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# The Exploding Globe: Scale And Catastrophe In Contemporary Anglophone Literature

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# The Exploding Globe: Scale And Catastrophe In Contemporary Anglophone Literature

## **Abstract**

This dissertation interrogates the interconnections between catastrophe and globality in contemporary fiction, arguing that “global Anglophone literature” has emerged as a field decisively marked by political and aesthetic engagement with transnational crisis. Ongoing scholarly debates have questioned global Anglophone literature’s utility as a critical framework and argued over what texts belong in its canon. But scholars have tended too readily to enfold the phenomenon of a “global” English literature within a paradigm borrowed from anti-globalization movements rather than consider the distinct and often resistant narratives of globality emerging from literary works themselves. Against these established framings of global literature, my dissertation investigates an array of catastrophes—nuclear disaster, terrorism, pandemics, and the worldwide exploitation of animals—that, I argue, have come to occupy a central and determining role in literary representations of the global. Using a comparative method to highlight the shared urgency of catastrophe as it has been represented in contemporary fiction from around the globe, I reframe and recuperate global Anglophone literature’s importance as a literary field against critiques that have otherwise dismissed it as indicative of neoliberal politics and shallow multiculturalism. Whatever its national origins, each of the texts I examine offers a radically scaled-up view of catastrophe that transcends national boundaries and insists on the planetary nature of catastrophic damage or threat. In effect, the world as conceived by contemporary global fiction is poised in a state of explosion, perpetually expanding in scale and threatened with comprehensive destruction. As literary fields continue to expand outward from postcolonial studies and transnational studies to ever greater scales of analysis, my project thus traces the utility of “the global” for Anglophone literature in an era defined by rapid globalization and catastrophic risk.

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IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

Chris D. Jimenez

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in

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

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THE EXPLODING GLOBE: SCALE AND CATASTROPHE IN CONTEMPORARY  
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*For Dad*

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EXPLODING GLOBE: SCALE AND CATASTROPHE IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE LITERATURE

Chris D. Jimenez

James F. English

This dissertation interrogates the interconnections between catastrophe and globality in contemporary fiction, arguing that “global Anglophone literature” has emerged as a field decisively marked by political and aesthetic engagement with transnational crisis. Ongoing scholarly debates have questioned global Anglophone literature’s utility as a critical framework and argued over what texts belong in its canon. But scholars have tended too readily to enfold the phenomenon of a “global” English literature within a paradigm borrowed from anti-globalization movements rather than consider the distinct and often resistant narratives of globality emerging from literary works themselves. Against these established framings of global literature, my dissertation investigates an array of catastrophes—nuclear disaster, terrorism, pandemics, and the worldwide exploitation of animals—that, I argue, have come to occupy a central and determining role in literary representations of the global. Using a comparative method to highlight the shared urgency of catastrophe as it has been represented in contemporary fiction from around the globe, I reframe and recuperate global Anglophone literature’s importance as a literary field against critiques that have otherwise dismissed it as indicative of neoliberal politics and shallow multiculturalism. Whatever its national origins, each of the texts I examine offers a radically scaled-up view of catastrophe that transcends national boundaries and insists on the planetary nature of catastrophic damage or threat. In effect, the world as conceived by contemporary global fiction is poised in a state of explosion, perpetually expanding in scale and threatened with comprehensive destruction. As literary fields continue to expand outward from postcolonial studies and transnational studies to ever greater scales of analysis, my project thus traces the utility of “the global” for Anglophone literature in an era defined by rapid globalization and catastrophic risk.

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## Introduction: An Exploded View of Global Anglophone Literature

The first atomic bomb destroyed more than the city of Hiroshima. It also exploded our inherited, outdated political ideas. . . . We must aim at a federal constitution of the world, a working world wide legal order, if we hope to prevent an atomic World War.

—Albert Einstein et al., “An Open Letter to the American People” published in *The New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1945<sup>1</sup>

The catastrophe wrought by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki effectively ended World War II and ushered in a new political paradigm not only for the countries directly involved but for the world at large. At the moment of the bombings, however, many of the world’s countries had already been in the very process of negotiating a new global political order, symbolized by the end of the League of Nations and the ratification of the Charter of the United Nations on June 26, 1945. If the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lent seriousness to the above claim that the atomic age “exploded our inherited, outdated political ideas,” then the political reality in the aftermath of catastrophe meant that even the UN Charter’s new scope of international unity assembled in June would immediately have to be revised and expanded to take into account the possibility of global nuclear war after August. Thus, months before the UN Charter officially entered into force on October 24, 1945, it had already become outdated—*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and some fifty other newspapers

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Einstein et al., “An Open Letter to the American People,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1945. The letter also encouraged every American to read Emery Reves’ *The Anatomy of Peace* (1945), which caused sales of the book to skyrocket. Reves was one of the foremost advocates for World Federalism, a movement that advocates for the establishment of a global federal system of governance to prevent world war and ensure peace among nations.

published a letter co-signed by Albert Einstein and nineteen other prominent public figures arguing that the “[UN] Charter is a tragic illusion unless we are ready to take the further steps necessary to organize peace,” and that a peaceful future in the Atomic Age could only be ensured by means of legally mandated global cooperation.<sup>2</sup> We may read the letter as an important addendum to the UN Charter’s understanding of international responsibility, but just as important is its suggestion that the scale of destruction signified by nuclear threat had triggered a corresponding rescaling of how we should view the world. Though World Wars I and II amounted to mass destruction that could be felt on an international scale, the letter implies that the comprehensive threat of nuclear disaster solidly reframed the world’s geopolitical landscape from a mere assemblage of nations into a more unified space of global interdependencies. In this sense, the letter is an example of how global political discourse and even what is signified by “global” itself have developed against the backdrop of catastrophe—and more broadly speaking, in speculation of catastrophic futures.

With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the 9/11 attacks were taken up over half a century later not as a tragic event merely localizable to the United States but as one which symbolized the collision of worldly narratives. Like the pre-1945 political ideas that became “outdated” after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, contemporary literary representations of the world have also been “exploded” to the extent that catastrophic events like 9/11 have become entangled with global politics and symbolic conceptions of the world at large. For Salman Rushdie, one of the foremost Anglophone

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<sup>2</sup> Einstein et al., n. p.

authors of worldly novels, the 9/11 attacks were an almost literal representation of “the story of the Arab world smashing into the story of New York City,”<sup>3</sup> implying that, in the aftermath of the catastrophe, neither story could make sense without reference to the other. In meditating on how 9/11 has changed narrative space and scale, Rushdie’s concern about the difficulty of writing in an age where “everything connects to everything”<sup>4</sup> is a literary reflection of how catastrophe has rescaled the symbolic limits of contemporary literature to be global in scope. In similar fashion, Slavoj Žižek has compared the visual record of 9/11 to “Hollywood catastrophe movies,” reading the attacks as the spectacular realization of an American fantasy “about a global catastrophe that would shatter their lives.”<sup>5</sup> In Žižek’s view, neither Hollywood nor New York exists simply as an American space; both have deep ties to the global imaginary that are maintained through and against the discourse of catastrophe. In this regard 9/11 is hardly exemplary; the attacks demonstrate how ideas surrounding catastrophe and globality have become twin discourses, where narratives about one readily evoke the other. We can read into Rushdie’s use of the word “smash” a suggestion that catastrophe undergirds the development of globality in the post-9/11 literary imagination.

“The Exploding Globe: Scale and Catastrophe in Contemporary Anglophone Literature” interrogates the interconnections between catastrophe and globality in contemporary fiction, arguing that “global Anglophone literature” has emerged as a field decisively marked by political and aesthetic engagement with transnational crisis.

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<sup>3</sup> Lorenzo Perez, “Salman Rushdie on Novels, Freedom of Speech, Donald Trump,” *UVA Today*, September 18, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (New York: Verso, 2002), 17.

Ongoing scholarly debates have tended to question global Anglophone literature's utility as a critical framework and argued over what texts belong in its canon. But scholars have too readily enfolded the phenomenon of a "global" English literature within a paradigm borrowed from anti-globalization movements rather than considered the distinct and often resistant narratives of globality emerging from literary works themselves. Against these established framings of global literature, this dissertation investigates an array of catastrophes—nuclear disaster, terrorism, pandemics, and the worldwide exploitation of animals—that have come to occupy a central and determining role in literary representations of the global. Whatever its national origins, each of the texts I examine offers a radically scaled-up view of catastrophe that transcends national boundaries and insists on the planetary nature of catastrophic damage or threat. In effect, the world as conceived by contemporary global fiction is poised in a state of explosion, perpetually expanding in scale and threatened with comprehensive destruction.

Catastrophe, of course, has been a powerful narrative throughout all of history, and there is no shortage of literature from any era that makes use of its representational force. However, contemporary catastrophic fiction is unique for reasons that bear further examination and commentary, especially in relation to the institutionalization of global Anglophone literature in the academy. The response to the 1945 nuclear bombings as outlined above, for example, suggests that catastrophic events in the contemporary era impact the world in much more immediate and visible ways than in prior eras—even or perhaps especially for "world citizens" who have no direct relation to the catastrophic event itself. Present-day writers and readers alike have far greater access to catastrophic

reportage in cultural media such as literature and film; consequently, even as destructive events may be confined to a single corner of the globe, actors from around the world may now experience and participate in such events in real time. From this view, catastrophic fiction destabilizes longstanding literary categories based on geographic location, e.g. national literature, and indeed invokes the need for a global mode of analysis that can account for non-traditional views of literary space and time.

Moreover, catastrophic fiction is particularly useful as a counterweight to the world's globalized capitalist system, one which has been enjoying unprecedented economic growth. As the humanities and literary studies experience a generalized disciplinary crisis amid the privatization of higher education, catastrophic fiction provides a more distinct method of conceptualizing and periodizing the destructive consequences of capitalist progress. In this sense, contemporary catastrophic fiction brings into stark relief what Rob Nixon has called "slow violence," in which the destructive tendencies of a global capitalist economy are often not seen immediately or at a register that would elicit any appropriate or timely countermeasures. Nixon's writes that the concept highlights how global afflictions like climate change are often ongoing and unremarkable processes that occur "gradually and out of sight," against more traditional definitions of violence as "customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility."<sup>6</sup> If we accept Nixon's claim that much violence occurs on a long-term scale almost to the occlusion of the global capitalism's connection to it, then we may read

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<sup>6</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.

contemporary catastrophic fiction as a means of unearthing that connection and making it accessible for critique. In chapter 4, for example, I examine representations of global pandemics in speculative fiction and connect this imaginative fictional possibility to real-world developments in genetic engineering and biotechnology. What comes into view is the fact that scientific progress that promotes in the development of disease-resistant agricultural crops on one hand, for instance, is driven by capitalistic investments that adversely produce global economic inequality between first- and third-world countries on the other. Though such contemporary fiction exaggerates the dystopian potential of global capital for dramatic effect, even lowbrow literature of this sort can usefully expose how otherwise egalitarian global health initiatives can have calamitous consequences.

Lastly, contemporary catastrophic fiction is noteworthy for its close alignment with critical scholarship that describes the world as beset by perpetual global crises. The increased dialogue between fictional renditions of global catastrophe and the rise of scholarly investigations into its actual possibility make contemporary catastrophic fiction more materially relevant beyond mere metaphorical expression. In *Living in the End Times*, for instance, Žižek writes that:

The underlying premise of the present book is a simple one: the global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point. Its ‘four riders of the apocalypse’ are comprised by the ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself (problems with intellectual property; forthcoming struggles over raw materials, food and water), and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), x.

Žižek’s list of the “four riders of apocalypse” is but one of many similar lists of global crises created by scholars and public intellectuals alike, and I engage with each of them in the chapters set forth in this dissertation.<sup>8</sup> The crossover between academic discourse and contemporary fiction vis-à-vis catastrophe is not simply coincidence and at worst can be attributed to both the universal relevancy that inheres in “global” and the shared urgency prompted by “catastrophe.” That literature increasingly portrays catastrophic possibilities—and that our worldly future even includes the realistic possibility of catastrophe—is a signal that disaster writing in the contemporary era is an altogether different discursive practice than older forms of catastrophic fiction. As Eva Horn writes, “Thinking about the future, and even more so about the *future as catastrophe*, is epistemologically productive as a heuristic fiction.”<sup>9</sup> Horn’s point is that catastrophic thinking (or writing, in the case of fiction) is a means of producing knowledge about the world even in its rupture, and catastrophic writing is thus useful as a means of testing and apprehending the unpredictability of the globe during an era of perpetual crisis.

My insistence on connecting the development of globality to catastrophe, then, allows for an investigation into the utility and historical stakes of “global Anglophone literature” beyond anti-globalization critiques of the field while also emphasizing a more generative account of contemporary literary themes; in my view, the seriousness of catastrophe and its representation in global literature counteract what many scholars see

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<sup>8</sup> For a list of lists enumerating contemporary global crises, see Jernej Habjan and Jessica Whyte, eds., “Introduction,” in *(Mis)readings of Marx in Continental Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Eva Horn, “The Last Man: The Birth of Modern Apocalypse in Jean Paul, John Martin, and Lord Byron,” in *Catastrophes: A History and Theory of an Operative Concept*, eds. Nitzan Lebovic and Andreas Killen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014): 56-7.

to be the emptiness of “global” as a critical term in the contemporary era. Though there exists general scholarly consensus that “major revisions of the field of literary studies have focused on the idea of the world and worldliness,”<sup>10</sup> it must be acknowledged that this development has not occurred without controversy and skepticism that are themselves reflective of literary crisis. For Gayatri C. Spivak, for example, the propagation of the term “global” is neoliberal shorthand for “the financialization of the globe, or globalization as telematic development.”<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, for critics such as Emily Apter, the “global” serves as a problematically totalizing category that lacks the critical precision necessary for nuanced literary critique, swallowing up plurality into a “monoculture that travels through the world absorbing difference.”<sup>12</sup> These, to be sure, are important lines of critique. We must reject any critical paradigm that simply embraces the prevailing system of global literary production and the concomitant “easy” multiculturalism of literary identity politics. No doubt the term “global” is rarely as all-inclusive or egalitarian as it ought to be, which has led the editors of the infamous para-academic literary magazine *n+1* to declare that while “World Literature certainly sounds like a nice idea,” it has “become an empty vessel for the occasional self-ratification of the global elite, who otherwise mostly ignore it.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet there is a fine distinction to be made between understanding global literature as a field of literature that *comes* from the world, marketed as a pre-packaged

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<sup>10</sup> Madigan Haley, “The Novel at World Scale,” *Minnesota Review* 82 no. 1 (2014): 112.

<sup>11</sup> Gayatri C. Spivak, “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace: Revisiting the ‘Global’ Village,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 330.

<sup>12</sup> Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013), 83.

<sup>13</sup> See Carla Blumenkranz, Nikil Saval, and Dayna Tortorici, eds., “World Lite: What is Global Literature?” *n+1*, n. p.



representation of the globe's many cultures and nations, versus understanding it as a field of literature *about* the world, accounting for how literary representation and production have changed as worldly knowledge about international affairs and crises has become increasingly accessible to contemporary writers. On this note, it is telling that scholars have put pressure on the term "world literature" since the 1980s and have in turn supplemented it with "global." As a singular noun, "world" is a monolithic category inclusive of mankind's history (highlighted by the word's etymological roots in the German *were + old*, or literally the "age of man"), while "global" as an adjective can necessarily only qualify things in relative proportion to the world. In this sense, "global" is a modular and scalable category that can describe things lesser or even greater than the "world," e.g. we may have a "global" model of the world that cannot fully account for all things on Earth but we may also observe "global" properties that comprehensively apply to all known phenomena in the universe. In this narrow sense, the term "world" is a historical term that describes things as they have been whereas "global" has the capacity to account for unknown possibilities and futures.

Moreover, even before we begin to investigate the critical utility of the worldly turn of literary studies, it must be acknowledged that the field's use of the terms "global" or "world" has always been historically fraught. Standard histories of the field track its origins to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur* in conversations he had with his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in 1827. Critical of German parochialism, Goethe argued that "We Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like

to look about me in foreign nations . . . National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of world-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach.”<sup>14</sup> However, Goethe’s oft-cited forecasting of world literature is complicated by the fact that he defined it not as a tangible entity that exists on its own terms but rather in contradistinction to the nationalist foci of German and other literatures at the time. As Christopher Prendergast argues in *Debating World Literature*, “Goethe’s idea was itself cast in the form of a thought-experiment, a groping reach for a barely glimpsed future. . . . The idea is thus not, strictly speaking, ‘Goethe’s’ at all; it belongs to no-one in particular by virtue of the fact that its determinate shape and content are as yet far from clear.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, though Goethe may have popularized the concept of world literature, literary historian Wolfgang Schamoni notes that the concept likely has even older origins:

The term ‘*Weltliteratur*,’ generally assumed to have been coined by Goethe in 1827, was actually used for the first time in 1773 by August Ludwig Schlözer. The German Enlightenment historian used the term in a dissertation on Icelandic literature and history, in an age when growing curiosity about the ‘margins’ of Europe and beyond pointed towards a vision of ‘*Weltgeschichte*’; a history of universal human development.<sup>16</sup>

And beyond the concept of world literature as such, there is debate about the transnational social forces that led to its possibility in the first place. In *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, Paul Jay explains, for instance, that “the transnational turn in literary studies began in earnest when the study of minority,

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<sup>14</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Some Passages Pertaining to the Concept of World Literature,” in *Comparative Literature. The Early Years: An Anthology of Essays*, eds. Hans-Joachim Schulz and Philipp H. Rhein (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (New York: Verso, 2004), vii.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Schamoni, “‘Weltliteratur’-zuerst 1773 bei August Ludwig Schlözer,” *Arcadia* 43, no. 2 (2008): 288.

multicultural, and postcolonial literatures began to intersect with work done under the auspices of the emerging study of globalization.”<sup>17</sup> However, Jay himself argues that it is “a mistake to approach globalization itself as a contemporary phenomenon” and that “it makes much more sense to take a historical view in which globalization is dated as beginning in at least the sixteenth century and covering a time span that includes the long histories of imperialism, colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism.”<sup>18</sup> I marshal these accounts of the origins of world literature to suggest that the very conception of the “world” has historically developed in relation to contested definitions and continually rescaled symbolic understandings of global space and transnational geopolitical relationships.

To complicate things further, the historical and theoretical debates surrounding world literature also correspond to economic forces that have shaped the global development of literary trade. This global economic theorization of world literature originates from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels’ description of the concept in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country . . . In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. Trans. Samuel Moore (London: Verso, 1998), 37.

Though many regard Marx and Engels as building on Goethe's seemingly utopian view of literature's global capacities, Paolo Bartoloni reminds us that they heralded the concept "not so much on the belief of an aesthetic cosmopolitanism as on the assumption that literature, and art in general, had been transformed into a commodity."<sup>20</sup> In this view, global literature is not to be lauded for a perceived ability to look beyond the microcosms of national interest in the service of a more global or universal view of mankind; instead, global literature is "global" only insofar as literature has been produced in relation to an increasingly global—and globalized—system of cultural trade and encounter. Though its hazy origins and imprecise boundaries might make us skeptical of global literature as a critical framework, it is crucial to acknowledge that the field has been in constant development from its beginnings as economic and political interconnections between the world's many countries have deepened.

In short, the field of global literature itself has been embroiled in crisis from its very beginnings, and from this premise, we can better historicize where catastrophic fiction sits in relation to "global Anglophone literature," which is a more recent development stemming from the confluence of multiple fields: global literature, Anglophone literature, transnational studies, postcolonialism, and so on. Similar to anxieties invoked by the "global" in a broad sense, the increasingly global character of English literature has heralded a need for new analytic frameworks that can specifically account for the globalization of the English language. It is in this latter sense that James F. English argues that we should divest ourselves of the notion that the study of English

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<sup>20</sup> Paolo Bartoloni, "World Literatures, Comparative Literature, and Glocal Cosmopolitanism," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15 no. 5 (2013): 4.

is in crisis—it is clear that “English is becoming an ever more dominant language of a rapidly expanding global higher education system” and “Anglophone literature is becoming an ever more integrated element of the global media system.”<sup>21</sup> Yet even though global Anglophone literature has inherited the pre-existing canons and political freight of 1970s Commonwealth literature and 1980s postcolonial studies, its utility as a critical category has been insufficiently theorized. One issue is that of canon formation: it is uncertain whether “global Anglophone” is meant to index an all-inclusive egalitarian view of literature, where any text written in English across the globe is eligible for study, or if only texts with “global” significance are worthy for discussion. And beyond hand-wringing over its canon, many scholars have focused on the field’s putative implication that studying Anglophone literature can suffice for studying the world, problematized further by market conditions that some scholars fear may have watered down literary content due to “the leveling process of a spreading global consumerism.”<sup>22</sup> Even as the field has been swiftly adopted by a growing number of institutions and curricula over the past decade, debates among Apter, Prendergast, and other literary scholars such as David Damrosch, Franco Moretti, and Rebecca Walkowitz suggest that the propagation of “global Anglophone” as a category of analysis is as likely to be reductive as it is generative. From one perspective, the focus on Anglophone literature overdetermines English as the dominant world language, thus ignoring other languages and reinforcing an economically and culturally imperialistic Anglocentrism. From an opposing perspective, focusing on the English language’s global reach is viewed as a productive

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<sup>21</sup> James F. English, *The Global Future of English Studies* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 3-8.

<sup>22</sup> See David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 18.

way to decenter traditional scholarship by recovering overlooked literary peripheries. This latter group is composed of scholars such as Jason Frydman and Paul Gilroy, who locate the black Atlantic as the nexus through which English literary culture circulated and thrived globally, or Katie Trumpener, who employs a “transperipheral” approach that de-emphasizes Britain in the examination of Anglophonic literary exchange.

Building on these approaches, if we accept that “global” is a term in crisis, especially for literary studies, it is important to acknowledge that this terminological crisis has developed in correlation to the globalization of Western and Anglophone political and cultural discourse. As Ljubica Matek and Jasna Poljak Rehlicki note in *Facing the Crises: Anglophone Literature in the Postmodern World*, “It seems that crisis is the key word of contemporary Western culture,” adding that “Understanding Anglophone literature requires a deeper understanding of current cultural, economic and social processes in the globalizing and globalized culture of the West.”<sup>23</sup> Critiques of globalization thus coincide with critiques of Western and Anglophone discourse—but this is the very point: Anglophone literature produced under these conditions is not simply an *effect* of the crisis of globalization but indeed also a *representation* of it. Reframing global Anglophone literature from this perspective recuperates its value as a literary field against critiques that have otherwise dismissed it as perpetuating neoliberal politics and shallow multiculturalism. In this sense, my project understands the debates provoked by the “global Anglophone” not as an indication of its failure as an analytical lens but rather as a critical desire to decenter literary scholarship from Anglo-American

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<sup>23</sup> Ljubica Matek and Jasna Poljak Rehlicki, eds., *Facing the Crises: Anglophone Literature in the Postmodern World* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014), ix-x.

dominance. Accordingly, we should not shy away from global Anglophone literature because it is in crisis—crisis is the very basis for understanding contemporary Anglophone literature as it has become problematically globalized. As Alexander de Waal notes in *Capitalizing on Catastrophe*, it has long been known that “disaster reveals the hidden power relations of a society. . . . Calamity accentuates the preexisting gradients of inequity.”<sup>24</sup> Building on de Waal’s understanding of disaster’s revelatory capacity, I read the development of global Anglophone literature as a timely response to the globalization of literature vis-à-vis the Anglophone world, where disaster and catastrophe (in sociological accounts of the field and literary representations in texts) are reflective of inequity rather than perpetuations of it.

Accordingly, my dissertation makes an important distinction between “crisis rhetoric” and catastrophic discourse; the former is more suggestive of global political and social conditions in an unspecified sense whereas the latter gives representational or imaginative shape to such conditions so that they may be better understood or critiqued. The increased literary production of catastrophic fiction in the contemporary era may indeed be the natural consequence of longstanding feelings that globalization and late-stage capitalism are key players in the landscape of global crises. The atemporality of crisis—an atemporality given by the indistinct beginning and end of any given crisis—has become almost naturalized, where the threat of destruction or fallout is ever-present. Yet, as we see with the perennial “crisis of the discipline” conversations about the humanities or any similar discussions about the looming end of the world, crisis is as

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander de Waal, “Foreword,” in *Capitalizing on Catastrophe: Neoliberal Strategies in Disaster Reconstruction*, eds. Nandini Gunewardena and Mark Schuller (Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2008), ix.

indomitable as it is survivable. The happy fact that we are not utterly annihilated by crisis is diminished by its ability to forestall or overwhelm critique, whether because it is too complex to be addressed in any concrete way or because it exists on so large a scale as to have become constitutive of contemporary global life. We might say, then, that catastrophic fiction amplifies the weak signals of perpetual crisis and traces them to their ultimate manifestation, whether by tracing historical aftermath to older catastrophes or by speculating over the potential for new catastrophes. The capacity for writers to produce such fiction that spans time and space is fundamentally connected to the contemporary development of globality where, as Rushdie put it, “everything connects to everything.” It is through these distinctions that global Anglophone literature can be read not as the unfortunate result of literary studies in crisis but rather as possessing critical purchase on political and social issues through the lens of catastrophic representation.

As a phenomenon that operates on multiple scales simultaneously—local, regional, geological—catastrophe has allowed writers of contemporary fiction to extrapolate beyond national boundaries and produce narratives that can express, manage, and in a sense recuperate global crisis through specifically literary production. Theoretical investment in the “global” lies at the heart of many political and social concerns over catastrophe, including those involving the environment, nuclear technology, climate change, mass animal exploitation, war (including the War on Terror), and international health. As literature is increasingly produced with attention to these global discourses and the threat of catastrophe, the emergence of global Anglophone literature as a field of study thus reflects a scaling up of the stakes of literary critique.



This scaling up of the urgency of literary attention runs counter to the ossification of the global Anglophone canon, which tends to be organized around serious literary fiction and as such comprises a much smaller set of texts than general world literature. Accordingly, rather than understanding the “global Anglophone” as a subfield of literature merely consisting of works from a general assortment of English-speaking countries, my project reads global Anglophone literature for its participation in and critiques of emergent transnational movements that have been precipitated by real and imagined catastrophes. Given that catastrophe operates both on the scale of human life and on a geological scale, my approach to the field of global Anglophone literature is fundamentally interdisciplinary, borrowing from scholarship on postcolonialism, ecocriticism, animal studies, and biopolitics. Thus, in my chapter on Margaret Atwood’s popular *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003–2013), I show how the narrative speculatively imagines a genetically engineered pandemic as a means to critique Anglo-American capitalism’s unchecked influence on life sciences and global health. Likewise, my study of Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013) traces the transatlantic aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear meltdown and charts how such catastrophe enacts and sustains connections between strangers across the globe, whether through collective mourning or shared geological risk. By reassessing global Anglophone literature as a field energized by discourses of catastrophe rather than as a field founded on neoliberal and multiculturalist politics, my project ultimately seeks to take seriously the transnational ambitions of contemporary fiction for the urgency of its critiques instead of indicting it for complicity with literary marketing strategies.

Historically speaking, literature of catastrophe has often been connected to theological accounts of the world's origins and apocalyptic writing during times of natural or social disaster. In his analysis of disaster writing in Latin America, for example, Mark D. Anderson observes that in this kind of writing "catastrophic geological phenomena such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions only become disasters when they affect humans negatively and on a large scale," adding that cultural responses to disaster often result in "fierce competition over which interpretations hold sway over the collective imagination and, more to the point, the political establishment."<sup>25</sup> In the contemporary era, catastrophes have been connected in the Anglophone world to Western concepts of modernity especially in relation to theorizations of the world and society at large. Historicizing the development of catastrophe alongside modernity in the Anglo-American imagination, John McCormick writes for example that:

The catastrophe of the First World War not only altered society, it affected men's sensibilities as they had not previously been affected in modern times. The catastrophe brought into modern society a sense of urgency and a new tempo; it made for a new consciousness of self and of the place of the self in society; it created an atmosphere in which the loss of old certainties, the presence of new anxieties, and the thrusting forward of public issues combined to isolate man from man and group from group. The novelist promptly discovered that new techniques were required to express the new fragmentation of society. The novel of ideas, particularly for the English and American novelist, to whom ideas were traditionally distinct from literature, took on particular importance, for they learned belatedly what the continental writers had learned from Stendhal—that the novel was the unique instrument of the imagination for dealing with catastrophe.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Mark D. Anderson, *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), n. p.

<sup>26</sup> John McCormick, *Catastrophe and Imagination: English and American Writings from 1870 to 1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998): 41. In many ways, McCormick's argument follows from Paul Fussell that the literary tradition constitutes a unique means for apprehending and memorializing the horrors of disaster, such as the British experience of WWI in Fussell's case. See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

To the extent that modern conceptions of the world and society have evolved in relationship to contemporary catastrophic threat, global Anglophone literature emphasizes this development's connection to Anglophonic discourse, especially in the age of globalization where Anglo-American culture has gained political and economic prominence on the world stage. In this sense, "global Anglophone literature" is the logical extension of literary fields that sought to find footing in the political turmoil and national liberation movements of the 20th century; as writers around the world have produced texts to account for and come to terms with world war, postcoloniality, economic disaster, and so on, literature has been inflected by the increasingly transnational character of Anglophone politics. To the extent that these phenomena developed concurrently, therefore, disentangling "global" from "Anglophone" is far from an easy task. The following chapters of my dissertation extend McCormick's comments on early 20th-century Anglophone catastrophic fiction by examining how 21st-century literature has become the "unique instrument of the imagination" when dealing with more global forms of catastrophe.

My dissertation proposes that we understand the "global Anglophone" as a subfield of Anglophone literature in general, consisting not of works from particular locations (such as the Commonwealth or the Global South) but of works that contribute in especially vital ways to the production of discourses about the global. The study of Anglophone literature dates back at least to the 1960s, when it entailed the study of former British colonies (usually excluding the US); this was the field known as "Commonwealth literature." In the 1980s the field was reconstituted along more critical

lines in the form of colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial studies. But the most recent inflections of the “global” mark a significant departure from past literary fields both in scale and content. Accordingly, my project reads global Anglophone literature for its contributions to and critiques of emerging transnational social and political configurations. Unlike many other scholars working in this field, I do not categorically exclude the works of English or American writers from consideration. On the contrary, I treat the UK and the US as places where important global Anglophone production is taking place, and which any proper analysis of the field must take into account; however, I treat these not as nationalist spaces but rather as transnational switching points for global discourse. In this sense, my dissertation argues for the value of studying global Anglophone literature at a time when social configurations have expanded beyond older, now normative, categories of analysis: race/ethnicity, the nation-state, regionalism, and so on. By taking seriously the category of “global Anglophone,” we can recover historically overlooked intimacies and newly evolving communities that share in the production of global discourses such as environmentalism or animal rights. Reading literature in a global Anglophone framework not only locates the field as a significant revision to pre-existing modes of analysis but also highlights the field’s critical potential for reorganizing our understanding of the social and spatial configurations of literature produced across the Anglophonic world.

Given the unstable footing of “global Anglophone,” which is not yet fully formed or developed, I advocate for a comparative method in this investigation. In each chapter, I compare two related primary texts in order to make visible the contours and utility of

global Anglophone literature as a recuperative category of analysis. By employing a comparative method, I hope not only to highlight the sometimes counterintuitive linkages made possible by the category of “global Anglophone,” but also to expose problems inherent in other modes of analysis that would not be visible without reference to a global framework. This is partly the reason for my inclusion of canonical authors such as Salman Rushdie, J.M. Coetzee, and Zadie Smith; pairing these well-studied authors with other texts from geographically distant places highlights their global thematics and clarifies the nature of their contribution to discourses of globality. In this way, my dissertation shows how literature from many disparate locations, including Canada, Japan, the United States, England, South Africa, and Thailand, is consciously involved in a shared conversation of and about the global.

In my first chapter, “Nuclear Disaster and Global Aesthetics in Gerald Vizenor’s *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57* and Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*,” I examine how contemporary Anglophone authors portray nuclear disaster as a shared experience that surpasses nationalist, ethnic, and racial categories, requiring representation through new global aesthetic forms. Vizenor combines Native American storytelling and Japanese Kabuki drama to demonstrate how the present-day ideology of nuclear peace imperialistically perpetuates the destruction wrought by the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Similarly, Ozeki’s narrative is told through a fictional encounter with the found diary of Nao Yasutani, a Japanese teenager affected by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. Ozeki writes herself into the story as a metafictional character as a way to assert a transnational

US-Japan connection, thereby bridging temporal, spatial, and literary divides to represent how nuclear disaster engenders social affiliations beyond national boundaries. For both Ozeki and Vizenor, nuclear threat and disaster productively sustain otherwise illegible connections across global space, whether through collective mourning or the shared risk of global nuclear fallout.

My second chapter, “Nazi Ecocriticism in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*,” explores how contemporary Anglophone writers connect the genocidal exploitation of animals to the legacies of European biopower. This chapter identifies animal rights advocacy as particularly relevant to contemporary Anglophone literature’s critique of English imperialism, taking Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) as its prime objects of analysis. *White Teeth* explodes a local narrative set in London to reveal the global lineages of two family sagas that take place across England, Jamaica, and Bangladesh, and juxtaposes this narrative with that of “FutureMouse,” a mouse whose genes have been altered as a means to study cancer. However, the promise of FutureMouse and genetic engineering for the advancement of global health is marred in the narrative by its connection to Nazi eugenics and imperialist history. In connecting the family saga to a deep history of eugenics, Smith historicizes the technological backstory of modern-day Britain and shows how transgenic research on animals mirrors mass historical violence against minoritized populations. Likewise, Coetzee’s text critiques animal cruelty, comparing it to the treatment of Jews in the Holocaust, but does so within a philosophical context via the essays and mediations of a fictional author, Elizabeth Costello. By further

fictionalizing the concerns first raised by Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* underscores and satirizes the supposed liberal humanist foundations of animal rights advocacy. Both texts trace the question of animal rights to the legacies of English imperialism and colonialism, showing how debates over animal rights stems from a longer history of exploitation and cruelty in the Anglophone world. In doing so, both texts critique the foundations of liberal humanism itself, problematizing its purported ethical high ground when its legacy of violence vis-à-vis eugenics has resulted in the mass murder of humans and animals alike across the globe.

In chapter three, "Cosmopolitanism and the Neoliberal American Dream in *Fury* and *Netherland*," I read Salman Rushdie's *Fury* (2001) and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) as literary examinations of the deep interconnections between cosmopolitan ideals and the neoliberal politics governing the lives of American immigrants in the age of globalization. Set in the hyper-cosmopolitan space of New York City at the turn of the millennium, each novel explores the limits by which American society can promote multiculturalism and diversity while still adhering to the alienating neoliberal conditions that guide immigration and the global culture market. Fundamental to each novel's exploration of these topics is their treatment of the American Dream, an idealized national ethos that promises American citizens and immigrants alike the opportunity to freely pursue success and prosperity at all levels: social, economic, cultural, and so on. In exploring the American Dream as not just a national but in fact a cosmopolitan ethos, each novel examines and deconstructs the fantasy of prosperity for individuals that exist at the margins of the United States' neoliberal culture. Rather than providing readers with

a satisfactory resolution of the challenges facing American immigrants, *Fury* and *Netherland* instead express a deeply ambivalent sense that contemporary US society only celebrates multicultural diversity and other supposedly universal humanist ideals to the extent that they can be understood through the socioeconomic logic of capitalism—a political double bind that, following Peter Gowan, I refer to as “neoliberal cosmopolitanism.” In these novels, the destructive threat of terrorism becomes a symbolic avenue through which the neoliberal cosmopolitanism of the United States expands to global implications.

In my final chapter, “Bioeconomics: Speculative Fiction, Pandemics, and the Corporatization of Global Health,” I examine how Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy and Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* (2009) critique the corporatization of global health and the speculative risks posed by recent innovations in genetic engineering. I frame this chapter using the concept of “bioeconomics,” drawing on extant scholarship to highlight the ways in which the most urgent questions of health, biology, genetics, and personhood itself are being shaped by multinational corporations and the vectors of global capital. It is no surprise, for example, that the *MaddAddam* trilogy’s driving plot device—the spread of a devastating global pandemic—arises from a dystopian view of corporate-driven genetic engineering. *The Windup Girl* likewise deals with “calorie companies,” which invest in biotechnology and whose competition results in bioterrorism and widespread plagues. Pandemics thus function in these narratives symbolize the real-world consequences of capitalism on global health, illustrating how speculative global capital is inextricable from catastrophic risk, whether biological and economic.



Each of the above chapters engages with a specific form of catastrophe and the global conditions that could either result from it or lead to it. By interrogating the representation of catastrophe using this comparative framework, what emerges from my analysis throughout this dissertation is a sense that contemporary writers are producing literature according to larger and more interconnected scales of analysis; though each text may deal with a specific instance of disaster, such as nuclear destruction or mass population death, they all nonetheless operate according to a global politics and aesthetics by showing how disaster intersects other discourses beyond destruction and calamity. In effect, the destruction invoked by the catastrophes outlined here is given new epistemological and aesthetic meaning through literary representation, which uses the history or threat of such destruction to re-organize the scale and urgency with which we regard the world. In turn, the cultural work performed by the global Anglophone texts examined here goes beyond debates of literary value or even the sociological production of global literature as a system. Indeed, dramatization aside, contemporary catastrophic fiction projects forms of globality not simply because it is the product of globalized era but because it is a reflection of real, urgent, and large-scale threats facing the world.

With this in mind, perhaps what is most alarming about the aversion to global Anglophone literature as a newly developing literary field is critics' tendency to dismiss it as a mere rebranding of pre-existing fields—that it is just “postcolonial studies by another name,” that the field of English “has always been in crisis,” that we're really not doing anything new except resorting to a more marketable term. Why is this so alarming? One well-trodden and legitimate anxiety is globalization's co-optation of literature, where

the utility of literature has been reductively boiled down to a cost-value calculus and literary studies with it. For me, however, the other more pressing concern is that scholarly aversion to this development is masochistic and self-perpetuating—one need only flip a few pages deep in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to find another self-indulgent think-piece on the crisis of the humanities, the presumptive doom-and-gloom future of our once-hallowed discipline. Whether the field is in crisis or not, whether literature as an art form has become a disastrous shell of its former self, whether the future of literary criticism is dim—these are all distractions. The ubiquity of “field-in-crisis” rhetoric or the critical tendency to make value judgments about whether “global” is useful or accurate seems to me to be an obsession with the cry rather than awareness of the wolf. Another way of putting this is that “global Anglophone literature” is generally not examined for its descriptive capacity as much as it is feared for its prescriptive potential. For this reason, my dissertation’s claim about the interconnectedness between catastrophe and globality is not simply an exercise in parsing out literary themes in an arbitrary set of texts. Rather, I hope, my focus here is a suggestion that something as significant as “global” *isn’t* arbitrary even if it’s suspiciously vague; contemporary literature’s aspiration to globality in any sense makes literary representation ostensibly more useful than ever before, and scholarship’s presumption of the limits of literary scale is of less import than the catastrophic stakes of textual content. Whether “global” is the right term or not or whether what we’re doing is the same as we always have, it cannot be denied that the world *as we know it* is a more immediate entity than it has ever been and our collective awareness of the risks it faces has only recently begun to catch up. As

contemporary culture and literature come to grips with this radical rescaling of the world, our increasing focus on crisis and catastrophe may not be new but we ought to find value in how it expands our recognition of the magnitude of what is at stake for the globe.

**Nuclear Disaster and Global Aesthetics in Gerald Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57* and Ruth Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being***

As one of the earliest entries in what has come to be known as “Atomic Bomb Literature,” John Hersey’s “Hiroshima” (1946) serves as a point from which we might begin tracing the development of Anglophonic representations of nuclear disaster. First published in *The New Yorker*, the story documents six first-hand accounts of the atomic bomb from the perspective of Japanese citizens living in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945—the day the bomb was dropped. At over 30,000 words, “Hiroshima” occupied almost the entirety of the issue of *The New Yorker* in which it appeared, a decision which the magazine’s editors justified with the following preface:

TO OUR READERS. *The New Yorker* this week devotes its entire editorial space to an article on the almost complete obliteration of a city by one atomic bomb, and what happened to the people of that city. It does so in the conviction that few of us have yet comprehended the all but incredible destructive power of this weapon, and that everyone might well take time to consider the terrible implications of its use. The Editors.<sup>27</sup>

In material terms, Hersey’s “Hiroshima” thus represents the ways in which the atomic bombings not only destroyed the city of Hiroshima but necessitated a rupture in literary space itself. Its “incredible destructive power,” in fact, could only be approached through the carefully editorialized and scaled-up buffer of Hersey’s literary imagination. The story was an immediate sensation and its huge success motivated Alfred A. Knopf to publish it as a standalone book that went on to sell more than three million copies, thus serving as many American readers’ first encounter with nuclear weapons and the atomic

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<sup>27</sup> *The New Yorker*, August 31, 1946, 1.

bombing.<sup>28</sup> As the editor's preface above anticipated, "Hiroshima" has become a central starting point by which readers may begin to comprehend the terrible implications of the nuclear age. Implied in this use of the text, however, is the more important claim that literary practice—even in its disfiguration—is a vital means by which Anglophone writers manage and recuperate nuclear disaster.

Over 70 years have passed since Hersey's text and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki heralded the start of the Atomic Age, and the literary world has continued to produce a steady stream of new texts on the nuclear. As military scholar Thomas M. Nichols contends, "The physical properties of nuclear explosions are well understood; it is the political and social outcomes of nuclear use that are unknowable."<sup>29</sup> It makes sense, then, that the nuclear occupies a central place in the literary imagination, where the "unknowable" can be explored, critiqued, and even resolved through fictional experimentation. Literary scholar Paul Williams explains that "nuclear representations in Anglophone literary, filmic and other cultural texts since 1945 have been pivotal sites for the articulation of racial, ethnic, national and civilizational identities."<sup>30</sup> Yet despite the massive amount of fiction that has been borne out of the nuclear, from postapocalyptic tales of survival to utopian visions of harnessed nuclear energy, contemporary Anglophone authors have yet to exhaust the nuclear as an object of literary interest, particularly in relation to themes of threat, disaster, and survival. Given its history and

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<sup>28</sup> Jon Michaud, "Eighty-Five from the Archive: John Hersey," *The New Yorker*, June 8, 2010, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima>.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas M. Nichols, *No Use: Nuclear Weapons and U.S. National Security* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 181.

<sup>30</sup> Paul Williams, *Race, Ethnicity and Nuclear War: Representations of Nuclear Weapons and Post-Apocalyptic Worlds* (Liverpool: University Press, 2011), 1.

capacity to spur transpacific writing, Japan continues to serve as a key site for Anglophonic literary meditations on the nuclear. In particular, the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and, more recently, the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster have registered not only in 20th- and 21st-century global discourses of nuclear policy and protest but also in contemporary Anglophone fiction and literary criticism. Since nuclear disaster has persisted not only as a literary theme but also as a topic of global public anxiety, examining its representation in contemporary Anglophone literature will allow us to better understand new developments in the genre beyond Hersey's rendering of unadorned nuclear disaster tinged by imperialism, not only in regard to the nuclear but also in regard to the wider genre of catastrophe in general.

This chapter thus considers the following research questions: How has the representation of nuclear disaster changed in contemporary Anglophone literature? What place does Japan occupy in contemporary Anglophone fiction? Why has nuclear disaster continued to persist as a literary theme? What are the sociopolitical stakes of nuclear discourse as represented through literature? How are we to read literature in a contemporary age haunted by perpetual nuclear threat? To answer these questions and to better sketch out the development of catastrophe and its relationship to nationalism, imperialism, and literary aesthetics, I turn to two contemporary texts of nuclear disaster: one a Hiroshima novel and the other a 3/11 novel.

Gerald Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57* (2004) details the life of half-Japanese, half-Native American protagonist Ronin Browne, who spends the novel protesting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. The narrative shuttles back and forth between

Hiroshima and Nogales, Arizona, detailing the interconnecting lives of a revolving troupe of outcast and homeless characters. The novel's geographical toggle is mirrored by a formal one: *Hiroshima Bugi* has been labeled on its own book jacket as an “ingenious kabuki novel,”<sup>31</sup> a genre term coined by Vizenor to explicitly connect the novel form to the cultural and aesthetic features of traditional Japanese kabuki theater. The blending of genres in this sense also entails a commensurate blending of languages and cultural politics. Indeed, *Hiroshima Bugi* relies on a jarring juxtaposition of abstract prose and parodical academic exegesis to highlight the fraught connection between Japan and the United States. In short, a proper reading of the novel's cultural politics requires an international or even global framework that can examine its multiple geoliterary influences and forms in tandem.

Where nuclear disaster via war takes center stage in Vizenor's novel, Ruth Ozeki approaches the theme much more indirectly in *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013). Her novel's treatment of nuclear disaster is not exclusively connected to weaponry and World War II but instead considers, however circuitously, the implications and consequences of nuclear accident. The novel is told through a metafictional version of its author—a Japanese-American novelist named Ruth living off the coast of British Columbia—who finds the diary of Nao Yasutani, a Japanese teenager dealing with bullying, alienation, and attendant suicidal thoughts. Having recovered Nao's diary washed up on a beach, Ruth assumes it traveled from Japan as transpacific debris from the 2011 Tōhoku

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<sup>31</sup> I read the novel's “ingenious” self-aggrandizement as a tongue-in-cheek jab at the effusive praise hefted at world literature by publishers and marketers hoping to capitalize on exoticizing foreign cultures.

earthquake, tsunami, and subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. This causes Ruth to frantically worry about Nao's well-being and attempt to learn her fate by reading the diary for clues, translating its contents where necessary, and conducting internet searches for Nao's family. The novel is a particularly timely account of nuclear disaster; though published in 2013, the novel could not operate without reference to the 2011 meltdown of the Fukushima Daichii Nuclear Power Plant. Thus, the concerns raised by Ruth in the novel metafictionally echo the real-world concerns of Ozeki as an Anglophone author coming to grips with the global ramifications of nuclear disaster at a transpacific distance.

Comparing these two novels broadens how we might understand nuclear disaster in contemporary Anglophone fiction. Indeed, while Vizenor's novel is more explicitly political, Ozeki's is motivated by philosophical interests such as Buddhism and environmentalism. Still, neither novel adheres to a single nationalist ideology. The shuttling between Japan and the United States in Vizenor's novel, along with the rotation through characters of different permutations of mixed identity who resist clear national or ethnic identification, evinces a global view of nuclear protest presented through an aesthetic collision of diverse literary forms—from English to Japanese to Anishinaabe. Likewise, Ozeki's narrative destabilizes the transpacific divide between Japan and the Pacific Northwest by unearthing their mutual nuclear histories in addition to their shared interest in the affective connections made possible by transnational literary exchange through the novel and digital media. Importantly, both novels attempt to reimagine nuclear disaster in a utopian frame, transmuting catastrophe into recuperative political



action and generative global affiliations.

### **Nuclear Dialectics and Dark Tourism in *Hiroshima Bugi***

Born in Minnesota in 1934, Gerald Vizenor is an Anishinaabe writer and literary scholar who has taught Native American literature, among other topics, at various colleges and universities throughout the United States, including research institutions such as the University of California, Berkeley and the University of New Mexico. Considered one of the “most prolific contemporary Native American writers” working today<sup>32</sup> he has attained prominence as both a scholar and an author of over 30 books as well as numerous collections of poetry, haiku, short stories, and essays. Kathryn Hume argues that “Vizenor is a challenging, important, and ambitious writer who has gained some following but deserves wider attention.”<sup>33</sup> Part of the reason for his limited popularity, Hume adds, is that “he does not pander to Anglo norms . . . his writing is difficult, alien to most Euro-American traditions, and hard to describe or grasp.”<sup>34</sup> His status as a contemporary Anglophone writer is made more complex by his longstanding position in the very circle of literary critics that studies his work. Yet despite his central position in the academy and his relative success as an author, Vizenor’s affiliation with tribal culture makes him stand apart in some respects as an outsider, whose themes and traditions trouble normative modes of literary analysis.

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<sup>32</sup> Jeanne Sokolowski, “Between Dangerous Extremes: Victimization, Ultrationalism, and Identity Performance in Gerald Vizenor’s *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57*,” Special issue, *American Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2010): 717.

<sup>33</sup> Kathryn Hume, “Gerald Vizenor’s Metaphysics,” *Contemporary Literature* 48, no. 4 (2007): 580.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

According to Jeanne Sokolowski, Vizenor's interest in Asia began while he was stationed in Japan when serving in the US military during the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> There, he was exposed to the aftermath of the vast destruction of the nuclear bombings in World War II, and it was directly after his service that he first began to write, starting with haikus.<sup>36</sup> The publication of *Hiroshima Bugi* in 2004 should therefore be read as the culmination of Vizenor's longer scholarly and writerly fascination with Japan and its literary forms. However, the jarring confluence of Native American and Japanese themes and forms has made *Hiroshima Bugi* a rather difficult book to examine using traditional literary analysis. Sokolowski explains that the novel identifies the "historical and cultural links between Japan and Native America," and thereby continues "Vizenor's history of celebrating hybridity and cosmopolitanism."<sup>37</sup> By juxtaposing disparate cultural and formal elements, says Sokolowski, Vizenor underscores "the potential for chance encounters to compel a more dynamic construction of identity in a postnational, racially hybridized and hybridizing world."<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the novel owes its experimental form not only to Japanese Kabuki theater mixed with elements of haiku but also to Western mode of the novel combined with the competing mode of Native oral storytelling. *Hiroshima Bugi*'s form thus mirrors its content: the novel combines a transpacific array of literary

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<sup>35</sup> Sokolowski, 718.

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Vizenor recounts that he owes his first academic position to the haiku: "Professor George Mills hired me to teach at Lake Forest College in Illinois and inaugurated my career as a college teacher in the most unusual manner: haiku poems, not a doctorate, earned the highest honors." Quoted in Tom Lynch, "To Honor Impermanence: The Haiku and Other Poems of Gerald Vizenor," in *Loosing the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, edited by A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 204.

<sup>37</sup> Sokolowski, 718.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

traditions while also examining cosmopolitan and racial identity. By this token, the already acknowledged difficulty of reading Vizenor is intensified when “he goes global,” which makes some scholars, such as Hume, consider *Hiroshima Bugi* to be Vizenor’s “most challenging novel to date.”<sup>39</sup>

The novel’s complexity promotes globality by dialectically arranging its literary influences. It is divided between 2 narrators: Ronin Browne, the novel’s protagonist, and a nameless Native comrade of Ronin’s war veteran father. Each of the novel’s thirteen chapters begins with an imagistic kabuki-style narrative told in the first-person by Ronin, directly followed by a third-person, pseudo-academic exegesis by the nameless second narrator. True to his name, Ronin is a homeless wanderer residing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in order to protest it by heckling tourists, vandalizing monuments, and otherwise disrupting the park’s carefully crafted messages of peace. Rather than promoting true peace, which he considers to be made possible only by the real threat of war, Ronin contends that the park advances only a “simulated” version of peace, mocking it as a “vacuous shibboleth”:

The simulations of nuclear peace will be complete when the hibakusha, the atomic bomb survivors, wear souvenir tee shirts with messages such as, “Hiroshima Loves Peace,” or the entreaty “No more Hiroshima, August 6, 1945, A Day to Remember, Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima,” or the understated “Hiroshima, A-Bomb Dome,” with letters turned awry, as if the last two words had been cutely bombed. Tourists wear these vacuous shibboleths in the Peace Memorial Museum.

I mocked the awry worded tee shirt once at the museum and promised autographs to every tourist. The shop sold twice as many shirts that day, and no one, not even the peacemongers, caught the cruel irony of my autograph. I signed the name Paul Tibbets on each white shirt in bold cursive letters.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Hume, 584.

<sup>40</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 17.

The representation of the memorial park as a shrine to simulated peace is a strong indictment by Vizenor of the touristic use of memorials to promote political agendas. Vizenor's critique is two-fold: he not only criticizes the existence of these "shibboleths" as a commercial venture (represented through t-shirt sales), but he also takes aim at the passivity of visitors who adopt an uncritical and touristic relation to the memorial, the history on which it is premised, and the problematic political implications it continues to promote with regard to a false sense of peace and the perpetuation of imperialism. To solidify these critiques, the novel even provides explicit self-exegesis in the chapter following Ronin's: "Colonel Paul Tibbets was the pilot of the Enola Gay, the plane that released Little Boy, the first atomic bomb, over Hiroshima."<sup>41</sup> By providing explicit critique, however, Vizenor metafictionally calls on the reader to not remain passively satisfied in identifying the "cruel irony of the autograph," i.e., t-shirts promoting peace being marked with the signature of Tibbets who was responsible for dropping the bomb. With this allusion laid bear in dramatized fashion, Vizenor suggests that mere reading (even historical or critical in type) may be reduced to spectatorship without further engagement.

Indeed, the seemingly prescriptivist political intentions of this passage and others like it are complicated by the novel's dialogical form. In an interview following the publication of the novel, Vizenor explains:

In *Hiroshima Bugi*, there are two narrators. Two voices—one, the character who does these marvelous things, and then a friend of the character's father who knows about him and how things have gone and provides some thoughts for the reader, and he does this because in fact the character asked him to do this, sent him his

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<sup>41</sup> Vizenor, *Hiroshima Bugi*, 24.

stories and said “add some background here,” so he adds a chapter following. It's a way to avoid third person omniscience, which is a giant false voice.

But the style I wrote it in is the first narrator, my character Ronin Browne, is not speaking to a reader. He's speaking a kind of poem, and the dialogue is without direction or notation, you just have to hear it as it goes. That is, it is between someone. There's no “he said, she said,” and nothing about the quality of voice. It has to be imagined in the imagistic reduction of the quote. And it's very short sentences. That's also the style of kabuki, so I've borrowed this literary sentiment and practice in kabuki, which is also a fantastic play embellished with costume and gesture, and then these short dialogue sentences to which you really have to pay attention. And I expect readers to pay attention. If they don't, well go read the newspaper then, where it's “he said, she said” because they talk bullshit.<sup>42</sup>

Vizenor's description of the novel's dialectical structure emphasizes how the novel demands the reader to directly engage with the subjective embellishments of the first narrator but to do so with limited exposition and contextualization, where the second narrator “adds some background” yet *without serving as the final authority* for how to engage with, read, or understand the preceding sections. In effect, the novel attempts to interpellate the reader into a critical engagement with the novel at the same time that it satirizes academic efforts that would seek to pin it down with any static literary interpretation. By approaching its own literary construction as well as the question of the nuclear in a dialectical manner, the novel posits a politics of anti-imperialism while avoiding prescriptivism.

Vizenor's experimentation with multiple literary traditions follows from his commitment to a global cultural politics irreducible to any single nation, race, or ethnicity. Rather than consider this to be a loss of cultural authenticity or a form of monoculturalization, Vizenor celebrates the hybridity and mixing of cultures through the

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<sup>42</sup> John Purdy and Blake Hausman, “The Future of Print Narratives and Comic Holotropes: A Conversation with Gerald Vizenor,” *American Indian Quarterly* 29, no. 1/2 (2005): 221.

aesthetic use of neologisms such as “victimry” and “survivance,” each of which has since gained widespread use in Native studies. Against what he terms “victimry,” or “the tragic view of self and the nostalgic lament over past wrongs and acceptance of victim status,” Vizenor instead “focuses on the present and the future; he does not mourn nostalgically for a lost past.”<sup>43</sup> Vizenor terms this counter-tragic practice “survivance,” which is “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response.”<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, survivance is “an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it is by “reimagin[ing] the past with all its contradictions” through a mashup of transnational literary traditions that Vizenor is able to promote “a liberation of the past from the dominant liturgy and cultural determinism.”<sup>46</sup>

“Victimry” and “survivance” thus comprise Vizenor’s nuclear dialectic in *Hiroshima Bugi*. In other words, nuclear tragedy and its memorialization form the battleground between an implicitly imperialist victimry and the liberatory practice of survivance. Vizenor depends heavily on the novel’s mashup of global forms to animate his cultural politics between these dialectical poles. The multilayered literary forms of Vizenor’s novel function as a built-in basis for cultural interplay; to even understand the novel at a basic level requires sustained effort on the part of the reader to draw connections between its disparate elements. As Hume explains, “*Hiroshima Bugi* links Japanese history and identity construction to Native issues in the United States,

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<sup>43</sup> Hume, 600-1.

<sup>44</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 15.

<sup>45</sup> Gerald Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Purdy and Hausman, 214.

triangulating the relationship among the United States, its Native peoples, and postwar, occupied Japan.”<sup>47</sup> With *Hiroshima Bugi*, Vizenor recognizes the parallels between US-Japan postwar relations and the history of colonialist US paternalism towards Native Americans; in both, the rhetoric of victimhood serves as a means of reanimating and codifying tragedy in the service of continued imperialism. Therefore, Ronin protests the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and calls for Japan’s nuclear rearmament not only to disrupt the naturalized narrative of victimhood but also because he believes that fetishizing a politics of peace forecloses any real attempt at dismantling the ideologies of dominance and oppression.

The majority of *Hiroshima Bugi* is set in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, the key exhibit of which is the Atomic Bomb Dome, the skeletal ruins of a building that has remained standing despite having been located only 160 meters from the hypocenter of the atomic blast.<sup>48</sup> Though the park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996 as a symbol of peace and resilience, Ronin describes it with cynical suspicion: “Hiroshima arose out of the nuclear ruins to become a testy, prosperous city of peace and victimry. Millions of tourists treasure the origami cranes and forever recite the tragic stories of Sadake [sic] Sasaki.”<sup>49</sup> Ronin mocks present-day Hiroshima as a city whose present-day success belies its dark nuclear history, putting it on display for visiting tourists to reinforce a hollow politics of peace and the continued victimhood of Japan. The reference to Sasaki alludes to the true story of Sadako Sasaki, a child who survived

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<sup>47</sup> Hume, 718-9.

<sup>48</sup> Kanako Ide, “A Symbol of Peace and Peace Education: The Genbaku Dome in Hiroshima,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 41, no. 4 (2007): 13.

<sup>49</sup> Vizenor, *Hiroshima Bugi*, 2-3.

the atomic bomb only to die ten years later of radiation poisoning. Inspired by the Japanese legend that folding 1,000 paper cranes can grant a wish, Sadako set out to complete the requirements in the hopes she might live, though in some fictional versions of the story, such as Eleanor Coerr's popular children's book, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (1977), she dies before meeting her quota. The popularity of Coerr's book, which is a mainstay in elementary school reading lists across the United States, and the popularization of origami cranes as a worldwide symbol for peace demonstrate how literary representation can significantly influence popular discourse on the nuclear.<sup>50</sup>

Vizenor's juxtaposition of the Peace Memorial Park with the politically safe but quietest story of Sasaki does more than analogize them in a figurative sense: indeed, the real-world Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park actually features a statue of Sadako in its Children's Peace Monument as well as a collection of her personal belongings, including some of her paper cranes. Ronin's disgust at the exploitation of Sadako's story and those of other children victimized by the nuclear bombing lead him in his mission to combat "the egoism of the peace museum, the deceptions of governments, and the contradictions of history. The Atomic Bomb Dome is his Rashomon. The names, stories, and memories of thousands of children, burned to faint shadows, unnamed, and lost in the cryptic egotism of peace."<sup>51</sup> The Hiroshima memorial hence embodies Vizenor's concept of

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<sup>50</sup> Some of the original paper cranes folded by Sadako have been donated to places around the world that have experienced tragedy, including the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York. See Ari Beser, "How Paper Cranes Became a Symbol of Healing in Japan," *National Geographic*, August 28, 2015. This donation of Sadako's crane to the 9/11 memorial indicates how nuclear discourse continues to have global connections. It also helps demonstrate how the memorialization of 9/11, too, can be considered a type of American victimry in which peace symbolically plays into the apocalyptic rhetoric that gave way to post-9/11 US imperialism.

<sup>51</sup> Vizenor, *Hiroshima Bugi*, 133.



victimry; its romanticization of nuclear tragedy continues to reanimate the past at the cost of cultural erasure. However, though he mourns the children's deaths by observing their "ghost parade" every morning, Ronin recognizes that not only does the memorial's current-day proliferation of nuclear peace discourse whitewash history and cultural memory, it does so by intertwining the politics of imperialism and Japan's victimry through global tourism.

Vizenor's rendering of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park thus aligns well with what Malcolm Foley and J. John Lennon coined in 1996 as "dark tourism," defined as travel to places where large-scale tragedies or disasters have occurred. Hiroshima's reputation as a site of dark tourism dates back to as early as 1962, when *Time Magazine* criticized it for being "the only city in the world that advertises its past misery," which "has made an industry of its fate."<sup>52</sup> Yet it is only recently that Hiroshima has become a site of interest for scholars of dark tourism, despite admissions that "tourism development was a driving factor in the formation of Hiroshima memory culture right from the start."<sup>53</sup> Stephanie Schäfer's analysis of dark tourism in Hiroshima, for example, matches the cultural politics evinced by Vizenor's novel: "In general, scholars argue that the so-called a-bomb nationalism reflects the belief of many Japanese that they themselves have been victims of the war, thereby obfuscating memories of wartime militarism and colonialism."<sup>54</sup> Claiming that "Hiroshima's memory as peace culture was just one way in

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<sup>52</sup> Stefanie Schäfer, "From Geisha girls to the Atomic Bomb Dome: Dark tourism and the formation of Hiroshima memory," *Tourist Studies* no. 1 (2015): 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

which tourism fostered a whitewashing of atomic bomb memory,”<sup>55</sup> Schäfer argues that Hiroshima’s tourism industry has influenced its memory of the atomic bomb and Japan’s subsequent postwar identity and politics that have developed in wake of the nuclear destruction. Though she acknowledges that the city has historically struggled to distance itself from the negative connotations of “tourism” by framing the memorial with the more politically acceptable language of “commemoration,” Schäfer notes that, ultimately, “In the light of global attention and a steadily increasing number of tourists, [Hiroshima] lost to a sanitized atomic bomb tourism free of unwelcomed reminders of the past and the present.”<sup>56</sup> Examining *Hiroshima Bugi* through the lens of dark tourism reveals the ways in which global Anglophone literature itself risks perpetuating a touristic politics of erasure with regard to the nuclear. Yet rather than writing from a position that assumes cultural authenticity, Vizenor avoids prescribing a positivistic history of nuclear disaster, instead deferring to readers to (re)construct such history for themselves.

### **The Virtual Worlds of *A Tale for the Time Being***

Literary scholar Eleanor Ty introduces her interview with Ruth Ozeki by writing that “Immigrant and ethnic writing frequently addresses the dilemma of being caught between two worlds.”<sup>57</sup> Though “being caught between two worlds” is a common idiomatic refrain when it comes to describing hybrid individuals—those straddling multiple ethnicities, races, or nationalities—I highlight it here to suggest that, as it

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<sup>55</sup> Schäfer, 11.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Eleanor Ty, ““A Universe of Many Worlds”: An Interview with Ruth Ozeki,” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 38, no. 3 (2013): 160.

pertains to Anglophone literature, the phrase can be taken somewhat more literally.

Whereas *Hiroshima Bugi* fundamentally concerns a specific place, as indicated by its title and Ronin's physical occupation of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, *A Tale for the Time Being* departs from being solely about a US-Japan connection and strikes out a different tact: that of the multiverse.<sup>58</sup> In other words, though *A Tale for the Time Being* is interested in the geopolitical connections between Japan and the United States, its narrative is also premised on the virtual, literary, and imagined connections that exist between the two cultures. The worlds described by the novel (Nao's, Ruth's, Ozeki's) cannot be bridged except through literature. Ozeki's third novel is thus an exemplary model of global literature, as it demonstrates the power of literature to imaginatively create, sustain, and transcend transnational connections. And as it pertains to the discussion here, it is precisely through the engagement with the nuclear that this literature operates.

*A Tale for the Time Being* is an example of what is known as "3/11 literature," which describes literature that has been produced in the wake of the March 2011 disaster in Japan, where a 9.0 earthquake and tsunami caused almost 16,000 deaths and the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As Japanese literary scholar Masami Usui notes:

Literature has often been turned to during global chaos of world wars, terrorism, and unprecedented natural disasters due to rapidly advancing technology. As Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 created Atomic Bomb literature, 9/11 in New York created 9/11 literature. Named 3/11 after 9/11, the

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<sup>58</sup> To be fair, the differences I have drawn between the two novels will deconstruct upon closer examination; even so, comparing them here allows for greater clarity in terms of outlining how each novel takes its own unique approach to narrativizing its own globality.

giant earthquake and tsunami that hit North-East Japan on 11 March 2011 founded the 3/11 literature.<sup>59</sup>

Among the first Japanese writers to engage with 3/11 were Ryōichi Wagō and Hideo Furukawa.<sup>60</sup> Wagō originally released his 3/11 poetry, *Shi no Tsubute* (*Pebbles of Poetry*), as a series of tweets on Twitter using the handle @wago2828. Some Japanese scholars suggest that 3/11 literature has allowed the country to reopen discussion of *kizuna*, a cultural concept that literally means “bonds between people”; as Tamaki Tokita argues, “3/11 literature provides a model for Japan’s emotional and physical reconstruction through its resourcefulness and alternative vision of *kizuna*.”<sup>61</sup> As the government’s response to the “triple disaster” of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown has been considered by many to be gravely insufficient, 3/11 literature works to “address the problems inherent in the structure of [Japan].”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Tepco, the Japanese electric utility company in charge of the power plant and redressing the nuclear meltdown, has faced severe backlash for its perceived ineptitude in the wake of the disaster. Yet despite the widespread unrest that has developed across Japan, the existence of 3/11 literature (and its popularity as evidenced by Wagō’s wide and immediate following on Twitter) also represents the will of authors and readers alike to embrace

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<sup>59</sup> Masami Usui, “The Waves of Words: Literature of 3/11 in and around Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale of [sic] the Time Being*,” *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences* 208 (2015): 91.

<sup>60</sup> Takeshi Kimoto, “Post-3/11 Literature: Two Writers from Fukushima,” *World Literature Today* 86, no. 1 (2012): 18. Other Japanese examples of 3/11 literature include “Watari Risa’s *Daichi no Geimu* (2013), Tsushima Yuko’s *Yamanako Dome* (2013), Murakami Haruki’s *Colorless Tukururu Tazaki* (2013), and Oe Kenzaburo’s *In Late Style* (2013) to name a few.” Usui, 93. See also *March was Made of Yarn: Reflections on the Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and Nuclear Meltdown*, eds. Elmer Luke and David Karashima (New York: Vintage Books, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Tamaki Tokita, “The Post-3/11 Quest for True Kizuna— Shi no Tsubute by Wagō Ryōichi and Kamisama 2011 by Kawakami Hiromi,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 13, no. 7 (2015) 1.

<sup>62</sup> Kimoto, 18.

*kizuna* and attempt to forge new bonds in the wake of disaster.

Most authors of 3/11 literature are based in Japan. But the fact that Ozeki is an Anglo-American writer indicates that there has been a transpacific leap and “writing about 3/11 has finally crossed over the Ocean.”<sup>63</sup> The Fukushima disaster serves as an imperative backstory in relation to which the narrative can take place, as it sets the stage for the loss of Nao’s diary and its recovery by Ruth. However, though 3/11 is an important reference point for the novel, it is very much in the background, a nuclear specter that intermittently haunts the narrative without being mentioned more than a handful of times. As in form, so in content, as Ruth describes the disaster:

In the two weeks following the earthquake, tsunami, and meltdown of the Fukushima nuclear reactors, the global bandwidth was flooded with images and reports from Japan, and for that brief period of time, we were all experts on radiation exposure and millisieverts and plate tectonics and subduction. But then the uprising in Libya and the tornado in Joplin superseded the quake, and the keyword cloud shifted to *revolution* and *drought* and *unstable air masses* as the tide of information from Japan receded. Occasionally an article would appear in *The New York Times* about Tepco’s mismanagement of the meltdown, or the government’s failure to respond and protect its citizens, but this news rarely made the front page anymore.<sup>64</sup>

Ruth’s obsessive research into the 3/11 disaster is instigated by her curiosity as to the whereabouts and well-being of Nao, which grows greater the further Ruth reads into the diary. However, despite the wide accessibility to information about the disaster via the internet and media coverage, Ruth remains at an unbridgeable distance from learning what happened to Nao. In effect, the global information network is demonstrated to be wholly inadequate and incommensurate with Ruth’s transglobal affect in the form of

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<sup>63</sup> Usui, 93.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 113-4.

worry, hope, and curiosity about Nao's whereabouts and well-being.

Naturally, the receding coverage of 3/11 causes Ruth dismay as her research begins to falter, and she switches her attention to ponder more philosophical questions such as:

What is the half-life of information? Does its rate of decay correlate with the medium that conveys it? Pixels need power. Paper is unstable in fire and flood. Letters carved in stone are more durable, although not so easily distributed, but inertia can be a good thing. . . .

Does the half-life of information correlate with the decay of our attention? Is the Internet a kind of temporal gyre, sucking up stories, like geodrift, into its orbit? What is its gyre memory? How do we measure the half-life of its drift?<sup>65</sup>

These passages confirm that the immediate devastation of the 3/11 disaster holds the attention of Ruth and the global media only for a very brief period of time, but its rippling consequences— i.e., its “half-life of information”—are of prime importance for the story. Thematically, *A Tale for the Time Being* succeeds as a global Anglophone novel rather than simply a non-Japanese example of 3/11 literature because it both contextualizes the disaster as one amid many other events competing for global media attention and uses the disaster as a premise by which to explore more abstract concepts like information, history, and digital memory that have universal applicability. Ozeki's use of “half-life” is especially important as it indicates the novel's interest in nuclear physics as a metaphor for historical and cultural memory. References to the nuclear, quantum mechanics, and philosophical ideas based on such science allow Ozeki to historicize the Fukushima disaster as a global discourse with a tangible ideological afterlife.

Reading 3/11 through Ozeki's novel allows us to see how the Fukushima nuclear

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<sup>65</sup> Ozeki, 114.

disaster has escalated from a national crisis particular to Japan to a more global crisis. Rachel DiNitto writes that “The death toll of 3/11 alone, close to 16,000 people, qualifies it as one of the major disasters in Japan’s history, but not all suffering rises to the level of national trauma . . . March 2011 has clearly risen to the level of national trauma, not just because of the scale of the disaster, but because it has been socially constructed as such.”<sup>66</sup> I would take DiNitto’s argument one step further and say that the event has received attention on such a worldwide scale (Ozeki’s novel itself registering as part of that mass of world media) that it in fact constitutes a global trauma. The social construction of the nuclear disaster is important for understanding the ways in which global Anglophone literature is itself a participant in the adjudication of what constitutes a “global crisis,” as literary representation has far-reaching effects in influencing social perceptions. Moreover, the implications of the disaster itself—its consequences for nuclear discourse chief among them— also extend beyond the scale of the national and have influenced global public opinion to the extent that we cannot consider 3/11 to be isolable to Japan. Indeed, Ruth is able to articulate how the 3/11 nuclear disaster has affected those living across the Pacific Ocean in British Columbia: “‘Some of the oyster guys are worried about nuclear contamination,’ she said. ‘From Fukushima.’ . . . Oyster farming was the closest thing they had to an industry, now that the salmon run was depleted and the big trees had been cut.”<sup>67</sup> The transpacific effect of nuclear disaster on the Canadian “oyster farming” industry is both a literal comment on the environmental destruction of the Pacific Ocean wrought by nuclear contamination (which is itself one of

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<sup>66</sup> DiNitto, 342.

<sup>67</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 187.

many global ecological problems that include overfishing and deforestation) but also a metaphorical comment on the effect of the Fukushima disaster on the way nuclear risks are taken up into a discourse about the global economy. The widespread coverage of the disaster in global news media already implies the international significance of 3/11 but *A Tale for the Time Being* and other literary representations of 3/11 demonstrate that the disaster has altered nuclear discourse even at the colloquial level of Canadian fishermen.

The novel's examination of nuclear disaster adds to the significance of forging transnational affiliations because, like the practice of reading, nuclear discourse comprises a shared global experience. Fundamental for the novel's premise, disaster operates in the narrative as the implicit catalyst that provides Ruth with the physical opportunity to read Nao's diary as well as the motivation to determine her fate given the possibility of her death. Japan's historical legacy allows Ozeki to connect the 3/11 disaster to World War II given their shared involvement in nuclear tragedy, and she does this to promote a theme of global interconnectedness. In describing her writing, Ozeki admits that while her first two novels were more "issue-driven," *A Tale for the Time Being* tries for something different:

With this new book, it wasn't a single issue, per se, that interested me; it was more a sense of the way the world is now; it was sort of everything. It was everything that has happened in the past decade, personally as well as globally, in the post-9/11 period and since the turn of the millennium. But as I worked, this material kept expanding and looping back further in time, which makes sense because it is a tale for the time being. Time itself became the issue that I was exploring. The time framework kept getting larger and smaller and larger and smaller as I worked it, stretching back to the military strategies in World War II [1939-45] and the way that the history of the military-industrial complex in both Japan and America impacts our moment-to-moment experience, here and now.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ty, 161.



Ozeki's explanation here stresses how World War II and the nuclear bombings continue even today to shape our understanding of the world. Moreover, her reluctance to operationalize this history to comment on a specific political issue speaks to the unwieldiness of nuclear discourse, which as she notes, works recursively and expansively. In contrast to *Hiroshima Bugi*, where Vizenor constantly keeps nuclear consciousness front and center, Ozeki approaches the subject as interwoven with a set of other discourses that affect human experience on a grand historical scale. Nao echoes this sentiment when she says that a generational shift has occurred regarding Japan's historical memory of war:

Old Jiko says that nowadays we young Japanese people are *heiwaboke* . . . [which] means that we're spaced out and careless because we don't understand about war. She says we think Japan is a peaceful nation, because we were born after the war ended and peace is all we can remember . . . but actually our whole lives are shaped by the war and the past and we should understand that.<sup>69</sup>

Japan's relationship to war is inextricable from its nuclear history, but this passage suggests that the nuclear is one of many contemporary discourses over which ideological battles are being fought in terms of the politics of cultural memory or, more accurately, cultural agnotology. Framing Japan as a "peaceful nation" entails a cultural forgetting of its relationship to war and problematically extricates it from a longer global geopolitical history. The novel works to resist this forgetting by insisting upon historical commonalities, such as nuclear disaster, between 3/11 and WWII.

The imaginary worlds that are signified by Nao and Ruth's separate narratives also allow Ozeki to explore the ways in which the age of digital information technology

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<sup>69</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 180.

has created new conditions for virtual globality. Information acts not only as a neutral accounting of facts but the very basis for each character's continued existence—indeed, for Ruth, the determination of Nao's ultimate fate and possible death hinges entirely on finishing her reading of Nao's diary. Importantly, the ontological affordance of information is connected to the novel's rendering of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. In looking for further information about the fate of her family on the internet, Ruth comes across many online news articles and governmental documents. As she “pore[s] over reports of the disaster,” she reflects:<sup>70</sup>

You can't hold on to water or keep it from leaking away. This was a lesson that Tepco learned in the weeks following the tsunami, when they pumped thousands of tons of seawater into the reactor vessels at the Fukushima nuclear plant in an attempt to cool the fuel rods and prevent the reactor meltdowns that in fact had already happened. They called it the “feed and bleed” strategy, and it created about 500 tons of highly radioactive water each day—water that needed to be contained and kept from leaking. . . . Information is a lot like water; it's hard to hold on to, and hard to keep from leaking away. Tepco and the Japanese government tried to contain the news of the reactor meltdown, and for a while they were successful in covering up crucial data about dangerous radiation levels in the region surrounding the crippled plant, but eventually the information began to leak. Japanese people pride themselves on being stoic and slow to anger, but the ongoing disclosures of mismanagement, lies, and cover-up touched a deep core of rage.<sup>71</sup>

By comparing information to water as an ephemeral substance that can “leak away,” Ozeki shows how the full story of the Fukushima disaster was slow to render but eventually made its way out not just to the Japanese public but also to a global internet audience. Though this may seem like an optimistic view of information as truth that cannot be concealed indefinitely, it is actually the opposite. Information is problematic

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<sup>70</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 196.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-7.

precisely because it can be temporally manipulated: Tepco's withholding of information allowed it to forestall local repercussions and damage to its corporate reputation but this myopic strategy may have worsened the spread of nuclear contamination. As Ruth laments, "The radioactive levels of the contaminated water were about a hundred times over the legal limits, but the Pacific Ocean is vast and wide, and Tepco didn't foresee a problem. . . . The company didn't estimate the consequences to the fish."<sup>72</sup> Symbolically linking information to contaminated water allows Ozeki to demonstrate the ways in which information is always already dangerous if mismanaged and at risk of creating far-reaching (i.e., global) consequences beyond our local expectations. Rob Nixon's theorization of "slow violence" is particularly apt in reading this passage, as he writes of "catastrophic procrastination" employed by transnational corporations that strive to stall the "environmental justice campaigns that seek compensation, remediation, and restored health and dignity. Under cover of a variety of temporal orders, the company can hope that public memory and demands for restitution will slowly seep out of sight, vanishing into the sands of time."<sup>73</sup> Tepco's cover-up of the true extent of nuclear contamination may have come to light but its withholding of information shielded the company from even greater sanctions due to the temporal exhaustion of truth-seeking and memory fatigue. Conversely, the long-term environmental damage caused by the nuclear disaster were potentially exacerbated due to the delay in reporting the magnitude of the problem.

Digital information also presents in the novel as beyond personal control, which

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<sup>72</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 197.

<sup>73</sup> Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 60.

gives it the potential of being used as a weapon made all the more vicious by the unpredictability of the digital transmission. Unbeknownst to her family for the majority of the narrative, Nao plans to commit suicide because she has been brutally bullied and sexually molested by her classmates. In addition to hitting her, ostracizing her for having lived in the United States, and performing a fake funeral as a means to ignore her existence thereafter, her classmates corner her in the bathroom, strip off her clothes, and make a video recording of almost raping her. To maximize her suffering, they then upload the video to the Internet:

They posted the video on the Internet that night. One of my classmates emailed me the link. The image quality from the keitai phone cams was crap, grainy and shaky, and you couldn't really see my face too clearly, which I was grateful for, but the video was awfully clear. With my arms and head tied up in my skirt and my naked legs kicking, you could almost say I looked like a giant prehistoric squid, squirming and oozing ink from my ink sac in a futile attempt to confuse my predators.<sup>74</sup>

Though Nao survives the traumatic event, it severely deepens her depression and she resigns herself to work as an escort at a maid café. News of the video spreads throughout her school and Nao's stolen bloodstained panties make their way to an online auction website, further compounding her violation through digital transmission. The sale of her sullied panties to a perverted stranger constitutes a depersonalized yet hyperpublic form of sexual trauma from which there can be no escape or overcoming since it has been eternalized in the internet's archive of digital information.

In effect, *A Tale for the Time Being* identifies the protection of digital information as an important consideration in the management of contemporary global life. Such

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<sup>74</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 278.

information is more than a symbolic signifier for a person or culture that exists in the “real” world, as its presence as a virtual currency is at once an ontological condition. The cultural curation of information is thus critically important to Ozeki, which connects her work to the social science of “Agnology,” which she personally defines as “the willful construction of ignorance . . . The black holes in our knowledge and memory can be created by political will but also just by neglecting to tell the tale. Jiko’s life story is a case in point. We know a little bit about her history, but most of it, like the history of many women, has just dropped out of being.”<sup>75</sup> Nao and Ruth exist as information for the reader—and so do the 7 billion other people worldwide with whom the reader will never physically interact. Advancements in telecommunication and information technologies mean that people living in the contemporary era are caught between two (or more) worlds now more than ever before—the real world and the imagined worlds of others to which they do not have physical access. For Ozeki, however, though nuclear disaster may wreak destruction, its global significance allows these imaginary worlds to be bridged through the recuperative practice of literature in the digital age of information.

Ultimately, Ruth finding Nao’s diary washed up as transpacific debris is symbolic of how literature operates as an affective platform for recording information and history, even if it is tragic or catastrophic. Though Nao remains a physical stranger to Ruth for the entirety of the narrative, Ruth becomes emotionally invested in Nao’s well-being to the extent that she gets into arguments with her husband and has dreams and visions about the diary. Eventually Ruth reaches the final pages of the diary only to find that they keep

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<sup>75</sup> Ty, 170.

changing each time she attempts to finish the Nao's narrative. As Nao's fate is left hanging in the balance, Ruth ironically thinks "If mean, if she stops writing to us, then maybe we stop being, too,"<sup>76</sup> calling attention to Ruth's own status as a fictional character whose existence depends on the real-world reader's active performance of reading. Extrapolated to the rest of the narrative, Nao's virtual existence as well as her ultimate fate are shown to be the result of Ruth's (and the real-world reader's) reading practices. The incredible cruelty Nao experienced both in the diegesis of the diary and her potentially catastrophic death in the extradiegetic context of the nuclear disaster would otherwise have been historically forgotten—or indeed never happened—if not for the practice of reading. However, the novel ends with Nao's narrative re-writing itself with the implication that she survived everything and reached a place of emotional stability: "And maybe you'll be glad to know that for the first time in my life, I really don't want to die . . . At least until I finish writing [Jiko's] story, I absolutely don't want to die."<sup>77</sup> The practice of enduring past trauma and the active literary performance of reading and writing constitute Ozeki's recuperative politics in the face of nuclear disaster. Though Nao's terrible fate early in the narrative is a result of Ruth's persistent reading of the diary, Nao's salvation and in fact her implied afterlife beyond the text is dependent on a global affective literary politics that does not shy away from catastrophic possibilities.

## Conclusion

Vizenor and Ozeki's novels show that nuclear discourse and its history exist at a

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<sup>76</sup> Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 344.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

greater scale than the unit of the nation and will continue to affect the world's cultural and political future. For literature in particular, nuclear disaster serves as a basis from which to explore and strengthen a global politics of affiliation, with far-ranging implications for historical memory, the perpetuation of imperialism, and the geopolitical organization of the world. Both authors show that the tragic rhetoric that accompanies nuclear disaster often occludes productive recuperation and may in fact perpetuate victimization. *Hiroshima Bugi* shows how Japan's adherence to an ideology of peace paralyzes the country in a state of victimry where nostalgic romanticization of nuclear tragedy has become self-perpetuating. For Vizenor, the solution to victimry is survivance, the active practice of assuming narrative control and reimagining it to resist the forces of imperialist domination and cultural determinism in the present. As it concerns nuclear disaster, the practice of survivance entails understanding the effect the atomic bombings have had not just on the victims who lost their lives but also on the aesthetic and cultural production of art, storytelling, and philosophy that has been created or inspired by the event. *A Tale for the Time Being* suggests that nuclear disaster increases the chances that the cultural memory of individuals may be forever lost, either as a direct effect of the disaster's ability to destroy lives or as an indirect result of being subsumed into the greater story of nuclear disaster only to be made irrelevant when the world's attention quickens to a new crisis. However, the novel also shows how nuclear disaster is embedded in a network of deep historical connections across both time and space; these connections transverse boundaries and through that process are made accessible to a global array of readers. Even if nuclear disaster installs an impassable distance between

such individuals, reading serves as a means by which readers can (re)animate culture, heal tragedy, and give imaginative life to other global subjects.



**Nazi Ecocriticism in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*  
and J.M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello***

It was the biggest catastrophe of my life. Until the day I die people will keep saying, 'Leni is a Nazi', and I'll keep saying, 'But what did she do?'<sup>78</sup>

—Leni Riefenstahl on meeting Hitler

In 2002, to little fanfare despite it being her 100th birthday, Leni Riefenstahl released *Impressions of the Deep* (*Impressionen Unter Wasser*), a marine-based documentary that showcased what the once-acclaimed director saw to be the beauty of the underwater world and how it is at imminent risk of destruction. Having not released a film for over 25 years, Riefenstahl had been all but forgotten as a filmmaker, and she produced the film not as a “comeback” but with the hope that the film would “touch the viewer's conscience as it illustrates just what the world will lose when nothing is done to stop the destruction of our oceans.”<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately for Riefenstahl—who first earned global attention as the director of the infamous Nazi propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will* (1935) (*Triumph des Willens*)—her historical connection to Hitler and Nazi Germany biased critics' reception of her latest film and overshadowed any of her newfound ecocritical impulses. The catastrophe of Riefenstahl's career, as she herself suggests in this chapter's epigraph, is that her work has been and will always be contaminated by an association with the Third Reich. The fact that nearly all reviews of *Impression of the Deep* were framed with reference to Riefenstahl's unbecoming past

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<sup>78</sup> Leni Riefenstahl qtd. in "Her Films Glorified Hitler now Leni Riefenstahl's Story Hits the Screen." *The Scotsman*, June 11, 2012, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/world/her-films-glorified-hitler-now-leni-riefenstahl-s-story-hits-the-screen-1-2348588#ixzz4AG2FUovX>

<sup>79</sup> Christopher Jones and Andrew Pulver, "In the shadow of the swastika," *The Guardian*, August 22, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2002/aug/23/artsfeatures>

suggests that even the transition to a project as politically sanitized as advocating for underwater marine life could not allow her to escape her disparaged connection with Nazism and the Holocaust.

Rather than regarding Riefenstahl's choice of directing a film with ecocritical politics as a failed attempt to escape her connection with Nazism, we should consider why such an attempt might have succeeded in the first place—and how such disparate discourses as ecocriticism and Nazism could share a connection even across a wide temporal span. As this chapter explores, there is a historical connection between the catastrophe of the Holocaust and contemporary ecocritical politics of animal rights and welfare. As scholar Greg Garrard notes, “The Nazis’ ideology promoted a mystical link between ‘Blood and Soil,’ while their legislative program included progressive measures on nature conservation, protection of small farms, and animal welfare”—an uncomfortable truth that has “generated a certain anxiety among historians and ecocritics to disassociate modern environmentalism from Nazism.”<sup>80</sup> Though Garrard asserts that “the seeming kinship of Nazism and ecologism is largely superficial,”<sup>81</sup> their connection highlights how the legacy of the Holocaust played a role in the counter-promotion of liberal humanism and its catastrophic ramifications for animal life. As Richard Crownshaw explains in *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture*, “While the expanding Nazi state was based on the exclusion of the cultural religious and ethnic differences primarily embodied by its Jewish inhabitants,” the post-

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<sup>80</sup> Greg Garrard, “Heidegger Nazism Ecocriticism,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 17 no. 2 (2010): 251-2.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

Holocaust memory promoted “a liberal humanism that did not recognize difference but sameness.”<sup>82</sup> Liberal humanism in this context refers to a specific form of humanism that gained full articulation in contrast to Nazism and other totalitarian discourses in the mid-20th century; though it promotes more general humanist ideals such as agency, equality, and autonomy for every individual, the actual practice of liberal humanism often fell short or even foreclosed any possibility of these ideals for minoritized populations.

To distance themselves from any association with Nazism, Britain and the US began employing liberal humanism as a moral and political philosophy in the name of democracy and freedom. Yet, as Amy Hungerford notes, these ideals often did not translate into actual practice:

During the Cold War, a liberal humanism prevailed that emphasized the importance of democracy, freedom, and equality at the expense of recognizing the institutional and cultural differences that kept women and people of color from having equal access to those very goods. . . . discourse about the Holocaust during this time followed suit, focusing less on the specificity of Jewish suffering and the dangers of state-sponsored racism than on the suffering of the individual under a totalitarian state.<sup>83</sup>

Operating from the idea that adopting a counter-discourse to Nazism would guarantee them moral superiority, Britain and the US adhered to liberal humanism for the latter half of the 20th century, thereby promoting capitalism and its various forms of exploitation under the guise of purportedly irreproachable humanist ideals. Riefenstahl’s case exemplifies how global public opinion continues to propagate a deep revulsion to Nazism

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<sup>82</sup> Richard Crownshaw, *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 278.

<sup>83</sup> Amy Hungerford, *The Holocaust of Texts: Genocide, Literature, and Personification* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 11.

even if it entails the total dismissal of an otherwise agreeable ecocritical politics. The message seems to be: humanism, at all costs. Under this mantra, however, liberal humanism may be at risk of potentially enacting catastrophic damage on a scale similar to the Holocaust— after all, critics disregarded Riefenstahl’s goal to help curb the massive destruction of underwater marine life ostensibly because liberal humanism could not forget her connection to Nazism even for the greater ecological good.

Two contemporary novels, Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), suggest that Riefenstahl’s catastrophe might also work in the reverse: whereas the director’s career and final ecocritical film experienced box office failure as a result of the long memory produced by her connection to Nazism, the contemporary world is at risk of a counter-catastrophe that entails a forgetting of the historical linkage between Nazism and the destructive potential of liberal humanist ideology if left unchecked. To animate this linkage, both novels portray present-day animal rights advocacy as intimately related to questions surrounding Nazi eugenics, genetic science, and the limits of liberal humanism itself, where the political message of democracy and freedom obscure global exploitation of biopower for animals and humans alike. As such, the novels project and critique the catastrophe represented by liberal humanism and its contradictory promotion of ecopolitics. However, both novels also suggest that the material forces of history, e.g., the genetic code embedded in the mouse and the physical-temporal limits of human life, possess recessive truths with the potential to counterbalance dominant narratives.

*White Teeth* explodes a local narrative set in London to reveal the global lineages of two family sagas that take place across England, Jamaica, and Bangladesh, and juxtaposes this narrative with that of “FutureMouse,” a mouse whose genes have been altered as a means to study cancer. The utopian promise of FutureMouse and genetic engineering for the advancement of global health is marred in the narrative by its connection to Nazi eugenics and imperialist history. In connecting the family saga to a deep history of eugenics, Smith historicizes the technological backstory of modern-day Britain and shows how transgenic research on animals mirrors mass historical violence against minoritized populations. Likewise, Coetzee’s text critiques animal cruelty, comparing it to the treatment of Jews in the Holocaust, but does so within a philosophical context via the essays and mediations of a fictional author, Elizabeth Costello. By further fictionalizing the concerns first raised by Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* underscores and satirizes the supposed liberal humanist foundations of animal rights advocacy. Both texts trace the question of animal rights to the legacies of English imperialism and colonialism, showing how debates over animal rights stems from a longer history of exploitation and cruelty in the Anglophone world. In doing so, both texts critique the foundations of liberal humanism itself, problematizing its purported ethical high ground when its legacy of violence vis-à-vis eugenics has resulted in the mass murder of humans and animals alike across the globe.

For Smith and Coetzee, the contemporary catastrophe envisioned by their novels does not amount to immediate an large-scale destruction such as nuclear disaster but instead comprises a much longer-scale erosion of ecocritical practices at the behest of

liberal humanist progress. Both authors cite the eventful catastrophe of the Holocaust in historicizing longer histories of mass scale animal exploitation across time and global space. In this regard, the catastrophe represented in these novels is altogether different from the nuclear disaster of chapter 1, for instance, in the sense that its contemporary manifestation is ongoing and naturalized. Yet the novels' insistence on tracing the historical connections between the Nazism and mass animal exploitation suggests that the development of modern global politics and ecological practices are foundationally influenced by the catastrophic ramifications of the Holocaust. Other catastrophic subplots in the novels pale in comparison. Even *White Teeth*'s ecoterrorist bombing plot is rendered comically incompetent so as to suggest that it cannot amount to a catastrophe. Yet the novel leaves the reader without resolving the fates of its human characters as well as the fate of its non-human animal character as they bear forward into a future that bills itself as inclusive and multicultural. For this reason, reading the novels in relation to catastrophe and the Holocaust brings into relief their shared critique of liberal humanism as a counter-discourse to Nazism; the purported progressive politics marked by humanist ideals of equality and freedom deconstruct in each narrative when put into juxtaposition with the violence inflicted against animals. In the case of *White Teeth*, Smith creates an analogy between liberal humanism and specicism, suggesting that liberal humanism's historical overlap with racism has not disappeared in recent years but instead continues through an assumed superiority over animals and the natural world. The novel's genius genetic scientist, Marcus Chalfen, for example, constantly work to assert his intellectual dominance over biological life, even comparing himself to God at one point in the novel.

His scientific comportment comes off as impartial at first but his development throughout the novel suggests that even his seemingly benign mission to work on health technology is a reiteration of older forms of oppression against not just his lab animals but also other humans.

In a critique of the humanities and social sciences, animal rights activist Cary Wolfe contends that “critics of racism, (hetero)sexism, classism, and all other -isms that are the stock-in-trade of cultural studies almost always remain locked within an unexamined framework of *speciesism*. This framework, like its cognates, involves systematic discrimination against an other based solely on a generic characteristic—in this case, species.”<sup>84</sup> By privileging the human at the top of a hierarchy of species, liberal humanism contradicts its own ideals of egalitarianism and rationality. The novels analyzed in this chapter suggest that critiquing liberal humanism from the context of a greater or more enlightened humanism is fundamentally limited—even drawing out the unintended institutional or tacit modes of liberal humanist oppression against minority populations is liable to reiterate other forms of humanist dominance. Instead, *White Teeth* and *Elizabeth Costello* satirize liberal humanism by showing its historical connection to Nazism and the catastrophe of the Holocaust on one hand and also by giving imaginative life to animals on the other (Kafka’s ape Red Peter in Coetzee’s case and FutureMouse in Smith’s). The catastrophic legacy of the Holocaust is brought to bear in both novels to highlight the ways in which liberal humanism problematically ignores the non-human animal as fundamental to the health and prosperity of the human.

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<sup>84</sup> Cary Wolfe, *Discourse of Species and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1.

Though this chapter fundamentally deals with fictional texts, it is important to note that I am not simply speaking of literary or metaphorical animals. It would be exactly contrary to these novels' politics to suggest that they portray animals only as a means to engage with or propagate a solipsistic human history. Put another way, I argue that these texts do not necessarily reduce animals to symbolic images that are reflective of Anglophone culture; indeed, the resistance of animals to symbolic reduction is one that is implicitly critical of an imperialist Anglophone history. Smith and Coetzee may "use" animals as representative figures in their texts, but they do so as counterfigures to Anglophone interests. Their novels deal seriously with *real* animals that, while fictionalized, are nonetheless part and parcel of our material history. This may read as an obvious point but it is important nonetheless to acknowledge how Smith and Coetzee's critiques rely on the existence of the material life (and animals) beyond the text—and in this regard, the scale of their novels is global in the literal sense of relying on the natural world. Put another way, it is easy to read Smith and Coetzee as merely using animals as a type of straw man figure to expose inherent contradictions in liberal humanist ideology. However, viewing the novels' use of animals in this way limits the full extent of their representational utility; indeed, giving full acknowledgment to the reality of animals in these novels highlights the urgency of the real-world, mass-scale violence propagated by an anti- or non-ecological liberal humanism. It is in fact that very reality of animals that allows for writers such as Smith and Coetzee to demonstrate the limits of liberal humanism as a means to expand their critique of its problematic connection to Nazism



and imperialism.

### **FutureMouse and the Nazi Genealogy of Liberal Humanist Science**

Marcus saw clearly now what he had previously only suspected, that if it were not for the mouse there would have been little interest in the book at all.<sup>85</sup>

While *White Teeth* may be read as a critically generative example of contemporary postcolonial literature, its historical critique of genetic science puts the progressive foundations of liberal humanism into question. The motif of teeth as a metaphor for the rootedness of culture and both the narrative of FutureMouse and genetic modification imply that the next era of human development is on the precipice of drastic challenges to present-day humanism not only on a cultural level but also on a biological level. Smith's genetic metaphors regarding teeth, hair, skin, etc. as well as her rendering of FutureMouse suggest that supposed progressiveness of liberal humanism can be connected to a history of Nazism and should therefore be considered suspect. *White Teeth*'s sci-fi elements are thus more than a mere fictional plot device and instead operate as a means to critique liberal humanism. The genetic modification of FutureMouse operates outside of a purely scientific vacuum; indeed, any modifications imposed on FutureMouse are connected to a longer backstory of eugenics and cultural imperialism. As our contemporary world hurdles toward an era in which these scientific developments are becoming not only possible but increasingly championed as the future of medical practice, Smith suggests that scientific progress as currently practiced is either naively or

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<sup>85</sup> Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 346.

purposely forgetting important historical connections that may reiterate cultural inequalities.

Though there is a fair amount of criticism on *White Teeth*, not many scholars have offered sustained readings of FutureMouse. Most readings of the novel read the mouse as a metaphor to examine the difficulties of assimilation and multiculturalism and how these can be traced to longer legacies of British imperialism.<sup>86</sup> These more or less traditional postcolonial readings usefully demonstrate how the novel critiques both historical and modern forms of imperialism. These readings come in various forms, some of which connect Smith's multicultural characters to Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity,<sup>87</sup> or to a general view that every living human is in some way postcolonial and hybrid,<sup>88</sup> or that, against hybridity, we are instead a "mix" of discrete races or ethnicities.<sup>89</sup> Some argue that *White Teeth* may not be as multicultural as is claimed, such as Jarcia Linn Watts' sociolinguistic reading that demonstrates that the novel's use of language does not represent the real kinds of "language crossing" that take place in diasporic communities.<sup>90</sup> Despite their interpretations of how Smith represents multiculturalism in *White Teeth*, all of these scholars demonstrate a similarity in how they approach the novel

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Matt Thomas, "Reading *White Teeth* to Improve Intercultural Communication," *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2009): 15-30. Or see Lydia Efthymia Roupakia, who says, "*White Teeth*'s impressive cast of ethnically diverse characters has drawn the attention of critics interested in multicultural politics" in "On Care, Ethnicity, and Reading Practice: Re-Reading Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*," *Literature Interpretation Theory* 26 no. 1 (2015): 150-171.

<sup>87</sup> Laura Moss, "The Politics of Everyday Hybridity: Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*," *Wasafiri* 18 no. 39 (2003): 11-17.

<sup>88</sup> Dominic Head, "Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*: Multiculturalism for the Millennium," in *Contemporary British Fiction*, Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham, Philip Tew, eds. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003): 106-119.

<sup>89</sup> Nick Bentley, "Re-writing Englishness: Imagining the Nation in Julian Barnes's *England, England* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*," *Textual Practice* 21 no. 3 (2007): 483-504.

<sup>90</sup> Jarcia Linn Watts, "'We are divided people, aren't we?' The politics of multicultural language and dialect crossing in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*," *Textual Practice* 27, no. 5 (2013): 851-874.

from a fundamentally humanist standpoint, privileging Smith's critique of multiculturalism and hybridity while still operating with an anthropocentric framework. I argue, however, that Smith's representation of multiculturalism and hybridity give way in the novel to a deeper, ethical commitment to animals. Of course, humans are included in this category, but not as special and prioritized members.

*White Teeth's* significance stems not simply from its representation of multicultural individuals living in the wake of various forms of imperialism but more fundamentally from its critique of liberal humanism that excludes animals from its purview. In effect, then, *White Teeth's* critical power depends on the FutureMouse subplot. Some scholars have addressed FutureMouse but only to highlight the ways in which the novel exemplifies anxieties about biotechnologies and their lack of cultural nuance.<sup>91</sup> As Michele Braun writes, "Ignoring the 'mouseness' of the mouse is an instrumental view of the animal, so that the extrapolation of this view to humans . . . draws our attention to the danger of Chalfen's reductionist view of the mouse and thus the reductionist effects of genetic determinism."<sup>92</sup> Braun does well to show how Smith critiques a point of view that identifies animals only as "sites of experimentation" without seeing how such a practice is reductionist for both animals and humans and can give cause for exploitation. However, in merely analogizing between the mouse and the human, Braun does not explicitly highlight the ways in which Smith takes aim at the very foundations of liberal humanism as speciesism, and I would add to her commentary that

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<sup>91</sup> Michele Braun, "The Mouseness of the Mouse: The Competing Discourses of Genetics and History in *White Teeth*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 48, no. 2 (2013): 221-236.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

the novel's representation of FutureMouse, especially as its fate is connected to a longer backstory of Nazi eugenics, suggests that the massively exploitative and murderous treatment of non-human animals amounts to a type of catastrophe invisible to liberal humanist ideology. In short, rather than viewing FutureMouse as an analogical character that metaphorically represents genetically oppressed humans, we should view FutureMouse as a material example of the limits of liberal humanism.

Smith troubles the distinction between humans and non-human animals at multiple points in the novel by describing FutureMouse using human characteristics and also by emphasizing the mouse's possession of human genetics. Irie Jones, a young half-Jamaican student and one of the novel's protagonists, comes to work for Marcus, who is gaining public notoriety for his work on FutureMouse. The novel's initial descriptions of the mouse occur when Irie becomes Marcus' assistant and he shows her pictures:

[The first] was of a mouse on its back. Its stomach was littered with little mushroom-like growths, brown and puffy. Its mouth was unnaturally extended, by the prostrate position, into a cry of agony. But not genuine agony, Irie thought, more like theatrical agony. More like a mouse who was making a big show of something. A barn-mouse. A luwie-mouse. There was something sarcastic about it. . . . The next one was of the same mouse, as far as she could tell, this time on its front, where the tumours were bigger. There was one on its neck that appeared practically the same size as its ear. But the mouse looked quite pleased about it. Almost as if it had purposefully grown new apparatus to hear what Marcus was saying about him. Irie was aware this was a stupid thing to think about a lab mouse. But, once again, the mouse-face had a mouse-cunning about it. There was a mouse-sarcasm in its mouse-eyes. A mouse-smirk played about its mouse-lips. . . . Now FutureMouse© was being held by his front paws by two pink giant fingers and made to stand vertical like a cartoon mouse, thus forcing his head up. He seemed to be sticking out his little pink mouse-tongue, at the cameraman initially and now at Irie. On his chin the tumours hung like big droplets of dirty rain. . . . One eye was closed, the other open. Like a wink. A crafty mouse-wink.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Smith, *White Teeth*, 281-2.

The detailed characterization of FutureMouse is a method by which Smith injects dark humor into the novel, using the mouse's "sarcastic" and "cartoon" features as a way to show how his terrible fate—being purposefully injected with cancer—is trivialized by the humans who would benefit from any scientific results derived from the experiment. Anthropomorphizing the mouse creates a sense of sympathy that would otherwise be denied to, say, a common non-descript lab rat. FutureMouse is exemplary *because* he has human features like mouse-lips and an outward sticking mouse-tongue; these features allow him to be useful as a genetic laboratory for Marcus as he seeks to cure cancer but they also trouble the foundations of liberal humanism because they literally humanize, both emotionally and materially, a non-human creature. FutureMouse thus literally and figuratively represents how liberal humanism has historically overlooked or even egregiously oppressed disprivileged humans and animals alike.

FutureMouse should be considered more than a fictional device by which Smith explores postcolonial concerns of diaspora and multiculturalism, as it is not mere science fiction. While Smith satirizes Marcus by extrapolating the so-called objectivity of genetic science to deconstruct its reductionist tendencies, FutureMouse has a real-world counterpart known as the Oncomouse, a type of transgenic laboratory mouse first developed in the early 1980s that was genetically modified to carry a specific gene called an activated oncogene and which can be used for tumor and cancer research.<sup>94</sup> Given that FutureMouse is based not on a narrative fancy but rather on a real scientific development,

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<sup>94</sup> For an in-depth history of the OncoMouse, see Douglas Hanahan, Erwin F. Wagner, and Richard D. Palmiter, "The origins of oncomice: a history of the first transgenic mice genetically engineered to develop cancer," *Genes & Development* 21, no. 1 (2007): 2258-2270.

our reading of Smith's characterization of the mouse must take into account implications that exist beyond rendering it as a metaphor for the effects of Anglophone imperialism on the cultural or racial Other. Smith is not conjuring a Derridian *animot*, which Émilie Hache and Bruno Latour define as "those paper animals that Western philosophy mobilizes in order to think about itself (rather than to think with and about—to learn with and about—others),"<sup>95</sup> and we must take seriously the fact that FutureMouse represents both a real mouse whose biological and genetic fate have been distorted and exploited by science but also a genetically modified mouse that therefore exists as a form of intellectual property (like the Oncomouse, which gained notoriety for being the first patented living animal in 1988).

A recurring motif in *White Teeth* is its critique of the false liberalism indicative of popular media such as newspapers, magazines, and television, and the public announcement of FutureMouse is one scene where we can further see Smith's critique of liberal humanism at work. As Marcus plans to hold a public and televised conference about FutureMouse that will later become the last scene of the novel, he gives Irie a press release to read to a journalist, the triumphant conclusion of which reads:

The Future Mouse© experiment offers the public a unique opportunity to see a life and death in "close-up." The opportunity to witness for themselves a technology that might yet slow the progress of disease, control the process of ageing and eliminate genetic defect. The Future Mouse© holds out the tantalizing promise of a new phase in human history where we are not victims of the random but instead directors and arbitrators of our own fate.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Émilie Hache and Bruno Latour, trans. Patrick Camiller, "Morality or Moralism?: An Exercise in Sensitization," *Common Knowledge* 16, no. 2 (2010): 315.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

The promise of FutureMouse is one of a “new phase in human history” but such a portrayal entails the collapse of “humans” into a monolithic, homogenous category that elides cultural difference. The irony, of course, is that Irie is the one tasked to deliver this information and her role in the dissemination of scientific progress is contaminated by the fact that she is working for a Jewish man whose work in genetic science the novel shows to be not-so-indirectly historically associated with Nazi eugenics. The highly marketable benefits embodied in FutureMouse as a technology that may save human lives are shown to be like any other capitalist discourse: seemingly unobjectionable by all parties but in fact connected to problematic legacies of oppression. However, rather than dismissing the positive potential of such technology, the novel demonstrates a commitment to tracing modern day genetic science back to its origins to suggest that the real problem is not that it stems from a dark history but that ideological forces have been all-too-eager to occlude how it came to be developed.

Scholar Gene McQuillan takes an alternative approach to the catastrophe of forgetting and looks at the novel as representative of the widespread challenges posed by popular science writing. McQuillan looks at the novel’s portrayal of Marcus, whom he characterizes as “a crotchety and eccentric research scientist with limitless ambition.”<sup>97</sup> McQuillan uses *White Teeth* as a literary example of how scientists such as Marcus must grapple with the misrepresentation of their scientific research in the realm of naïve public discourse. This misrepresentation is compounded by the intermediate role of journalists, novelists, and other writers who are tasked with making “such discoveries more

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<sup>97</sup> Gene McQuillan, “Science Writing and the Holy Grail: Popularizing Genetic Research in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* and Jonathan Weiner’s *His Brother’s Keeper*,” *Studies in Popular Culture* 29, no. 2 (2007): 3.

accessible to the public,” and who inevitably fail to relate or, worse, grossly distort their primary sources.<sup>98</sup> Marcus, for example, collaborates on a boilerplate pop science book with a novelist named Surrey T. Banks only to find out that those who read it skip past his research and go straight to Banks’ “freaky” novelistic representation of it. Though McQuillan shows that this is an exaggeration of the problem facing real scientists—and indeed, that such editorializing is less rampant than one would think—it is striking that he only mentions FutureMouse as a generalizable figure of advanced scientific research. Despite ending in agreement with Jon Turney’s claim that “Fictional representations matter, that the science and technology we ultimately see are partly shaped by the images of the work which exist outside the confines of the laboratory report, or the scientific paper,”<sup>99</sup> McQuillan himself seems to leave it to his reader to discover the implications of Smith’s FutureMouse for genetic research. Regardless, FutureMouse is an example of how novelistic renditions of technology can influence scientific practices, exposing how the impartiality assumed by scientific technology is as yet under the influence of other political forces including but not limited to the novel.

Yet for Smith, it is important to acknowledge that representations—of science, of culture—that ignore deep historical legacies are those which allow for the proliferation of cartoonish politics. This can be seen in the novel’s rendering of its radical political groups, FATE (an acronym for “Fighting Animal Torture and Exploitation”) and KEVIN (“Keepers of the Eternal and Victorious Islamic Nation”). With regard to the former, any

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<sup>98</sup> McQuillan., 2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 14-15.



radical or ecoterrorist political threat it could project is undermined by its portrayal as juvenile:

For three years FATE conducted a terror campaign against animal testers, torturers and exploiters, sending death threats to personnel at make-up firms, breaking into labs, kidnapping technicians and chaining themselves to hospital gates. They also ruined fox-hunts, filmed battery chickens, burnt down farms, fire-bombed food outlets and smashed up circus tents. . . . Then in 1987 Crispin went to jail for three years for his part in fire-bombing a Welsh laboratory and releasing 40 cats, 350 rabbits and 1,000 rats from their captivity. Before being taken down to Wormwood Scrubs, Crispin generously informed Joely that she had his permission to go to other FATE members if she was in need of sexual satisfaction while he was gone<sup>100</sup>

FATE's members, including Marcus' son Joshua, engage in an extended subplot that reads like a teenage sexual drama, suggesting the ineffectiveness of their radical ecopolitics. Smith is of course parodying the influence that real-world ecoterrorist groups can have on actual environmental policy and does not fairly represent their ability to accomplish their goals, but this is decidedly the point: that there is humor to be found in caricaturing such groups because their political liberalism can so easily be turned on its head.

The most readily identifiable crisis in *White Teeth* is the climactic final scene where all of the novel's characters converge on the televised exhibition of FutureMouse on New Year's Eve, December 31, 1992. As Marcus prepares to present FutureMouse as a hallmark of scientific progress for cancer research, the other characters, including Marcus' son Joshua, assemble at the conference. FATE and KEVIN attend the conference in protest of the Chalfenist treatment of FutureMouse with the hope of terrorizing the event and using the opportunity to broadcast their radical politics to the

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<sup>100</sup> Smith, *White Teeth*, 396-7.

television audience. As Marcus reads aloud his speech about the significance of FutureMouse and his cancer research, a member of KEVIN shoots at a panelist, Dr. Marc-Pierre Perret (a French scientist sponsoring Marcus' research who collaborated with Nazi eugenicists during World War II). Irie's father, Archie Jones—a soldier in the war who previously saved Dr. Perret despite an order to execute him for his Nazi crimes—ends up taking the bullet and crashing into FutureMouse's cage, accidentally releasing him. FutureMouse is able to evade capture as he disappears through an air vent while Archie cheers, "*Go on my son!*"<sup>101</sup> The scene ends with Smith tying up of the narrative strands, telling the proleptic "endgames" of each character's futures.

However, what may be considered the novel's most natural catastrophe—an attempted murder that results in the escape of FutureMouse—is anything but. Even the would-be murderer, Millet Iqbal, the son of Samad Iqbal (Archie's wartime comrade), escapes jail time and is only issued "four hundred hours of community service," which he spends as a gardener.<sup>102</sup> The novel ends almost arbitrarily, without any narrative resolution. Even the supposed endgames are framed as romantic yearnings that would appease "young professional women aged eighteen to thirty-two who would like a snapshot seven years hence," noting that "to tell these tall tales and others like them would be to speed the myth, the wicked lie, that the past is always tense and the future, perfect."<sup>103</sup> In this sense, Smith suggests that a real catastrophe would entail regarding or understanding history as a self-contained and predictable narrative. For Smith, it would

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<sup>101</sup> Smith, *White Teeth*, 448.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

seem that narrative resolution itself—one that would seek a seemingly utopian and progressive future that ignores the past, like a genetic science founded on liberal humanism does with regard to its otherwise occluded Nazi legacy—would be a greater crisis than anything else. Yet the escape of FutureMouse implies that the material truth of history, such as the real modification of animals, cannot be suspended in such narrative resolution and indeed transcends it.

### ***Elizabeth Costello* and Ecocritical Exhaustion**

J. M. Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello*'s metafictional and satirical elements make it a difficult novel to pin down with regard to its political and ethical positions. A straight reading of the novel would suggest that it is interested in advocating against the cruelty of animals and espousing an ecocritical ethics that entails treating animals with the same equality that we afford other humans (e.g. not slaughtering them or exploiting their labor). But the novel's metafictionality disallows any such conclusive reading. Indeed, the novel is highly aware of and even exhausted by its own arguments. Costello, a globally acclaimed Australian novelist preparing to give the annual Gates Lecture at a liberal arts college, is hosted by her son and his wife, Norma, who thinks that "his mother's books are overrated, that her opinions on animals, animal consciousness and ethical relations with animals are jejune and sentimental."<sup>104</sup> Costello is hyperconscious of the dismissiveness with which people often respond to animal rights advocacy and

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<sup>104</sup> J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 61.

indeed to the advocates themselves. She opens her lecture by foregoing a “recital of the horrors” faced by animals:

In addressing you on the subject of animals, . . . I will pay you the honour of skipping a recital of the horrors of their lives and deaths. . . . I will take it that you concede me the rhetorical power to evoke these horrors and bring them home to you with adequate force, and leave it at that, reminding you only that the horrors I here omit are nevertheless at the centre of this lecture.<sup>105</sup>

My earlier point about Smith and Coetzee’s invocation of real animals rather than mere metaphorical signifiers is clearly on display in the above passage, where the material horrors regarding global animal welfare are necessarily omitted (i.e., animals cannot be literally present inside a text) yet “nevertheless at the centre” of discussion, not just in the context of the diegetic narrative but also at the level of Coetzee’s moral and literary politics. After her opening remark, Costello moves immediately to her main argument: “Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them.”<sup>106</sup> To the omitted horror of animals, Costello invokes the Holocaust, employing catastrophic language without any suggestion that the comparison is out of proportion with its content.

The straightforwardness with which Costello opens her lecture suggests her awareness not only of the moral fatigue regarding animal rights advocacy in general, but of the particular skepticism toward analogies between ordinary people with meat-based diets and the Nazis who carried out the Holocaust. The bluntness employed by Costello at

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<sup>105</sup> Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 63.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

the beginning of her lecture, this is to say, contrasts with the common feeling that the evocation of Hitler and Nazism is usually considered so hyperbolic as to delegitimize an argument rather than corroborate it. In fact, the practice of blowing a comparison out of proportion has gained notoriety in the Internet Age as “Godwin’s Law,” which states that “as an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazism or Hitler approaches.” Costello’s attempt to connect the cruelty of animals to the Holocaust would at first blush appear to be dead in the water at the outset, an argumentative risk that the narrative both acknowledges and disregards in its starkly straightforward register. Costello’s awareness of the exhaustability of her ecocritical pleas—and of an attendant exasperation with any argument that invokes Nazism—counterintuitively suggests that we should take her all the more seriously. Costello’s informed awareness of the potential for her ecocritical call-to-action to go unheard, coupled with her decision to put forth that call regardless, establishes her authority through an assumed familiarity with her audience. In other words, Costello’s ecocritical politics plainly invokes the Holocaust as an analogue for worldwide animal exploitation in full seriousness as a means to cut through the general exhaustion that would otherwise disbelieve the catastrophic register of comparison.

The exhaustion implied here as it concerns the ethical treatment of animals is related to moral philosophy and what some scholars have identified as “insensitivity” to the category of animals as living beings. In a response to *Émilie Hache* and *Bruno Latour*, *Mark Rowlands* argues for the “Anglophone case for animals,” positing that “in the Anglophone context, the idea that nonhuman animals . . . make at least some moral

claims on us is almost universally accepted.”<sup>107</sup> Rowlands explains that Hache and Latour are incorrect in their critique of what they see to be a moral philosophical tradition that suggests that “contemporary treatments of animals exhibit a hard-won insensitivity, and a corresponding inability to respond, to the ‘call’ of animals.”<sup>108</sup> In their critique of Comte-Sponville, who Rowlands says espouses the orthodox Anglophone case for animals, they wrongly think that said tradition considers animals as objects without moral entitlements. By other terms, we might understand the “Anglophone case for animals” as a limited form of liberal humanism that extends limited sympathetic feelings to animals but otherwise considers them as lesser-than-human agents unworthy of political action.

Rowlands suggests that in the Anglophone community, there is a certain moral regard for animals that attempts “to justify giving equal consideration to the interests of humans and animals,” which has developed in different ways to advocate for animal rights.<sup>109</sup> Rowlands, however, is more interested in the ways in which the Anglophone case for animals, as Hache and Latour suggest, “betrays insensitivity to animals.”<sup>110</sup> Like liberal humanism that is championed in the name of equality for all while exploiting some in the process, Rowlands’ is invoking the possibility of a form of animal rights advocacy that is in fact detrimental to animal welfare despite presenting as progressive. Eventually Rowlands claims that the crux is the difference between humans and nonhuman animals is determined by agency, as marked by the

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<sup>107</sup> Mark Rowlands, “Responding to Animals,” *Common Knowledge* 16, no. 2 (2010): 352.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 351.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 351, 354.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

distinction, often employed in the Anglophone case for animals, between moral *agents* and moral *patients*. A moral agent is, very roughly, an individual who has both rights and responsibilities. A moral agent has moral entitlements but can also be praised or blamed — morally evaluated — for what he or she (or possibly it) does . . . animals are moral patients (they have entitlements) but are not moral agents (they cannot be praised or blamed for what they do).<sup>111</sup>

Rowlands, then, suggests that if the Anglophone case for animals is in any way “insensitive,” then it is because it is premised on the idea that “eliminating historically contingent properties of people and relations between people is foundational to morality.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, the development of moral philosophy over the past three centuries has been premised on a consistency and impartiality that attempts to ignore history in order to promote abstract justice and equal representation for all. Despite the benefits of this system, it promotes an erasure of history, of identity, and of the real relations that exist between people. The problem is that this “one-size-fits-all” approach to morality fails to account for historical differences in the case of humans and biological differences in the case of animals.

From the standpoint of narrative, the novel’s relationship to ethics is also problematized given the disjunctures between Costello’s refusal to depict certain obscene or violent events and Coetzee’s narratorial description of such events anyway. As Markku Lehtimäki explains, “Costello thinks that some thing sin this world should not be represented in fiction. Yet one of the cruel ironies of Coetzee’s novel is that precisely those things and science—even violent and sadistic ones—are represented for the

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<sup>111</sup> Rowlands, 356.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 360.

reader.”<sup>113</sup> Beyond this irony, however, Coetzee cannot escape the representational limits of literature, which is of particular concern for the novel’s ethical position in relation to non-human animals, as they cannot be realistically represented without depending on humanistic modes of signification such as language and description. Even as Costello lectures at length about the capacity of animals to elicit sympathetic moral responses from humans, her arguments are put forth to a human audience ostensibly without any immediate relevance for non-human animals.

The challenges to moral philosophy posed by animals are significant for our understanding of Coetzee. On one hand, the contemporary treatment of morality, egalitarian as it tries to be, is shown to be at risk of being unaware of or otherwise ignoring important historical contingencies that would necessitate alternative moral action. For example, the irony of Costello’s lecture taking place at a liberal arts college is that such a scene obscures how the conditions of local political forces are connected to geographically distant histories, viz. how contemporary animal rights advocacy, including objections to the eating and manufacture of food, intersects with moral lessons that should have been derived from the Holocaust. As Costello’s son and his wife Norma watch the performance, Norma adjudicates her Costello’s lecture, snorting and snickering when she senses Costello falter near the end, remarking that “She is rambling. She has lost her thread.”<sup>114</sup> Norma’s skepticism is echoed by a question in the Q&A in which an audience member says to Costello, “What wasn’t clear to me . . . is what you are actually

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<sup>113</sup> Markku Lehtimäki, “An Ethics of Reading Sophisticated Narratives: The Example of J. M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*,” in *Narrative Ethics*, Jacob Lothe and Jeremy Hawthorn, eds. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 99.

<sup>114</sup> Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 75.



targeting. Are you saying we should close down the factory farms? Are you saying we should stop eating meat . . . [or] treat animals more humanely, kill them more humanely? . . . Can you clarify? Thank you.”<sup>115</sup> Costello replies with a non-answer: “I was hoping not to have to enunciate principles . . . I have never been much interested in proscriptions, dietary or otherwise. Proscriptions, laws. I am more interested in what lies behind them.”<sup>116</sup> Contemporary moral insensitivity toward animals is expressed in full apathetic force throughout *Elizabeth Costello* as signified by Norma and the audience member, both of whom fail to take a moral position on the treatment of animals, opting instead to drill down on Costello’s rhetorical presentation. Costello, having made the points she wished to convey, cannot be said to have succeeded in adopting a markedly better moral position, but her decision not to clarify or offer “proscriptions” constitutes a more self-conscious politics of refusal that runs counter to Norma’s petty snickers or the cold sterility of the academic lecture hall.

By the same token, Costello struggles with her induction as a famous novelist into the canon of Western knowledge, and her ambivalence implies that it is less an accolade than a curse, for it reflects her own inadequacies against the categorically greater scope of humanity. In their introduction to *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, editors Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin historicize the plight of non-human species (i.e. animals) in connection to European colonialism. Drawing upon Alfred Crosby’s term, ecological imperialism, Huggan and Tiffin claim that environmental issues are not only “central to the projects of European conquest and

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<sup>115</sup> Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 81.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

global domination,” but are also “inherent in the ideologies of imperialism and racism on which those projects historically – and persistently – depend.”<sup>117</sup> Likewise, Coetzee

includes a claim by a fictional Nigerian author, Emmanuel Egudu, that:

Europe has spread across the world like a cancer, at first stealthily, but for a while now at gathering pace, until today it ravages life forms, animals, plants, habitats, languages. With each day that passes several languages of the world disappear, repudiated, stifled. . . One of the symptoms of the disease has without doubt, from the beginning, been what we call literature; and literature has consolidated itself, prospered, and become what it is--one of the hugest dimensions of mankind--by denying the voice<sup>118</sup>

Costello does not fully buy into Egudu’s argument but concedes that it was advanced with passion and commendable rhetorical force. Even so, the novel highlights the risk of a complicity that liberal practices such as the production of marginalized ethnic literature or a half-committed form of animal rights advocacy might have with European imperialism.

*Elizabeth Costello*’s conflation of animal rights advocacy with anti-Nazism arguments thus evokes a host of interrelated implications that complicate the novel’s critique of liberal humanism: 1) it deconstructs the boundary between what is considered ‘human’ and non-human, i.e., it advances a non-anthropocentrism that is critical of the dehumanizing tendencies of *both* Nazism and liberal humanism; 2) it strengthens a critique of colonialist and imperialist ideologies inherent in so-called egalitarian political thought, suggesting that liberal humanism is no better than Nazism if it cannot account for “lesser” beings such as animals; 3) it promotes an ethics against animal cruelty based

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<sup>117</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 6.

<sup>118</sup> Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, 45.

on moral philosophy that runs counter to otherwise dominant Anglophone sensibilities, i.e., anthropocentrism and the prioritizing of human welfare over “non-human” welfare; and 4) it demonstrates the biopolitical stakes of human life for global society and its dependence on compelling non-human life for continued exploitation. To compel life is to demand something to live, to force it to continue living as a source of sustained sustenance and exploitation. This is reification by another name, turning life into fodder for other processes.

## **Conclusion**

Genetic science’s historical connection to animal rights makes it a particular concern for global Anglophone literature. A significant number of contemporary Anglophone novels have engaged with the topic, including Ruth Ozeki’s *My Year of Meats* (1999), Judy Reene Singer’s *Still Life with Elephant* (2009), Don LePan’s *Animals* (2010), Neil Abramson’s *Unsaid* (2012), Karen Joy Fowler’s *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013), William Kotzwinkle’s *Doctor Rat* (2014), and J.E. Fishman’s *Primacy* (2015). Regardless of their varying literary merit, which ranges from the saccharine to the sublime, most of these novels have won prizes, become bestsellers, or both, and almost all are praised for their ethical sensibility for exposing mankind’s cruelty to other lifeforms at the same time that they vivify animals with sympathetic consciousness. This pattern does not stop with fiction, for many celebrated non-fiction books have likewise discussed the exploitation of animals as a source of food and staunchly advocated for the reform of industrial and agricultural practices. These books

include but are not limited to bestselling texts such as Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001), Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006), Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007), and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals* (2009). These texts, of course, follow out various threads intertwined with animal rights that are decidedly human concerns: unequal labor and wage rights, malicious industrial and corporate practices, corrupted federal regulations, etc. Needless to say, animals are a hot literary commodity.

While this is not a new phenomenon, we should ask why animals and their “rights” are becoming of such particular interest now? Insofar as animal rights discourse is connected to globalization, which is predominantly driven by Anglo-American economic and political forces, it only makes sense that it would find representation and popularity in contemporary Anglophone literature. This connection is corroborated by the ways in which animals have been historically linked to other ecological imperialist practices driven by Anglophone influence, including agricultural imposition, environmental conquest, and the main subject of this chapter: genetic science and Nazi eugenics. Though Smith and Coetzee identify and highlight this connection, it is only a means for them to more broadly critique the how the advance of human welfare and politics comes at the cost of the lives of animals and humans alike. Indeed, the ideologies that drive this transaction—global capitalism, cultural imperialism, ethical apathy—are premised on the exploitation of Life with a capital L, only to offer up a poisoned prize in return to the humans who supposedly benefit from it. That is, Smith and Coetzee suggest

that even the so-called beneficiaries of ecological imperialism are made *unwell* by the artificial delineation between human and non-human life, as such a distinction operates on a human scale that ignores the ways in which the human is embedded in and affected by a larger scale marked by ecology and the world's diversity of species. Even without regard to the ethical or biological consequences of a liberal humanism based on ecological imperialism, the fact remains that such an ideology fails to live up to its humanistic ideals simply because it is either complicit with or has been co-opted by forces that are in fundamental contradiction with its egalitarian values.

This is the “catastrophe” lurking in *White Teeth* and *Elizabeth Costello*: that the ideals of liberal humanism have been contaminated and delegitimized even in areas one would hope would be exempt: (1) genetic science, which would otherwise promise to improve all human life and (2) the academy, premised as it is on unambiguous reason. Following Rob Nixon, we might understand the worldwide exploitation of animals as a catastrophe in slow motion, one which is historical and ideological more than instantaneous and physical; it is the indication that liberal humanism has reached an endpoint where it is limited by its own ability to be conflated with modes of thought counter to itself. Catastrophe in this sense is not necessarily negative—it is simply true to its roots (from the Greek *kata*, “down,” and *stréphō*, “I turn”), suggesting a final conclusion and the overturning of a system or order of things. In the case of liberal humanism, the catastrophe portrayed by Smith and Coetzee—if it can be identified as such—is that its contemporary instantiation entails a historical forgetting of its connection to such moral horrors as Nazism. This is cause for alarm because liberal

humanism is premised on rationality and asserts itself as such. Chalfenism, the reigning ideology of Marcus Chalfen and his hyperrationalist approach to genetic science, for example, is a parody of how a seemingly humanist practice deconstructs when put into historical context.

Yet, given that Smith and Coetzee both critique rationality as fundamentally problematic even as it represents an essential human ideal, the catastrophe marked by liberal humanisms' exhaustion does not seem to trouble either author. In fact, both end their novels inconclusively without offering a satisfying alternative to replace the liberal humanism they show to be problematic, hypocritical, and historically suspect. But perhaps this is the point—to posit an ethically or ideologically sound alternative to such humanism would be a practice reminiscent of rationalist humanist discourse itself. The only ideologically consistent way for Smith or Coetzee to enact narrative closure is to evade closure altogether, instead leaving the reader in a position of suspended self-reflection and thought.

## **Cosmopolitanism and the Neoliberal American Dream in *Fury* and *Netherland***

Though much scholarship on Salman Rushdie's *Fury* (2001) and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) has explored their cosmopolitan ambivalence and their criticism of the neoliberal conditions governing American society, scholars have only recently begun to account for the ways in which these phenomena are mutually constitutive. Claire Westall argues, for example, that *Netherland* is "a novel that we cannot know without knowing the world-system, a system typically bypassed in discussions about cricket, empire and postcoloniality, as well as in debates about global, cosmopolitan and immigrant-inspired literary endeavors."<sup>119</sup> Rather than focusing on O'Neill's use of cricket as a cosmopolitan entertainment and a cultural legacy of colonialism, Westall explains how the author uses it to "encode the world-system . . . and the ways in which structural continuity and 'riskless risk' . . . are glorified as neo-liberal conditions for a cosmopolitan class of white international workers."<sup>120</sup> Westall provokes us to consider how *Netherland* cannot be properly understood without reference to the interconnectedness of macro-level economic, political, and cultural forces on a global scale, which undoubtedly confounds the novel's symbolic representation of cricket, masculinity, and post-9/11 uncertainty. Likewise for *Fury*, scholarship has been quick to identify the novel's investment in a "critical cosmopolitanism,"<sup>121</sup> a "radical cosmopolitanism,"<sup>122</sup> and a "passionate

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<sup>119</sup> Claire Westall, "Cricket and the World-System, or Continuity, 'Riskless Risk,' and Cyclicity in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 52, no. 3 (2016): 288.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>121</sup> Rebecca L. Walkowitz, "Modernist Cosmopolitanism: Rushdie's Mix-Up," in *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 131-152.

<sup>122</sup> Soo Yeon Kim, "Ethical Treason: Radical Cosmopolitanism in Salman Rushdie's *Fury* (2001)," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 42, no. 1 (2011): 63-84.

cosmopolitanism,”<sup>123</sup> but these have generally framed the novel’s cosmopolitan politics as a resistant critique of neoliberal alienation rather than its necessary and complicit consequence. In short, the pronounced irony with which *Fury* and *Netherland* represent the systemic linkages between neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism have problematized interpretations of the novels’ politically ambiguous renderings of contemporary American society.

To better situate readings of these texts, I look to Sarah Brouillette’s article on the crisis of authorship in *Fury*, where she examines the economic history of Rushdie’s literary career to convincingly argue that the novel’s politics—whatever they may be—have become inseparable from the global economic conditions of contemporary cultural production.<sup>124</sup> Reading the novel against *The Jaguar Smile* (1987), Rushdie’s non-fictional exploration of the politics of national liberation in Nicaragua, Brouillette writes that *Fury* evinces a “paranoia about the way mass media make cultural products available for highly politicized forms of appropriation or interpretation that betray the controlling intentions of their authors.”<sup>125</sup> Indeed, if Roland Barthes declared the death of the author in 1967, then in assessing *Fury*’s politics we must recognize that Rushdie’s career is “representative of literary publishing’s increasingly global structure,” where literary signification is conditioned not just by authorial intent but also by market decisions that involve “lead authors making deals for global distribution with conglomerates that

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<sup>123</sup> Rishona Zimring, “The Passionate Cosmopolitan in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 46, no. 1 (2010): 6.

<sup>124</sup> Sarah Brouillette, “Authorship as Crisis in Salman Rushdie’s *Fury*,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 40, no. 1 (2005): 137-156.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.



operate locally through numerous branch offices that are often headquartered in New York.”<sup>126</sup> As texts are increasingly produced through and against globalization, contemporary literary analysis cannot properly read local textual content without attending to the global economic conditions that regulate literary interest—especially in the case of global literature, which often self-reflexively sits at the intersection of these matters. Rushdie is particularly demonstrative in this regard because his meteoric rise through the economic machinery of the global literary market can be recursively attributed to his express literary investment in global politics and culture. Moreover, historicizing Rushdie’s career according to this global economic logic emphasizes the integral role of the United States in the development of his literary politics.

Following Westall and Brouillette, I read *Fury* and *Netherland* as literary examinations of the deep interconnections between cosmopolitan ideals and the neoliberal politics governing the lives of American immigrants in the age of globalization. Set in the hyper-cosmopolitan space of New York City at the turn of the millennium, each novel explores the limits by which American society can promote multiculturalism and diversity while still adhering to the alienating neoliberal conditions that guide immigration and the global culture market. Fundamental to each novel’s exploration of these topics is their treatment of the American Dream, an idealized national ethos that promises American citizens and immigrants alike the opportunity to freely pursue success and prosperity at all levels: social, economic, cultural, and so on. In exploring the American Dream as not just a national but in fact a cosmopolitan ethos,

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<sup>126</sup> Brouillette, 139.

each novel examines and deconstructs the possibility of prosperity for individuals that exist at the margins of the United States' neoliberal culture. Indeed, as the immigrant protagonists of *Fury* and *Netherland*—Malik Solanka and Hans van den Broek—attempt to carve out space in American society, their cosmopolitan worldviews are shown to run parallel to neoliberal processes that grant them access to mobility and visibility in the United States but with violent consequences for their self identities and the lives of other less-privileged immigrants. In aspiring to economic prosperity through the American Dream yet unable to reconcile this pursuit with their wider egalitarian beliefs as cosmopolitan outsiders, both Hans and Malik experience identity crises that are left unresolved even by the end of their narratives. Rather than providing readers with a satisfactory resolution of the challenges facing American immigrants, *Fury* and *Netherland* instead express a deeply ambivalent sense that contemporary US society only celebrates multicultural diversity and other supposedly universal humanist ideals to the extent that they can be understood through the socioeconomic logic of capitalism—a political double bind that I refer to as “neoliberal cosmopolitanism” throughout this chapter.

As I work through this argument in the following pages, the collapse of terms like “cosmopolitan,” “neoliberal,” “global,” and “American” is therefore not by accident; both *Fury* and *Netherland* are invested in how the contemporary United States has come to play a massively influential role in transnational political and economic discourse, and they each trace the global scope of US influence through a complex set of elisions. Though the United States is not uniquely responsible for the development of

neoliberalism as global economic praxis nor of cosmopolitanism as a transcultural humanist ideology, any historicization of these phenomena would be suspect if it failed to reference their evolution vis-à-vis contemporary US society and international policy. David Harvey writes that “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”<sup>127</sup> Yet as an economic discourse that most significantly began to gain traction in the late 1970s with the emergence of Thatcherism and Reaganomics, neoliberalism as a theory has become difficult to disentangle from its manifestation in the context of American global economic policy and the rise of globalization, where there exists a lingering feeling that “the grim reach of US imperial power might lie behind the rapid proliferation of neoliberal state forms throughout the world from the mid-1970s onwards.”<sup>128</sup> Likewise, cosmopolitanism, too, has been shaped by Anglo-American political discourse and policy, especially in the wake of 9/11. Peter Gowan notes, for instance, that whereas older, more democratic forms of cosmopolitanism were based on “visions of a single human race peacefully united by free trade and common legal norms, led by states featuring civic liberties and representative institutions,” these have been replaced by a contemporary version of cosmopolitanism that “seeks to overcome the limits of national sovereignty by constructing a global order that will govern important

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<sup>127</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief Introduction to Neoliberalism* (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

political as well as economic aspects of both the internal and external behaviour of states.”<sup>129</sup> In Gowan’s view, the utopian promise of “unifying the peoples of the world in representative government, monitored by global institutions protecting human rights” is offset by the reality that only “one single member of the Pacific Union—the United States—has acquired absolute military dominance over every other state or combination of states on the entire planet.”<sup>130</sup> In short, the global dominance of the United States and the propagation of what Gowan terms “*neoliberal* cosmopolitanism” have developed in tandem, complicating any straightforward reading of *Fury* or *Netherland*. Any possibility of utopian transnationalism as figured by earlier versions of cosmopolitanism is forestalled in each novel by the unpredictability of supranational violence and capitalist expansion on a global scale. Conversely, each novel’s cosmopolitan politics must be read not as “more critical” versions of free-floating planetary humanism but rather as deeply enmeshed with and written against American political ideology and culture.

Accordingly, for both novels the utopian promise of New York as a cosmopolitan haven paradoxically co-exists with its terrifying neoliberal precarity. New York symbolizes the cultural gateway between cosmopolitan outsiders and their realization as legitimate participants in American society, particularly with regard to immigrant Americans. As a country that aspires to multicultural and meritocratic ideals, the United States exists in a state of flux where outsiders from around the world have the option to adopt, participate in, and thereby influence “American” identity. For a variety of reasons, putting scare quotes around “American” with regard to Rushdie and O’Neill is apt, as it is

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<sup>129</sup> Peter Gowan, “Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism,” *New Left Review* 11 (2001): 79.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

a contestable qualifier of not just identity and character, but also of citizenship— both authors have been living full-time in the United States for nearly two decades, and both have been naturalized as American citizens. Their experience highlights what we might call a specifically American in/security, where the economic security afforded by living in the United States is counterbalanced by the insecurity of its terms. It is no wonder that both *Fury* and *Netherland* constellate the neoliberal American condition with catastrophic threat on one hand and cosmopolitan experience on the other; the country's focus on free enterprise is the basis for both its present-day role as a dominant global economic superpower and its susceptibility to disruption, e.g., as the target of terrorist forces or through the infusion of an immigrant Other. As Arjun Appadurai notes in *Modernity at Large*, “The United States, always in its self-perception a land of immigrants, finds itself awash in these global diasporas, no longer a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic . . . People come here to seek their fortunes, but they are no longer content to leave their homelands behind.”<sup>131</sup> With this in mind, *Fury* and *Netherland* represent exemplary American immigrant novels both on the level of narrative content and on a biographical level. Rushdie and O'Neill, like their respective protagonists Malik and Hans, embody American in/security because their economic security in the United States exists in tandem with their cosmopolitan pressure on American identity. Given the confluence of these investments, it is therefore significant that each novel is set specifically in New York, as the city's zeitgeist of late-stage American capitalism and the political turmoil

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<sup>131</sup> Arjun Appaduria, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 173.

leading up to and surrounding 9/11 exemplify the precarity of neoliberal cosmopolitanism.

By focusing their narratives on pre- and post-9/11 New York respectively, *Fury* and *Netherland* portray how the threat of terrorism and disaster have shifted the socioeconomic terms of cosmopolitanism and trace this shift to the United States' precarious economic position on the world stage. *Fury*'s protagonist, Malik Solanka, relocates to New York to escape the homicidal rage he feels for his wife and son, only to find that his fury persists and deepens in the context of American society. As a cosmopolitan intellectual, Malik persistently connects the culture of New York to decay and artifice as a result of globalization, eventually leading him to realize that the wealth he has derived from the global culture market is inseparable from various forms of violence, material or symbolic. In this sense, Malik's conflicted refuge in the promise of American prosperity reflects the tenuousness of the United States' global dominance—a precarity which would have been starkly present in Rushdie's mind during *Fury*'s composition given his own terrorized existence in the aftermath of *The Satanic Verses* controversy. Similarly, *Netherland*'s two central characters, Hans van den Broek and Chuck Ramkissoon, are both damaged in the wake of 9/11 alongside the ugly material and political realities of the War on Terror. The attacks catalyze a rupture in Hans' marriage after he relocates to New York as a banker working in oil securities, eventually causing his wife Rachel to separate from him and return to London with their son Jake. Chuck is literally murdered as a result of risky and illegal business strategies he adopts to fund his communitarian dream of forming The New York Cricket Club, which ultimately

fails. As an analyst of oil securities, Hans' precarious status as a cosmopolitan individual is directly connected to the Iraq War, neoliberal globalization, and the in/security of post-9/11 American life. In this sense, both novels explore the lives of cosmopolitan individuals against the backdrop of catastrophe: in anticipation of catastrophe in the case of *Fury* and in recuperation of catastrophe in the case of *Netherland*. Terror, in turn, stands out as a central preoccupation that fundamentally structures the narratives of both *Fury* and *Netherland* and their explorations of cosmopolitanism and the neoliberal American Dream.

Hailed by initial reviewers as Rushdie's "first 3-D, full-volume American novel," *Fury* was officially published on Sept. 4, 2001, only a week before the 9/11 attacks.<sup>132</sup> The novel was met with bored hostility from prominent American critics such as Michiko Kakutani and became virtually indefensible a week later.<sup>133</sup> Combined with Rushdie's controversial association with (anti-)Islamism at least since the *Satanic Verses* controversy in the late 1980s, the novel's biting critique of American culture found little purchase after 9/11. *Fury* fared not much better in academic scholarship, where some consider it a "'failed' postcolonial novel . . . [or] a 'failed' postmodern novel, an example of 'junk lit' adorned with superficial exuberance."<sup>134</sup> Importantly, however, *Fury*'s ostensible failure along these lines coincides with what some have called Rushdie's "Americanization," where he has arguably "inserted himself, however provisionally and

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<sup>132</sup> Margaria Fichtner, "Malik Strives to Survive the Summer of Great Evil," *The Miami Herald*, September 2, 2001.

<sup>133</sup> See Michiko Kakutani, "BOOK OF THE TIMES; A Dollmaker and His Demons in the Big City," *The New York Times*, August 31, 2001.

<sup>134</sup> Kim, 64.

critically, into the multicultural mainstream of the United States.”<sup>135</sup> For all *Fury*’s self-indulgence, it is still notable for serving as the “American” inflection point in Rushdie’s career. Rushdie’s shift toward American life is important for contextualizing a reading of *Fury*, as its composition follows from Rushdie’s own physical insecurity following the 1989 fatwa ordering Muslims around the world to kill him. Well before the 9/11 attacks, terrorists targeted Rushdie on a global scale and he subsequently took refuge the United States at the end of the millennia during the height of American prosperity. It was around this time that Rushdie would declare, in an article written for *The New York Times* titled “Terror versus Security” in January 2000, that “Now we saw, as clearly as the fireworks in the sky, that the defining struggle of the new age would be between Terrorism and Security.”<sup>136</sup> Rushdie’s prior encounters with terrorist threats and his conflicted shift toward American life thus make *Fury* an exemplary pre-9/11 novel in its representation of terror and the in/security of American immigrants. Arguably, Rushdie might not have sought safe refuge in the United States if it were not for terrorism, yet this logic is complicated by the fact that his security came to be threatened in the first place partly as a result of his rise to literary prominence via a global culture market largely influenced by American political investment in neoliberal cosmopolitanism. If we accept Brouillette’s argument that *Fury* represents Rushdie’s crisis of authorship in the age of globalization, then it follows that this crisis has developed as the result of Rushdie’s conflicted relationship with the United States.

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<sup>135</sup> Rüdiger Kunow, “Architect of the Cosmopolitan Dream,” *Amerikastudien* 51, no. 3 (2006): 369-385.

<sup>136</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002* (New York: Random House, 2002), 288-290.



Given that Malik's familial fallout and transatlantic relocation to New York mirrors Rushdie's own at the turn of the millennium, aspects of *Fury*'s plot are metafictionally representative of Rushdie's struggle to reconcile his literary politics with his decision to relocate to the United States. *Fury* can most accurately be described as a *Künstlerroman* that track 55-year-old Malik Solanka's development from a "retired historian of ideas" with declining artistic relevance to an author in command of his own artistic self-representation. As Rishona Zimring notes in her examination of the novel's affective politics, however, *Fury* is hardly an "emancipatory *Künstlerroman*" and its conflicted representation of the "American experience . . . prevents the novel from endorsing a view of cosmopolitanism as a simple solution to the problems of cultural and linguistic displacement."<sup>137</sup> At the outset, the novel frames Malik's move to New York as a quest for the American Dream not for opportunity but to escape the homicidal rage he feels for his family. Importantly, this quest is both made possible and distorted by the fact that he has already achieved a lifetime guarantee of economic security—the ease with which Malik spontaneously relocates to New York is itself symbolic of his economic privilege, which he has attained due to his cosmopolitan pursuits. He can afford to live in "his comfortable Upper West Side sublet" because he is the creator of Little Brain, a philosopher-historian doll whose viral popularity generates massive profits via global multimedia including novels, merchandise, a long-running television show, video games, and eventually the creation of Little Brains Trust, a "booming independent business, projected to break the billion-dollar barrier someday soon."<sup>138</sup> Accordingly, Malik's

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<sup>137</sup> Zimring, 12.

<sup>138</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Fury* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 99.

wealth as a cosmopolitan intellectual inverts the typical narrative of a hardworking immigrant coming to the United States in search of economic opportunity. This narrative inversion highlights Malik's struggle to assimilate into New York where he is simultaneously celebrated and traumatized according to a heightened neoliberal cosmopolitan system of values. Indeed, in reflecting on the interconnection between celebrity and trauma, Malik projects a future based on neoliberal contamination of the arts: "This was the period in which the two great industries of the future were being born. The industry of culture would in the coming decades replace that of ideology, becoming 'primary' in the way that economics used to be . . . And if culture was the world's new secularism, then its new religion was fame."<sup>139</sup> The grandiosity of Malik's proclamations here goes beyond a critique of neoliberalism as such; the elisions between industry, culture, ideology, religion, and fame in this passage all hint at *Fury's* suspicion of neoliberal cosmopolitanism and its global ideological capture of meaning making.

However, Malik's conflicted quest for the American Dream also recognizes the value of reductivity in a system that blows cultural and political meanings out of proportion and seeks to harness it to an individualistic politics of artistic autonomy. As a wealthy cosmopolitan, Malik represents the accursed beneficiary of this system whose monetary worth increasingly comes to overwrite his artistic value, where only few know him as anything other than "the legendary creator of Little Brain."<sup>140</sup> Global success in the novel is thus connected to a neoliberal reductivity wherein artistic and cultural worth can only be validated by American money:

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<sup>139</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 24.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

Everywhere on earth—in Britain, in India, in distant Lilliput—people were obsessed by the subject of success in America. . . . In India, great pride was taken in the achievements of U.S.-based Indians in music, publishing (though not writing), Silicon Valley, and Hollywood. British levels of hysteria were even higher. British journalist gets work in U.S.A.! Incredible! British actor to play second lead in American movie! Wow, what a superstar! Cross-dressing British comic wins two Emmys! Amazing—we always knew British transvestism was best! American success had become the only real validation of one’s worth. Ah, genuflection, Malik Solanka thought. Nobody knew how to argue with money these days, and all the money was here in the Promised Land.<sup>141</sup>

As Brouillette explains, Malik, like Rushdie, is “an author of cultural texts designed for mass consumption,”<sup>142</sup> but if Malik expresses dissatisfaction with his status as a successful author it is because his own intellectual and cultural individuality is shorn away in his texts’ reification into globally marketable commodities. Though Malik’s identity has been conscripted by or overwritten by neoliberal cosmopolitanism, that is, the novel recognizes that there is a use for such reductivity: “There was a satisfying anonymity in the crowds, an absence of. Nobody here was interested in his mysteries. Everyone was here to lose themselves. Such was the unarticulated magic of the masses, and these days losing himself was just about Professor Solanka’s only purpose in life.”<sup>143</sup> Yet for Malik, the possibility of losing himself in American society is disrupted throughout the novel by the reoccurrence of Little Brain, who exists as a persistent reminder of both his economic privilege and corrupted cosmopolitan politics. In other words, if Malik is in New York to “lose himself,” however, the parts of himself that he seeks to lose are the same that are connected to his condition as an author-commodity ontologically and economically dependent on his creation-commodity, Little Brain.

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<sup>141</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 224.

<sup>142</sup> Brouillette, 141.

<sup>143</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 7.

Lack of control is a central trope in *Fury*, and Malik routinely reflects on it in relation to globalization, particularly as control or the lack thereof is routed through United States' neoliberal cosmopolitan position on the world stage. The novel describes Malik's quest for individual control as a process of semantic navigation through the United States, the world, capitalism, and cosmopolitan diversity:

Solanka marveled, once again, at the human capacity for automorphosis, the transformation of the self, which Americans claimed as their own special, defining characteristic. It wasn't. Americans were always labeling things with the America logo: American Dream, American Buffalo, American Graffiti, American Psycho, American Tune. But everyone else had such things too, and in the rest of the world the addition of a nationalist prefix didn't seem to add much meaning. English Psycho, Indian Graffiti, Australian Buffalo, Egyptian Dream, Chilean Tune. America's need to make things American, to own them, thought Solanka, was the mark of an odd insecurity. Also, of course, and more prosaically, capitalist.<sup>144</sup>

In cycling through the faux-diversity in this passage—English, Indian, Australian, Egyptian, Chilean—Malik attempts to challenge the exemplarity of the United States against the world, but he ironically strengthens the signification given by “American” as it relates to self, ownership, and capital. Juxtaposed against the United States' economic security in a “golden age,” Malik views this American compulsion to ownership as evidence of the United States' ideological insecurity in relation to the world: “America, because of its omnipotence, is full of fear, it fears the fury of the world and renames it envy.”<sup>145</sup> For Malik, the excessive wealth of New York comes to exemplify American life, where the country's global economic prosperity creates psychological insecurity at home: “While the greenback was all-powerful and America bestrode the world,

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<sup>144</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 55-56.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

psychological disorders and aberrations of all sorts were having a field day back home.”<sup>146</sup> Malik’s refuge in the United States is thus a conflicted one, as his reasons for leaving his family in the first place are due his loss of creative control over Little Brain, whose artifice and connection to capitalism Malik cannot avoid seeing in New York society. In moving to New York, Malik seeks to remake himself but is recursively forced to depend on the wealth he has earned through a globalized system of capitalist value in order to do so.

Yet if *Fury* critiques the United States as marked by “fear” and “psychological disorders” despite an “all-powerful” economy, this depiction is problematized by the fact that success in a global capitalist market earns not just Malik entry into American society but also Rushdie, whose real-world financial success as a prominent global writer affords him the capital to live full-time in New York. Rushdie’s financial success, of course, developed in connection with his terrorized literary celebrity and a US-led global media marketplace increasingly willing to market his situation to sell novels. As Rüdiger Kunow suggests, Malik is someone who profits from globalization despite his status as a cosmopolitan immigrant: “if he can be called a migrant at all, then he is one of the aspiring elite variety, people who profit from, rather than suffer under the effects of globalization. . . . there is nothing in his narrative that would fundamentally contradict the American identity script.”<sup>147</sup> Thus, as Brouillette suggests, Rushdie is less critical of “commodification” and more specifically concerned about “the lack of authorial control

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<sup>146</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 114-115.

<sup>147</sup> Kunow, 378.

allowed to him as a major producer of texts . . . [and] the impossibility of authoring the *political meaning* of his own works.”<sup>148</sup> With respect to Rushdie’s physical insecurity under the siege of terrorist threat, the political meaning of his texts is, simply put, a life-or-death matter. In this sense, one modification I would add to Brouillette’s argument is that *Fury*’s anxieties surrounding the usurpation of authorial control and meaning-making developed not with the understanding of the literary market’s globalization as an apolitical process but rather as one specifically conditioned by the violent consequences of neoliberal cosmopolitanism as propagated by the United States.

The entanglement between all of these processes is most clearly represented in *Fury* in Malik’s deep ambivalence toward Little Brain’s smashing celebrity on a purportedly global scale that is nonetheless most symbolized by her American popularity on “cable television” and the “Amazon bestsellers charts.” In order to market philosophical history to a mass audience, Malik experiences both profit and anguish as the neoliberal culture market transforms Little Brain from his original vision of her as a “hip, fashion-conscious, but still idealistic Candide, his Valiant-for-Truth in urban-guerrilla thread” into “the kind of monster of tawdry celebrity he most profoundly abhorred.”<sup>149</sup> Malik’s inability to prevent Little Brain’s transformation thus symbolizes how, in Roshana Zimring’s words, “*Fury* bears disappointed, disillusioned witness to the fading of an American dream of cosmopolitan possibilities.”<sup>150</sup> Though the unruliness of his creation is on one hand a remark on his lack of authorial control, the profit he derives

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<sup>148</sup> Brouillette, 154, original emphasis.

<sup>149</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 98.

<sup>150</sup> Zimring, 14.

from Little Brain's capitalist ontology is a persistent reminder of Malik's inescapable reliance on her:

Professor Solanka remained aloof, refusing all invitations to discuss his out-of-control creation. The money, however, he was unable to refuse. Royalties continued to pour into his bank account. He was compromised by greed, and the compromise sealed his lips. Contractually bound not to attack the goose that laid the golden eggs, he had to bottle up his thoughts and, in keeping his own counsel, filled up with the bitter bile of his many discontents.<sup>151</sup>

Given Little Brain's portrayal as a simulacrum of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, Malik's inability to escape from her in his relocation to the United States is telling; he compares rich American society girls to dolls and develops a relationship with Mila Milo, a young uber-hip cosmopolitan American immigrant, only to soon view her "as Little Brain come alive . . . At first he told himself it would be wrong to do this to Mila, to dollify her thus, but then—he argued back against himself—had she not done it to herself?"<sup>152</sup> Little Brain thus represents the inversion of the American Dream, where the self-determination afforded by economic freedom instead traps its adherents in a globalized system of capitalist value. Attending this trap, the novel tracks the replacement of traditional cosmopolitan ideals of planetary humanism and universal rights with a neoliberal cosmopolitanism that celebrates cultural difference and hybridity only to the extent that they produce maximum capital in a global media market. In this sense, the novel explores the overlap between cosmopolitanism and neoliberal globalization and connects them to the inversion or fracturing of artistic success. Put another way, Little Brain's

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<sup>151</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 100.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

simultaneously unprecedented commercial success and total cultural failure in *Fury* represents the American Dream turned American Disaster.

Given these concerns, it is surprising that *Fury*'s prescient view of neoliberal cosmopolitanism's connection to terrorism and catastrophe did not garner more attention in the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks. Notably absent from Brouillette's analysis of *Fury*, for example, is any mention of 9/11, which had a significant impact on the afterlife of the text if not on the development of its content. Of course, since *Fury* predated 9/11, it would be anachronistic to examine the novel for any evidence that could connect its composition to the attacks, but as Mita Banerjee has argued, while *Fury* cannot be a literal reaction to 9/11, it nevertheless reacted to the "political climate out of which September 11 arose."<sup>153</sup> The connection between American prosperity and the threat of its demise is expressed only a few pages into the novel: "America insulted the rest of the planet, thought Malik Solanka in his old-fashioned way, by treating such bounty with the shoulder-shrugging casualness of the inequitably wealthy. But New York in this time of plenty had become the object and goal of the world's concupiscence and lust, and the 'insult' only made the rest of the planet more desirous than ever." In comparing America with "the rest of the planet," Rushdie syntactically rescales both the United States and the world to play at on the perception that they hold equal significance, yet he satirizes this possibility by portraying each of them with affective states such "lust" and "insult." The absurdity of this comparison on a political or conceptual level, however, is complicated

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<sup>153</sup> Mita Banerjee, "Postethnicity and Postcommunism in Hanif Kureishi's *Gabriel's Gift* and Salman Rushdie's *Fury*," in *Reconstructing Hybridity: Post-colonial Studies in Transition*, Joel Kuortti and Jopi Nyman, eds. (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 313.



in the novel by an acknowledgement of how real-world violence in a transnational or global context comes to bear in its local New York setting. Malik mentions that “A Concorde crashed in France, and people imagined they saw a part of their own dreams of the future, the future in which they too would break through the barriers that held them back, the imaginary future of their own limitlessness, going up in those awful flames.”<sup>154</sup> The airplane crash in question is reference to the real-world tragedy of Concorde Flight 4950, which crashed on July 25, 2000 with 113 fatalities, an event that Rushdie personally examined in an op-ed titled “Two Crashes.”<sup>155</sup> In her analysis of *The Satanic Verses*, Gillian Gane remarks that “Rushdie shows a sharp awareness of how airspace is implicated in globalization and postmodernity—air-space as twentieth-century theatre of war, air travel as distance-erasing ‘planetshrinker.’”<sup>156</sup> In a similar examination of Rushdie’s use of air travel, Mike Frangos notes that “*Fury*’s meticulous and frenzied account of pre-9/11 New York may be read as an attempt to develop aesthetic strategies to capture a moment not only of increasing acceleration but also of the premonition of impending catastrophe.”<sup>157</sup> Indeed, in an early passage treating Malik’s transatlantic emigration, *Fury* establishes air travel as the very symbol of a precarious globality: “[Malik] had conceived, in that instant, an almost religious belief in the power of flight. Flight would save others from him, and him from himself. He would go where he was not known and wash himself in that unknowing. . . . he flew business class to JFK.” Though

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<sup>154</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 114.

<sup>155</sup> Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*, 303-305.

<sup>156</sup> Gillian Gane, “Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in *The Satanic Verses*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 1 (2002): 19.

<sup>157</sup> Mike Frangos, “The Future of Disillusionment: Rushdie’s *Fury* and the Politics of Time,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 48, no. 2 (2012): 237.

Rushdie could not have anticipated how 9/11 would demonstrate the terrorist threat posed by air travel, *Fury*'s reference to the Concorde catastrophe performs a similar function: Malik uses the news of the crash as evidence that "This golden age, too, must end," specifically in relation to American prosperity.<sup>158</sup> As Frangos notes, "in *Fury*, catastrophe's material possibility is the other side of the coin of the hopes for progress articulated in neoliberal globalization."<sup>159</sup> The connection of the Concorde crash to the end of the golden age highlights American in/security, where the promise and failure of global technological progress serves as a metaphor for connection between catastrophe and neoliberal American society.

When the novel references *The Great Gatsby*, then, it is unsurprising that it focuses not on the romantic promise of the American Dream but rather its eventual failure: "After all, Jay Gatsby, the highest bouncer of them all, failed too in the end, but lived out, before he crashed, that brilliant, brittle, gold-hatted, exemplary American life."<sup>160</sup> Though Malik seeks to live out like Gatsby in the first half of the novel, achieving the American Dream comes at a cultural rather than economic cost, as Malik describes his motivations for relocation to New York as tantamount to self-erasure: "He had come to America as so many before him to receive the benison of being Ellis Islanded, of starting over. . . . No longer a historian by a man without histories let me be. I'll rip my lying mother tongue out of my throat and speak your broken English instead."<sup>161</sup> Malik views his cosmopolitan identity as obstructing his adoption of the

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<sup>158</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 114.

<sup>159</sup> Frangos, 240.

<sup>160</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 82.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

clean slate symbolized by the American Dream, highlighting that his move to New York has less to do with seeking opportunity than it does with overwriting his identity in a desperate attempt to escape the homicidal rage he feels for his family. As Zimring notes, “*Fury* is an extended examination of ambivalence about the censorship of a problematized Indian identity entailed in the acquisition of a cosmopolitan one.”<sup>162</sup> Malik’s obsessive urge to forget his “back-story” coincides with the accessibility of the American Dream for cosmopolitan outsiders: “Yes, it had seduced him, America; yes its brilliance aroused him, and its vast potency too, and he was compromised by this seduction. . . . Everyone was an American now, or at least Americanized: Indians, Iranians, Uzbeks, Japanese, Lilliputians, all.”<sup>163</sup> Malik’s self-punishing language in these passages hints at an underlying awareness that his attempts at overwriting himself through the American Dream are futile, as his very access to American society is premised on his *a priori* economic success in a neoliberal cosmopolitan culture market in which he and his artistic creations have already been Americanized as commodities. Malik’s difficulty with reconciling his cosmopolitan identity with the neoliberal pretenses of American society is compounded by realization that the tension existed within him even before his immigration to the United States—and indeed provided the economic groundwork that made his immigration possible.

However, if Malik aspires to and/or comes into full consciousness of his self-erasure through the metanarratives of American life in the first half of *Fury*, Rushdie himself expressed an altogether more celebratory view of the United States during the

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<sup>162</sup> Zimring, 7.

<sup>163</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 87-88.

time he was composing the novel. The discrepancy between Malik as self-tormented character and Rushdie as security-seeking author thus complicates a reading of *Fury* as a straightforward metafictional retelling of Rushdie's struggle with emigrating to New York in early 2000. That said, the political implications of neoliberal cosmopolitanism were undoubtedly on Rushdie's mind, as evidenced in his work as a syndicated columnist for *The New York Times* from 1998–2002. In an article titled "Globalization" written in March 1999, Rushdie defends the "globalizing power of American culture" and the United States' role as "world policeman," arguing that while "those of us who shelter under the pax Americana are deeply ambivalent about it," it cannot be denied that the "international community" . . . is little more than a euphemism for the United States."<sup>164</sup> Tentatively conceding global authority to the United States as the "best current guarantor" of freedom, Rushdie ends the column by writing that "Sneakers, burgers, blue jeans, and music videos aren't the enemy. . . . Out there are real tyrants to defeat."<sup>165</sup> In this article, Rushdie is blatantly unapologetic about the American cultural imperialism:

To some, *globalization is an equivalent social catastrophe*, with equally alarming implications for the survival of true cultural diversity, of the world's preciousness. . . . [But] do cultures actually exist as separate, pure, defensible entities? Is not *mélange*, adulteration, impurity, pick 'n' mix at the heart of the idea of the modern, and hasn't it been that way for most of this all-shook-up century? . . . Or, to put it another way: are there other universals besides international conglomerates and the interests of super-powers? And if by chance there were a universal value that might, for the sake of argument, be called freedom, whose enemies—tyranny, bigotry, intolerance, fanaticism—were the enemies of us all; and if . . . the authority of the United States were the best current guarantor of that "freedom"; then might it not follow that to oppose the spread of American culture would be to take up arms against the wrong foe?<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*, 267-269, my emphasis.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

Certainly, Rushdie's politics in *Fury* diverge from those in "Globalization," but where there is a potential for overlap, it is in an acknowledgement of neoliberal cosmopolitanism that defies full complicity with globalization but generally concedes to the culturally appropriative aspects of neoliberal American society so long as its hegemony ensures world peace. Given that Rushdie spent over a decade hiding, as detailed in his memoir *Joseph Anton* (2012), it is reasonable to assume that the micro-level effects of globalization that can be conceptualized in commodity objects were of lesser concern to him than macro-scale political forces such as the protection of the free world even behind the aegis of neoliberal capitalist superpowers like the United States. In "Terror versus Security," Rushdie would echo this sentiment, writing on the eve of Y2K that "The security establishment rightly regards the non-explosive Millennium as a triumph. Security is, after all, the art of making sure certain things don't happen. . . . [but] in a choice between security and liberty, it is liberty that must always come out on top."<sup>167</sup> Read in light of Rushdie's political views here, Malik's aspiration to artistic freedom are both ensured by the security afforded by the United States and obstructed by a neoliberal cosmopolitan system of values.

Malik attempts to reassert his lost individuality through sexual intimacy only to find that he cannot fully escape neoliberal cosmopolitan modes of signification even there. Though he shares cosmopolitan values with his lovers Mila and Neela, they are represented as "female muses who, like Malik, are immigrants to America, struggling with the contradictions of being America."<sup>168</sup> If the novel's preoccupation with sex and

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<sup>167</sup> Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*, 288-290.

<sup>168</sup> Zimring, 6.

female muses is demonstrative of Malik's sexual insecurity, then it is interesting that he attempts to regain security through a series of partners that route him through a critique of capitalist value back toward a place of cultural authenticity. Malik's original muse is in fact his wife Eleanor in London, and in describing her failings, Malik focuses on her frivolity with money and inability to validate him sexually: "If [Eleanor] had a failing, it was that she had grown accustomed to being kept, and could spend more money on Christmas than half the population earned in a year. If she had a failing, it was that her mother-love blinded her to the rest of humanity's desires, including, to be blunt, Professor Solanka's."<sup>169</sup> The phrasing of her failings as conditional and singular suggests that money and sex exist in tandem for Malik. As Zimring suggests, "these female cosmopolitans . . . represent a feminized sphere of creative expression into which a mutilated male protagonist enters to be healed."<sup>170</sup> Indeed, when he turns to Mila Milo, a young tech-savvy immigrant girl who enters into a pseudo-incestuous relationship with Malik, they mix business with pleasure. After they enter into their illicit affair, Malik reflects that "The word 'muse' was attached sooner or later to almost all beautiful women seen with gifted men . . . The true muse was a treasure beyond price, and Mila, Solanka discovered, was capable of being genuinely inspiring."<sup>171</sup> In helping him overcome the overbearing place of Little Brain in his life, Mila, however, becomes representative of the doll incarnate and from there to a capitalistic end: "He had glimpsed a possible new incarnation of his living doll . . . Mila had justified herself. She had provided the spur that

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<sup>169</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 12.

<sup>170</sup> Zimring, 10.

<sup>171</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 138.

had sent him back to work.” With Mila’s help, Malik regains a sense of creative power and begins developing the “Puppet Kings,” a sci-fi epic about cyborgs that becomes a global multimedia sensation with the help of Mila and her team of genius programmers.

Notably, Mila focuses on the work’s monetary potential while Malik disregards the financial considerations and uses the work as a symbolic playground on which to conduct the liberation struggle of a fictional country, Lilliput-Blefuscu. He turns his artistic investments away from the artifice of worldly cosmopolitanism, redirecting them toward to his cultural roots. Even though Malik ends his relationship Mila, they retain a business partnership in turning the Puppet Kings into the massively profitable PlanetGalileo.com: “Backers and sponsors were eager to get in on the ground floor of this important new launch by the creator of the legendary Little Brain. Major production, distribution, and marketing agreements with key players—Mattel, Amazon, Sony, Columbia, Banana Republic—were already in place.”<sup>172</sup> After Malik breaks intimacy with Mila, the novel begins to represent her as increasingly inseparable from her neoliberal American drive: “She is an expert in the ways of her age, this age of simulacra and counterfeits, in which you can find any pleasure known to woman or man rendered synthetic, made safe from disease or guilt—a lo-cal, lo-fi, brilliantly false version of the awkward world of real blood and guts. Phony experience that feels so good that you actually prefer it to the real thing.”<sup>173</sup> The novel’s critique, however, diverges from a condemnation of neoliberalism as such and instead focuses on how “All around [Malik] the American self was reconceiving itself in mechanical terms, but was everywhere

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<sup>172</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 139.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

running out of control. This self talked constantly about itself, barely touching on any other topic.”<sup>174</sup> Even in his cosmopolitan exemplarity, Malik’s hyper-solipsism thus deconstructs into self-critique.

It is only when Malik enters into a relationship with Neela in the second half of the novel that *Fury*’s politics begins to subordinate its sharp critique of neoliberal American society to a more subjectivist aesthetic individualism. Malik’s movement away from an identity centered on his cosmopolitan wealth in the novel’s second half corresponds both to his recovery from the traumas that have fueled his rage and to his second wind as an artist. All of these transformations are routed through Malik’s love for and cultural solidarity with Neela Mahendra, a beautiful Indian woman and documentary filmmaker who becomes involved in the political turmoil of Lilliput-Blefuscu. When Malik sees Neela for the first time, his attention falls on her scar: an “eight-inch-long herringbone-pattern scar . . . [that] perfected her beauty by adding an essential imperfection.”<sup>175</sup> Though at this point in the narrative she is still a “stranger” to Malik, he immediately portrays her as a figure of salvation:

Extreme physical beauty draws all available light toward itself, becomes a shining beacon in an otherwise darkened world. Why would one peer into the encircling gloom when one could look at this kindly flame? Why talk, eat, sleep, work when such effulgence was on display? Why do anything but look, for the rest of one’s paltry life? . . . he was also imagining himself with this dark Venus, he was allowing his own, closed heart to open, and so remembering once again what he spent much of his life trying to forget: the size of the crater within him, the hole left by his break with his recent and remote past, which, just perhaps, the love of such a woman could fill. Ancient, secret pain welled up in him, pleading to be healed.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 183.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.



In a reversal of the self-effacing terms with which Malik describes himself with regard to the United States, his perception of Neela is instead one of cultural sincerity, where she espouses an altruistic concern for Lilliput-Blefuscu and puts her life at risk by joining its liberatory struggle. In thus finding solace in Neela, however, Malik is asked to confront his deepest trauma, which lies in his roots as a child in Bombay. “Here is this Indian man,” Neela says to him. “Indian from India, not Indo-Lilly like me, a son of the mother country, but apparently that also is a forbidden topic. Born in Bombay, but on the place of his birth he is silent. . . . The answer must be: more scars.”<sup>177</sup> In finally being recognized beyond his status as a wealthy cosmopolitan, Malik confesses his back story to Neela, revealing that he was raped by his stepfather when he was six years old while his mother turned a blind eye. This confession represents a double disavowal: of his rarified neoliberal privilege on one hand (as such privilege is always subordinated to his trauma) and of his cosmopolitan authenticity on the other (as his cultural history is associated with the very source of said trauma). It is in this sense that Soo Yeon Kim notes that the novel’s politics is a “type of non-allegiance that deconstructs a utopian rendition of cosmopolitanism and refuses to commit it to either cosmopolitanism or nationalism.”<sup>178</sup> In other words, if Malik cannot be adequately signified through the American logic of neoliberal cosmopolitanism, neither can he safely fall back on his ethnic background without being subjected to violence.

*Netherland*, too, expresses ambivalence about the negotiation of various forms of security afforded to cosmopolitan individuals in the context of the United States. Unlike

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<sup>177</sup> Rushdie, *Fury*, 160.

<sup>178</sup> Kim, 65.

Rushdie, who by the time of *Fury*'s publication was among the best known writers in the world, O'Neill published *Netherland* as a relatively anonymous and as yet uncertainly categorized writer. Though born in Ireland, O'Neill grew up in Mozambique, Iran, and the Netherlands, speaking English, French, and Dutch along the way, which has led scholars to note that "O'Neill has always been aware of the 'oppressive' categorization of literature by nationality."<sup>179</sup> Yet with his novel famously praised by *The New York Times*' Michiko Kakutani as "a resonant meditation on the American Dream . . . with echoes of *The Great Gatsby*," it is telling that O'Neill did not gain literary acclaim until he wrote about New York.<sup>180</sup> Practically from the moment of its release, *Netherland* began to achieve status as a classic American novel, yet the relative obscurity of the rest of O'Neill's output marks him as a global outsider who only came into prominence at the whim of American literary circles. I argue the recognition of *Netherland* suggests the novel indexes a particular set of American anxieties regarding cosmopolitanism and the failure of the American Dream. Specifically, *Netherland*'s representation of post-9/11 New York explores the limits of neoliberal cosmopolitanism in the age of terror, where the American Dream associated with the economic security of the 1990s is destabilized by the 9/11 attacks.

Sarah L. Wasserman has convincingly argued that *Netherland*'s optics "deterritorialize the attacks and ask readers to linger in a complex narrative of sustained

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<sup>179</sup> Stanley van der Ziel, "It's a Long Way to Tipperary: Globalization [sic] and Tradition in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*," *Irish Review* 45, no. 1 (2012): 60-76.

<sup>180</sup> Michiko Kakutani, "Post 9/11, a New York of Gatsby-Size Dreams and Loss," *The New York Times*, May 16, 2008.

departure.”<sup>181</sup> However, if *Netherland* “includes scenes of seeing that look beyond familial and national boundaries,”<sup>182</sup> then it is not because the novel escapes the centrality of the United States but rather that American insecurity has become part and parcel of a transnational cosmopolitan ontology. The distinction here is important for a reading of the novel’s globalized representation of post-9/11 New York. *Netherland* departs from other works of 9/11 literature, which have generally “failed to embrace the transnational imperative to remap the US’s relationship with the rest of the world . . . [seeking] refuge in the rituals of the domestic.”<sup>183</sup> But if the novel expands the representational scale of post-9/11 New York to capture its transnational implications, this is less a result of a neutral cosmopolitan commitment than it is an acknowledgement of the reality of neoliberal cosmopolitanism with the United States as its center. Even if Wasserman’s contention that the novel “directs its gaze—and the readers’—somewhere other than backward toward images of terror and destruction”<sup>184</sup> is true, then it rests on a deeply ambivalent vision of neoliberal futurity and its great capacity for violence even in the face of its increasingly cosmopolitan structure. In this sense, the novel evokes what Emily Apter calls “oneworldness” in *Against World Literature*, an explicitly paranoid version of transnationalism or globalism that envisions everything in the world as connected, which “has become exemplary of the postwar, and now post-9/11 American literary world-system . . . work that exports a singularly American style of one-world

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<sup>181</sup> Sarah L. Wasserman, “Looking Away from 9/11: The Optics of Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland*,” *Contemporary Literature* 55, no. 2 (2013): 251.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>183</sup> Bimbisar Irom, “Towards a Worldly Post-9/11 American Novel: Transnational Disjunctures in Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland*,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 3.

<sup>184</sup> Wasserman, 267.

thinking.”<sup>185</sup> My argument here is that O’Neill in fact subverts oneworldness by connecting it to the neoliberal American Dream, showing that this line of cosmopolitan thinking problematically enacts violence on those it pretends to serve most.

Whereas *Fury* is narrated in chronological order in the third-person limited, *Netherland* is told from the first-person perspective of Hans van den Broek in a framed memoir-style narrative with present-day Hans recollecting the past relating to his wife Rachel and a separate thread where he plays cricket in post-9/11 New York with the help of Chuck Ramkissoon. Hans begins the novel by referencing his relocation to New York to work as a financial analyst specializing in oil securities. Unlike Malik, Hans brings his wife with him – Rachel, who is 7-months pregnant with their son Jake. Family estrangement soon occurs, however, as Rachel leaves New York with Jake to London, catalyzed by the 9/11 attacks. Hans and Rachel are displaced from their loft in Tribeca until cleared by authorities to return, and Rachel announces her intention to leave Hans in the small hours they spend in a hotel room, where “in the hush of the small hours, a goods truck smashing into a pothole sounded like an explosion, and the fantastic howl of a passing motorbike once caused Rachel to vomit with terror.”<sup>186</sup> Indeed, in the aftermath of the attacks, Rachel cannot dissociate the United States from a looming sense of terror: “the feeling in her bones that Times Square, where the offices of her law firm were situated, would be the site of the next attack. . . . [It was an] unfathomable and catastrophic atmosphere.”<sup>187</sup> In both novels, the terror surrounding 9/11 puts pressure on

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<sup>185</sup> Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013), 83.

<sup>186</sup> O’Neill, *Netherland*, 19.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

cosmopolitan wealth as represented by the United States, where economic security becomes associated with emotional insecurity. The fact that *Netherland* has been favorably compared to *The Great Gatsby* suggests that the novel has performed a paradigm shift in rendering a specifically post-9/11 Gatsbyesque critique of the trappings of the American Dream.<sup>188</sup> In an interview shortly after the novel's publication, O'Neill himself claims that "The Gatsby-esque narrative of the corrupting of the American dream is premised on the existence of an autonomous, intact America. But there are forces—including 9/11 and the globalization of the economy—which have destroyed that premise and put an end to a hugely significant literary and cultural era in American life."<sup>189</sup> Rachel initially justifies leaving Hans by stressing her fear of New York in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, a fear that in Hans's case is outweighed by his reluctance to give up employment in the financial sector. Rachel dismisses this kind of cost-risk calculation which accepts a life under conditions of terror in exchange for a Wall Street income:

It came to me when I thought about packing up and going back to Tribeca. Then what? Start again as though nothing has happened? For what? So we can have this great New York lifestyle? So I can keep risking my life every day to do a job that keeps me away from my son? When we don't even need the money? When I don't even enjoy it anymore? It's crazy, Hans.<sup>190</sup>

After desperately suggesting solutions only to have Rachel rebuff them, Hans gives in to the idea of moving and suggests to her: "I'll collect my bonus and then we'll head off together, as a family. London would be just fine. Anywhere would be fine. Tuscany,

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<sup>188</sup> Unsurprisingly, *Fury* also references *The Great Gatsby*: "After all, Jay Gatsby, the highest bouncer of them all, failed too in the end, but lived "out, before he crashed, that brilliant, brittle, gold-hatted, exemplary American life." See Rushdie, *Fury*, 82.

<sup>189</sup> O'Neill in Bacon, n. p.

<sup>190</sup> O'Neill, *Netherland*, 22.

Tehran, it doesn't matter."<sup>191</sup> Hans' belief in the affordances of cosmopolitan travel are destroyed when Rachel retorts with, "Hans, this isn't a question of geography. You can't geographize this."<sup>192</sup> In part, Hans's failure to recognize the deeper problems in his marriage are tied to his privileged lifestyle as a wealthy cosmopolitan. His suggestion to travel "anywhere" glosses over the fact that he has enough money to uproot his life and live anywhere because he has attained his wealth by working for oil companies such as Shell that are fully implicated in the politics of the Middle East and hence in the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror. In embodying neoliberal cosmopolitanism, Hans is blindsided by Rachel's decision to separate from him, forcing him to confront the reality of his loss of self in American society: "I felt shame because it was me, not terror, she was fleeing."<sup>193</sup>

As *Fury* does for pre-9/11 New York, *Netherland* portrays economic and emotional security in an inverse relationship after the 9/11 attacks. Hans's success as an analyst working in oil securities provides an ideal conceit for O'Neill to triangulate his failing marriage, his job status, and the War on Terror. Ultimately, it is Rachel who arbitrates the value of economic security for Hans. His marital insecurity is exacerbated when he talks with Rachel's new lover Martin at a family gathering. Martin is a star chef in London thinking of expanding to New York because "business is good."<sup>194</sup> To himself, Hans thinks: "Oh yeah? I wanted to say. Get back to me when you're grossing ten

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<sup>191</sup> O'Neill, *Netherland*, 29.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

thousand dollars per working day, asshole.”<sup>195</sup> Hans’ income places him comfortably in the top fraction of the one percent, affording economic security that Hans calls upon to counter the marital insecurity represented by Martin. In calling on it out of pettiness and jealousy, however, Hans only suggests that wealth is a weak substitute for Rachel’s companionship. Even as Hans gains greater job security, his relationship with Rachel suffers: “Inside the business, I had the beginnings of a reputation as a guru: on the Friday of the week Rachel declared her intent to leave for London, *Institutional Investor* ranked me number four in my sector—a huge six spots up from the year before.”<sup>196</sup> Hans’s rise in the analyst ranks, however, earns him the jealousy and contempt of the coworkers with whom he competes. One coworker challenges Hans even as they go out to celebrate his ranking: “‘I hate drinking this shit,’ Rivera told me as he emptied into his glass the fifth bottle of champagne I’d bought, ‘but seeing as you’ll be getting most of my year-end fucking bonus, it gives me satisfaction on a wealth-redistribution basis.’”<sup>197</sup> Hans’ buying five bottles of champagne only for Rivera to hate it suggests capitalist excess leads to happiness for no one. Indeed, as Hans’s success pushes him farther away from his coworkers, he brushes up against the limits of late-stage capitalism: “On the one hand it was a feather in the bank’s hat, which vicariously sat on their heads . . . [but] the supply of feathers, and the monetary rewards that went with them, were not infinite.”<sup>198</sup> In earning greater job security as a “guru,” Hans is estranged both at home and in the workplace, eventually leading him to find new communities through cricket and his

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<sup>195</sup> O’Neill, *Netherland*, 225.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

friendship with Chuck Ramkissoon, a Trinidadian businessman who seeks to establish the New York Cricket Club. As Hans proceeds to distract himself with the affordances of New York culture, including the goal of acquiring his driver's license, his friendship with Chuck deepens and they bond over their shared interest in cricket. Chuck meanwhile recruits Hans as a driver to help him gain experience driving to Chuck's business dealings around the city. Present-day Hans reveals to us early on that Chuck has mysteriously died, and late in the novel we learn that Chuck's death likely occurred due to his unscrupulous business practices, which include running an illegal lottery in which Hans was an unwitting accomplice. Regarding himself as "a man to whom an apology of almost any kind is acceptable," Hans mourns Chuck's death and sentimentally recounts their final meeting, where Chuck pays a surprise visit to Hans after the latter successfully passes his driver's test.<sup>199</sup> Hans' and Chuck's unlikely friendship across cultural boundaries has prompted scholars to read *Netherland* as highlighting a "precarious cosmopolitanism"<sup>200</sup> or an unrealized "cosmopolitan dream."<sup>201</sup>

If Chuck Ramkissoon plays Gatsby to Hans' Nick Carraway, then one of *Netherland's* paradigm shifts is based on race and ethnicity—Chuck is a black Trinidadian immigrant who becomes a naturalized American citizen. As Pamela Mansutti claims, "Through Trinidadian Chuck, O'Neill reactualizes the character of Gatsby and presents ethnicity as one of the shady yet propulsive economic forces coming out of post-

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<sup>199</sup> O'Neill, *Netherland*, 239.

<sup>200</sup> Pier Paolo Frassinelli and David Watson, "Precarious Cosmopolitanism in O'Neill's *Netherland* and Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15 no. 5 (2013): 2.

<sup>201</sup> Pamela Mansutti, "Ethno-religious Identities and Cosmopolitan Echoes in John Updike's 'Terrorist' (2006) and Joseph O'Neill's 'Netherland' (2008)," *Other Modernities* 3, no. 1 (2011): 105-123.



9/11 New York.”<sup>202</sup> Rather than reading Chuck as a straightforward attempt at immigrant representation, however, recent scholarship has sought to recover Chuck’s characterization in the novel, focusing instead on how O’Neill’s seemingly problematic rendering should be read as a critique of the neoliberal cosmopolitan conditions affecting immigrant lives in the United States. Stanley van der Ziel’s exploration of *Netherland*’s “subterranean modernism,” for example, argues that O’Neill is acutely aware of the realist tradition and imputes modernist techniques throughout the narrative as a means to destabilize surface-level readings of its realist plot.<sup>203</sup> Highlighting the novel’s non-chronological narrative patterning and interplay between surface and underside, van der Ziel argues that the novel draws on the “legacy of modernism” as a means to index “feelings of disintegration, fragmentation, and doubt in the face of the quickening pace of modern life, the emergence of new technologies, and the realities of the horrors of world war.”<sup>204</sup> In his view, Hans seeks to make sense of the world—and therefore Chuck—not through the semantic reliability of language but rather through the “idea of *order*, and the various ways in which a sense of order might be imposed by its confused narrator on the chaos of existence.”<sup>205</sup> From this view, what has been called *Netherland*’s lyrical realism is in fact a more subversive account of American culture with a resigned wistfulness, where the narrative’s selective nostalgia presents the United States, and New York in particular, as a space both of glorified meritocracy and of illusory fantasy. Thus, even

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>203</sup> Stanley van der Ziel, “Beneath the Surface: The Subterranean Modernism of Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland*,” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 56, no. 2 (2015): 207-222.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 216.

when the novel seeks to characterize Chuck in the reinvented terms of the American Dream for a non-White immigrant, it cannot help but signify Chuck in ways that play on overdetermined tropes of American neoliberalism, where his skin is “like Coca-Cola” and he endeavors to name his cricket field “Bald Eagle Field.” Building on van der Ziel’s reading that *Netherland* does not “advocate for the erasure of personal identity . . . in the face of globalization”<sup>206</sup> but without reiterating Zadie Smith’s suggestion that Chuck functions as an “authenticity fetish,”<sup>207</sup> I want to suggest that the novel views identity as always already articulated according to neoliberal cosmopolitanism. If Chuck seems at all inauthentic, it is because Hans—not O’Neill—cannot understand him by any other logic than that which already assumes signification in a capitalist system of values. Only Chuck’s death disrupts Hans’s determination to make capitalist sense of his life, since there is no clear basis for assuming he died as a result of shady business dealings aimed at economic profit or for reasons totally unrelated, beyond this frame of neoliberal explanation.

Arguably, then, Chuck’s death serves as the key to determining *Netherland*’s central concern: the grave consequences of neoliberal cosmopolitanism for immigrant Americans. The initial wave of criticism surrounding Chuck’s role in the narrative as an “authenticity fetish,” first launched by Smith’s incisive critique of *Netherland*, argues that O’Neill fails to articulate a suitably nuanced characterization of marginalized American immigrants. Given that Chuck is celebrated for his stereotypical immigrant work ethic only to be tragically reduced, in the end, to a noble criminal, O’Neill uses

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<sup>206</sup> van der Ziel 2012, 67.

<sup>207</sup> Zadie Smith, “Two Paths for the Novel,” *The New York Review of Books*, November 20, 2008.

Chuck to glorify multiculturalism while ignoring the material conditions of racial, immigrant, and economic disprivilege—or so the argument goes. Yet to assess Chuck’s lack of authenticity, this criticism in fact projects a sort of idealized authenticity of its own and therefore falls into the same trap for which it indicts *Netherland*. This is to say that Chuck should not be read as a realist character or as an attempt by O’Neill to authentically represent the lives of immigrants; if anything, the novel’s only realism regarding this class of individuals is captured in Chuck’s *death* rather than his life. At the end of the novel, Hans and the reader are left with the *mystery* of Chuck’s life and the *fact* of his death. If *Netherland* seduces the reader into wanting to know more about Chuck—the “authentic” Chuck behind his blatantly vacuous “Think Fantastic” motto—then his death (and its revelation at the virtual start of the novel) is an immediate recognition of the impossibility of such knowledge. What little we do know of Chuck, even in his death, is organized in relation to his status as a cosmopolitan immigrant striving for the neoliberal American Dream; his business dealings, interpersonal relationships, and the facts surrounding his death are all circumscribed in the neoliberal logic of seeking economic security by any means necessary. With regard to his goal of forming the New York Cricket Club, as Wasserman writes, “Because Chuck has been dead from the first pages of the novel, the field is never more than the emblem of an aborted dream.”<sup>208</sup> In short, Chuck’s only “authenticity” in the novel is as a cosmopolitan immigrant unable to be fully recognized by neoliberal American society except in death. Westall corroborates this argument, writing that Chuck “embodies these pertinent pasts

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<sup>208</sup> Wasserman, 262.

and the aborted future. Always-already dead, his dream is always-already a failure.”<sup>209</sup>

Yet, given the irresolution of the narrative itself, which, as van der Ziel points out, “refuses, in the end, to fix meaning by providing a definitive account of the life and death of Chuck Ramkissoon”<sup>210</sup>—the novel does not fully align with the neoliberal cosmopolitanism that it depicts. Rachel makes suggestions that imply Chuck’s death are due to his criminal activities, but Hans focuses less on resolving Chuck’s mysterious death than on making sense of his lived experience.

Accordingly, by the end of the novel, we are led to believe that if there has been character growth, it has taken place in Hans rather than Rachel. Rachel leaves Martin to his New York enterprise, and through another series of O’Neill’s quick narrative jumps, Rachel and Hans reunite by having regular sex and then starting to consult with a marriage counselor. In reflecting on his growth, Hans only further demonstrates his inability to articulate the world without respect to neoliberal cosmopolitan modes of inquiry, focused on the in/security of American interests on the world stage:

I could take a guess at the oil production capacity of an American-occupied Iraq and in fact was pressed at work about this issue daily, and stupidly. . . . But I found myself unable to contribute to conversations about the value of international law or the feasibility of producing a dirty bomb or the constitutional rights of imprisoned enemies or the efficacy of duct tape as a window sealant or the merits of vaccinating the American masses against smallpox or the complexity of weaponizing deadly bacteria or the menace of the neoconservative cabal in the Bush administration . . . I had little interest. I didn’t really care.

In short, I was a political-ethical idiot.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Westall, 292.

<sup>210</sup> van der Ziel 2015, 219.

<sup>211</sup> O’Neill, *Netherland*, 99-100.

However, it is notable that Hans's growth in *Netherland* is not a process of coming into political consciousness. His is the development of a pre-consciousness that the very political-economic conditions that afford him cosmopolitan privilege are connected to a gamut of global forces fundamentally conditioned by the threat of catastrophe. Hans's self-proclaimed idiocy and apathy in the face of these forces are a challenge to the centrality of the United States, where his inability to participate in these conversations is representative of his irreducibility to a knowable cosmopolitan subject except in cases that may lead to his death. Indeed, if Hans has learned anything in light of the 9/11 attacks and Chuck's death, it is that his neoliberal cosmopolitan privilege does not exempt him from death by terror or catastrophe but in fact might even bring him closer to it.

Like *Fury*, *Netherland* ends with family reconciliation and a recapitulation of utopian cosmopolitanism: instead of looking at what he is "supposed to be seeing,"<sup>212</sup> Hans is instead caught smiling at the tableau of his family. As Bimbisar Irom argues, this conclusion evinces a "profound ambivalence" because its "tussle between competing gazes . . . remains confined to the Euro-American protagonists as Chuck's perspective is left out."<sup>213</sup> Having ascended the London Eye over the Thames River, Hans notes that what he supposed to be seeing is the vast expanse of British monuments such as Tower Bridge, Buckingham Palace, and Trafalgar Square. The scene serves as a metaphor that links the Anglophone world together in terms of cosmopolitan sites only to de-spatialize them according to cosmopolitan ideals centered on the human as represented by Hans'

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<sup>212</sup> O'Neill, *Netherland*, 26.

<sup>213</sup> Irom, 14.

family. In this scene of reunion, Hans has finally addressed Rachel's objection to his habit of "geographizing" their problems, reinscribing cosmopolitanism in the unit of the family rather than in the individual. To orchestrate Hans's character growth in this regard, however, O'Neill must accept an authorial bind. "There is to be no drifting out of the moment," Hans is thinking atop the London Eye. "What happens, however, is that I'm the one who drifts—to another sun, down, to New York, to my mother."<sup>214</sup> In this sense, the final scene is actually two scenes in quick succession, the first in London on the Thames River with Hans joyfully reunited in London with his son Jake and previously estranged wife Rachel, and the second a nostalgic flashback to Hans with his elderly mother on a Staten Island Ferry in New York. The significance of Hans drifting out of the moment in London also recapitulates a form of British imperialism: "You wonder how anyone is able to navigate this labyrinth, which is what this crushed, squashed, everywhere-spreading city appears to be."<sup>215</sup> O'Neill partially subverts the undertones of Anglophone imperialism by having Hans regard the sites as unimportant, first portraying Hans as envisioning his mother "looking not at New York but at me, and smiling," which he then emulates in the present, "com[ing] to face my family with the same smile." The affective leverage of "smiling" in these nested scenes suggests a politics of intimacy based on a normative portrait of the nuclear family, and though the cosmopolitan crush of New York or London is forestalled in this freeze-frame of intergenerational family togetherness, the alienating neoliberal conditions governing

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<sup>214</sup> O'Neill, *Netherland*, 255.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

intersubjective ties is left unresolved. Simply put, the abounding smiles at the end of *Netherland* are certainly not an indication that the novel's ending is a happy one.

In my view, then, the critical potential of *Fury* and *Netherland* inheres not in their promotion of cosmopolitanism as such but rather in rendering characters who are reducible neither to cosmopolitan flair nor to economic privilege. The characters' economic privilege is on one hand a prerequisite for their access to the exorbitant space of New York, but in reverse their economic mobility is undoubtedly integral to their cosmopolitan ontologies. As the cosmopolitan "creative" intellectual par excellence, Malik must reconcile his investments in high culture—philosophy, history, political and artistic critique—with a rather vacuous capitalist system of value that sustains his very freedom to maintain and explore these investments. In *Netherland*, Hans's obsession with connecting to Chuck and his multicultural crew of cricketers exposes a tension between Hans' privileged *want* for community as a holdover for his newfound isolation versus Chuck's and the cricketers' virtual *need* of cricket as a marginalized group to secure financial well-being and community of their own. Neither protagonist can disentangle his economic privilege from his cosmopolitan beliefs or vice versa; they are mutually determined. Though critics have sought to tease out the more critical aspects of the novels' respective cosmopolitan politics or otherwise deride their supposedly reductive politics altogether (especially in the case of *Netherland*), I argue that *Fury* and *Netherland* depict neoliberal cosmopolitanism not to promote it but to refuse its overdetermination of identity, turning reductiveness itself into a form of criticality. I want to suggest that these novels promote an affective politics of inarticulability that seeks to

*unwrite* the deterministic modes of capitalistic value given by neoliberal cosmopolitanism. In refusing to be satisfied with this dominant mode of signification, Rushdie and O'Neill rely on literary expression not as a positivist means of articulating cosmopolitan individuals but to show that these individuals are in fact always only imperfectly articulated. It is only through strategies of literary *irresolution* that the novels' simultaneously global-cosmopolitan and marginalized American immigrants can be represented without falsifying their reality.



## **Bioeconomics: Speculative Fiction, Pandemics, and the Corporatization of Global Health**

Though it existed earlier in various forms, speculative fiction gained critical traction as a literary genre in the mid-twentieth century, championed by sci-fi heavyweight Robert A. Heinlein as “the most important, the most useful, and the most comprehensive fiction being published today.”<sup>216</sup> Bordering on hyperbole, Heinlein considered it “the most difficult of prose forms” and lauded the genre for its engagement with “the most human of all activities, observing the past in order to make plans for the future.”<sup>217</sup> In an invective against authors such as James Joyce and Henry Miller and advocating for the advantages of speculative fiction over so-called “serious” literature, Heinlein declared that “it is always hard to face up to a complex world, try to figure out what makes it tick, try to cope with it, survive and triumph over it,” yet speculative fiction “prepares young people to live and survive in a world of ever-continuing change . . . to be mature citizens of the galaxy.”<sup>218</sup> Fredric Jameson would later echo Heinlein’s sentiments in his study of utopia and science fiction, *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005), claiming that “the representational apparatus of Science Fiction . . . sends back more reliable information about the contemporary world than an exhausted realism (or an exhausted modernism either).”<sup>219</sup> The particular cultural and critical importance that Heinlein and Jameson attribute to speculative fiction recommends it as a key site for

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<sup>216</sup> Robert A. Heinlein, “Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues,” in *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism*, ed. Basil Davenport (Chicago: NESFA Press, 1959), n. p.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), 384.

investigating “global literature” as the symptomatic construct of an exhausted world fighting for survival.

This chapter looks at Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddam* trilogy (2003-2013) and Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Windup Girl* (2009) as contemporary Anglophone novels that exemplify the speculative fiction genre and offer a particular insight into the genre’s globality. These texts unfold plots of worldwide catastrophe in order to highlight the social and economic challenges that stem from the corporatization of global health and the rise of genetic engineering. The speculative nature of these texts demonstrates how the future of global health is already being mediated by literary representations, as fiction has the capacity to engage with and influence global phenomena and shape their attendant social effects. Indeed, the novels are similar not only in their thematization of global catastrophe, but in their success as works in a globalized literary marketplace and a global circuit of literary awards. The first book of Atwood’s trilogy, *Oryx and Crake*, was shortlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2003, and *The Windup Girl* won both the Nebula and Hugo Awards for Best Novel, the most prominent awards available for science fiction. Atwood’s trilogy was slated to be adapted into an HBO mini-series by acclaimed director Darren Aronofsky (*Black Swan*, *Noah*) in 2015, but this project has since been scrapped.<sup>220</sup> These speculative texts thus participate in a commercialized global entertainment market that amplifies and inflects their social commentary.

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<sup>220</sup> Bill Bradley, “Darren Aronofsky’s ‘MaddAddam’ Brings Margaret Atwood Novels to HBO,” *The Huffington Post*, June 6, 2014, accessed February 20, 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/06/darren-aronofsky-maddaddam-hbo\\_n\\_5455427.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/06/darren-aronofsky-maddaddam-hbo_n_5455427.html).

It matters that the term “speculative” not only denotes a subgenre of literature but also calls attention to the language of economics: market speculation, speculative risk, etc. As literary scholar J. Paul Narkunas contends, “Speculative fictions envision unrealized future scenarios; in this regard, they share a similar strategy to speculative capital, the very forces whose fictions have become our realities.”<sup>221</sup> Narkunas’ point is well-taken: the fictions produced by economic speculation often result in actions that have real material effects on our world, and in this way both speculative literature and market speculation distort the line between fiction and reality.<sup>222</sup> However, whereas speculative literature seeks, according to Heinlein, to help humanity prepare for the complex world of the future, market speculation is fundamentally premised on risk and a capitalist system susceptible to exploitation. In the novels examined here, both senses of “speculative” are at play. Not only do the texts envision realistic futures in which imagined pandemics devastate the global population, they also plot such catastrophe as an extrapolated consequence of the global capitalist economy. In effect, these texts show how contemporary literary expressions of globality are fundamentally tied to representations of catastrophe.

In order to better engage with this type of fiction, I turn to Catherine Gallagher’s application in literary studies of the concept of “bioeconomics.” In *The Body Economic* (2006), Gallagher notes that she derives this term from the ideas of the late 18th-century

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<sup>221</sup> J. Paul Narkunas, “Between Words, Numbers and Things: Transgenics and Other Objects of Life in Margaret Atwood’s *MaddAddams*,” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fictions* 56, no. 1 (2015): 1.

<sup>222</sup> As Atwood herself admits at the end of her trilogy, “Although *MaddAddam* is a work of fiction, it does not include any technologies or biobeings that do not already exist, are not under construction, or are not possible in theory.” Margaret Atwood, *MaddAddam* (New York: Anchor Books, 2013), 393.

political economist, Thomas Robert Malthus, and it “refers to political economy’s concentration on the interconnections among populations, the food supply, modes of production and exchange, and their impact on life forms generally.”<sup>223</sup> Gallagher explains that the term “bioeconomics” stresses “the natural limitations on economic activity as well as the tendency of that activity to rearrange nature.”<sup>224</sup> Bioeconomics is thus a useful way to conceptualize the *MaddAddam* trilogy’s extensive use of “Corporations” and *The Windup Girl*’s matching “calorie companies,” as these texts emphasize the massive corporate effects on human life across the globe. Engaging with speculative fiction vis-à-vis bioeconomics also allows us to better examine how market speculation itself is a form of fiction that affects global life.<sup>225</sup>

The *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Windup Girl* both envision a future controlled by corporations whose misguided forays into genetic engineering result in devastating consequences for global health. The main driving forces of both texts are what I call “speculative pandemics”<sup>226</sup>—diseases that not only seem entirely possible from a contemporary standpoint but also necessarily arise in response to pre-existing market

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<sup>223</sup> Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Bioeconomics thus offers a more specific means of apprehending speculative literature than the more well-known concept of biopolitics, popularized by Michel Foucault in the 1970s. Both, however, are interrelated global discourses. Foucault theorizes that biopolitics targets “man-as-species . . . a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on,” further explaining that biopolitics exerts significant “control over relations between the human race . . . and their environment, the milieu in which they live.” Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 243-245.

<sup>226</sup> “Pandemic” comes from the Greek “pan” and “demos,” lit. “all-people.” Given that these narratives by definition deal with “all people,” it makes sense that we consider them as global or at least as texts whose settings are framed as all-encompassing. “pandemic, n.” OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press.

demands and the biotechnologies they engender. As Lawrence Buell argues in one of the seminal works of ecocriticism, *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), “apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal.”<sup>227</sup> As a subclass of the apocalypse genre, speculative pandemic narratives are particularly useful for highlighting the intersections between ecology, global capitalism, and the contemporary literary imagination.

Pandemics have long existed in literature. In her analysis of 20th-century epidemics and their sociocultural implications, Priscilla Wald uses the term “outbreak narrative” to examine how “plagues have been formative in human existence and speculation,” and notes that such narratives have existed since antiquity in texts such as *The Iliad* and *Oedipus Rex*.<sup>228</sup> However, in a departure from earlier eras, contemporary pandemics such as HIV, H1N1, avian flu, Ebola, the Zika virus, etc., have exacerbated fears and occupy global public discourse now more than ever. This is partly because contemporary pandemics are not simply a world-health issue but also expose the deeper fault lines of global geopolitics. As Wald explains, “disease is associated with dangerous practices and behaviors that allegedly mark intrinsic cultural difference” and yet the prevention of pandemics is commonly credited to “a spirit of global cooperation.”<sup>229</sup> While considered a universal adversary to all humanity, pandemics also expose pre-existing social inequalities and cultural divisions, hence providing an ideal conceit for

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<sup>227</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 285.

<sup>228</sup> Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

authors to explore these topics. Wald thus argues that globalization is a significant reason why the fear of communicable diseases has been amplified: “As foretold, microbes circulated through air travel, commerce, and the circuits of capital, and they materially expressed the predictable contact anxieties.”<sup>230</sup> While Wald links the “circuits of capital” to prevailing global anxieties regarding pandemics, such a relationship is only indirect; global capital in her account acts as the vehicle for disease to spread but not necessarily as an agent in the production of disease.

Works of speculative literature such as the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Windup Girl* take this a step further and critique the ways in which global capital not only spreads but indeed *manufactures*, at times intentionally, pandemics that threaten worldwide human demise.<sup>231</sup> To the extent that technological progress and the exponential growth of the human population can be attributed to globalization, the speculative pandemics in these texts invert this logic to warn how the global economic conditions propelling technology may ultimately be injurious to global health. In the case of the *MaddAddam* trilogy, the reigning market demand is that of transgenic health: the use of genetic

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<sup>230</sup> Wald, 25.

<sup>231</sup> I have chosen the *MaddAddam* trilogy and *The Windup Girl* as exemplary texts that are particularly suited for a discussion of global literature vis-à-vis speculative pandemics, but it should be said that they are simply demonstrative of a much larger genre. Though the pandemic genre can of course be considered a subgenre of the apocalypse narrative, it has developed its own robust canon that continues to grow. While the genre includes classic texts such as Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) or Albert Camus’ *The Plague* (1947), it has become increasingly popular in contemporary literature. Some contemporary texts include not just the texts I examine in this chapter but also: Jeff Carlson’s *Plague Year* (2007), Justin Cronin’s *The Passage* trilogy (2010-2015), Lauren Groff’s *Arcadia* (2012), Peter Heller’s *The Dog Stars* (2012), John Smolens’ *Quarantine* (2012), and James Dashner’s *The Maze Runner* series (2009–). The recent mass interest in zombie narratives can also be seen as an offshoot of this genre, where popular films and television shows such as *28 Days Later* (2002), *I Am Legend* (2007), *Zombieland* (2009), *World War Z* (2013), *Survivors* (2008–), and *The Walking Dead* (2010–) all speculate on how a post-apocalyptic society might deal with widespread plague of one sort or another.

engineering and other biotechnologies to improve or extend the quality of human life. Though the trilogy follows a common tendency of dystopian fiction in depicting the biotech industry as oppressive and totalitarian, its portrayal of the industry's wealth and scope is not far from reality, where analysts project it to generate annual revenues of over \$600 billion by 2020.<sup>232</sup> *The Windup Girl* is similarly concerned with global health but approaches it through transgenic agriculture, where global human survival hinges on the genetic production of plague-resistant crops. By speculating on the adverse effects that biotechnology may have on global health, both texts reflect prevailing anxieties about technophobia and global capital's perceived links to economic exploitation, political corruption, and sociocultural inequality.

### ***MaddAddam*, Transgenic Health, and Bioeconomic Neoliberalism**

*MaddAddam*'s speculative pandemic connects the corporatization of global health management to the inescapably deleterious effects of global capital on the world's population. Comprising three quite different and distinct novels—*Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009), and *MaddAddam* (2013)—the trilogy explains how a genetically engineered pandemic named “The Waterless Flood” comes to devastate the world. The advanced transgenic scientific progress of Atwood's world is made possible

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<sup>232</sup> “Biotechnology Market Size to Reach \$604.40 Billion by 2020: Grand View Research, Inc.,” *PR Newswire*, September 22, 2015, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/biotechnology-market-size-to-reach-60440-billion-by-2020-grand-view-research-inc-528626431.html>. Accessed May 1, 2016. Other life science industries command similarly massive markets: by 2019, global pharmaceutical sales are estimated to reach \$1.4 trillion, global medical technology revenues are expected to increase to \$454 billion, and the global healthcare wholesale and distribution market is projected to grow to \$1.04 trillion. Gregory Reh et al., *2016 Global life sciences outlook: Moving forward with cautious optimism* (New York: Deloitte, 2015), <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/Life-Sciences-Health-Care/gx-lshc-2016-life-sciences-outlook.pdf>.

and yet shown to be contaminated by its connection to unchecked free-market capitalism. In effect, the trilogy's global pandemic represents the extrapolated consequence of unbridled neoliberalism, where capitalism creates not only financial inequality but also bioeconomic catastrophe, i.e., an economic teleology that ultimately results in the mass-scale death of the world's population. In this regard, Atwood's critique runs deeper than an anti-neoliberalist portrayal of free-market capitalism and calls into question global demand for scientifically enhanced health. Where health sciences are invariably intertwined with bioeconomics, Atwood's novels speculate that uneven technological advancement would not only deepen existing inequalities across the globe but also threaten a re-evaluation of what it means to be "human" in an age where capital allows for transgenic privilege.

Atwood's trilogy begins with the story of Snowman, formerly Jimmy, who grows up in a near-future Anglo-American world filled with advanced genetic science, rampant consumerism, and tyrannical Corporations. Marooned in a devastated New England landscape and left to watch over the Crakers, a group of genetically "improved" humans resistant to disease, Snowman is one of the few surviving humans left in the apocalyptic aftermath of an engineered pandemic designed to destroy humanity. As the narrative shuttles between past and present, we learn that the financial dominance of the Corporations has allowed for the development of new biotechnologies but at major social costs, including the execution of any dissenters who learn of or threaten their unscrupulous business practices. Jimmy himself is driven to work as an advertiser to promote health products for "AnooYoo" before he reunites with his childhood friend



Crake, the genius scientist who created the Crakers. Impelled by the quest for human “immortality” and disaffected with the Corporations, Crake leads a group of genetic scientists (the eponymous group called “MaddAddam”) to engineer a devastating pandemic and, with Snowman’s unwitting aid, unleashes it across the world.

It is the naïve demand of the global biotech market that allows the Corporations to ascend to power in Atwood’s story. She portrays a distorted version of the future of biotechnology where wealth expands its province from socioeconomic privilege to more explicitly include biological privilege as well. Corporations dominate the global market through their development of health technologies that extend life, maintain the appearance of youth, and satisfy consumer vanity—all at high prices. As one scientist explains, “It was big business . . . People were paying through the ceiling for those gene-splices. They were customizing their kids, ordering up the DNA like pizza toppings.”<sup>233</sup> Indeed, Crake confirms it is a thriving global market: “People come here from all over the world – they shop around. Gender, sexual orientation, height, colour of skin and eyes – it’s all on order, it can all be done or redone.”<sup>234</sup> By comparing custom DNA to “pizza toppings,” Atwood treats such biotechnologies as consumer commodities rather than scientific innovations, thereby indicting contemporary culture’s renewed interest in technologies such as those used to create “designer babies.”<sup>235</sup> Such privilege has little to do with improving physical health and is more centrally focused on conforming to idealized biological regularity, where smooth skin and perfect teeth become indicative of

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<sup>233</sup> Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 43.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>235</sup> See, for example, Glenn McGee, *The Perfect Baby: A Pragmatic Approach to Genetics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996).

wealth even more than money. Granted, such biotechnological science is not fundamentally shallow and exists in tandem with life-prolonging health sciences that include the growing of transplant organs, gene modification, and the development of new pharmaceuticals. Yet, as Angela Laflen contends, the trilogy's setting is one where "media, government, and multinational corporations have become entirely integrated and work together to provide constant entertainment to a public that is increasingly isolated within company-run Compounds."<sup>236</sup> As the forces that profit off consumer vanity converge with social governance, Atwood shows how biotechnologies that have the potential to improve global health are more likely to be hijacked by unchecked capitalism. Her trilogy suggests that a purely profit-driven investment in biotechnology and the health sciences risks appealing more to consumer narcissism than societal betterment.

Indeed, Atwood puts into stark opposition the conflicting aims of global capitalist economics and global health, demonstrating how the therapeutic purpose of health management becomes unsustainable as a profitable business practice as human longevity improves. Eventually, the concentration of power and biotechnology in the hands of the Corporations motivates global bioterrorism to take place. Crake lays out the process to Jimmy:

Axiom: that illness isn't productive. In itself, it generates no commodities and therefore no money. Although it's an excuse for a lot of activity, all it really does moneywise is cause wealth to flow from the sick to the well. From patients to doctors, from clients to cure-peddlers. Money osmosis, you might call it . . . The best diseases, from a business point of view . . . would be those that cause lingering illnesses. Ideally – that is, for maximum profit – the patient should

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<sup>236</sup> Angela Laflen, "There's a Shock in This Seeing": The Problem of the Image in *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Oryx and Crake*," *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 54, no. 1 (2009): 108.

either get well or die just before all of his or her money runs out. It's a fine calculation.<sup>237</sup>

Crake goes on to explain that Corporations such as “HelthWyzer” actually *create* diseases and disseminate the “hostile bioforms” to an unknowing public, all as a means of “practi[cing] the economics of scarcity, so they’re guaranteed high profits.”<sup>238</sup> Harnessed by free-market capitalism, health management thus inverts to illness management, and human life becomes an adjustable variable in an equation designed for maximum profit. Appropriately, the bioterrorism practiced by the Corporations is framed more as an efficient market strategy than an evil capitalist plot. Adam One, another survivor of the novel’s pandemic, remarks that by using vitamin pills and painkillers as vectors for diseases, “They make money all ways: on vitamins, then the drugs, and finally on the hospitalization when the illness takes firm hold . . . A very good plan for siphoning the victims’ money into Corps pockets.”<sup>239</sup> Bioterrorism in this view functions not as an exception but rather as the rule of unchecked global commerce.

The trilogy suggests, then, that the prospect of improved human life in the age of biotechnological innovation threatens the profit-driven goals of global capitalism and must be managed. Having proven himself as a genius geneticist, Crake earns a top position at one of the leading Corporations, RejoovenEsense, and follows this logic to its

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<sup>237</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 210-211.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Atwood, *MaddAddam*, 254.

extreme: the manufacture of a devastating global pandemic. Under the guise of addressing the threat of Malthusian catastrophe,<sup>240</sup> Crake summarizes the problem:

I've seen the latest confidential Corps demographic reports. As a species we're in deep trouble, worse than anyone's saying. They're afraid to release the stats because people might just give up, but take it from me, we're running out of space-time. Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply *for everyone*.<sup>241</sup>

Here, Crake reiterates the Malthusian idea that population growth will eventually exhaust the world's natural resources and cause massive death to "visit the human race."<sup>242</sup> In response and working on behalf of the Corporations, Crake and the rest of the MaddAddam team develop "BlyssPluss," a "sure-fire one-time-does-it-all birth-control pill" that also provides "an unlimited supply of libido and sexual prowess, coupled with a generalized sense of energy and well-being."<sup>243</sup> Though Crake calls it a "huge money-spinner" and a "must-have pill, in every country, in every society of the world," Jimmy bluntly concludes that it is a pill created to "sterilize people without them knowing it under the guise of giving them the ultra in orgies."<sup>244</sup> What Jimmy does not know is that Crake considers humans to be genetically inferior and plans to use BlyssPluss to kill the global population and replace it with his genetically enhanced Crakers. The selling point of the BlyssPluss pill inheres in its ability not only to manage global life but to do so in a way that is saleable to a global economy enraptured by sex. By invoking lusty sexual

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<sup>240</sup> For further analysis on Malthusian catastrophe and 20th- and 21st-century literature, see Andreu Domingo, "'Demodystopias': Prospects of Demographic Hell," *Population and Development Review* 34, no. 4 (2008): 725-745.

<sup>241</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 295.

<sup>242</sup> Malthus T.R. 1798. *An essay on the principle of population*. Chapter VII, 61.

<sup>243</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 294.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 294-295.

images and depicting a society overloaded with shocking visual distractions—references to child pornography, live sex shows, murder-suicide videos, etc. abound throughout the trilogy—Atwood shows how the advertising strategies of global capital trade on visual-biological currency. That is, bioeconomic speculation entails imagining humanity’s desire for sex and need for biological survival, and exploiting these not just for profit but to manage human life itself.

BlyssPluss ultimately commandeers the circuits of global capital to deliver Crake’s engineered pandemic to the global population, thereby reifying Atwood’s speculative account of the links between globalization and bioeconomic catastrophe. Crake recruits Oryx, a former child prostitute from Southeast Asia and the love interest of both Jimmy and Crake, to distribute BlyssPluss to sex clinics and whorehouses in pleeblands around the world. In doing so, Crake quite literally uses the sex trade for his own bioeconomic ends. Jimmy describes the fallout:

At first Jimmy thought it was routine, another minor epidemic or splotch of bioterrorism, just another news item . . . Then the next one hit, and the next, the next, the next, rapid-fire. Taiwan, Bangkok, Saudi Arabia, Bombay, Paris, Berlin. The pleeblands west of Chicago . . . This was more than a few isolated plague spots. This was major . . . The symptoms were high fever, bleeding from the eyes and the skin, convulsions, then breakdown of the inner organs, followed by death. The time from visible onset to final moment was amazingly short . . . By midnight the hits were coming almost simultaneously. Dallas. Seattle. New New York. The thing didn’t appear to be spreading from city to city: it was breaking out in a number of them simultaneously.<sup>245</sup>

The listing of cities here demonstrates Atwood’s expectation of how the “circuits of capital” are mediated through a sexual-economic network of cosmopolitan centers. And, on the surface, Atwood’s point seems to be that the bioeconomic threat posed by global

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<sup>245</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 324-325.

capital is non-specific; in a perverse, egalitarian way, the global speculative pandemic of Atwood's world targets humanity-as-species and makes no geopolitical distinctions. In this light, we can better understand how Crake's belief in the genetic inferiority of humanity so easily coincides with his nonchalant critiques throughout the narrative of the inefficiencies of racism and unequal social hierarchies.<sup>246</sup> A universal pandemic is one form of true globality.

However, because Crake works for Corporations located in the Anglophone world (viz. "New New York" and the general New England area) and because the pandemic spreads almost like an STD, an alternative reading is that Atwood is specifically indicting areas highly affected by Western capitalism. The geopolitical history of capitalism thus necessarily complicates a reading of Atwood's speculative narrative that views its setting as global. Or at any rate if we are to understand the trilogy's world as global insofar as it imagines the speculative future of humanity as a whole rather than any single group, it must be qualified that such a globality reiterates a form of Western exceptionalism. Atwood's vision of the world seems less inflected by the racial or cultural implications that a speculative pandemic would bring, and to fill this gap, we may now turn to *The Windup Girl*.

### ***The Windup Girl*, Transgenic Agriculture, and Bioeconomic Imperialism**

Set in futuristic Thailand, *The Windup Girl*'s greatest strength is its use of existing cultural history to reflect on the bioeconomic implications of global agricultural

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<sup>246</sup> Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, 305.

development. Moreover, the speculative pandemic depicted in the novel—which affects both humans and agricultural crops—provides an ideal conceit to explore capitalism’s intersection with ecological change. While Atwood provides a more nuanced look at how socioeconomic structures must inevitably change as genetic science shifts the spectrum of what is possible for global health, Bacigalupi is more explicitly concerned with the changes in cultural relativity that advances in biotechnology would bring. His rendering of Asia highlights the significant challenges the continent poses for the ecological future of global capitalism, even if his depiction participates in blatantly Orientalist imagery. Both texts demonstrate the ease with which transgenic privilege (both societal and cultural) may be engendered by global capitalism in an age of unprecedented ecological change and biotechnological innovation.

*The Windup Girl* is told from multiple perspectives, which can be most easily described in terms of three intertwining narrative strands. In the first, Anderson Lake is an American undercover agent who works on behalf of powerful “calorie companies” that seek to steal genetic specimens from Thailand’s seedbank and establish increased trade with the country. In the second, Emiko, the novel’s eponymous “windup girl,” experiences identity crisis as a genetically manufactured new human subservient to capitalist and imperialist desires. In the last, Captain Jaidee is a Thai military officer caught between two opposing political factions: the Environment Ministry, which promotes Thai isolationism, and the Trade Ministry, which seeks to lift embargoes and increase trade with foreigners in the West. As these strands play out, the world in the narrative is continually plagued by rising oceans caused by global warming, the total

depletion of carbon fuel and energy sources, and agricultural catastrophe where only genetically modified crops can survive the hazards of bioterrorism. Accordingly, the social and economic landscape of *The Windup Girl*'s setting allows the novel's calorie companies to accrue vast influence and political sway as the world's population struggles to survive. Indeed, as Andrew Hageman asserts, "geopolitics, technoculture, and ecology all converge in *The Windup Girl*," and the novel portrays how "devastating ecological consequences recursively result from and drive global economic changes."<sup>247</sup> While *The Windup Girl* is not the first science-fiction novel to articulate the connection between these phenomena, its portrayal of the potentially catastrophic future of transgenic agriculture participates in pre-existing geopolitical history between Asia and the West.

The political economy of transgenic agriculture drives *The Windup Girl*'s central plot as its world is imperiled by a speculative pandemic known in the novel as "blister rust" or "cibiscosis."<sup>248</sup> As Lake muses at the outset of the novel, "Miracles are worth the world. A unique gene that resists a calorie plague or utilizes nitrogen more efficiently sends profits sky-rocketing."<sup>249</sup> Any admiration of biodiversity and its capacity to engender humanity's survival amidst ecological disaster in the novel is always linked to the forward advance of capital:

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<sup>247</sup> Andrew Hageman, "The Challenge of Imagining Ecological Futures: Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Windup Girl*," *Science Fiction Studies* 39, no. 2 (2012): 283-5.

<sup>248</sup> Bacigalupi uses "blister rust" as a fictional pandemic but it is related to a group of real-world fungal plant diseases called "rusts" that affect wheats, oats, and barley. *Cronartium ribicola* is a specific species of rust fungus that causes "white pine blister rust," and is believed to have originated in Asia before spreading to Europe and subsequently the US. One might venture a reading of Bacigalupi's use of blister rust along the geographical travel of agricultural plagues from Asia to the Western world, but it is more likely he chose it as the name for his pandemic simply for aesthetic purposes. Otis C. Maloy, "White Pine Blister Rust," *Plant Health Progress*, September 24, 2001, doi: 10.1094/PHP-2001-0924-01-HM.

<sup>249</sup> Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl* (San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2009), 3.



Somewhere in this country a seedbank is hidden. Thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of carefully preserved seeds, a treasure trove of biological diversity. Infinite chains of DNA, each with their own potential uses. And from this gold mine, the Thais are extracting answers to their knottiest challenges of survival. With access to the Thai seedbank, Des Moines could mine genetic code for generations, beat back plague mutations. Stay alive a little longer. (86)

The conflation of “seedbank” with “gold mine” or “treasure trove” with “biological diversity” is a clear demonstration of the connection between free-market capital and its valuation of genetic life. The value of life is not equal on a global scale, however, as the opposition between Thailand and Des Moines is represented as a zero-sum competition of genetic resources. As Hageman remarks, the futuristic Thailand of the novel is “one of the few nation-states still intact, largely due to policies of global embargo.”<sup>250</sup> Des Moines, in contrast, represents American free-market agri-business reorganized with proportionately more financial and geopolitical power. Whereas the US has disappeared only to be replaced by Des Moines (which itself is synonymous with “AgriGen,” the calorie company for which Lake works), Thailand retains its national sovereignty. The contradictions between ecological survival and capitalistic expansion are brought to the fore as the logical consequence of advancements in genetic science and its necessitation of geopolitical remapping.

Accordingly, the agricultural fantasy of *The Windup Girl*'s setting closely mirrors real-world technological advances involved in the search for a solution to unprecedented population growth and attendant global hunger. The novel's fictional genetic crops such as “U-Tex rice,” “TotalNutrient Wheat,” or “SoyPRO” are based on real-world equivalents that have developed as a result of mid-twentieth century innovations in

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<sup>250</sup> Hageman, 283.

transgenic agriculture during what is known as the Green Revolution. Started in the late 1950s, the Green Revolution has promoted agricultural productivity across the world in order to aid the global economy and relieve famine and world hunger. By the mid-1960s, scientists led by the American biologist Norman Borlaug had developed high-yield varieties of “rice and wheat that were subsequently released to farmers in Latin America and Asia.”<sup>251</sup> While “miracle rice” and “Golden Rice” have proved successful, public discourse continues to be wary of genetically modified crops and their geopolitical and socioeconomic consequences. Those unwilling or unable to join the Green Revolution must suffer as the value of their own crops plummets in relation to higher total global yield. In R. E. Evenson’s view, however, those countries who have not yet adopted the Green Revolution will remain “condemned to poverty” until their policymakers manage to deliver these new biotechnologies to farmers.<sup>252</sup> Economists argue that while it is not true that such “technologies were thrust upon the farmers of the world,” it seems that “for many, future green revolutions hold out the best, and perhaps the only, hope for an escape from poverty.” Thus, the Western technology developed in the Green Revolution has become virtually compulsory for any marginalized country to remain competitive in the global market and thereby reiterates a form of bioeconomic imperialism. The Green Revolution demonstrates that uneven advancements in transgenic agricultural technology

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<sup>251</sup> R. E. Evenson and D. Gollin, “Assessing the Impact of the Green Revolution, 1960 to 2000,” *Science*, no. 5620 (2003): 758.

<sup>252</sup> Evenson, 485.

can result in massive geopolitical effects not only on the global economy but also on global life.<sup>253</sup>

In narrating transgenic agricultural catastrophe through a speculative pandemic, *The Windup Girl* highlights the history of bioeconomic imperialism imposed on Asia by the West. The pandemic's threat of caloric scarcity exacerbates existing tensions in the global economy, and the promise of survival hinges on genetic science as it can be secured through corporate strategy. In this regard, the novel straightforwardly depicts the corporatization of global health, drawing on the history of the Green Revolution to foretell how biotechnology may remap the circuit of global capital in a future threatened by ecological change as it is tethered to a more specific cultural history of Western economic imperialism. For example, Lake's unrelenting search for the seedbank eventually leads him to make a pact with the Thai regent, Somdet Chaopraya. At first, Somdet Chaopraya is uninterested in anything Lake has to offer, calmly explaining, "We want nothing from your hand . . . There is nothing you can show me that I have not already seen."<sup>254</sup> On a basic level, the regent's reluctance derives from cultural suspicion; Lake is considered a "*farang*"—a pejorative term for a foreigner used throughout the novel—because of his known connection to the West and its underhanded agricultural companies, such as AgriGen. But Somdet Chaopraya's insistence on isolationism reiterates the real-world history of Asia's reluctance to enter into trade agreements with

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<sup>253</sup> For a related discussion on how US nuclear technology informed mid-twentieth century global agricultural policy, see also Neil Oatsvall, "Atomic Agriculture: Policymaking, Food Production, and Nuclear Technologies in the United States, 1945-1960," *Agricultural History* 88, no. 3 (2014): 368-387.

<sup>254</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 232-3.

an imperialistic West, perhaps most prolifically addressed in scholarship on the Opium Wars between Britain and China that took place during the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>255</sup> And, by having the regent eventually persuaded by Lake to enter into a pact with him, Bacigalupi thus implicitly comments on and reinvents the geopolitical history between Asia and the West. The novel thus suggests that biotechnologies such as genetically modified crops have the capacity to usher in a paradigm that imposes new bioeconomic implications, where the need for caloric survival supersedes pre-existing cultural suspicions.

As a meditation on how the nations of the world will navigate resource scarcity, *The Windup Girl's* setting thus permits a sustained examination of how Asia's current relationship to the environment portends major ramifications for the future of global health and commerce. Bacigalupi is thus participating in and critiquing a long-standing fascination that science fiction writers have had with "the Orient." Building on David Morley and Kevin Robins's concept of "techno-Orientalism," Greta Aiyu Niu observes that Asian subjects have figured "prominently in the reinvigoration of mass-market North American science fiction" since at least the 1960s.<sup>256</sup> Niu maintains that techno-Orientalism is "a practice of ascribing, erasing, and/or disavowing relationships between technology and Asian peoples and subjects" that "ignores the history and constructions of relationships between Asian people and technology."<sup>257</sup> Much like Orientalism as

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<sup>255</sup> For more discussion on the Opium Wars and their geopolitical implications for global capitalist economics, see, for example, Carl Trocki, *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>256</sup> Greta Aiyu Niu, "Techno-Orientalism, Nanotechnology, Posthumans, and Post-Posthumans in Neal Stephenson's and Linda Nagata's Science Fiction," in *Asian/Alien*, ed. Stephen Hong Sohn, special issue, *MELUS* 33, no. 4 (2008): 73.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

conceived by Edward Said, techno-Orientalism produces imagined representations of the Asian “Other” that are more reflective of reigning Western ideologies than they are an accurate portrayal of Asia itself. According to Artur Lozano-Méndez, techno-Orientalist representations manifested in order to “explain both the role of Japan, first, and then the role of East Asia in the configuration of global economy after World War II, in a context of technological leap and acceleration of globalization.”<sup>258</sup> The unclear place of Asia in relation to the rapid globalization of the 1960s onward thus gives the Asian “Other” the potential to exist as a figure with a radical or even subversive relationship to a normative capitalist economy.

Under techno-Orientalism, Asia presumably cannot neatly fit into a narrative of globalization and technological advancement, and Bacigalupi’s representation of Emiko both reiterates and inverts the logic of Western economic imperialism. Emiko is one of the genetically engineered “New People” manufactured by Japan in response to environmental change. Spliced together from “DNA confetti mixes” that give her “perfect eyesight and perfect skin and disease- and cancer-resistant genes,” Emiko is designed to serve as an ever-obedient companion for those with enough money to possess her.<sup>259</sup> Neatly appealing to a techno-Orientalist imagination, Emiko’s status as a windup girl is a reference to her artificial construction—built like a mechanical watch with “stutter-stop” movements—as well as to her built-in subjugation to those who possess her. Abandoned in Thailand by her original Japanese master, Gendo-sama, Emiko is

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<sup>258</sup> Artur Lozano-Méndez, “Techno-Orientalism in East-Asian Contexts: Reiteration, Diversification, Adaptation,” in *Counterpoints: Edward Said’s Legacy*, eds. May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 184.

<sup>259</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 34.

captured by a sadistic woman named Kannika and forced to perform at shows in which she is physically tortured and sexually humiliated. Yet her place in the novel allows Bacigalupi to critique not just the history of Asian prostitution but also Thai-Japanese relations, as nearly all the Thai characters in the novel treat her with disgust.

Indeed, the antipathy directed toward Emiko's existence as a genetically modified creature lapses into a cultural hatred of Japan. This is made visible immediately after a sexually deprived scene where Emiko is raped as part of a stage show: "Kannika gestures at her movements as if to say, 'You see? Look at this animal!' and then she is kneeling about Emiko's face and hissing to Emiko that she is nothing, and will always be nothing, and for once the dirty Japanese get what is coming to them."<sup>260</sup> Kannika's statement suggests that the novel oftentimes conflates Japan with advanced genetic biotechnology, rendering the country as a threatening place of technological wonder. In this way, cultural antipathy against Japan in the novel is premised on an underlying and problematic techno-Orientalist ideology. This is corroborated by another windup, Hiroko, when she explains: "It is in our genes. We seek to obey. To have others direct us. It is a necessity. As important as water for a fish. It is the water we swim in . . . We are more Japanese than even the Japanese. We must serve within a hierarchy."<sup>261</sup> Even the language of the narrative reiterates this techno-Orientalist mode, describing Hiroko as "perfect, precise as clockwork, and contextualized by the tea ceremony, all her motions take on a ritual grace."<sup>262</sup> On the surface, Bacigalupi uses windups to reiterate an Orientalist view of

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<sup>260</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 38.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

Japan as a patriarchal and obsequious society, whose very genetic code produces sexualized but helpless women and uncanny technology. That said, it is clear that the techno-Orientalist imagination of the novel stems from and critiques the US military's historical relationship to prostitution in Asia and elsewhere.<sup>263</sup>

The US's postwar solicitation of prostitutes was not solely restricted to Japan but extended to the rest of East and Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, China, Korea, and, in particular, Thailand. In her analysis of prostitution in Thailand, Alyson Brody notes that its "most visible manifestation" is a brightly lit street named "Patpong" in the city of Bangkok, adding that "Patpong, and other streets like it . . . cater mainly to tourists and expatriates."<sup>264</sup> Brody stresses that "the Thai sex trade has only developed into a full-scale industry in the past few decades, as an effect of two separate, but interconnected events: the Vietnam War and the explosion of tourism. The role of Thailand in providing a haven of 'Rest and Recreation' for American soldiers stationed in Vietnam . . . has been well documented."<sup>265</sup> However, though the Thai sex industry may have largely developed in to its current form as a result of US involvement, it is important to note that it is also "sustained by a local clientele; the figures commonly quoted are that 96% of Thai men

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<sup>263</sup> Beginning with the "American Plan" introduced during World War I, the US military has officially taken a prohibitionist stance towards prostitution, purporting to protect its military personnel by establishing "zones around military bases where the sale of sexual services is prohibited." However, Fujime Yuki explains that by the time of the Korean War, "there was an explosion of US soldiers buying sexual services," adding, "in each area where a US base was located, a heretofore quiet and sparsely populated locality was transformed into a bustling entertainment district for US troops where prostitution flourished." Fujime Yuki, "Japanese Feminism and Commercialized Sex: The Union of Militarism and Prohibitionism," *Social Science Japan Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 33-35.

<sup>264</sup> Alyson Brody, "Prostitution in Thailand: Perceptions and Realities," in *International Approaches to Prostitution: Law and Policy in Europe and Asia*, eds. Nicole Westmarland and Geetanjali Gangoli (New York: Policy Press, 2006), 189.

<sup>265</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 191-2.

have had sex with a [commercial sex worker].”<sup>266</sup> There exists a prevailing discourse that Thailand is a victim of the ravages of US intervention, but this statistic regarding local participation demonstrates that the truth is far more complicated. This is particularly important to acknowledge because the same can be said of the prostitutes themselves: they are commonly regarded as helpless victims of a corrupted global capitalism and an imperialistic US military, but anthropological accounts show that many Thai sex workers actually consider themselves to be “self-interested. . . breadwinners” and “derive agency from fulfilling their duty and responsibility to their families.”<sup>267</sup> Indeed, Brody concludes that “the phenomenon of prostitution is a product of several overlapping strands, of which economic factors are perhaps the most powerful. These economic forces include the relative poverty that makes prostitution a viable and even attractive option for a percentage of poor, rural Thai women.”<sup>268</sup> This is not to deny the exploitation of Thai prostitutes, though it is important to recognize that Orientalist ideology has entrenched itself in any discourse regarding the sex industry in Asia and seeks to obstruct Asian agency on all fronts.

Horribly abused and in existential crisis throughout the story, Emiko characterizes the potential dehumanizing consequences of genetic engineering and its reifying effects on human life. As Hageman asserts, “what is wrong is not [Emiko’s] existence in itself but her existence as a life form become private property . . . —that is the real engineering at work.”<sup>269</sup> However, the objectification of Emiko as property

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<sup>266</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 193.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>269</sup> Hageman, 294-5.



highlights not just the biotechnological capacity of science to engineer living objects, but exposes the ways in which the innovation of biotechnology inherits the freight of capitalist alienation. Paradoxically, Emiko represents at once a dehumanized Asian capitalist object as well as a threatening post-human genetic monstrosity. In this regard, Bacigalupi comments doubly on the subjugation of the Asian “Other” to global capitalism—in terms of both economic and sexual exploitation—as well as its overlooked complicity with a seemingly benign humanism. Similar to how J.M. Coetzee and Zadie Smith problematize liberal humanism by showing its devastatingly inhumane of animals as I explored in chapter 3, Bacigalupi’s rendering of Emiko’s plight in *The Windup Girl* is in many ways a meditation on the naively destructive capacity of global capitalism promoted in the name of human survival. Emiko’s bioengineered fitness is overlooked and even punished because she is not “human” at the same time that her transhuman superiority may be the only way forward for humans to survive the harsh environmental conditions of the planet.

Eventually, Emiko relinquishes her claim to Japanese nationality and aspires to more fully embrace her identity as one of the New People, i.e. genetically engineered humans. Having heard rumors of a village where New People live without masters, Emiko regains hope and seeks to escape Kannika. She thinks, “somewhere out there, if the pale scarred *farang* is to be believed, windups dwell. Somewhere beyond the armies that war for shares of coal and jade and opium, her own lost tribe awaits her. She was never Japanese; she was only ever a windup. And now her true clan awaits her, if only

she can find a way.”<sup>270</sup> The suggestion here is that while others view Emiko as doubly Japanese and post-human, Emiko herself portends a future beyond national distinctions, which as it turns out is also “beyond the armies that war” for capitalist commodities such as coal or jade or opium. In this sense, Emiko enacts a postnational or transnational politics of un-belonging, where her rightful place cannot be confined to a single nation but is instead only made visible by her ability to survive as a windup. In combination with her genetic superiority in an age of ecological turmoil, Emiko’s full transition to a post-human state suggests not that humanity must change but that it will come to be replaced wholesale. Given that her status and features as a windup are inherently connected to the climate catastrophe and global economic conditions, Emiko literally embodies the connection between globality and catastrophe.

### **Speculative Fiction as Global Anglophone Literature**

The longstanding skepticism regarding the coherence and value of speculative fiction as a genre category resembles the skepticism emerging more recently around the category of global Anglophone literature. Margaret Atwood’s self positioning as an exemplary author in both categories thus makes her a doubly suspect figure on the contemporary field. Atwood has famously maintained a distinction between “science fiction proper” and speculative fiction, which she argues goes beyond “talking squids in outer space”<sup>271</sup> and can better “speak of what is past and passing, but especially of what’s

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<sup>270</sup> Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*, 102.

<sup>271</sup> David Langford, “Bits and Pieces,” *SFX Magazine* 107, no. 1 (2003): n. p.

to come.”<sup>272</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, an equally renowned sci-fi writer, argues that Atwood’s distinction is “arbitrarily restrictive . . . designed to protect her novels from being relegated to a genre still shunned by hidebound readers, reviewers and prize-awarders.”<sup>273</sup> Putting aside her critique of Atwood’s refusal to use the sci-fi label, Le Guin’s point demonstrates that writers are conscious of how perceived genre affects readership and literary prestige. Even if such distinctions between genres may indeed be arbitrary, the reasons for enacting such distinctions are not, and indeed both speculative fiction and global Anglophone literature are concerned with proving themselves as legitimate literary forms.

Speculative fiction today seems to have achieved a degree of respect among literary scholars, saving the once-panned genre of science fiction from being denigrated as literature not worth critical examination. This has caused a rift to develop between the genres of science fiction and speculative fiction, though the exact differences between them remain a matter of debate. Science fiction writer Peter Watts describes the division of the two genres using what he calls the “Hierarchy of Contempt”: “Literature with a capital L (all characters, no plot) sits enthroned at the top. Genre fiction, including science fiction (all plot, no characters) is relegated to the basement. Certain types of fantasy hover in between . . . the Magic Realists get loads of respect, for example.”<sup>274</sup> Watts’ main complaint is that there is an artificial distinction between high and low forms of literature, and the creation of speculative fiction propagates a false sense of differential

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<sup>272</sup> Margaret Atwood, “The Handmaid’s Tale and Oryx and Crake ‘In Context,’” Special issue, *PMLA* 119, no. 3 (2004): 515.

<sup>273</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Year of the Flood by Margaret Atwood,” *The Guardian*, August 28, 2009.

<sup>274</sup> Peter Watts, “Margaret Atwood and the Hierarchy of Contempt,” *On Spec* 15, no. 2 (2003): 3-5.

literary quality. To buy into this misconception, for Watts, is to reify the ivory tower of high literature while unfairly dismissing critically interesting texts that participate in genres of lesser regard. Despite Watts' valid critiques, a number of authors still eschew the label of science-fiction in order to escape what they perceive to be the negative connotations that attend it. Watts notes that Atwood, for example, "claims to write something entirely different: *speculative* fiction, she calls it, the difference being that it is based on rigorously-researched science, extrapolating real technological and social trends into the future."<sup>275</sup> Speculative fiction thus exists as a genre whose value partly lies in its ability to escape older notions of literary inferiority by shifting its scale temporally into the future and spatially onto the globe.

By narrating catastrophe as stemming from various features of globalization—from transgenic biotechnology to economic imperialism—the speculative fiction outlined in this chapter transcends the seemingly placeless foci of earlier science fiction while also appealing to a different, presumably wider readership that is likely more interested in "serious" literature. Along these lines, following Gallagher's use of bioeconomics, we can better understand how Atwood and Bacigalupi themselves participate in a global literary market, in which novels bear "the impressions of a creative subject who is emphatically also a productive economic subject . . . one whose life and feelings have been transmitted to the textual product."<sup>276</sup> Both Atwood and Bacigalupi self-identify their literature in relation to "fear," making use of contemporary anxieties to better

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<sup>275</sup> Watts, 4.

<sup>276</sup> Gallagher, 5.

market their texts. Atwood, for example, notes that “*The Year of the Flood* is fiction, but the general tendencies and many of the details in it are *alarmingly* close to fact.”<sup>277</sup>

Similarly, in a 2011 interview with James Long, Bacigalupi observes that his central preoccupation is “the interaction between genetic engineering, food, intellectual property and big agricultural corporations,” and that “the kind of science fiction” he aims to write consists of “fear fantasies, or ‘if this goes on,’ stories.”<sup>278</sup> By invoking fear around transgenic agriculture, Bacigalupi uses the discourse of catastrophe not only to tap commercially into a global literary market but also to participate in a transnational discussion of ecological futures.

To return to Heinlein, we may consider speculative fiction as a proleptic literary form that shapes and is shaped by humanity’s future. The fact that speculative fiction envisions catastrophe as the necessary consequence of ecological change and the forward march of capital is a sign of how fiction itself is becoming increasingly conversant in global discourses. Just as Bacigalupi and Atwood are both involved in the speculative economy of literary production and trade, so too are they actively involved in producing the global future of speculative capital, insofar as it is a future shaped by public discourse over ecology, agriculture, genetic science, and so on. In this regard, the authors’ speculative fictions about the global exert a global force of their own: speculative

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<sup>277</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 433. Emphasis added. Indeed, Atwood is consistent in her rhetoric of “alarm,” as she describes the writing of *Oryx and Crake* as following a similar process: “I’d been thinking about ‘what if’ scenarios almost all my life . . . So I’d been clipping small items from the back pages of newspapers for years, and noting with alarm that trends derided ten years ago as paranoid fantasies had become possibilities, then actualities. The rules of biology are as inexorable as those of physics: run out of food and water and you die. No animal can exhaust its resource base and hope to survive.” Margaret Atwood, “Writing *Oryx and Crake*,” in *Writing With Intent: Essays, Reviews, Personal Prose 1983-2005* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2005), 284-286.

<sup>278</sup> Paolo Bacigalupi, interview by James Long, *Orbit Books*, May 5, 2011.

pandemics envisioned by these authors are useful for showing how our fictions—market-based or literary—have global bioeconomic force to produce real material and political effects, the main consequence of which may be our ultimate demise.

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