

University of Pardubice

Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Man and Nature in Contemporary Ecotopic and Apocalyptic Fiction

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Bachelor Thesis

2021

## Podklad pro zadání BAKALÁŘSKÉ práce studenta

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Osobní číslo: **H17420**

Téma práce: **Člověk a příroda v současné ekotopické a apokalyptické próze**  
Téma práce anglicky: **Man and Nature in Contemporary Ecotopic and Apocalyptic Fiction**

Vedoucí práce: **PhDr. Ladislav Vít, Ph.D.**  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

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Autor se ve své bakalářské práci zaměří na současně silící zájem o ekotopickou a apokalyptickou literaturu. V úvodu přiblíží ekokritický pohled na vztah člověka, přírody a fyzického prostředí obecně (Buell, Garrard, aj.). S cílem vybudovat užitečný teoretický rámec se zaměří na ta témata, která přímo souvisí s jeho následným rozбором. Druhou část práce bude tvořit detailní rozbor vybraných děl ekotopické literatury – James Ballard *The Drowned World*, Trevor Hoyle *The Last Gasp* a Margaret Atwood *The Year Of The Flood*. Autor bude zejména mapovat kontinuitu a změny, které přírodní katastrofa vyvolá ve struktuře společnosti, ve vztahu člověka k přírodě a v jeho společenských a existenčních hodnotách. Práci uzavře kapitola, která z předchozích dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěr.

### Seznam doporučené literatury:

Primární: Ballard, James Gr. *The Drowned World*. London: HarperCollins (UK), 2012. Hoyle, Trevor. *The Last Gasp*. London, United Kingdom: Quercus Publishing, 2015. Atwood, Margaret. *The Year Of The Flood*. London: Little, Brown Book Group, 2013. Sekundární: Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. Cresswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2004. Glotfelty, Cheryl a Harold Fromm. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens (USA): The University of Georgia Press, 1996. Oppermann, Serpil, and Serenella Iovino. *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. Gold, Mick. *History of Nature*. Massey, Doreen. *Geography Matters!*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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Jakub Borovec

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, PhDr. Ladislav Vít, Ph.D., for his valuable advice. My thanks also belong to my friends who supported me during the writing process, especially my classmates.

## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis deals with establishing the ecotopian genre with help of the scientific literature from the field of ecocriticism. The theoretical part includes the definition of the ecotopian genre together with its features. The practical part is divided into two chapters. It focuses on the analysis of ecotopian novels – Atwood, Hoyle, Ballard. The aim of this analysis is to include novels into the ecotopian genre and define the relationship between man and nature.

## **KEYWORDS**

anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, ecocriticism, man and nature

## **NÁZEV**

Člověk a příroda v současné ekotopické a apokalyptické próze

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá stanovením ekotopického žánru za pomoci odborné literatury z oblasti ekokritiky. Teoretická část obsahuje definici ekotopického žánru s jeho rysy. Praktická část je rozdělena na dvě kapitoly. Zaměřuje se na analýzu ekotopických románů od Atwoodové, Hoyle a Ballarda. Cílem této analýzy je zahrnout tyto romány do ekotopického žánru a definovat vztahy člověka k přírodě.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

antropocentrismus, biocentrismus, ekocentrismus, ekokritika, člověk a příroda

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## Introduction

The ecotopian genre is not sufficiently researched, and it borrows its knowledge from other genres. These include not only utopias and dystopias, which illustrate the relationship of society to their environment, but also various ideologies that examine the relationship between man and nature and the position in which one perceives oneself. These are anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism.

The theoretical chapter focuses on establishing the ecotopian genre, its philosophies, and ideologies. It also includes the definition of nature by Mick Gold since this paper mentions nature a lot. Additionally, it describes terms place and space that represent the values one has during and after a catastrophe, as the meaning of a place can be constantly changing.

The practical part of this work will be conducted using primary sources, which are *The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood, *The Last Gasp* by Trevor Hoyle, and *The Drowned World* by J.G. Ballard. All analysis will be done with the help of secondary literature and they will be viewed from the viewpoint of the ecotopian genre.

The first analytical chapter focuses on the relationships between man and nature. It examines what ideologies from the theoretical part are followed by the main characters. The characters in selected novels view nature and its importance differently, therefore there is increasing tension between those groups. Thus, the second part of the chapter focuses on the tension between characters as the environment affects their mindset and they are driven by their instincts. This part also includes the depiction of the shift in behavior with regard to external influences.

The second analytical chapter describes the concept of place, as the characters perceive it differently. This analysis is based on Tim Cresswell's theory of the ever-changing concept of place. This chapter contains examples of values that are reflected in the importance of place for individual characters. Furthermore, this analysis focuses on the depiction of novels in the light of the theory of utopian and dystopian literature. It also describes the consequences of natural disasters and examines changes in the behavior of characters.

In conclusion, the aim of the work is to determine the ecotopian genre and determine whether selected novels belong to it. This paper depicts nature and the characters' attitudes towards it. The analysis is followed by a concluding chapter that summarizes the findings obtained in the analytical chapters.

## 1. The Definition of Ecotopian Genre

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the ecotopian genre on a detailed scale. It is important to first define all aspects and ideologies that form its basis. The main literary genres making up the foundation of the ecotopian genre are utopia and dystopia.

Gregory Claeys in his book *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* claims that utopia changed its meaning through the process of deneologization.<sup>1</sup> The writer of *Utopia* Thomas More defines the term as “a place which is a non-place, simultaneously constituted by a movement of affirmation and denial.”<sup>2</sup> Even today, certain authors believe that utopia does not exist, as suggested by More’s definition. Also, More originated another neologism called ‘Eutopia’, in translation the good place. With the creation of this concept, the author added a double meaning to a seemingly identical word. It could be interpreted either as an unrealistic place, or the good place.<sup>3</sup> This argument is partially supported by Edward Rothstein who in his book *Visions of Utopia* states that utopian ideals are “harmony, equality, the elimination of unmet needs or desire, ethical interaction, and the resulting potential for new forms of human consciousness – and the very possibility of social progress.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Rothstein expands More’s definition and claims it is an advanced society with fulfilled needs. In his book, Patrick Parrinder joins these claims and agrees with the fact that modern utopia is set in the future.<sup>5</sup> To summarize the previous definitions, Claeys provides four characteristics necessary to define the concept of utopia, among them there are two important features. Firstly, utopia is oriented on an imagined futuristic society living in a good place.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the aspiration of living in such a place stems from “the desire for a better life, caused by a feeling of discontentment towards the society one lives in,”<sup>7</sup> as Claeys states in his book.

The second genre important for defining the ecotopian genre is a dystopia. Michael D. Gordin declares that “every utopia always comes with its implied dystopia – whether the dystopia of the status quo, which the utopia is engineered to address or a dystopia found in the way this specific utopia corrupts itself in practice.”<sup>8</sup> Even though dystopia is not the exact

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Rothstein, Martin E. Marty, *Visions of Utopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), VIII.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Parrinder, *Utopian Literature and Science* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Michael D. Gordin, Hellen Tilley, *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

opposite of utopia, some authors believe dystopia is a subgenre of the utopian genre. Thomas Molan refers to several authors and their interpretations of dystopia. Besides, he is particularly interested in a definition proposed by Suvin in 1998 who defines dystopia as “a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms, and relationships between its individuals are organized in a significantly less perfect way than in the author’s community.”<sup>9</sup> He also declares that it is judged by “a representative of a discontented social class or fraction.”<sup>10</sup> This definition suggests that dystopia is concerning unacceptable behavior and one can tell whether the text is dystopian by looking at the state of disadvantaged social classes. Simultaneously, Claeys uses negative connotations with the word dystopia, for example, worse place,<sup>11</sup> which somehow corresponds with the definition by Suvin mentioned in Molan’s book. Claeys mentions dystopian discourse that has been created by:

on the one hand, the idea of totalitarianism; on the other hand, the idea of scientific and technological progress which, instead of impelling humanity to prosper, has sometimes been instrumental in the establishment of dictatorship.<sup>12</sup>

Taking into consideration the previously specified definitions, the term dystopia can be interpreted as a place ruled by the government or a corrupted organization; a place that disadvantages certain groups of people to subdue and control them. It can also be understood as a totalitarian world with values set to perfection, however, it can never be reached as it is impossible in such conditions, for instance, otherwise established rules of behavior in dystopian society leading to moral depravity and lack of moral values.

These two genres can be summarized in two ways. On the one hand, there is a utopian world that leads its inhabitants towards building better social values, mutual relations, and also to achieve common goals, for example, equality and prosperity. On the other hand, there is a dystopian world oftentimes led by influential people who pay attention to technological progress instead of its citizens, which leads to poverty, hence, poor actions leading towards a loss of morality and a loss of individualism.

Among other things, the ecotopian genre draws inspiration from numerous beliefs and ideologies, including anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism. The following part will

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 155.

<sup>10</sup> Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, 155.

<sup>11</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Claeys, *The Cambridge Companion*, 18.

focus on defining them, starting with anthropocentrism. First and foremost, the term anthropocentrism can be interpreted as “the assumption or view that the interests of humans are of higher priority than those nonhumans.”<sup>13</sup> Panayot Butcharov provides a more detailed classification and elaborates that the superiority of human beings stems from the fact that only they are capable of having moral judgment and certain rights.<sup>14</sup> According to Rob Boddice, anthropocentrism intervenes with animal rights and environmentalism, as he defines it as “a charge of human chauvinism, or as an acknowledgment of human ontological boundaries. It is in tension with nature, the environment, and non-human animals (as well as non-humans per se).”<sup>15</sup> Boddice introduces a term called speciesism. Boddice in his book refers to an Australian moral philosopher, Peter Singer, who defines speciesism as “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, speciesism follows Butcharov’s illustration of anthropocentrism. Boddice supports it and asserts that speciesism can be seen as equivalent to any other belief in the superiority of one species. He elaborates this idea by saying that “regarding humans as the only creaturely bearers of value or as creatures whose value as humans systematically trumps the value of all other creatures,”<sup>17</sup> suggesting that speciesism is a form of anthropocentrism. Boddice argues that these issues cannot be fixed and he suggests that the environmental crisis comes from the fact that “humans are seen as guardians of the Earth, superior to non-human beings who exist not for their own sake but for the sake of humanity.”<sup>18</sup> This statement implies that the purpose of animals is to serve as food or a means to an end. In other words, animals are meant to die in order to satisfy human beings. Lynn White, Jr. supports this claim by saying that “Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule,” and claims that “although man’s body is made of clay, he is not part of nature.”<sup>19</sup> This declaration puts man above nature. There remains one more question: how to avoid anthropocentrism?

there are many aspects of humanity that are similar to other animals and in these aspects, we may speak in an analogical but imprecise way. However, areas where we are the most different from other animals are the areas where we are most likely to be in error. The temptation

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 134.

<sup>14</sup> Panayot Butcharov, *Anthropocentrism in Philosophy: Realism, Antirealism, Semirealism* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 2015), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Rob Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, 224.

<sup>17</sup> Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, 226.

<sup>18</sup> Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, 308.

<sup>19</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 9.

to commit anthropocentrism in our use of language is likely to be strongest in the areas where there are the greatest dissimilarities. Our knowledge of this fact may not enable us to avoid anthropocentrism completely, but the more aware we are of it, the more likely we are to improve our ability to meet this important ethical challenge.<sup>20</sup>

To sum up, humans are responsible for damaging the environment because they do not consider nature and all its organisms, such as animals or trees, important and they find it irrelevant to take care of it if they can just exploit it for their own advantage. Neil Evernden's essay in the book *The Ecocriticism Reader* by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm argues that "things are inter-related if a change in one affects the other," and proposes that tempering with one aspect of nature creates movement in the entire ecosystem.<sup>21</sup> Thus, by contaminating the environment, humans are held accountable for polluting the world. Besides, William Rueckert claims that anthropocentric vision followed by exploiting the environment is the fundamental pitfall of human beings.<sup>22</sup>

The following term is biocentrism which could be determined as "the view that all organisms, including humans, are part of a larger biotic web or network or community whose interests must constrain or direct or govern the human interest."<sup>23</sup> Greg Garrard argues that biocentrism aims to change one's view on the value of the natural world and to prevent humans from endangering it and change their attitude towards nature.<sup>24</sup> Glotfelty's definition is rather simplified and she claims that biocentrism is challenging the traditional hierarchies in ecology and she also states that humans are equal to the natural world, whether it is animals, plants, or bacteria.<sup>25</sup> In regard to those statements, the interpretation of the term can be summarized by stating that biocentrism acknowledges all aspects of nature, not only humans but also non-humans (such as animals), and evaluates them on the same scale. Thus, no organism is considered superior to others. Another closely related term is ecocentrism.

Buell defines ecocentrism as "the view in environmental ethics that the interest of the ecosphere must override that of the interest of individual species."<sup>26</sup> Bryan L. Moore agrees with Buell's definition and argues that ecocentrism tries not to focus on humans, instead it aims

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<sup>20</sup> Boddice, *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments*, 137.

<sup>21</sup> Harold Fromm, Cheryll Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1996), 93.

<sup>22</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 134.

<sup>24</sup> Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 176.

<sup>25</sup> Fromm, Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 137.

at understanding the relationships of all species in nature.<sup>27</sup> While anthropocentrism views human beings as the superior species and emphasizes the needs of humans, both biocentrism and ecocentrism are opposed to that idea. Although biocentrism focuses on equality in the ecosystem without making any species superior to others, ecocentrism focuses on individual species in the said ecosystem without deeming humans as the center of it. Additionally, its purpose is to protect nature from external influences, for instance, from man as their actions can have a bad impact on the environment. All three points of view have a major role in understanding the ecotopian genre as human beings can affect the ecosystem and either help nature recover from all the industrial work, or worsen its state by exploiting it.

Biocentrism and ecocentrism are environmental philosophies and there are two more terms related to them. The first term is deep ecology. Its philosophical guru Arne Naess concluded key points of the deep ecology and mentions two of them as the most relevant ones:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires a smaller human population.<sup>28</sup>

The first point suggests that both humans and non-humans (man and nature; animals representing the natural world) should not depend on mutual usefulness which is a similar approach as biocentrism because it also suggests the equality of humans and non-humans. The succeeding point argues that by overpopulating the planet, non-human life will not flourish as it would if there were a smaller number of human beings. This suggestion makes the fourth point look similar to ecocentrism. Mark Rowlands claims that deep ecology describes the relationship between man and nature as unhealthy because the relation is “characterized by domination, disrespect, disharmony.”<sup>29</sup> He also claims that according to deep ecology, humans should rethink this relationship in order to start identifying themselves with nature.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Rowlands does not agree with Naess’s suggestion that “in nature, cooperation,

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<sup>27</sup> Bryan L. Moore, *Ecological Literature and the Critique of Anthropocentrism* (Jonesboro: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 21.

<sup>29</sup> Mark Rowlands, *The Environmental Crisis: Understanding the Value of Nature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 168.

<sup>30</sup> Rowlands, *The Environmental Crisis*, 169.

‘the ability to coexist and cooperate’ is more important than competition, ‘the ability to kill, exploit, and suppress.’”<sup>31</sup> He believes that whoever supports such allegations does not understand the true meaning of the theory of evolution.<sup>32</sup> In other words, his statement implies that humans are simply superior to the natural world and that deep ecology is harming the environmental movement as it is trying to persuade the public to value the environment and protect it.

Another term that has already been pointed out and is important for establishing the ecotopian genre is environmentalism. Some might define it as a movement, for others it is a calling to protect something that has been here before all of us. Furthermore, *enviro-* holds rather an anthropocentric view as it implies that humans are at the center.<sup>33</sup> Followers of this ideology are called environmentalists and they are defined as people who “are concerned about environmental issues such as global warming, pollution, but who wish to maintain or improve their standards of living.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, environmentalism is concerned with taking care of the environment, or as Garrard defines it as “an instrumental approach to nature, arguing for preservation of natural resources only for the sake of humans.”<sup>35</sup> Another definition following Garrard’s interpretation claims that environmentalism is “a concern about the natural environment and how to improve and protect it.”<sup>36</sup> And what exactly can be considered as nature? Mick Gold in his essay *A History of Nature* explains that:

nature cannot simply be regarded as what is out there – a physical universe which preceded the world of human values, and which will presumably outlive the human race – because what is out there keeps changing its meaning. Every attempt at describing nature, every value attributed to Nature – harmonious, ruthless, purposeful, random – brings nature inside human society and its values.<sup>37</sup>

This explanation states that nature is eternal and being defined as ruthless and random suggests that it is also unpredictable. Throughout history, the concept of nature and the planet changed. For some ethnic groups, for example, Native Americans, nature represented their mother. They knew that white men exploited the Earth and they believed that everything nature produces is a

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<sup>31</sup> Rowlands, *The Environmental Crisis*, 172.

<sup>32</sup> Rowlands, *The Environmental Crisis*, 172.

<sup>33</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, XX.

<sup>34</sup> Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Environmentalism*, Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, Accessed on Feb 4

<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/environmentalism?q=environmentalism>

<sup>37</sup> Doreen Massey, *Geography Matters!* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

sacred thing. Several respected writers tried to persuade people that earthquakes are a response to the mistreatment of the Earth.<sup>38</sup> Gold also assumes that “nature’s image is changing from something to be respected (the mother) into a source of wealth that needs to be forced into revealing things (the selfish step-parent),”<sup>39</sup> which is following an anthropocentric point of view. Moreover, Gold admits that in our private lives “we look to nature as a repository of values”, and claims that the open countryside serves as an escape from the reality of our daily work in the city.<sup>40</sup> Nature is a force to be reckoned with, except there is no point in trying to subdue it, seeing that everything is connected and every inappropriate action reflects in the ecosystem. Essentially, this statement is supported by Evernden’s definition which asserts the idea of inter-relatedness. Gold concludes his essay with words saying that “nature is our own creation and may yet prove to be our own destruction.”<sup>41</sup> Not only is this a concern of environmentalism, but also it is a concern of all humans on this planet. Both deep ecology and environmentalism are important for the ecotopian genre for they deal with the environment in which humans and non-humans live together.

The covering term of the ecotopian genre is ecocriticism. William Rueckert coined the term in 1978 and interpreted it as “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, Rueckert’s definition restricts the term only to an ecological stance. Since then the critical theory has developed. On the one hand, Glotfelty defines it as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.”<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Garrard specifies it as “the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human.”<sup>44</sup> This statement expands the meaning beyond literature and puts its cultural significance in the foreground. Nonetheless, both authors agree on the fact that ecocriticism deals with man’s approach to the natural environment. Glotfelty concurs and states that “as a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land;” and she adds that “as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, she mentions a list of questions ecocritics and theorists should ask while analyzing the text. She claims that “all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the

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<sup>38</sup> Massey, *Geography Matters!*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Massey, *Geography Matters!*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Massey, *Geography Matters!*, 31.

<sup>41</sup> Massey, *Geography Matters!*, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, XX.

<sup>43</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, XVIII.

<sup>44</sup> Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, xix.

physical world, affecting it and affected by it.”<sup>46</sup> This declaration yet again refers to the inter-relatedness of things.

Ecocriticism appeared in two waves. When the first wave emerged, it emphasized nature and its approach resembled ecocentrism. First-wave ecocritics appraised “the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action.”<sup>47</sup> The second-wave of ecocriticism was devoted to environmental movements. Buell believes that “second-wave ecocriticism has so far concentrated strongly, for example, on exposing crimes of eco-injustice against society’s marginal groups.”<sup>48</sup> While the first-wave ecocriticism tried to make an impact on the reader to protect and appreciate nature, second-wave ecocriticism engaged in pursuing environmental movement to make people aware of the mistreatment of the natural environment. The difference between the former and the latter is yet to be discovered more, as it is not clear, and they resemble in its core. These findings propose the idea that ecocriticism goes in two directions. Either it examines the coexistence of humans with nature, or it examines the actions of humans that are affecting nature. Such actions have a mostly negative impact as they might lead to a natural disaster.

To the field of ecocritical studies was later contributed the term *material ecocriticism*. Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann describe its function as “analyzing the interlacements of matter and discourses not only as they are re-created by literature and other cultural forms, but also as they emerge in material expressions.”<sup>49</sup> This statement stems from beliefs that every organism in the world has its own story to tell and it is looked upon as a matter that has something to express. It does not matter if it is the evolutionary story of coexistence or a story about surviving.<sup>50</sup> Iovino elaborates on that idea and states that

material ecocriticism is the study of the way material forms—bodies, things, elements, toxic substances, chemicals, organic and inorganic matter, landscapes, and biological entities—intra-act with each other and with the human dimension, producing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, xix.

<sup>47</sup> Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 24.

<sup>49</sup> Serena Iovino, Serpil Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>50</sup> Iovino, Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Iovino, Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism*, 7.

In other words, material ecocriticism focuses on material entities in the world and their codependency and mutual living in nature. Seeing that ecocriticism emphasizes the relationship between the human and natural world, material ecocriticism broadens the scope of critical thinking to the interrelationships of all organisms, not just the ones mentioned in the paragraph about ecocriticism.

The following segment describes the terms place and space. Seeing that each person on this planet has their place, it is necessary to establish what is the concept of place. Tim Cresswell offers three fundamental aspects of place established by John Agnew. Firstly, there is location, which states that each place has its location, meaning it is possible to point out where. However, there are exceptions, for instance, public transport keeps changing its location but people in there share the same place.<sup>52</sup> The second aspect of the place is defined as locale which means that “the material setting for social relations – the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives as individuals.”<sup>53</sup> Agnew suggests that the last aspect is a sense of place which is an emotional attachment towards a place.<sup>54</sup> Based on Agnew’s features, trying to find the proper concept of place, Cresswell used exemplifying and asks a question of

what links these examples: a child’s room, an urban garden, a market town, New York City, Kosovo, and the Earth? What makes them all places and not simply a room, a garden, a town, a world city, a new nation, and an inhabited planet? One answer is that they are all spaces which people have made meaningful. They are all spaces people are attached to in one way or another. This is the most straightforward and common definition of place – a meaningful location.<sup>55</sup>

This sort of attachment Cresswell discusses in his book makes people think of home, taking into consideration that a home is a place people are usually attached to. According to Nigel Thrift, “places are constructed by people doing things and in this sense are never ‘finished’ but are constantly being performed.”<sup>56</sup> To add this statement to Cresswell’s definition of meaningful location, the definition of place could be interpreted as a location that is meaningful only if people take care of it and perform certain actions to keep it that way. This can be supported by the example of universities that are “both produced and producing. Universities would be nothing if they were not inhabited by people visiting the library, taking exams,

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<sup>52</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 37.

attending class.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, places are maintained by day-to-day activities. Also, Cresswell claims that “places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process,”<sup>58</sup> proving that Thrift’s statement is entirely truthful. This finding will be proved in chapter 3 in a detailed analysis of the novels.

The following term is often replaced with the word *place*. However, Cresswell claims that “space has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning – as a ‘fact of life’ which produces the basic coordinates for human life,” and states that “naming it is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become place.”<sup>59</sup> Considering that places are spaces with meaning, space can be defined as meaningless or not important. In other words, places are somehow significant to people and emotional attachment is an important factor while depicting it. Seeing that people are usually attached to the places they live in; the following term is *home*. On the one hand, it can be defined as “an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness.”<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, David Seamon argued that “a home is an intimate place of rest where a person can withdraw from the hustle of the world outside and have some degree of control over what happens within a limited space. Home is where you can be yourself.”<sup>61</sup> Not everyone can afford to live in a building of some kind and not everyone recognizes the same concept of place. For someone, it might be home or something materialistic, or it might be something valuable. According to Cresswell, there are also people considered to be ‘out-of-place’ which is rooted in the idea that somebody is acting in a way they are not supposed to. For example, minorities expressing something the masses view as unacceptable, or homeless people.<sup>62</sup>

To summarize all the previously mentioned definitions, the ecotopian genre could be interpreted as a set of beliefs and philosophies concerning with the state of the environment and society living in such an environment. While there is a utopian society aspiring to prosperity, there is also a dystopian one that puts one group of people above the other. It also emphasizes the fact that people are affecting nature with their actions. The ecotopian genre is mostly interested in the negative influence. This mistreatment of the natural environment could be followed by a natural disaster and the ecotopian genre should be able to recognize such misconduct and explain how the said disaster happened and why it has reached the stage it is

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<sup>57</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 38.

<sup>58</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 10.

<sup>60</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 13.

in. Furthermore, the genre in question should acknowledge the importance of place for humans affected by natural disasters because they usually have to adapt to conditions, they would not normally live in. The last point of the ecotopian genre should be concerned with the humans' attitude towards nature after the said disaster happened.

## 2. The Importance of Nature and Morality

This chapter centers around the depiction of humanity in the selected novels. It examines the way characters perceive nature, and how they adapt to the environment and act during natural disasters. Also, it focuses on the tension between characters as their opinions differ in many ways.

*The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood is set in a dystopian world where humanity is divided into two groups. Either there is a powerful corporation holding an anthropocentric point of view, or poor people are living in shantytowns or slums, who believe that the world can be saved from an impending disaster. Within those slums, there are various gangs, prostitutes, but also spiritual communities. The book focuses on God's Gardeners which is a group of people leaning towards ecocentrism. One of the main characters, Toby, describes the community as people of all colors promoting the immoral actions of the human species. Moreover, their leader, Adam One, who is undeniably similar to Moses with his long beard and dirty caftan, is being threatened by locals and he remains calm and tries to persuade people not to kill animals for meat. "My name is Adam One. I, too, was once a materialistic, atheistic meat-eater. Like you, I thought Man was the measure of all things."<sup>63</sup> Knowing they are not accepted among town citizens, they continue to assert their views and keep spreading their messages about animal rights. Although the reason for the virus's production is unknown, the Gardeners believed that it is supposed to punish all human beings for harming animals and for not accepting them as equals. This statement alone can represent an example of biocentrism, however, the ecocentric point of view takes place in this novel as suggested by Adam One's speech:

What is it about our own Species that leaves us so vulnerable to the impulse of violence? Why are we so addicted to the shedding of blood? Whenever we are tempted to become puffed up and to see ourselves as superior to all other Animals, we should reflect on our own brutal history. Take comfort in the thought that this history will soon be swept away by the Waterless Flood.<sup>64</sup>

According to Adam One, the idea of an impending disaster is rather comforting, no matter how much work they have put into preventing it from happening. Instead of taking care of themselves, they are rigorously working on the Garden because they realize the Flood is coming

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<sup>63</sup> Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* (London: Brown Book Group, 2013), 40.

<sup>64</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 312.

and it harms those who deserve it. Putting nature at the center of the universe is what gives their lives purpose in regard to realizing that the history of humankind is so brutal, it ought to be stopped. The catastrophe in this novel is depicted as a human-species-ending disaster in the form of an artificial plague. It is supposed to annihilate everyone who deserves it, but it should not do any harm to animals, plants, and other aspects of nature. Gardeners believe that, unlike self-centered people, those concerned with nature preservation survive and ascend to the new world.

Furthermore, Gardeners had a specific wedding ritual as they perceived the wedding as a life commitment, yet completely irrelevant. “They exchanged green leaves to symbolize growth and fertility and jumped over a bonfire to symbolize the energy of the universe, then declared themselves married and went to bed.”<sup>65</sup> Their value system does not include marriage under a ceremonial event, but a kind of ritual that celebrates nature and its gifts. They replaced all material things, such as wedding rings, with something that would seal their relationship with nature. Furthermore, divorces are performed as the opposite to weddings. Gardeners usually exchange dead twigs and make “a public statement of non-love and separation.”<sup>66</sup> Their actions show that they live in harmony with nature, but to some extent consider themselves a part of nature that the environment itself has created.

Together with ecocentrism, there is a strong anthropocentric point of view. CorpSeCorps is a corrupted police force paid by corporations. It can be understood as a totalitarian government that controls most of the social segments, such as the food industry, business, and, last but not least, the health industry. The total domination of this group of people began when “they have outlawed firearms in the interests of public security, reserving the newly invented sprayguns for themselves, and suddenly people were officially weaponless.”<sup>67</sup> The withdrawal of weapons mainly affected slums where local gangs lived with the citizens. This act caused a decrease in security in the mentioned districts. Among the CorpSeCorps’ corporations, there is Silk, a Halloween store aimed at confusing Gardeners and all those people protecting animal rights. In the back of the store, where no one goes, employers kill animals and sell their carcasses to restaurants called Rarity. The Rarity is a fancy place with private banquet rooms where you could eat endangered species. Genetic engineering is also represented in the book. There are lots of species that should not exist, for example, Liobam. A species

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<sup>65</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 115.

<sup>66</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 115.

<sup>67</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 24.

created by mixing a lion with a lamb. Also, it shows genetically modified people who are radioactive and who are destined to mate because they are to survive the disaster. Although the experts do not consider radioactivity a problem, these actions serve to prevent the demise of life on the Earth after the plague. These procedures point out disrespect to the natural world.

*The Year of the Flood* by Margaret Atwood follows a lot of themes. It is mainly concerned with the conditions of living in slums, but it also depicts the way powerful people destroy nature with their immoral actions. From slaughtering animals, to mixing species. On the one hand, Margaret Atwood presents the portrayal of ecocentrism which is following Buell's definition as the Gardeners aim to change one's view on the importance of nature. Besides, they try to prevent corporations from the irreversible destruction of the environment. To sum it up, they are taking the side of the interest of the ecosphere against the corporations representing individual species. On the other hand, the anthropocentric viewpoint is also represented because of the perception of the world in the novel which is in line with Boddice's arguments about interfering with animal rights and the environment. Corporations in this novel consider themselves to be at the top of the imaginary hierarchical pyramid even though they voluntarily threaten other human beings and violate animal rights. This form of a breach is an example of speciesism resulting from the fact that characters in this novel did not find it immoral to mix two completely different species. The following line is in accordance with Butcharov's explanation of anthropocentrism. Corporations did not consider animals as beings capable of their own thinking as they treated them as their property. Their mindset is completely different from the mindset of people living in said slums trying to survive on daily basis. For the purpose of inclusion in the genre, this behavior can be summarized as chauvinistic, or oblivious. Similar characteristics are portrayed in the following literary work.

*The Last Gasp* is the only novel out of the three that spans over 36 years, starting in the year 2016. The natural disaster in this novel happened as a result of human ignorance, especially the government and military forces. *The Last Gasp* has a similar approach as *The Year of the Flood*. While there are few individual scientists interested in the question of the cataclysm, the novel mostly depicts their fight against those who do not. Therefore, anthropocentrism is present throughout the novel since the beginning. The human-centered ideology is held by the government of the United States of America, and the Russian Federation, who are unwilling to proceed with necessary steps to save humanity. However, this novel also shows a clash of anthropocentrism and nationalism as stated in the following line. "The balance of power must

be in our favour if we're to safeguard the nation. After all, that is our prime responsibility."<sup>68</sup> Their decision-making process puts the man/nature relationship at odds with interrelationships between human kind. Both of these governments correspond with the phrase 'survival of the fittest' taken from Darwin's evolutionary theory.

'We calculate that the biosphere can comfortably support about two and a half billion human beings. The combined population of the Russian Federation and the United States is around one billion – or a fraction over. So that leaves breathing space for another billion spread across the rest of the globe.' As if stating a fact that was so obvious it hardly needed mentioning, he added, 'Of course China will have to go. India too. Africa and most of Indonesia. But China is the major culprit driving oxygen deletion; already its population is nearly two billion and they're breeding like lice.'<sup>69</sup>

The quotation proposes the idea that the novel embodies the anthropocentric charge of human chauvinism as some characters are seen as nationalists who believe they are superior to other people. While Atwood's *CorpSeCorps* threaten human beings of a nonexistent city, Hoyle's novel depicts a situation where the whole world is endangered. Moreover, Atwood depicts moral depravity mainly in the form of disregarding animals and conspiring against humanity. However, Hoyle touches more triggering subjects. Apart from ignorance and scheming, he mentions group rape, narcotics abuse, and also forced social isolation.

The ecocentric point of view is held by a group of scientists, such as marine biologists or physicists, who are concerned with the impending disaster. They try to spread the results of their researches to make the government and the general public aware of the situation as depicted in the following extract:

'Theo, old man,' Winthrop said faintly, 'do you seriously expect me to tell the President that the world is about to perish through asphyxiation?' 'No,' Theo corrected him at once, 'I want you to arrange a meeting so that I can tell him. That is why I'm here, why I came in person. This is my task, my responsibility, Parris, not yours.' Winthrop's healthy, urbane face had frozen into a mask of pained unease. He'd read what isolation could do the mind. Was he seeing it at first hand in the ragged figure sitting before him?<sup>70</sup>

The quotation mentions asphyxiation which can be defined as "the fact of being prevented from

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<sup>68</sup> Trevor Hoyle, *The Last Gasp* (London: Jo Fletcher Books, 2016), 123.

<sup>69</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 464.

<sup>70</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 53.

breathing until you become unconscious or die.”<sup>71</sup> That is the main conclusion of their research because they deal with the loss of plankton in the oceans and its impact on the amount of oxygen in the air. Unlike the government and the military forces, the scientists are concerned with the whole ecosystem, including humans. They realize the plankton's demise can affect the whole world and that it can lead to perilous situations. However, for the powerful people, it is just a blank speech with no serious consequences. About the quotation, Parris Winthrop presumes the scientist out of his mind which indicates that influential people do not even bother to understand the threat. Later on, they decide to wipe out circa 7 billion people, as mentioned on the previous page. The government fails to realize that “each individual has a responsibility for the entire biosphere and is required to engage in creative and cooperative activities.”<sup>72</sup> This statement supports the idea the scientists try to convey.

Therefore, the ecocentric view also follows Buell’s definition as it puts the matter of nature above everything else. It is partially following Moore’s statement as the scientists try to understand the effect on the whole ecosystem. However, this novel also shows a clash of anthropocentrism and nationalism in the sense that the American government together with the Russian Federation believe they are superior to the rest of the world. Their actions put the entire ecosystem in danger and lead the world to its doom. Moreover, the scientists depicted in this novel as environmentalists follow Rueckert’s statement declaring that “the problem now is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community.”<sup>73</sup> Their efforts are constantly being thwarted because the US government does not want to take responsibility and make a change.

*The Drowned World* by J.G. Ballard is set in the far future, in the year 2145. There is demonstrated that the natural disaster has already happened. The characters are able to live in outer conditions as they had a lot of time to adapt. It is set in London which has been flooded and now everything is underwater. The novel depicts a biocentric viewpoint. The disaster forced characters to live in mutual symbiosis with animals, such as crocodiles, snakes, or even insects, which have mutated and become larger. It is almost as if the natural disaster itself represented the biocentric point of view and tried to force itself upon human beings. The word tried is used

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<sup>71</sup> *Asphyxiation*, Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, Accessed on Feb 18  
<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/asphyxiation?q=asphyxiation>

<sup>72</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 114.

<sup>73</sup> Glotfelty, *The Ecocriticism Reader*, 107.

here because there is no mention of the previous state of the world, therefore it looks like the flood happened to improve something.

Another thing the novel depicts is the attitude of the characters to the current situation. Dr Kerans, an ecological explorer, is the only character who enjoys living in such conditions. It might be due to the fact that he was born after the flood, therefore, this state of the world is all he knows. He is the only character in the novel who believes the time of men has passed. Even though he has been affected by the outcome of the catastrophe, he would rather live in the world he was born to than trying to change what might be changed and improved. The following quotation describes his appearance influenced by the disaster:

Kerans' beard had been turned white by the radio-fluorine in the water, but his bleached crew-cut hair and deep amber tan made him appear at least ten years younger. A chronic lack of appetite, and the new malaras, had shrunk the dry leathery skin under his cheekbones.<sup>74</sup>

Besides Kerans, there is Beatrice, who used to belong to the upper-class before the flood. She remains the same throughout the book. Rather than helping others, she is enjoying herself, drinking by the pool. On the one hand, Beatrice might lean towards anthropocentrism in terms of not caring about the natural environment. On the other hand, she might be the example of an egocentric behavior as a result of acting as if everybody is there for her pleasure. She puts herself at the center of the universe. The author chose to illustrate Beatrice as the only woman who survived which suggests that she is the only one to give birth should the order of things be restored. Therefore, Beatrice illustrates the symbol of civilization, seeing that she is the only person capable of childbirth.

*The Drowned World* is not similar to *The Year of the Flood*, nor *The Last Gasp*. It depicts the world after the catastrophe, and it is more concerned with the ability to adapt and live in deteriorating conditions than the relationship between man and nature. However, Ballard built this novel around the fact that man is helpless against nature and that the power of nature is so immense, there is only so much human beings can do to subdue it. Especially, if there is a team of people with different values and opinions. Apart from biocentrism, there is a hint of ecocentrism, as nature itself has more power over the characters. All things considered, the novel is in accordance with Glotfelty's definition of biocentrism, especially the part about the traditional hierarchies in ecology. However, no one can answer the question of what the

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<sup>74</sup> James Gr. Ballard, *The Drowned World* (London: HarperCollins, 2012), 183.

hierarchy is, or who is superior. It depends on the point of view. Seeing that nature took its course of action, nature can be perceived as superior, which might put the novel into an ecocentric perspective. Nonetheless, characters are coexisting with animals and most of them do not feel the need to kill them in order to obtain food. Also, humans are sort of harmless to the natural world which holds a strong suggestion that the novel is indeed biocentric in its core.

The following segment centers around the tension between the groups of people with different opinions and the shift in their behavior as the tension increases. *The Year of the Flood* holds both ecocentric and anthropocentric points of view, as already depicted. Nevertheless, the interests of the representatives of the two groups vary in everything except their core. Although Gardeners and CorpSeCorps want the best for people, corporations do not bother with slums. At first, they do not consider Gardeners a threat as shown in the following line. “They view us as twisted fanatics who combine food extremism with bad fashion sense and a puritanical attitude towards shopping. But we own nothing they want, so we don’t qualify as terrorists.”<sup>75</sup> Both groups hold a radical position when it comes to their actions, but they do not respect one another. This is based on the fact that the corporations keep all the weapons which makes them dominant over others. This noticeable superiority itself impairs the quality of relationships. Perhaps, Gardeners are not a threat because their actions toward a better environment are legal, assuming that the fictional world has any laws. Gardeners are opposed to material things and all that CorpSeCorps represents. Toby is forced to reconsider the situation as her former employer (a member of CorpSeCorps) pursues her and tries to murder her. To protect the group, she leaves the Garden and goes through plastic surgery to obtain a different appearance. Therefore, corporations drove her into changing her moral values and attitudes towards things that Gardeners considered trivial and extraneous.

By the end of the novel, Toby shoots someone to protect her friend. Thereafter, she realized it was her former employer who molested her and called her names. She is doubtful about saving him and she gives in to the predator inside of her.

He wouldn’t have lived, Toby tells herself, not with a leg as bad as that. Attempting to treat it would have been a waste of maggots. Still, she’s just committed a murder. Or an act of mercy: at least he didn’t die thirsty.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 48.

<sup>76</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 382.

Although Toby knew ways of healing the man's injured leg, however, she concluded he would die anyway. Toby realized that by treating him she would give him another chance at killing her or any of her friends. On the one hand, her act of mercy can be seen as a deeply rooted sense of egocentrism on account of choosing herself over somebody else. On the other hand, it can be viewed as a selfless act because she was protective of other people who might become his potential victims.

Margaret Atwood highlighted the best qualities as well as the worst in the surviving characters. Given the mentioned aspects, it leads to the conclusion that she tried to show the animal side of people, especially in precarious situations and in situations they could not influence in any way. Based on the analysis, the summarization is that the external factors influence the change in attitudes of the characters as their subconscious makes them resort to their animal side and they have to rely on their instincts, such as self-preservation instinct. The following paragraphs portray other examples to prove the credibility of this statement.

*The Last Gasp* depicts the fight for environmental conservation. Unlike in Atwood's novel, the green group does not have any spiritual beliefs and they are assuming the position of messengers of nature as they spread the awareness of natural disaster. Their solutions stem from thorough scientific researches, rather than just faith in the greater good. Contrariwise, the government promotes the idea that the US "should adopt the strategy of domination by the use of Weapons of Climate Degradation."<sup>77</sup> As in *The Year of the Flood*, the tension between the characters is based on their mental state and self-perception. For example, there is a community hidden in the countryside, where people build livelihoods: "Tom Brannigan's developed a king-size power complex; he sees Goose Lake as his private empire. And with Baz around, things get kind of complicated because he thinks he's running the show."<sup>78</sup> Not only does Tom believe he is the leader of that community, but his son Baz also sees himself this way, considering his immoral and disrespectful behavior towards other people. Baz is the type of person similar to Toby's employer in Atwood's novel. He is also violent, aggressive, and prone to rape. The tension rises as Baz abducts the son of one of the scientists and holds him captive. Nonetheless, his animal behavior does not go unpunished, as he is murdered by a group of once peaceful scientists. These people allow others to choose whether to stay in the community or run away as the outcomes of the catastrophe are getting nearer day by day.

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<sup>77</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 123.

<sup>78</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 618.

There is a probability that Hoyle approached the novel knowing that with great power comes great responsibility as he depicts morally depraved figures in the leadership. The animal nature in Hoyle's characters is shown in the form of raping and torturing others. The so-called leaders in the mentioned community can be described as abusive men with a passion for poisoning their bodies and minds, as they did drugs amid the natural disaster.

As established before, *The Drowned World* is unlike any of the selected novels. On one hand, some characters are willing to live in the flooded world. On the other hand, most of them are eager to leave that place behind. There is one more person who has not been mentioned so far. "Kerans realized that the skin of his face and hands was uncannily white, devoid altogether of any pigmentation."<sup>79</sup> He calls himself Strangman and he travels around lagoons and steals whatever he finds valuable. However, he fails to realize that every item lost its value after the enormous flood covered the country like a blanket. His white costume and distinctly white skin are symbols of the white men colonizing North America, as they also enslaved black people and confiscated things using nothing but fear and injustice. Just like Puritans, he comes into the unexplored territory on the boat. Strangman's behavior shows signs of egocentrism rooted in puritanical ways. The dominance over the African Americans who survived the disaster proves his puritanical manners. Nonetheless, the men follow him blindly, even though he owns them. Their loyalty is based on the fear of their master. There is also dominance over a trio of alligators which he gained by killing one of them. The need to own everyone and everything comes from deep within his mind and it is almost irreversible. Despite the fact there are only a few humans left alive, he insists on relocating water from the lagoon and make it habitable. His intentions come in contrast with his constant demeanor that is unjustified and rather violent.

The tension increases when he comes across Kerans who is not fond of him since the beginning. He is doubtful of his intentions and does not like that Strangman is trying to return the world to its original state. As he managed to do so, Kerans seemed to have lost it as depicted in the following line. "For a moment Kerans fought to free his mind, grappling with this total inversion of his normal world, unable to accept the logic of the rebirth before him."<sup>80</sup> Seeing that Kerans considered the flooded world normal, Strangman's agenda does not seem relevant to him. Once Kerans realizes the motive behind Strangman's actions, he tries to persuade others to leave. "Strangman has everything he needs now. We're useless to him. Soon we'll simply be

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<sup>79</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 92.

<sup>80</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 121.

unwelcome guests.”<sup>81</sup> Kerans and Strangman are examples of two opposite poles. The former is in peace with the fact that humanity might be over and wants to preserve the environment as it is. The latter tries to save what can be saved; however, his agenda is overshadowed by the fact that he just wants to restore the world so he could proclaim himself a leader. Thereafter, Strangman got tired of having a non-believer in “his little community”, therefore Kerans had to hide. The quotation marks suggest he assumed that by saving them, they would be loyal to him just like his Afro-American followers. Being a marine biologist, Kerans never thought of killing an animal, but he has never been put under so much pressure. “Two corridors down he trapped a small lizard in the washroom, killed it with a loose brick. He lit a fire of tinder with a lens of chipped glass, roasted the fillets of dark stringy meat until they were tender.”<sup>82</sup> His physical weakness and inner voice forcing him to return for the others made him kill a trapped lizard to gain strength. As Strangman tries to kill Kerans one more time, he is stopped by the Colonel and his subordinates. However, he is not found guilty as his actions were completely legal, yet he retreats from others and begins to mind his own business. Unlike other novels that depict immoral behavior, his intention justifies the manner, so he is allowed to live.

To conclude, every novel depicts a shift in humans behavior as a result of fear for life. Even though most of the main characters tried to defend the natural world, there were situations where it came down to kill or be killed. Each of the previously mentioned characters had to find an inner strength to protect themselves or the people they care about. At the same time, all the books include a villain, who is driven by animal instincts and often pursues power or wealth. In all cases, the villain focuses on leadership to take advantage of the wretched situation of humanity and the weakness of the citizens. If the main characters faced the proper stimulus, they were able to intervene and influence the situation. Ballard’s novel depicts the villain in the form of a historical figure since American history began with the colonization of the land. The following chapter follows the behavior of characters after the natural disaster. Seeing that *The Drowned World* is set after the catastrophe, the novel will be only slightly mentioned as opposed to the other two.

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<sup>81</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 124.

<sup>82</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 144.

### 3. The Impact of Natural Disasters

This chapter analyzes and depicts the way characters perceive the place they inhabit after the natural disaster. The second part of this chapter analyzes the first point from the theoretical part. Therefore, it focuses on establishing whether the novels belong to utopic or dystopic literature. It also describes the impact of natural disasters on the behavior of characters.

The term place in *The Year of the Flood* follows Cresswell's explanation as it represents something meaningful for the characters. For example, Gardeners live in a building with a Garden on the rooftop. In terms of protecting their home, Gardeners' roles in the Garden are divided based on their skills. The younger generations are taught several practical things. In the following quotation, Ren, one of the students, introduces their school system.

Our teachers were Nuala for the little kids and the Buds and Blooms Choir and Fabric Recycling, and Rebecca for Culinary Arts, which meant cooking, and Surya for Sewing, and Mugi for Mental Arithmetic, and Pilar for Bees and Mycology, and Toby for Holistic Healing with Plant Remedies, and Burt for Wild and Garden Botanicals, and Philo for Meditation, and Zeb for Predatory-Prey Relationships and Animal Camouflage.<sup>83</sup>

The excerpt shows that the study of Gardeners focuses on something nature-related. Due to the fact that their community considers understanding the natural world to be most important, their children shall follow in their footsteps. The older generations are leading the kids towards the ecocentric point of view, trying to make them understand that nature is a ubiquitous essence that must be honored and taken care of. Therefore, the Garden is in accordance with Cresswell's statement because it represents their priorities. It serves as their safe place, which is invaluable to its inhabitants. Among other things, it represents something beautiful and worth keeping, even though it is situated in the middle of a slum. The attitude towards the Garden and the way of life is also depicted in the following line. "Nothing should be carelessly thrown away, not even wine from sinful places. There was no such thing as garbage, trash, or dirt, only matter that hadn't been put to proper use."<sup>84</sup>

The meaning of place shifts after Toby undergoes her surgery, as mentioned in the second chapter. She is forced to stay in isolation away from other Gardeners to protect them. In the light of recent events, for example, being attacked in the Garden, she has to settle for

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<sup>83</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 61.

<sup>84</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 69.

working in the AnooYoo Spa. The only thing that makes her feel calm is knowing that the spa is under constant protection and that the guards check the identities of each newcomer. Toby does not find a place to which she could get emotionally attached and she feels remorse for not being able to return to the Garden. Nonetheless, the Garden became a dangerous place for her to be in. From the other point of view, CorpSeCorps own the industry and they aim to make a profit with no regard towards poor inhabitants. Thus, the employees consider the most meaningful place their workplace as the novel does not depict the homes of wealthy citizens. To them, said slum is just an irrelevant space that is there for those who do not fit their standards.

Trevor Hoyle's approach to place is similar to Atwood's, as he also follows Cresswell's definition. However, the concept of place changes. It depends on the point of view as there are various characters in *The Last Gasp*. The novel introduces a lot of scientists who participate in environmental research and the impact of human behavior on the whole ecosystem and also the rest of the world. Before the disaster, the main character Gavin Chase considered his work the most relevant thing. Due to his workaholicism, he neglected his son. When the first signs of the disaster occur, his priorities change because he realizes something concerning his son. "He couldn't escape the guilty feeling, nor the doubts; yet in his calm, rational moments Chase recognized that his son was in the most advantageous environment he could be."<sup>85</sup> Gavin experiences the shift from being attached to his work to putting his family first. The book is divided into several years and the year 2030 is considered a post-apocalyptic one.

The year 2030 is depicted as post-apocalyptic because the world has changed its form, and nothing is what it used to be. Thus, there are not as many places to be called safe. People in the US have to be covered from head to toe, otherwise, they would be exposed to polluted air. "The ocean to their right was a toxic cocktail of high acidic saltwater, with methane and sulphur belching from its surface. It was this lethal combination that formed the unbreathable atmosphere at the tip of southern Florida."<sup>86</sup> The remaining survivors found a shelter in Disney World. Gavin Chase, his son, and his girlfriend consider it a risk, seeing that the conditions outside are not welcoming. Its purpose was to accommodate humans who were not intoxicated by the radiation. To Gavin, it seems more like a refugee camp without any form of security, therefore he decides it would be better to try and find a better place for them to hide. This sentence suggests that the hope of finding a habitable place kept Gavin and his family alive. In

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<sup>85</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 337.

<sup>86</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 421.

terms of defining place, Gavin's family and friends are a representation of another concept of place seeing they are indispensable to him and their safety is a matter of the utmost importance.

In the year 2036, Gavin finds a community mentioned in chapter 2. "The important thing was to live in harmony with their surroundings and not to plunder or despoil out of sheer greed, indifference or asinine thoughtlessness."<sup>87</sup> These are their rules. For Cheryl, Gavin's girlfriend, it meant a safe place with the hope of civilized life outside the natural threat. In other words, a place where they could live in peace, far away from the disastrous conditions. Then, as some individuals began to behave as if they owned the place and proclaimed themselves leaders of an imaginary pack, conditions began to deteriorate. The loss of morality is compounded by a wave of disasters stemming from a disrupted ecosystem. The concept of place changes from safe to inhabitable and once again, the characters have to run for their lives.

Before the year 2052, there were other characters whose perception of the place changed radically. For example, Dr. Ruth Brosnan is reminiscent of the time when she came into New York City and saw the bustling city full of fashionable people for the first time. The Big Apple had a special place in her heart. In the following quotation, she compares it to what is now:

Nobody strolled down Fifth Avenue any more. If you tried it without a respirator you could manage maybe fifty paces before collapsing facedown on the sidewalk and coughing up shreds of pink lung tissue. She'd seen that happen, and more than once. From the safety of a sealed car she'd observed a couple of down-and-outs, a man and a woman, slumped against the granite base of the Rockefeller Center: their grey, exhausted faces, eyes blood-red and streaming from the photochemical irritants in the air, lips drawn back in a ghastly snarl of abortive inhalation.<sup>88</sup>

Her perception of place shifts from a prosperous city full of life to something dangerous and life-threatening. Later, Ruth discovered two possible outcomes caused by prolonged exposure to the atmosphere in the US. Either, it accelerated aging by causing senile dementia, or it attacked the nervous system which led from paranoia to outbursts of violence. Thus, New York City cannot be considered a place due to its conditions. Now it is just a space with no relevant meaning. The only meaningful thing about it is its irreversible past.

The year 2052 is the last one mentioned in this novel and it shows a civilization that is capable of coexisting and working together to achieve their common goal – to increase the

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<sup>87</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 539.

<sup>88</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 454.

quality of life and to start a new civilization. “Canton Island had originally comprised just the central globe, with living space for ten thousand people: the first settlers, scientists, technicians, engineers and construction workers.”<sup>89</sup> Gavin, Dan, and Ruth felt at peace when discovering the area. Regarding its safety system, they gained a sense of hope for better days. However, one of the local scientists introduced the group to their plans for the future. The inhabitants of Canton Island realize that the planet cannot be restored because of its current condition. Even though, the chain of disasters stopped, the air is so polluted that even a slight exposure without protective equipment might lead to sudden death. Therefore, the local scientists plan to colonize the universe and settle on one of the planets.

“Most of the groundwork – not a suitable phrase in the circumstances,” he chuckled, “has been completed. It has taken nearly three years to transport and establish large-scale storage facilities for the life support materials, namely oxygen, and water. These are now in place and work is proceeding on the construction of the islands themselves.”<sup>90</sup>

The main characters aspire to get into space and this news gives them hope that one day they might be able to live their lives without fear of near disaster. It motivates them to start a new civilization there.

No matter how many times the meaning of place has shifted throughout the novel, it always came down to family and the striving for finding habitable conditions. Even for Ruth, who felt the greatest change because she was not a scientist like Gavin and had no idea that something like this was going to happen, a light of hope shone upon her. When it comes to Gavin, he demonstrates the elements of a righteous leader who is capable of making a decision when one needs to be made and who has changed from someone buried deep in researches to a protector of his family and friends. His most important place was alongside his loved ones. Thus, leaving the planet and going to space is the only chance at starting a new civilization and to start writing a history of humankind all over again. Moreover, it is the only chance at finding a place with a meaning considering the Earth is so polluted, it is not visible from space. “No brilliant blue oceans or dazzling white clouds; no landmasses or islands or polar caps. Just grey

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<sup>89</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 708.

<sup>90</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 711.

nothingness masking every feature, like a once-beautiful woman shamefully hiding her aged, crumbling face behind a soiled veil.”<sup>91</sup>

Unlike *The Year of the Flood* which mostly viewed the concept of place as a safe place, *The Last Gasp* offers more options as it changes throughout the novel. It shows that the meaning of place can vary, from material places to emotional ties. It could be a building with a roof, or a family and emotional support it provides. Most changes in perception appeared after a circumstance that has affected the course of the novel. Tim Cresswell argues that place is something with a meaning and that it changes frequently. Hence, both books are congruent with his declaration. The following paragraph analyzes the last book from the selected novels.

The concept of place in *The Drowned World* is partially the same as in *The Last Gasp*. The perception of the place also varies depending on the characters. Dr Kerans considers the lagoon a home which Cresswell introduces as the most common example of a place. Taking into consideration that the lagoon is made out of water and dirt, Kerans’ point of view suggests that nature itself is of paramount importance. Even though the surrounding is dangerous, Kerans hides his inclination towards the place behind work. In fact, the presence of his colleagues adds value to the lagoon by making it not only safe but also friendly. “Of course, Colonel. As a matter of fact, I have already.” Technically Riggs had overall authority for the testing station and Kerans should have asked his permission, but the relationship between the two men was without ceremony.”<sup>92</sup>

Kerans’ conception of the place changes on account of the arrival of Strangman, who brought with him feelings unknown to him, such as an adrenaline rush and a pinch of danger. Kerans has not experienced these feelings because he is used to the outer conditions and even though he realizes that the lagoon is a filthy swamp, he feels calm about it and he enjoys the view.

As the sun rose over the lagoon, driving clouds of steam into the great golden pall, Kerans felt the terrible stench of the water-line, the sweet compacted smells of dead vegetation and rotting animal carcasses. Huge flies spun by, bouncing off the wire cage of the cutter, and giant bats raced across the heating water towards their eyries in the ruined buildings. Beautiful and serene from his balcony a few minutes earlier, Kerans realized that the lagoon was nothing more than a garbage-filled swamp.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 718.

<sup>92</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 13.

On the contrary, Strangman considers the lagoon an opportunity to gain loyal followers because he tries to restore the beautiful cities of England. Therefore, the concept of the place for Kerans gets contorted because he does not like the idea of the world with no water in it. Seeing that the water itself is part of nature and his preferences relate to the natural world, the following line displays his confusion. “Increasingly disorientated, Kerans would wander alone through the dark streets at night – by day it became unbearably hot in the labyrinth of alleyways – unable to tear himself away from his memories of the old lagoon.”<sup>94</sup> Afterward, Kerans finds himself a new sense of place in Beatrice who is also unhappy with the outcome. Nonetheless, she refuses to follow him owing to her reluctance to express any interest. Kerans decides to embark on his own journey looking for a new place he could call home. “So he left the lagoon and entered the jungle again, within a few days was completely lost, following the lagoons southward through the increasing rain and heat, attacked by alligators and giant bats, a second Adam searching for the forgotten paradises of the reborn sun.”<sup>95</sup>

To prove that the analyzed novels follow Cresswell’s definition, the setting in Agnew’s distinction of a place is needed. First, there is a location that is represented in every novel as every plot takes place somewhere in the world. Even in *The Drowned World* where the main focus is on natural surroundings, the lagoon itself represents nature and everything that is wrong with the outcome of human behavior. Second, there is a locale that is represented differently in each book. Atwood’s novel’s locale is demonstrated as a slum including the Garden. Hoyle’s locale is represented by the United States of America. In Ballard’s case, the locale is shown as a lagoon set in the place of former London. The word former is used here to suggest that after the drainage of water, the city did not remain the same. Buildings got destroyed, fish and marine plants lay dead on the ground. All things were covered with algae. The third and last point of Agnew’s aspects is a sense of place which is thoroughly analyzed preceding this paragraph. An emotional attachment to a place is a crucial aspect of defining the sense of place. The selected novels supply several examples of the concept. The analysis proves that the emotional attachment to a place can be understood as an inclination towards the physical or mental world. It depends on the situation and every factor should be considered. While *The Year of the Flood* holds an unbreakable bond with nature and the sense of place aims at the Garden and the community living there, *The Last Gasp* shows the family and hope as the center of attention for the main characters. This finding proves that the concept of place depends on the viewer and

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<sup>94</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 128.

<sup>95</sup> Ballard, *The Drowned World*, 175.

their preferences. Therefore, Cresswell's statement that places are never finished is confirmed. In other words, "place is, therefore, a pre-scientific fact of life – based on the way we experience the world."<sup>96</sup>

The following analysis focuses on aspects of utopia and dystopia while showing changes in the behavior of characters after a disaster. *The Year of the Flood* takes place in a dystopian scenario. The superiority is represented in the form of powerful people because they decide what is going to happen to others. The novel does not show any driving force that might have led to the outbreak of the virus, but it describes when it got out of hand. "The minor epidemic they'd been talking about earlier wasn't behaving in the usual way – a local outbreak, one they could contain. Now it was an emergency. It was an eruptive plague, they said, and the thing was spreading fast."<sup>97</sup> After the disease hit most of the world, former Gardeners adhered to their values.

Although the pandemic divided their paths, the survivors felt a strong sense of belonging. "Adam One, Nuala, Zeb. Shackie, Croze, and Oates. And Glenn – I just couldn't picture anyone so smart being dead. And Jimmy, despite what he'd done. And Amanda. I said those names over and over, in order to keep them alive."<sup>98</sup> They lacked a community that gave them hope and meaning in life. They had to live alone even though together they had the greatest power. Their power did not lie in money, in owing companies, and taking advantage of other people. Their best value was a concern for nature. In their case, nature means a vital force. Thanks to their unbreakable friendships, they overcame all the obstacles that CorpSeCorps had prepared for them. Nevertheless, CorpSeCorps represented a totalitarian government as they ruled over the city and their actions made the conditions worse. The novel does not depict their behavior after the pandemic because it focuses on Toby and Ren, two main characters mentioned in chapter 2. Neither Toby nor Ren changed their values after the pandemic.

*The Year of the Flood* is in fulfillment of Suvin's definition, mainly the part about judging the state of the world by a representative of disadvantaged social class. The Gardeners stand for everything the society should strive to be. However, they are not taken seriously because they do not have money and they cannot influence masses of people, just like corporations and the police force. Their values and practices focus on protecting the natural

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<sup>96</sup> Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction*, 24.

<sup>97</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 282.

<sup>98</sup> Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, 315.

world, which is not considered imperative for CorpSeCorps. Therefore, it should not be considered serious for the rest of the world created by Margaret Atwood.

Hoyle's novel follows the same principles as *The Year of the Flood* because it illustrates a society that is ruled by a government. *The Last Gasp* uses fear as the main tool in achieving their goals. Right before the catastrophe, the government had their people kidnap scientists who did not behave in a certain way. "But Micki's right: the only fact we have comes from Stella – Dr Inchcape's wife – and all she knows is that federal agents were waiting for Binch in his office building and escorted him away."<sup>99</sup> In this scenario, federal agents took care of an educated man who could become a potential threat to the US government who tried to keep the impending danger under wraps. After the disaster, almost nothing changed. There was no need in explaining what might happen, instead, the main characters started running for their lives in search of a new home. "Once begun, the process was self-perpetuating. The mounds of rotting corpses, left where they fell because there was no one to bury them, spread the contamination to the soil. Rainwater washed it into sewers, streams, and rivers. A black stain spread across continents, killing every form of animal life it encountered."<sup>100</sup> The rapid spreading does not help the cause of Gavin and his people. Unlike the virus in Atwood's novel, Hoyle's kind is more dangerous to nature because it also kills non-human forms of life. Whereas *The Year of the Flood* illustrates a virus that can harm only human beings.

While people are trying to hide and survive the ongoing disaster, some believe they have it figured out and they try to make a profit out of the poor situation. For instance, scientists working for the government developed a new specimen and they are testing it on people infected by the pollution. Instead of telling them that they are perfectly treatable, they announce to them they are most likely to die.

With the culture in place, fertilization would now begin. The newly formed zygote would start to divide into a cluster of sixty-four cells, taking about a week to travel down the Fallopian tube to the uterus. There the young embryo – the blastocyst – would attach itself to the lining of the uterus and – if there were no complications – pregnancy would proceed in the usual way.<sup>101</sup>

The said specimen should be able to survive in outer conditions. They use fear and lies to

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<sup>99</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 327.

<sup>100</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 550.

<sup>101</sup> Hoyle, *The Last Gasp*, 603.

manipulate people into becoming volunteers for their testing program. The specimen they are making is called Homunculi, the scientific term is O-zoes. In the year 2042, O-zoes are everywhere and they display zombie-like behavior. The environment suits them and they flourish in conditions normal humans do not.

While the main character bent their morals to help and protect others, the governmental control over the country remained intact. Even after the outbreak, they do not care enough to change their views and they still try to subdue nature and make it their pet. Their values are of the highest importance, whereas the values of the rest of the world are not relevant enough. The abuse of sick citizens proves that they consider themselves superior and that it is not the well-being of the whole continent that matters, but only those who can afford it. As mentioned in the subchapter dealing with the place, most of the main characters will find a safe haven. Contrarily, the government and military units die a slow death in the submarine. Hoyle does not describe their deaths in detail. Furthermore, the immoral actions are described vividly and in detail, thus the novel has a karmic end for such horrible human beings. *The Last Gasp* is a dystopian novel as a result of following Claeys' interpretation of the dystopian genre. Hoyle's novel introduces the idea of scientific progress leading towards dictatorship, instead of helping humanity prosper.

Ballard's novel holds a strong utopian view in a seemingly dystopian world. Dr Kerans' discontent with the drainage of the lagoon suggests that he considered the swamp a good place. When he embarks on his journey trying to find a new lagoon, in fact, he is looking for a better place. He searches for something that he considers safe and sound, even though the reality is quite opposite. His manners do not change throughout the novel as he still believes lagoons possess suitable conditions for living. Although he almost drowned in the lagoon when he got into a cross with Strangman, he did not consider the lagoon dangerous, but the people who inhabited the lagoon with him.

Therefore, *The Drowned World* is the only novel that can be partly viewed as utopic, but also dystopic, because the main character lives in the belief that the world is as it should be. Even though it is extremely dangerous and unhealthy, Dr Kerans considers it a good place. His conviction supports and confirms More's definition of utopia and that it is a non-existent place. Kerans' view of the matter is also based on Claeys' statement, which describes utopia as a futuristic society staying in a good place. Kerans' journey at the end of the novel points to another aspect in Claeys' book, namely that people in utopia long for a better life, which stems

from their dissatisfaction in the present place. At the same time, it can mean that Kerans uses his utopian worldview as an excuse to ignore current problems. This ignorance can be understood as dissatisfaction with the environment, so the novel could correspond with the established definition of the dystopian genre.

## Conclusion

The theoretical part is divided into several paragraphs focusing on the aspects of the ecotopian genre. The genre itself has been established by the end of this part by combining all the previously mentioned factors, as they define the genre and make it understandable for a reader.

The interpretation of the ecotopian genre stems from understanding utopian and dystopian literature. These similar genres make room for other concepts related to the ecotopian genre. For example, philosophies dealing with man's relationship to nature and his view of the relativity of the natural environment. These philosophies include anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism. Environmentalism and deep ecology are also included. This chapter also involves the term material ecocriticism, which is not analyzed in the practical part, as it serves as an example of the extent of ecocritical theory. The authors cited in this thesis are Boddice, Buell, Garrard, and Glotfelty. Moreover, this chapter deals with the terms place and space, as the sense of place has a great influence on the characters in selected novels. This part was established with the help of the British geographer Tim Cresswell. All of these authors contributed to establishing the ecotopian genre whose definition was reached at the end of the chapter.

The first part of the analysis focused on the depiction of the relationships between man and nature. Anthropocentrism was mainly depicted in the form of violating humans and animals. *The Year of the Flood* and *The Last Gasp* involved speciesism and chauvinism. In the case of Hoyle's novel, the ignorance towards the natural world and the desire for power culminated in a chain of natural disasters as the entire ecosystem collapsed. Atwood's novel depicted anthropocentrism in the form of the man-made virus and the ignorance towards human beings as species. On the contrary, both books included ecocentrism which is portrayed in the form of environmental activists and those who seek to warn others and protect them from impending disaster. Its depiction is supported by Buell's definition. *The Drowned World* is the only book dealing with the clash of biocentrism and ecocentrism. The flood itself can be understood as the force making humans coexist with the natural world and change their attitude towards nature, as suggested by Garrard. When it comes to ecocentrism, the book follows the definition by Glotfelty who mentions hierarchies in nature. From the analysis of the characters, it can be determined that the question of superiority remains unanswered, as everyone perceived it differently and the main character was disappointed when the flood disappeared. This part

gives the impression that nature is truly superior and that the character in question considers it something to be valued and respected.

The second part of the first analytical chapter dealt with the tension between the characters, as the first chapter set out their view of the natural environment and it in many cases differed. Therefore, this chapter displays the effect of external influences on the behavior and instincts of the characters. In each novel, the tension rises with deteriorating conditions outside which leads to the loss of morality. *The Year of the Flood* as well as *The Last Gasp* represent the animality in human beings in the form of being driven by instincts, such as raping, torturing, or even murdering other beings. *The Drowned World* leans toward puritanism as the character representing the villain acts in his own interest and tries to occupy the lagoons inhabited by other citizens. All the books depict two kinds of people. Those who care about their surroundings and those who use any situation to their advantage, regardless of the consequences. This ignorance led the negative characters in all novels to suffer the same fate as those they have hurt. Nevertheless, even those who care changed their attitudes and values due to stressful situations and the fear for their lives, and they were forced to succumb to their predatory instincts.

The first part of the final chapter focused on the depiction and perception of the place in each novel. The concept of place is different in each book, but it is still within the scope of definition established in the book written by Tim Cresswell. The meaning of place differs the most in *The Last Gasp* because it shifts from materialism to emotional attachment throughout the novel. *The Drowned World* showed that each character values different things which is a result of individualism. For example, Kerans considered the lagoon home. This finding shows that nature was the most important place for him. Beatrice was too self-involved to care for anything, thus her place was her own room where she spent the most time. Nonetheless, *The Year of the Flood* portrayed the concept of a place like a shelter or a safe place, depending on the situation. Due to the environment, the values of the characters were constantly changing, as was their behavior, which was addressed in the previous analysis. Therefore, the aim of this analysis was fulfilled as the main goal was to prove that the perception of a place can continually adjust given the current situation.

The final analysis aimed at determining whether the novels belong to the utopian or dystopian genre. *The Year of the Flood* and *The Last Gasp* possess similar patterns and they both can be described as dystopic. There is a focus on governmental control and ignorance

towards a global catastrophe. However, government control is not the only thing these books show. There is also an environmental threat that leads to a loss of individuality because the characters had to rely on each other, and their possibilities were limited. Atwood's novel depicts the dystopian world from the viewpoint of disadvantaged classes, whereas Hoyle's novel tries to show the corrupted government ignoring the current situation. On the contrary, *The Drowned World* depicts a situation after the flood and despite the state of the world, some characters consider it adaptable and habitable. Thus, the first two novels can be considered dystopian, whereas Ballard's novel can represent both interpretations. To conclude, all three novels fulfill the conditions to be classified as either utopian or dystopian genres.

To conclude this bachelor thesis, every source has been thoroughly analyzed. *The Year of the Flood*, *The Last Gasp*, and *The Drowned World* have met the formerly set goals. Even though some findings may slightly divert from the established definitions, their essence remains the same. If all aspects are taken into account, it can be said with certainty that all the selected novels follow the formerly established interpretation of the ecotopian genre and can be therefore proclaimed a part of ecotopian literature.

## Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce obsahuje hned několik cílů. Tím základním je stanovení co nejpodrobnější definice ekotopického žánru, který je poměrně nový a zároveň nedostatečně probádaný. Právě díky tomu se tento žánr inspiruje různými filozofickými směry a ideologiemi, které jej tvoří. Tyto rysy jsou v této práci zkoumány za pomoci sekundárních zdrojů, které jsou tvořeny odborníky ve svém působení. Druhý cíl této práce je postaven na podrobné analýze primárních zdrojů, které tvoří *The Year of the Flood* od Margaret Atwoodové, *The Last Gasp* od Trevora Hoyla a *The Drowned World* od J. G. Ballarda. Tato analýza dochází ke zjištění, jak tyto romány souvisí s ekotopickým žánrem a zkoumá jejich aspekty na pozadí sekundární literatury, která tvoří nezbytnou součást praktické části.

Úvod práce začíná přehledným shrnutím kapitol, které tato práce obsahuje. Teoretická část této práce se zabývá definováním pojmů, které společně tvoří podklad pro praktickou část. První pojmy, které práce zmiňuje, jsou utopie a dystopie, jelikož tvoří pomyslné okolí románů, do kterých jsou děje zasazeny. Další termíny definované v této práci jsou filozofické směry zabývající se vztahem člověka k přírodě. Patří mezi ně například antropocentrismus, biocentrismus a ekocentrismus. Mimo jiné sem spadá také environmentalismus a hlubinná ekologie. Dále tyto směry zkoumají, jak moc může chování člověka ovlivnit dění natolik, že dojde k nevratné změně ve formě přírodní katastrofy. V odstavci zabývajícím se environmentalismem je část věnována pojetí přírody od Micky Golda, neboť se slovo *příroda* v textu vyskytuje opakovaně a je tak klíčovým slovem této práce. Další nezbytný pojem je ekokritika, která se zabývá zobrazením přírody v literárních dílech. Z téhož pojmu vzniklo odvětví nazývané materiální ekokritika, která je v teoretické části zmíněná jako příklad možného rozsahu působení ekokritiky. Sekundární zdroje, ze kterých je tato část tvořena, jsou napsány profesory jako například Cheryll Glotfelty, Greg Garrard a Lawrence Buell. Definované -ismy mají vícero definicí, které jsou v práci zmíněné a slouží k jejich vzájemnému porovnání. Z každého je vyvozen obecnější závěr. Poslední termín, který tato část popisuje, je pojetí místa, které skýtá dva významy, respektive buď význam má, nebo je to pouze nepodstatný koncept, kterému nebyl přidán žádný význam. Tyto pojmy jsou zkoumány očima Tima Cresswella, který ve své knize cituje další významné autory, kteří k problematice přispívají. Na základě předchozích zjištění je na konci kapitoly stanoven podrobný formát definice ekotopického žánru, o který se opírá praktická část této bakalářské práce a který slouží jako prostředek k dosažení stanovených cílů. Součástí definice jsou následující body, mezi které patří: zasazení díla do utopické nebo dystopické společnosti, dále také zkoumání vztahu

člověka k přírodě z pohledu předem stanovených -ismů, a v neposlední řadě také vliv přírodních katastrof na hodnoty člověka, neboť lidé mohou měnit svoje priority z materiálních věcí na věci spíše sentimentálního charakteru. Zmíněné faktory jsou součástí praktické části této práce, neboť tvoří podklad pro analýzu primárních zdrojů.

Praktická část této práce je rozdělena na dvě kapitoly, z nichž se každá zabývá dvěma analýzami primárních zdrojů. První analytická kapitola rozebírá vztah člověka k přírodě na základě filozofických postupů. Tento vztah je zkoumán před katastrofou a také při ní, neboť jsou v románech zastoupeny různé masy lidí s odlišnými názory. V románech jsou zobrazeny všechny druhy filozofických postojů, především antropocentrismus a ekocentrismus. V knize *The Drowned World* má své zastoupení především biocentrismus, který je zobrazen formou harmonického soužití s přírodou. *The Year of the Flood* a *The Last Gasp* obsahují rozpor mezi antropocentrismem a ekocentrismem, jelikož se v nich objevují dvě skupiny postav. První skupina je specifická tím, že se snaží dostat stav přírody do podvědomí občanů a druhá skupina je především zastoupena vládou, nebo mateřskou společností, která ovládá jednotlivé sektory průmyslu, a zajímá se pouze o vlastní zisk. Vzhledem k této ignoraci okolí vznikají problémy ovlivňující nejen celý ekosystém, ale také strukturu lidstva a hodnoty postav, které se mění okolními vlivy. Druhá část této analytické kapitoly se zabývá rozborem morality jednotlivých postav a jejím vývojem a změnami. Jak je již zmíněno, chování postav bylo ovlivněno prostředím, ve kterém se nacházely. Celá situace měla největší morální dopad na ty, kteří se snažili konat dobro a neublížovat ostatním členům přírodního světa. V románu *The Drowned World* je zobrazena postava reprezentující puritány, neboť svým vzhledem a činy připomíná kolonizátory z historie Ameriky. Přírodní katastrofa ovlivňuje postavy natolik, že jim nezbývá nic jiného než se uchýlit ke své zvířecí podstatě. Klíčovou roli především hraje pud sebezáchovy, jelikož je to nejdůležitější instinkt všech přeživších. Tento instinkt se objevuje ve všech třech románech, neboť v nich dochází k dohnání postav k nezvratitelným a neomluvitelným činům. Nicméně, rozbor poukazuje na jejich vyústění a snaží se je ospravedlnit ve světle logického uvažování a vzhledem k okolí, ve kterém se postavy nachází.

Druhá analytická kapitola zkoumá to, jak jednotlivé postavy vnímají místo a jejich priority, které toto vnímání ovlivňují. Tato část vychází z Cresswellových zjištění stanovených v teoretické části. Každý román obsahuje jiné příklady pojetí místa a také hmotná místa, která mu dodávají svoji jedinečnost. Závěrem této analýzy je zjištění, že se vnímání místa neustále mění a většinou je ovlivněno nejen okolím, ale také přehodnocením dané situace, která ve většině případů nebyla příznivá. Tedy za místo může být považováno prakticky cokoli, čemu

člověk dá jakýkoli význam. Toto tvrzení je podpořeno všemi třemi romány, především *The Last Gasp*, ve kterém je největší důraz kladen na rodinu a její bezpečí, ale právě díky tomuto příkladu samotná rodina tvoří jakési místo klidu a opory. V případě *The Drowned World* je kladen emocionální důraz na samotnou reprezentaci přírody, neboť jedna z postav nebere v potaz nebezpečné podmínky, které mohou zabránit ve vývoji civilizace. V případě románu *The Year of the Flood* je důraz kladen spíše na obydlí znevýhodněné skupiny lidí, neboť jejich místo má formu bezpečného útočiště. Další analýza, kterou tato kapitola obsahuje je zařazení analyzovaných románů do utopické nebo dystopické literatury. *The Year of the Flood* je stejně jako *The Last Gasp* prototypním příkladem dystopických románů, jelikož zde společnost ovládají mocní lidé, kteří využívají strachu a násilí k dosažení svých cílů. *The Drowned World* obsahuje jisté prvky utopického románu, přestože je to pouze pocitové a okolí naznačuje pravý opak. Tento román se jako jediný dá považovat za nejen dystopický, ale také utopický. Zároveň se tato kapitola zaměřuje na chování a změnu postojů postav poté, co přírodní katastrofa ovlivní celý svět.

Závěrečná kapitola této práce uzavírá veškeré posudky a vyvozuje z nich obecnější závěry. Každá dílčí kapitola došla ke svým vlastním zjištěním a analytické rozbory jsou podpořeny ukázkami z primárních zdrojů. Celou práci lze shrnout tvrzením, že všechny analyzované romány dodržují předem stanovenou definici. Tudiž předem stanovených cílů bylo dosaženo a lze tyto romány považovat za součást ekotopického žánru.

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