinction between good and bad people, that is, the distinction between those who go their own way without harming anyone and the terrorizing cannibal gangs, is undoubtedly an allegory of the distinction between the ecocentric lifestyle and the capitalist exploitation of nature. *The Road* also criticises against the basic parameters of capitalism by showing the invalidation of symbolic values of the commodities which are used by the system to make consumption culture permanent.

Their environmental content is not the only feature that brings these three novels together in an ecosocialist context but also their genre familiarity and the fact that they all reflect the social, political and intellectual agenda of the

periods in which they were written. Various reviews on these novels have shown that they all have multiple genre affiliations. However, since they depict a world after some kind of apocalyptic event which references different ancient and modern narratives about the end of humanity, they are generally categorized as post-apocalyptic. These novels are also categorized as dystopian due to their having sections comparing the periods before and after the apocalyptic event that caused considerable changes in the social order. Post-apocalyptic novels are generally included in the science fiction genre. The relationship of these novels to science fiction consists of their speculations about the future by taking into account the environmental, political and social situation of the present world. They reflect the socioeconomic conditions of the period in which they were written and thanks to this they provide useful material for a critical reading focused on the causes and effects of environmental degradation.

It is known that since the beginning of the 21st century there has been an increase in the writing of post-apocalyptic dystopias due to increasing concerns about the future of the world and humanity. An important part of these concerns is related to the increasing environmental degradation due to industrial activities and the consumption habits of modern societies. The dominant culture, however, shaped by neoliberal ideology, intentionally ignores the role of economic choices in these apocalyptic projections, because for the survival of this ideology, overproduction and overconsumption should continue at all costs; profits should be increased, capital should be accumulated and the wheels of capitalism should turn without interruption. Consequently, the fact that this system creates a heavy burden that our natural environment cannot bear should be hidden from people. Therefore, as Jameson (2003) claimed, “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.” This ideology tries to convince society that if one day capitalism comes to an end, it will only happen when the world comes to an end. The message is always the same, though hidden in different expressions in different contexts: humanity has reached the end of history, which is to say there is no alternative to the economic and social institutions brought by capitalism.

While saying that the novels inevitably support the claims of this dissertation due to their themes and the political agenda of the societies that have shaped the

legacy of the recent past, it does not mean that all the novels deal with the relationship between environmental problems and capitalism in a perfect and complete way. They bear the influence of certain cultural perspectives that have also been criticized by various environmental movements. A literary study drawing on Marxist tradition deals with the nature of messages towards repressive ideologies. In this context this study has determined that while handling their environmental contents, these novels occasionally misrepresent certain details about the subject matter. It would also be a deficiency not to refer to these misrepresentations from the viewpoint that intersects ecocritical and Marxist literary criticisms, which is to say that, throughout the critical reading of the novels, any detail that may support a repressive ideology and thus cause false consciousness has been noted as the occasion arose. However, in the novels, the relationship established between capitalism and human activities, and between human activities and environmental problems is so strong that they do not completely change the environmental messages of the novels; as suggested in the introduction chapter, the overall perspectives of these novels are still in accordance with the claims of the ecosocialist philosophy. Although certain deficiencies might detract from their success in delivering a fully consistent environmentalist message, they sufficiently raise the awareness required for the cultural transformation necessary for the construction of an ecological society.

It is generally accepted that *The Road* holds an exceptional position in the context of its environmentalist messages. However, certain details in the story and the author's remarks ignoring the possibility that environmental problems could one day make our planet a hostile place for humans have partially weakened this content. According to some critics, the post-apocalyptic conditions in *The Road* evoke an imaginary post-nuclear war period or a meteor strike event. This study, by examining the descriptions of urban and rural areas depicted during the man and the boy's journey, suggests that both possibilities are unlikely. However, there is also no detail linking the apocalyptic event to the current environmental degradation. The only certainty is that both the man and the strange wanderer Ely (and the author himself) blame humanity for the current situation.

Another flaw of the novel is based on a cultural misrepresentation frequently encountered in dystopic fictions. The human condition in *The Road* carries the traces of the cultural programming of a repressive ideology; the disappearing of the hierarchical society structure based on industrial capitalism seems connected to humanity as a meaningless concept. However, this relationship is a purely cultural construct and is not based on concrete facts. Human beings, like all living things, are a part of nature and with the disappearance of natural life they have been cut off from their roots. When we focus on the environmental messages of *The Road*, we can say that by implying the disappearance of a system, which is mainly responsible for the environmental devastation, the novel distracts the reader's attention from the main problem and weakens its ecological content.

The Flood has a long list of characters, most of which have already been used in the author's previous novels. Although the number of characters is almost comparable in length to that of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, there is not a single ecocentric character in real terms among them. In ecocritical readings, it is a general practice to identify the distinction between the environmentally conscious, ecocentric characters who are compatible with their natural surroundings and the anthropocentric characters who are under the influence of Cartesian philosophy. In *The Flood* Maggie Gee, despite focusing on individual responsibilities related to social problems and viciously satirizing them does not include any characters that would typically serve as a role model on account of their ecological consciousness.

Among the three novels examined in this study *The Year of the Flood* qualifies as the only work that is thoroughly an environmental project. Besides, Atwood's popular reputation as an environmentalist gives the novel a missionary tone even before opening its cover. As Maxwell (2010) rightly puts it, this novel is almost "a model by which we might alter our own behaviors to develop better relations with the living things around us" (p. 9). Yet, from an ecosocialist perspective, two details about the novel's environmental content can be regarded as slight flaws. The first is the abundance of distracting details and the complexity of the narrative, which put a strain on the clarity of the environmental content of the novel. The life stories of the characters and the

details of the events that carry the story forward are scattered throughout the entire trilogy, which exceeds 1300 pages. This structure gives the novel a partial ambiguity and occasional uncertainty in terms of its environmentalist and socialist messages.

Another flawed aspect of the novel is the disillusionment of God's Gardeners and the MaddAddamites, in relation to the deadly plans of Crake. These groups, which consist of conscious, committed and truly eco-friendly scientists, are incapable of recognizing the activities carried out by a single person. They sometimes display apparently self-contradictory behaviours and are distracted by occasional arguments; also, even if they make relatively well-established determinations on the relationship between environmental problems and capitalist exploitation, and exemplify many inspiring living practices in harmony with nature, at the end of the story, a sociopathic scientist was the one who saved natural life by killing almost everybody on Earth with a lab created virus. No environmental organizations, traditional or modern, mainstream or radical, would find such a solution acceptable.

An examination of the novels also draws attention to the multidimensionality of environmental problems. In this study, the economic aspect of the environmental problems related to different social, political or individual spheres are emphasized; however, the necessity of addressing the same issues from the perspectives of different schools of environmental philosophy has not been ignored. It is understood that the modern environmental movement has a fragmented structure and each element is defined under different headings, follows different organizational structures; in addition to ecosocialism, there are ecofeminism, eco-anarchism and social ecology, deep ecology and land ethics. It should be underlined that this fragmented structure is not a weakness for environmental movements.

Each of the three novels was written by novelists from a different Western country. Analysis has shown that each novel addresses different aspects of environmental problems; an issue that was ignored in one of the novels is emphasized in another. For example, *The Road* is the only novel that refers to the message given by the slogan 'there is only one world', which environmentalists often use, and in order to emphasize this fact, the UN has

designated June 5 World Environment Day. In McCarthy's novel, human beings have no other place to go; the end of nature is also the end of humanity. As for the other novels, the apocalyptic event does not bring an absolute end. As a result of this, for both novels, the 'dystopian' label fits more closely to their pre-apocalyptic periods. Although they have significant differences in terms of their causes and effects, the apocalypse in *The Flood* and *The Year of the Flood* brings about a better world for the survivors. In Atwood's novel, nature begins to heal itself after humans withdraw from the scene. Pollution and bad odours decrease rapidly, because there is no outside intervention in natural processes; besides populations of the species increase rapidly until the natural balance is restored. In the brief 'After' section of *The Flood*, Gee depicts a heaven-like setting. As well as the natural environment, relationships between people have improved too; prejudices, discrimination and inequalities have disappeared.

Lack of awareness associated with the destructive potential of science and technology which have become powerful and dangerous weapons in the hands of humanity, is brought to the fore in Atwood's novel. *The Year of the Flood* is the only novel examined in this study that explicitly expresses speculations about the possible consequences of technological advances carried out according to capitalist logic, without any responsibility to society. In the novel multinational companies, which monopolize scientific knowledge, have also begun to dominate the state authority over time. Ultimately, there is no one left to oppose this system, except for a group of anarchist religious sects.

In *The Road*, while the apocalypse causes electric appliances to stop working, traditional internal combustion engines continue to run, but few of them are running due to the depletion of oil. Apart from that, some simple gadgets such as the man's binoculars and the shopping carts still remain functional, and certain types of processed food such as expired canned food prove useful for the survivors. In *The Flood*, there is only one detail about science. While real scientists warn the City people about the approaching meteorite, neither the administrators nor the general public takes these warnings seriously. Instead, pseudo-scientific programs made by popular media figures attract more attention from the public.

The obvious difference between *The Flood* and the other novels is that it focuses more on current political and social problems. In this novel, while the signs of a global environmental disaster are becoming apparent, we are confronted with a narrative that shows how fragile the boundaries between political and individual spaces are. The errors of corrupted decision-makers and the insensitive people who avoid taking responsibility in the face of environmental problems are juxtaposed in a way that does not create very much contrast. Both *The Road* and *The Year of the Flood* describe environments in which the modern state becomes dysfunctional. Therefore, *The Flood* is the only novel that emphasizes individual responsibilities within the broad network of social and political relations in a way that reflects the condition of today's societies.

In the light of these examples it could be claimed that each novel emphasizes different aspects of environmental problems, but at the same time they intersect on crucial issues. Based on this an inference can be made in the context of environmental ethics; differences in environmental philosophies and environmental movements cannot be seen as deficiencies provided they can unite around a common purpose without either ignoring each other or losing their original identity. This common goal, in its simplest terms, is showing the necessary courage and determination to leave a self-sufficient and regenerative natural environment for future generations.

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