Moving Beyond Survival in Twentieth-Century Canadian Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction 1948-1989

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic science fiction (SF) by English-language and Francophone Québécois authors published between 1948 and 1989, in order to investigate how historical settler imaginations of disaster are articulated. This study is in service of several ends: first, to disrupt and interrogate the Canadian literary canon through the study of SF as a legitimate genre with important insights; second, to take a good, hard look at the development of what theorists have called a neoconservative and regressive genre in settler Canada and Québec; and third, to look to the past for strategies to live in an imagined future where worldwide disaster ("apocalypse") has already transpired. I argue that the visions of the post-apocalyptic future that were prevalent in SF produced in Canada during the latter half of the twentieth century correspond to a singular narrative in SF that is based on and around tropes established by earlier SF and literary writing published in the US.

In the course of my research, I found that while most of the forty-four texts in this genre adhere to a specifically Canadian settler-colonial and ultimately instrumentalist worldview, there are several texts that demonstrate divergent attitudes and sociopolitical alternatives to dominant cultural imaginings of the methods of survival in the post-apocalypse. I focus my study on these few texts that I argue depart in significant ways from a dominant post-apocalyptic narrative, subverting the genre and taking it to new places. While doing so, I reference and make note of other texts and use them to illustrate my arguments, comparing and contrasting them with the main texts and tropes under discussion. In chapter order, the main theoretical lenses I employed are: 1. Canadian SF theory and environmental criticism, 2. ecofeminism and feminist posthumanism, 3. post-colonial and decolonial thought specifically focusing on Quebec and Indigenous issues, and 4. affect and queer theory.

This dissertation contributes to excavating and highlighting the colonial survival mindset that colours the stories we tell ourselves, and shines a light on the philosophies underpinning our actions as we move forward into the Anthropocene. It is a project that seeks to build imaginative capacity for writers, critics, theorists, and readers of SF. I argue that these scripts both cleave to and depart from reality, and that dominant settler assumptions based on individualism and garrison mentality as a way to survive crises ignore the crucial role of care and healthy community in encouraging human flourishing in its diverse forms.

My research shows that, in the post-apocalypse, which more often than not is marked by ongoing crises, people who are able to move beyond disaster survival narratives are the ones that in the end are able to create a life for themselves and others worth living—in non-hierarchical community, in relations of care, and in an acknowledgement of their posthuman entanglement with the non-human world and their environment. My findings from this study are that the imaginary of the post-apocalypse necessarily *must* incorporate community, connection, and post-anthropocentrism as key facets in order to truly move beyond the fear-driven regressive, exclusionary, and violent impulses of survival. Unsubscribing from the single version of the post-apocalyptic narrative that anticipates the garrison mentality as a necessary corollary of worldwide devastation can allow for a critical appraisal of the present in order to consciously move beyond survival and into the future.

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Introduction

"When the fictions change, therefore the world changes in step with them."
-Frank Kermode

I Introduction

This thesis examines settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic science fiction (SF) by English-language and Francophone Québécois authors published between 1948 and 1989, in order to investigate how historical settler imaginations of disaster are articulated. This study is in service of several ends: first, to continue the good work of scholars such as Veronica Hollinger, Jessica Langer, Amy Ransom, and Sherryl Vint to disrupt and interrogate the Canadian literary canon through the study of SF as a legitimate genre with important insights; second, to take a good, hard look at the development of what theorists have called a neoconservative and regressive genre in settler Canada and Québec; and third, to look to the past for strategies to live in an imagined future where worldwide disaster ("apocalypse") has already transpired.[1, 2] I argue that the visions of the post-apocalyptic future that were prevalent in SF produced in Canada during the latter half of the twentieth century correspond to a singular narrative in SF that is based on and around tropes established by earlier SF and literary writing published in the US. Post-apocalyptic narratives from Canada and Québec have long been assumed by fans and scholars alike to narrate the same thematic concerns as those in the US, despite differences acknowledged in other areas of cultural production such as canonical literature and attitudes towards the environment. My dissertation focuses on the question of whether post-war SF in Canada has

[1] The first of which is NOT to affirm that yes, there is such a thing as Canadian science fiction. Many others more qualified and experienced have written on the topic: see Andrea Paradis' 1995 collection *Out of This World: Canadian SF &F* and Amy Ransom and Dominick Grace's 2019 edited volume *Canadian Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror: Bridging the Solitudes*.
[2] See Curtis 2010 and Bellamy 2014 for further reading on the apocalyptic as a neoconservative and regressive genre.

historically demonstrated a viable alternative, both political and social, to dominant cultural imagining of the methods of survival in the post-apocalypse. What work do these texts do in articulating survival through and beyond catastrophe, and how is the representation of the post-apocalyptic environment and its inhabitants changed—if at all—in these texts due to the influence of their writers' identities and location?

It is undeniable that we are rapidly approaching (or, as theorists such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Donna Haraway, and others have argued, already passed) a global disaster point, environmentally speaking. Species are dying. Oceans are acidifying. Ice caps are melting. And still, the neoliberal, neocolonial state of Canada insists on pushing through pipelines and ramping up tar sands exploitation.[3] There is startlingly little evidence of forethought about the environmental and social consequences that petro-expansionism will entail in provincial or federal legislation; for example, the LEAP manifesto, a call to respect Indigenous rights and implement a new sustainable way of life in Canada in order to avert or mitigate the damage of climate apocalypse, so much a part of the sociopolitical conversation in the 2014/15 election cycle in Canada, seems to have been relegated once again to the marginal world of environmental non-government organizations (ENGOs) and various activist organizations.[4] However, the reality is that the world is going to change, like it or not, and an underdeveloped resource of the people living on the lands currently called Canada is the cultural imagination for what the world would look like if the present global environment (constructed, built, naturally occurring, as defined by structures of power) were to be fundamentally altered for the worse—no

[3] See articles by the Associated Press, Knight, Tuttle, Dangerfield in that order to track recent pipeline politics in Canada.
[4] See https://leapmanifesto.org/ for more information on this ongoing initiative.

matter the catalyst.[5] This dissertation is an imaginative capacity-building project, ultimately, and one that targets the roots and ground from which the settler imaginations in Canada and Québec of the past seven decades have grown.

Present critical discussions of SF are based mainly upon understandings of the genre as it was articulated by texts published during the so-called "Golden Age" of SF in the United States (primarily in the 1950s),[6] which dictate its tropes and mores (Silverberg). Though the chronological parameters of the "Golden Age" are the subject of debate among SF critics, the moniker is broadly understood as referring to the years spanning the late 1930s to the early 1950s (Silverberg; Clute et. al.; Ransom 27); this is the time during which the writers in this study were educated in what constituted SF and engaged in writing their own narratives. Élisabeth Vonarburg asserts in a critical essay that though cinema is now the leading vehicle for SF stories in culture, films are generally 20-30 years behind SF writing "in terms of its subject matter and handling of themes" ("Women and Science Fiction" 178). Vonarburg was writing in 1995; her observation bears out given the current 2020s pop cultural obsession with fashion and media from the 80s and early 90s, itself a rehashing of decades-old themes.

Consequently, there exists a dominant (US) understanding of what constitutes SF that often determines our expectations of the future and our ideas of what must be done in order to survive beyond apocalypse. Major tropes of the genre of post-apocalyptic SF as a whole include emphasis on individuality, hyper-masculinity, and the human-supremacist belief that anthropocentric will can conquer the post-apocalyptic landscape.[7] In a 1993 survey of post-

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[5] Some compelling stories—such as *The Back of The Turtle* by Thomas King (2014), *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline (2017), *Moon of the Crusted Snow* by Waubgeshig Rice (2018)—have been published in recent years by Indigenous writers which accomplish this very thing; however, these are still very new and do not impinge on the public consciousness that shapes the imagination of apocalypse. Yet.

[6] See publications by Otto in 2012; Hambrick in 2012; Bernardo in 2014; Seed in 2014.

[7] See: Evans 556; Broderick 362.

nuclear-holocaust SF films, scholar Mick Broderick observes that the filmic representations "seemingly advocate reinforcing the symbolic order of the status quo via the maintenance of conservative social regimes of patriarchal law (and lore)" (362), and allow spectators to ignore the "human causal chain in nuclear warfare and to replace it with an archaic mythology steeped in heroic acts" (362). I am not including film and television in this dissertation as that would enlarge the scope of my argument beyond Canadian and Québécois literature, but it is important to note that many of the on-screen SF narratives with which we are familiar are adapted from print sources. [8]

Early American SF, prior to the intervention of feminist writers in the late 1960s and early 70s, was rooted in what Sarah Lefanu terms "masculine concerns": space exploration, the development of technology, areas "effectively denied to women in the real world" (3), along with the "frontier-myth"-inspired themes of colonization, triumphant individualism, and the physical prowess to engage in combat (Clute 22). The majority of SF writers prior to and during the Golden Age in the US were men, writing for an assumedly masculine audience, and whose otherwise fantastic and imaginative narratives had, as Lefanu argues, been conspicuously silent on issues such as the "personal and political relationships" between women and men (4). Lefanu states this is because SF "like all writing, is written from within a particular ideology" (3); the "failure of imagination" is thus a disappointment keenly felt by non-male readers precisely because of SF's central goal to imagine the world otherwise.

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[8] *Blade Runner* is an excellent example of this adaptation. Originally opening in 1982, the film was based on the 1968 book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, by American writer Philip K. Dick, who had begun writing SF full time in the "Golden Age." *Blade Runner: The Final Cut* was released in 2007 to celebrate the film's 25th anniversary and included never-before-seen material. *Blade Runner 2049*, released in 2017, is its sequel and takes place in the same universe a generation later, but it seems that extremely little (if anything) has changed politically or socially following from the events of the first film, which included the very public murder of the genius leader of the (apparently sole) company that creates and supplies the replicant slave-labour upon which that society depends. See also Broderick's article "Surviving Armageddon" for a broader list of SF films of the twentieth century.

A parallel tradition of SF did exist in Canada and Québec during the "Golden Age" and in the decades following, one which deliberately participated in US SF tropes for market reasons, yet also exceeded them, demonstrating a divergent approach to the tradition. My search for post-apocalyptic settler-Canadian SF from 1948-1989 was as thorough as it could be under the circumstances, but was hobbled by the fact that many self-identified Canadian SF writers felt obliged to exclude all Canadian cultural references and thematic concerns from their manuscripts in order to sell stories to a US market, partially on account of the dearth of Canadian publishers who were willing to accept genre fiction (Gotlieb 200; Grant 14), as well as the complete lack of outlet for publishing book-length Canadian SF in French (Gouanvic 71-72). Phyllis Gotlieb noted that, even in 1995, Canadian SF writers "[were] forced to depend on American paperback publishers" (200).[9] Therefore, while I availed myself of various library collections here in Canada and searched through a multitude of twentieth-century short SF story collections, I would not be surprised if there are post-apocalyptic texts additional to the forty-four under study in this dissertation that I have not yet encountered, and would be glad to read about in future.

Despite the way in which the conditions of publication forced many Canadian and Québécois SF writers to conform to American tropes within the genre, Canadian and Québécois SF itself during the twentieth century still managed to develop narratives of alterity. SF from Canada and Québec, as Robert Runté and Christine Kulyk note, has a penchant to depict its "heroes as victims, or losers with occasional wins," where change does not equal growth, and "the major character is likely no better off, and sometimes worse off, at the end of the story" (46)—in contrast with the dominant American SF narrative of the heroic individual who

[9] The situation seems not to have improved with time: in a 2006 article for the Canadian Encyclopedia, Robert Sawyer asserted that Canadian SF writers remained very often unable to market their work internationally due in part to the fact that "Canada has no domestic short-fiction markets that meet the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America's minimum requirement for professional payment" ("Science Fiction" par. 4).

triumphs in the end. Thus, these stories tend not to be read as SF by genre fans (Clute 24), but neither have they been seen as "worthy of treatment" by literary institutions in Canada and Québec (Weiss and Spencer 13). Many twentieth-century Canadian and Québécois SF texts narrate an alternate version of the necessities of survival, bringing to post-apocalyptic SF an emphasis on "soft" themes such as the sociological ramifications of technology, concern for and identification with the racialized / gendered Other, and acknowledgement of the environment as an agential force.[10]

Parallels between American literary culture and American SF have merited some scholarly inquiry, with particular attention paid by the field of SF studies to American representations of destruction throughout the twentieth century, as prompted by the intensification of the Cold War. These have been interpreted as resulting in the collapse of the American Dream (Rabkin vii-viii; Manjikian 6), a fantasy of neo-conservatism (Curtis 5-6; E. Kroon 131; Bellamy ii), an expression of cultural fascination with technology and its capabilities (Seed *Under* 4), among others. As John Clute observes, "the characteristic plots of twentieth-century SF were versions of the fable of America" (22). When I began my dissertation work, I was guided by curiosity about what similar work twentieth-century Canadian SF might be doing. I herein challenge the assumption that, per Clute, describing Canadian narratives as "not like American SF at all" implies that they are not, in fact, real SF; I read twentieth-century Canadian SF narratives of disaster in a similar vein as the above theorists, paying attention to the ways in which Canadian literary culture is reflected and refracted through generic texts.

[10] For further reading on interpretations of the environment as an agential force in Canadian SF, see Dorsey 1989, qtd in Runté and Kulyk 42; Ketterer "Canadian Science Fiction" 332-33 and *Canadian SF and F* 162; Merril 227.

One major concern informing my inquiry in this dissertation is that Canadian SF has not historically been the subject of academic study[11] (and post-apocalyptic narratives not at all), despite the fact that the issues within Canadian SF "rhyme nicely with the rest of 'Can Lit,' notably in its adaptations of the "'fable of survival' and the related themes" (Leroux 2; also noted by influential SF writers such as Judith Merril, 277). While Canadian thematic literary criticism of the 1970s organized itself around the symbol of survival of harsh environments in Canadian literature, it wholly ignored the occurrence of the same in SF. As I discuss in my first chapter, the concept of survival (of catastrophe, of annihilation, of hyperbolic destruction) is the *raison d'être* of post-apocalyptic fiction; without it, the genre would not exist. In infamously claiming that survival is the central preoccupation of Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood built upon the earlier work of Northrop Frye that identified a "garrison mentality" in the Canadian psyche that viewed its physical surroundings as hostile, or an orientation towards the environment of suspicion and outright fear. Atwood's theories of "Canadian survival" and victim positions, though justifiably critiqued (Davey 1983; Stuewe 1984) in the decades since *Survival*'s publication, still work to inform the past fifty years of literary criticism in Canada.[12] Literary critics are required to raise "the survival theme" in order to refute it, and so its legacy continues.

In a review of the extant literature, I have found that no scholarly work has yet undertaken to examine the parallels between this theme, so central to the mid-century understanding of Canadian literature, and the essential issue of survival in post-apocalyptic SF narratives. David Ketterer, in what was for a long time the only book-length academic survey of Canadian SF and fantasy, notes that "a disproportionate number of [Canadian] SF stories focus

[11] See: Leroux and La Bossière 2004; Ransom 2009; Langer 2011; and Ransom and Grace 2019 for the most recent scholarly, book-length works.
[12] See: Söderlind on marginality 1991; Coleman on masculinities 1998; Sugars and Turcotte on the postcolonial gothic 2009.

directly or indirectly" on what he terms the catastrophe theme (*Canadian SF and F* 161). However, Ketterer dismisses this theme as a characteristic common to the genre of SF as a whole, without analyzing its significance within the larger body of Canadian literature. Ketterer does not take the opportunity to marry genre literature to the analysis usually reserved for literary works institutionally recognized for their cultural significance and, by doing so, establish a connection between the two, nor has it been taken up by other scholars in the years since Ketterer's 1992 publication.

My original goal was to combat the invisibility of Canadian genre writers' contributions to the North-American SF literary tradition within SF scholarship and Canadian literary criticism: this has not so much changed as evolved. I imagined that such an undertaking would contribute to unearthing a Canadian and Québécois literary legacy of speculation on possible futures, and while it did, my research also laid bare the way that the future has always already been colonized in the settler imagination of the future of Canada, including little to no consideration of Indigenous peoples beyond tokenism. Yet at the same time, writer-critics and scholars of Canadian and Québécois SF have lauded the fact that the SF scene in Canada and Québec in the 60s, 70s, and 80s was replete with female writers and that the number is growing.[13] Until very recently, there has been a dearth of SF published by Indigenous authors to inform the genre of SF in Canada,[14] though the Canadian imaginaries in both SF and fantasy have been informed by Indigenous mythological traditions.[15] SF in Canada and Québec has thus been heavily informed and shaped by the voices and concerns of writers marginalized by their gender, at the same time as it has leaned heavily on the commodification and erasure of the

[13] See: Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 90; Kulyk 160; Weiss and Spencer 16.
[14] *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*, edited by Grace Dillon in 2012, was the first collection of stories, poems, and excerpts of Indigenous SF. It is an American publication.
[15] See: Colombo "Four Hundred" 32, 39-40; Langer 45; Ketterer 100, 110, 118.

voices and concerns of writers marginalized by their race, leading to an SF that is at the same time critical of some dominant discourses but complicit with the structures of colonialism. My second and third chapters are devoted to discussing each of these issues in turn at more length. Knowing this background to the SF scene in Canada and Québec can inform writers' and scholars' understanding of its contemporary incarnation.

Studies by fans and writer-scholars such as John Robert Colombo, Judith Merril, and Andrea Paradis (in conjunction with the Library of Canada in 1995) in Anglophone Canada, and that of Vonarburg and Joël Champetier in Québec, have shown that there has existed—regardless of the lacunas laid out above—a strong tradition of SF writing and publishing in Canada and Québec during the twentieth century. These studies of the nature of SF in Canada lay the groundwork that allows me to further interrogate the North American cultural imagination of crisis with regards to its understanding of the post-apocalyptic future, both in relation to the larger field of SF in Canada and as an entity separate from its generic (primarily American) narrative counterparts.

Another aim of this dissertation overall is to provide a literary history where before there has not been one. For scholars of Canadian and Québécois literature, I believe it is important to look at the Canadian literary imaginary holistically, unrestricted by the canon-making dictates of an earlier time, if we are to understand it at all now. My research is concerned with filling important gaps in literary criticism from Canada and Québec. This project provides an understanding of how contemporary narratives are often sourced in the concerns of an earlier time, though they may take different forms. The imaginative traditions of Canada and Québec are inspiring in their triumphs but also—most importantly—in their failures. What have these writers neglected? What are the implications for contemporary Canadian and Indigenous post-

apocalyptic SF that, while many of their literary predecessors valorize characters' efforts to live in careful balance with and give respect to the power of their natural surroundings, the oppressed protagonists are white settler-colonial men? Does this mean that the Canadian SF future is necessarily an extension of the patriarchal white supremacist dream, or is there a truly new imaginary at work in these texts?

II On a "Canadian" Post-Apocalyptic Future

When I began this dissertation in 2016, I marked the then-recent publication of post-apocalyptic literature in Canada—by Atwood from 2003-2013,[16] Emily St. John Mandel in 2015, and Thomas King in 2014, to name a few—as providing evidence of a market for SF in the Canadian state in the twenty-first century. The publication of novels such as Cherie Dimaline's *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) and Waubgeshig Rice's *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018) in the years since then has made it clear that this market has not disappeared but grown. Yet there is still no extant, sustained academic scholarship of pre-millennial, post-apocalyptic Canadian SF—an omission which troubled me when conducting research for my Masters in 2014 and remains a scholarly gap up to the time of writing this in 2021. Recent Canadian academic studies of SF do exist,[17] but they are not exclusive to or sustained inquiries about post-apocalyptic literature specifically. The first-ever book-length academic study of Canadian SF was published by Ketterer in 1992 and, while an important and necessary survey of SF and fantasy literature in Canada, it is for the most part bibliographic; provides little detail about the texts listed; is Anglo-centric; and gives little if any thought to Indigenous writing or representation. Literary perception of the SF genre, both popular and scholarly, is thus based primarily on American,

[16] The *MaddAddam* trilogy is currently being developed by HBO and Darren Aronofsky as a TV adaptation; a mini-series based on *Station 11* is similarly set to premiere on HBO Max in 2021.
[17] See Leroux and La Bossière 2004, Ransom 2009, Langer 2011, and Grace and Ransom 2018 for the most recent scholarly, book-length works.

Euro-settler scholarship, perceived through the lens of American literature and criticism as discussed above.

It is a challenge first to talk about SF in Canada when, for most of the twentieth century, it has been acknowledged by neither academic scholarship nor Canadian publishing, and then to focus on post-apocalyptic narratives within this almost invisible tradition. The apocalyptic and, more recently, post-apocalyptic has been discussed at length with regards to American SF literature,[18] but despite a healthy tradition of disaster-obsessed writing north of the border,[19] the exploration of iterations of apocalypse and its aftermath in genre literature is generally thought of as an American topic and belonging to the domain of SF pulp and religious moralizing by the disenfranchised (Kreuziger 1; Stableford 97; Manjikian 2). Critics point to Cold War paranoia and its linked technological acceleration as a major influence on American apocalyptic imaginings in the twentieth century; it would be easy to draw the conclusion that, since Canada was not a chief player in that struggle, Canadian writers did not seriously develop cultural responses to the threat of targeted nuclear aggression. Yet the roots of the threat and promise of apocalypse in the Canadian imagination are a result not of its twentieth-century experience, but are sourced in an older apocalyptic tradition, stemming from the clash between cultural and religious expectation and environmental reality that informed the European settlement of North America.

My use of the adjective "Canadian" here is quite deliberate—these are narratives written by settlers benefiting from and reproducing the colonial rule of the Canadian state. In 1992, Ketterer, following Christine Kulyk, notes that in defining an authentic Canadian SF, the scholar

[18] See: Kermode 1967; Kreuziger 1982; Rabkin et. al. 1983; Seed 2000; Heffernan 2008; Curtis 2010; Paik 2010; Manjikian 2012; Bellamy 2014.
[19] See: Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 161; Goldman 10; Weiss 38; Atwood, "Selections" 16.

"depends less on the presence of Canadian settings or characters than on the presence of 'a Canadian cultural consciousness,' a Canadian sensibility" (Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 165). I would like to qualify this vague but nonetheless accurate determinant by stating that the nationalities of authors of the texts in under study range from: Canadians who found it difficult or impossible to publish SF in Canada and so wrote for a primarily American market (e.g. Gotlieb); to transplants to Canada, such as Americans Spider Robinson and William Gibson, South African Ian Adams, Parisian Vonarburg, and Scot David Walker; to Francophone authors who wrote in French such as Maurice Gagnon, or those Francophone authors who wrote in English, such as Hélène Holden; to authors who were born, raised, and lived in English Canada at the time of writing, such as Atwood, Wayland Drew, and Margaret Laurence. In this dissertation, I study two of the short post-apocalyptic stories written by Yves Thériault, a Québécois man of Montagnais ancestry, and perform a close-reading in my fourth chapter of a novel by Paulette Jiles, an American who lived and worked in Canada for over a decade and where she began her writing career. Jiles' specific work was with the CBC; she lived with a Northern Ontario Oji-Cree band as a content producer for their radio station and was daily engaged with one of the most influential institutions for performing and producing Canadian culture in the 1970s and 80s (Bonetti 108; Mills 250).

I am following a distinct trend in critical study of Canadian SF here in this dissertation in my "big tent" style inclusion of writers of diverse identities; throughout the twentieth century, critical notation and study of SF from Canada and Québec has been, for the most part, wide-ranging, perhaps in part due to the perceived dearth of a Canadian or Québécois SF tradition. Colombo explicitly states in his landmark 1972 anthology that the SF therein is "writing in prose or poetry form by all of the following: Canadian citizens, new Canadians, former Canadians,

even non-Canadians (when their work is set in Canada)" (*Other Canadas* 1) and while my study does not go quite as far, I also have the benefit of writing this about five decades after Colombo's work and thus have a larger library to go through. Amy Ransom and Dominick Grace note in their introduction to the recent anthology *Canadian Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror: Bridging the Solitudes* that attempts "to define what is Canadian often devolves into a definition of what is not Canadian: being Canadian is often understood as an absence, rather than a presence" (17), shedding light on why so many earlier theorists of settler-Canadian SF were either inclusive to the extreme or extremely vague in their definition of what constitutes a Canadian SF. Allan Weiss and Hugh Spencer state in their introduction to the anthology *Out of This World*, a publication celebrating the major 1994 Canadian SF exhibit of the same name by the National Library of Canada, that its curators had resolved to "focus on the search of identity as a central theme which underlie[s] much of Canadian SF and connects to our wider literary traditions" (14). While Colombo had attempted to positively define four characteristics of Canadian SF and fantasy—1. Polar World 2. National Disaster Scenario 3. Alienated Outsider and 4. Prevalence of Fantasy over Science Fiction—he himself was forced to reckon almost immediately with differing viewpoints (for example, the fracturing of Canada is only a disaster for Québec if the country manages to politically hold together) and the haziness of categories of definition (for example, category 4 is more of an observation than a hallmark characteristic).

I am not interested in providing some sort of definition of the Canadian settler state to which authors' identities must adhere in order for them to be included in a canon of SF, but my analysis is necessarily influenced by the history of how SF has been informed by Canadian literary nationalism and the colonial drive towards definition. Canadian literary nationalism, as I will discuss below, was a goal towards which the dominant literary community strived for

decades during the early and mid-twentieth century, attempting to produce the Great Canadian Novel that would display a distinct "Canadian" identity in its plot, structure, and characters, and would be able therefore to compete on the world stage with the Great American Novel (such as the work of writers such as T.S. Eliot, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald) and the British literary tradition (including James Joyce, H.G. Wells, the Brontë sisters, all the way back to Shakespeare). This never quite materialized, a reflection of how "Canada" is a "disrupted category, geographically and culturally contested" and ambivalent (Langer 12-13). Scholar Jessica Langer prefaces her discussion of "Canadian identity" with the statement that since Canada is a multicultural nation of diasporic immigrants, "each of these hyphenated identities presents its own complex interaction with Canada's colonial and postcolonial legacy, both historical and present" (12). My articulation of themes in the post-apocalyptic SF under study as "Canadian" therefore is grounded in historical considerations of what constitutes a settler-Canadian SF attitude according to theorists and critics of twentieth-century SF produced in Canada and Québec at the same time as it is critical of the exclusionary ends which that identification serves.

III Settler-Canadian Literature: Thematic Criticism vs Genre

One of the factors both driving and hindering the research on my project has been that, for all intents and purposes, settler-Canadian SF has historically been rendered invisible within the settler-Canadian literary scene as it evolved after the Second World War. Critics Laura Moss and Cynthia Sugars note that in the early twentieth century, settler-Canadian literature grew alongside a burgeoning confidence in the country's ability to compete on the world stage, not as a former colony, but as a nation in its own right (1). Art was seen as necessary for effecting "cultural and psychic decolonization" (Moss and Sugars 2), and the Canadian government's

commission and subsequent publication of the 1957 Massey Report served to entrench a feeling of "strong cultural nationalism" (Moss and Sugars 12) in the postwar Canadian state. Yet the perception of Canadian culture and its institutions as overly reliant on its imperial roots and unable to stand on their own persisted past the country's centennial year, evidenced in Frye's 1971 assertion that Canada is "practically the only country left in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology as well as in mercantile economics" ("Preface" iii). The consolidation of settler-Canadian national identity and the production of settler-Canadian literature were thus mutually constitutive, resulting in the aforementioned Canadian literary nationalism. Debates over what was or was not considered worthy of inclusion in the canon represented very real struggles in the face of perceived threat to Canada's ability to build a strong and unique culture that could compete with British and American cultural products such as national literatures.

I set out in this dissertation to evaluate and interrogate the contiguity between mid-twentieth century settler-Canadian SF narratives and Canadian canonical literature, specifically the shared focus on characters' survival in a harsh environment, prompted by the experience of settlement in Canada. Critic Robert Lecker, in a study of early anthologies of settler-Canadian literature, notes a drive towards "affirming the presence of place" (10) that, in conjunction with the rise of realism and naturalism in literature, led early Canadian writers to focus on narration of their surrounding environment. Theorists in the post-war period noted that in English settler-Canadian writing, the natural world represented a threat to both the physical and psychological well-being of protagonists and civilization.[20] French settler-Canadian literature similarly has a tradition of representing wilderness as an unknown and hostile space, as the direct obstacle to the

[20] For examples, see Frye, *The Bush Garden*; Atwood, *Survival*; Sullivan, "*La forêt*."

provincial interests of "agricultural colonization" until the Quiet Revolution in 1960.[21] "[T]he unmistakable emphasis on wilderness in Canadian iconography" from its beginnings (Soper and Bradley xxii) in texts authored in both official languages greatly informed critics', readers' and, importantly, authors' understandings of settler-Canadian literature as explicitly environmental in theme. Significantly, thematic critics noted that the environment (usually natural, but social and cultural as well) is represented as one that is oppressive or that actively victimizes the characters within settler-Canadian texts and theorized that the main struggle of the protagonist—and thus, according to Atwood, the defining symbol of the Canadian national psyche—is that of survival (Atwood, "Selections" 16).

This thesis does not aim to simply replicate the thematic criticism of the 1960s and 1970s, which interpreted literature as a "direct reflection of a national consciousness or national way of being" and thus evidence of cultural identity and maturity (Moss and Sugars 232-33). Rather, this project does acknowledge the significance of observations by thematic critics such as Frye, Atwood, and D.G. Jones on how settler-Canadian writers respond to their environment as an important influence on my study of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF, for two reasons. The first is because thematic criticism, despite justifiable critiques, has been significant to settler-Canadian literary history in its influence on the rise of an ecocritical tradition in Canada (Moss and Sugars 233; Soper and Bradley xxii) as well as on critical treatments of settler-Canadian SF. The second is because thematic critics' appraisal of the wilderness in literature as a threatening environment, and of characters as victims and survivors of this potentially catastrophic context, mirrors closely the way in which the post-apocalyptic environment is represented in SF: as a hostile, threatening, and potent force.

[21] See: Posthumus and Salaün 299; Cook 37.

Settler-Canadian literature in the 1960s and '70s saw the rise of postmodern aesthetics that interrogated universalist truth-claims, leading not only to productive critiques of authority (Moss and Sugars 16) and the "inscription" into history of marginalized and silenced voices (Hutcheon 11; see also *Open Letter* journal), but also to an anti-thematic wave of criticism that had the adverse effect of inhibiting ecocriticism in Canada. Ella Soper and Nicolas Bradley, editors of *Greening the Maple*: *Canadian Ecocriticism in Context*, contend that this mood was adopted in Canadian publishing by ECW and University of Toronto press during the 1980s, a bias that "undoubtedly precluded publications by would-be thematicist [sic] critics" and caused a "rupture […] in the articulation of a proto-ecocritical discourse in Canada," which affected Canadian literary criticism until the mid-nineties (xxviii). This anti-thematic disposition perhaps contributed to the dearth of critical or academic attention paid to cold-war-era Canadian articulations of the "zero hour" and its aftermath. I read the belated advent of ecocriticism in Canada as the side effect of the gatekeeping impulse of an institution that perceives itself to be threatened: in an attempt to solidify itself as a major player internationally, the institution of Canadian literature ended up excluding itself from cross-border conversations around environment in literature.

The thematic approach's main failing, critics agree, is its focus on content and not technique such as form, style, language, etc., coupled with a claim that the texts studied represent the Canadian psyche as a whole.[22] Critic Frank Davey articulates a desire to return to an analysis where "no writer can be excluded because of his attitudes or subject matter" (11). This statement could be read as ironic, considering the Canadian literary canon's exclusion of genre literature such as SF on an assumption of content, without evaluation of these narratives on the basis of

[22] See: Moss and Sugars 233; Davey 1-2; Stuewe 5.

technical merit (not to mention Davey's constant use of the masculine possessive pronoun). Would a scholar of SF be accused of trying to "avoid treating Canadian writing as serious literature" due to a focus on content and not technique (Davey 7)? SF has been written by authors such as Atwood, Laurence, Gotlieb, Hugh MacLennan, Thériault, and other writers whose works in other genres are lauded. Surely, the genre texts written by these authors display the same technical prowess as their more realist fiction and deserve the same scrutiny regardless of genre.

IV About Apocalypse; defining a post-

In the summer of 2016, I performed a cursory survey of settler-Canadian SF texts in order to select the ones which fulfilled the criteria of being 1: Canadian- and Québécois-authored, 2: within the genre of SF, 3: published between 1945 and 1989, and 4: post-apocalyptic narratives.[23] I read in both official languages, and so this thesis contains a study of texts both in English and in French. I read with an eye to the texts' overall expression of and attention to environmental issues (both natural and built), and how the interdependence of formal elements such as plot, character, and setting gave rise to speculation on settler-Canadian and Québécois subjectivities in an imagined future. The forty-four resulting texts are linked by their environmental concerns as well as a postmodern drive to question and critique established narratives: those of the SF genre as well as those of national identity at this time in history. My study is thus comprised of texts that are specifically concerned with the subject formation of their characters; and characters' selves are directly informed by the severely altered physical environment in the wake of apocalyptic-scale catastrophe. I do not in this project perform an in-depth reading of all forty-four texts that conform to my definition of the post-apocalyptic, but

[23] I conducted the majority of this research at the Toronto Public Library's Merril Collection and am indebted to senior department head Lorna Toolis and her team of librarians for their invaluable help in locating obscure texts.

rather focus my study on the few texts that I argue depart in significant ways from a dominant post-apocalyptic narrative, subverting the genre and taking it to new places. While doing so, I reference and make note of other texts and use them to illustrate my arguments, comparing and contrasting them with the main texts and tropes under discussion; for example, in chapter one I nuance my discussion of the hero archetype as it applies to Canadian protagonists in Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* (my main text) by contrasting it with William C. Heine's *The Last Canadian* (an example text).

My research hypothesis for this project rested on the assumption that settler-Canadian SF texts during this period display a keen attention to the environmental consequences of human action; and that the horrors of nuclear devastation, among other terrors, are described in ecological terms as well as human ones. My preliminary readings confirmed my suspicion, which was solidified when I later began to research and write in earnest. The post-apocalyptic settings of my primary texts—though their narratives' temporal settings range from just after the apocalyptic event—(as in Leonard Fischer's 1950 pulp novel *Let Out the Beast*) to centuries in the future (the setting of Gagnon's 1972 novel *Les tours de Babylone* is 2380)—are all connected through their articulation of characters as products of their altered environments.

Each text draws attention to the ways in which the environment of the post-apocalypse differs from that of pre-apocalyptic society, and how characters' thoughts, actions, and relationships are profoundly affected by this alteration. For example, Fischer's protagonist embodies a male power fantasy, where fighting prowess, physical strength, and vicious cunning become necessary to survival in the new, ruined, and harsh environment left by nuclear devastation; in *Babylone*, residents must acquire approval from L'Institut d'Eugénisme before having children, in order to ensure that their DNA is untouched by nuclear fallout's corruption.

The texts demonstrate an acute awareness of the precariousness of not just human life and culture under threat from military might, but of the vulnerability of the natural world to human activity and the paradoxical dependence of humanity on that very vulnerable environment.

Early in my research, I decided on a definition of terms that would aid me in focusing in on the specific texts useful to my research, separating them from the larger amount of general SF during that period: "post-apocalyptic" (or "post-apocalypse") being the first. In describing something as post-apocalyptic, I found very quickly that I was stepping into a minefield of hazy notions: what is the difference between apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic? If an environment is dystopic, such as the relentlessly urban and corporate-dominated Sprawl of Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), does that mean that an apocalypse must have preceded it? I have a very specific definition of the post-apocalypse that I use throughout this dissertation to describe and define my texts; it is not post-catastrophe, nor is it dystopian, nor is it merely apocalyptic, though the genre includes many features of each. For the purposes of clarity, here follow my definitions, which have provided me with grounds for texts' inclusion in (and exclusion from) my study:

- post-catastrophe: the narrative is set after a catastrophe, usually localized, but the structure of society is unchanged; society quickly recovers/adapts and continues the way it had pre-catastrophe. Example: Marian Engel's "Sophie, 1990" (1985).
- dystopian: the structure of society has changed, but in general, due to non-worldwide incidents that caused society to reorganize "organically" from within; often the society is harsh and totalitarian and justifies its methods by the fear of causing a large (or series of small) catastrophic event(s). Example: *The Wabeno Feast* by Wayland Drew (1973).

- apocalyptic: temporally, the narrative is set in medias res or in the immediate aftermath of the apocalypse; the plot revolves mainly around the protagonist's immediate coping strategies, with no gesture towards how things will evolve from that point onwards. Example: "After the Sirens" by Hugh Hood (1960).
- post-apocalyptic: there was a world-wide, totalizing catastrophe; generally, society takes a while to recover and is fundamentally altered (most often negatively) – the resulting society can be dystopic, but not always. Example: *Les tours de Babylone* by Gagnon (1972)

The texts which fall into the last category are the ones which comprise my study.

A note on the word "apocalypse": this project works from the premise that whereas the religious Apocalypse is a totalizing and final event, the secular apocalypse as it is represented by SF texts—both Canadian and international—is survivable, though at great cost to both humanity and the earth. Further, the secular apocalyptic event of Canadian SF is not a mythological metaphor implying salvific significance for those involved; protagonists' survival of this very literal event does not prove their disenfranchisement and barring from paradise (the premise of literary apocalyptic studies such as Goldman 2005). The landscape of post-apocalyptic SF does not "[provide] evidence of a higher order" in the same way that the literal landscape of Canada was interpreted by settlers (Lecker 21), and so is not textually imbued with Apocalyptic significance. That is not to say that the landscape is not represented as still threatening, as argued by thematic critics such as Frye and Atwood, but that the wilderness is not characterized as a danger to SF characters' spiritual state in a religious, soteriological sense.

It is within SF that the idea of "apocalypse" finds its secular crystallization and transition to contemporary usage to describe a world-altering catastrophe: during the twentieth century,

Apocalypse lost its status as a religious noun and became a secular adjective (Kreuziger 1). The apocalyptic event, though often figured as nuclear during the Golden Age of SF and afterwards, is not anthropocentric in the majority of the texts in this study: its advent irrevocably changes not only characters' lives, but also the very landscape of the narrative itself. The settings represented within these texts are very clearly the products of ecological catastrophe: many of them blur the boundary between characters and their environments, emphasizing a symbiotic relationship between humanity and ecology.

The texts range in publication date from 1948 until 1989, a period of intense social change and significant apocalyptic anxiety, mainly articulated in response to the US-Soviet Cold War-era arms race and so-called star wars. However, I argue that the role played by the upheaval of global and domestic postcolonial movements, the work of feminist and civil rights activists in North America, and an urgent environmental awareness occasioned especially by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) in causing a new, secular apocalyptic paranoia to arise cannot be overlooked. Significantly, these decades also marked the rise of settler-Canadian literary nationalism as a cultural mandate, as well as that of Québec nationalism (and the *Révolution Tranquille*); settler-Canadian SF authors' versions of the future are influenced by their values in relation to these concerns. Writers of SF in the eighties deliberately created the cyberpunk subgenre as a fiercely postmodern, conscious backlash against the older tropes of SF writing, with Canadian William Gibson leading the charge; cyberpunk was a movement that was both radical and regressive, as explored in my fourth chapter. My dissertation explores how settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF responded to and articulated a radical break from fears of the apocalypse as a modern phenomenon in the latter half of the twentieth century in North America.

A new iteration of end-times anxiety (still rooted firmly in Judaeo-Christian tropes and imagery) became apparent in cultural texts during the twentieth century, settling into the niche of pulp SF and eschatological religious language, as the old order seemed to pass away, along with the pre-modernist faith in the myth of progress. The Canadian post-apocalypse of SF refuses to see meaning in meaninglessness, however: the fragmentation, lack of controlling myths, and questioning of narrative truth of postmodern literature does not constitute an environment to be merely survived, but is the backdrop of narrative action.

All of these factors influenced the societal milieu in which settler-Canadian authors wrote and to which they responded. Leslie A. Croutch's 1948 "Eemanu Grows Up" marks the earliest instance I have found of Canadian-authored post-apocalyptic SF appearing after the Second World War, and 1989—the end date of my focus—corresponds with the fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War. Thus, the historical context for this project, in addition to attention to a growing environmental consciousness in North America, includes the development of a national literature in Canada and Québec, as well as that of postcolonial and feminist critical frameworks that will play a role in my reading of these texts.

This body of texts is united by a shared concern for the environment of the lands called Canada at the time. I use the term "environment" here to refer to the literal environment—both as wild landscape (i.e., northern Ontario in Laurence's "A Queen in Thebes" 1964) or urban cityscape (i.e., the Sprawl in Gibson's *Neuromancer*, 1984)—and to the literary environments of Canada and Québec, as well as to the social environment of the nation. All three of these were perceived to be under significant threat: rising concerns about environmental pollution in North America were coupled with a nascent awareness of the negative effects of fallout from post-war nuclear testing; a growing conviction, stemming from a deep cultural anxiety, that Canada was

not competitive as a nation with the US, Britain, and France; and increasing worries about the overturn of dominant white male hegemony, in response to the efforts of second-wave feminist reform and global anti-colonial movements. These fears of the destruction (or abortion) of an ideal status quo played out against the larger backdrop of terror of nuclear annihilation due to the heightening Cold War: apocalypse seemed imminent and unavoidable.

V From Environmentalism to Apocalypse

Ecocriticism as a movement has its roots in British Romanticism (informing North American settler worldviews) and American nature writing (Soper and Bradley xx; Buell 2), and as a theoretical approach seeks to "make the study of literature […] relevant to the innumerable environmental crises, local and global, that characterized the end of the twentieth century and that threaten to define the twenty-first" (Soper and Bradley xiii). In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell notes that while the ecocritical turn in theory came about in the 1990s, the term "ecocriticism" was coined in the 1970s (13), alongside the inception of modern environmentalist thinking in the 1960s and 1970s (Heise 8). At this time, environmental thought reflected a growing awareness of the threat posed by pollution and environmental degradation to the beauty and power of nature so valorized by the Romantics. Calls for preservation from US bodies such as the Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, and Audubon Society were joined and critiqued by more radical movements such as those of deep ecologists, whose anti-anthropocentric philosophy demanding recognition of the intrinsic value of nature has inspired activist movements such as GreenPeace, Earth First! and Sea Shepherd, to name a few (Garrard 19-20). Similarly, ecofeminism, whose "inquiry starts from the premise of a correlation between the history of institutionalized patriarchy and human domination of the non-human" (Buell 19) also interrogates the anthropocentric/androcentric and calls for the dismantling of current

patriarchal systems of domination in order for environmental (and gendered) justice to be realized.[24]

In Canada, theories of ecocriticsm came on the scene in the 1990s, at least in English, as an outgrowth of Canadian literature's often obsessive focus on the environment. Laurie Ricou, then-editor of *Canadian Literature*, ruminated in a 1991 article "So Big about Green" that though Canadian writing seems obsessed with the landscape, perhaps the tradition of "writing the land as adversary inhibits ecocriticism" (110). In a 1996 follow-up article "So Unwise About Green," Ricou lauds the publication of Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader* as "a great stimulus to students of Canadian literature, whose project […] has so often featured land, landscape, climate, wilderness, animals, and region" (118). As Soper and Bradley note, "contemporary ecocritical approaches to Canadian literature and culture are not wholly separate from earlier critical and cultural fascinations with nature" (xvi). Likewise, Stephanie Posthumus and Elise Salaün assert that Québec literature has been imbued with an attention to the land throughout the twentieth century, with a specific urban focus from the 1940s onward (299) – and that an ecocritical tradition in Québec is "alive and well […] but it simply does not line up easily with an Anglophone ecocriticism" (310). Posthumus and Salaün elaborate that Québec *écocritique* does not exist as a literal "translation" of Anglo North-American ecocritical theories; unbound by local or provincial interest, it realizes a more global environmental imagination, drawing from French (more broadly, European) environmentalist thought (311). Ecocriticism as a term has itself become a subject of scrutiny, due to its resting on assumptions of what is signified by its focus on concepts such as "the natural" and "wilderness." William

[24] For further reading on ecofeminism, see the feminist ecotheology of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether; as well as the environmental philosophy of Plumwood, Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, Astrida Neimanis, Sherilyn MacGregor, Richard Grusin, etc. For a thorough discussion of the theory of ecocriticism's rise from and involvement with North American sociopolitical movements, see Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2004).

Cronon's 1995 article "The Trouble with Wilderness" called for a rethinking of wilderness as an ideological construct, discussing its trajectory in American literature from its roots in old-world pastoral and romantic tropes to its modern-day construction in opposition to civilization. Likewise, in the past few decades, ecocritics such as Timothy Morton, Timothy Clark, and Stacy Alaimo have engaged with and successfully troubled concepts of "nature" and "the natural" (as binary opposites of "civilization" or "constructed") that underlie the approaches of early ecocritical theories. Buell prefers the term "environmental criticism" to "ecocriticism," as it "approximates better than 'eco' the hybridity of the subject at issue," acknowledging that all environments are a mix of built (or constructed) and natural, and reflecting the environmental movement's increasing focus on landscapes that are urban, or degraded/toxified due to human activity (viii). Soper and Bradley note that an understanding that all texts have an environmental dimension, and not just those which focus specifically on nature, has become a widely accepted view (xv); environmental criticism also reflects the changing attitudes in literary criticism towards what "counts" as natural space and place in literature. The postapocalyptic SF under study often expresses the scale and scope of ruin and achieves the effect of cognitive estrangement through focus on the destruction of the urban and transformation of familiar structures into ruins, even if the bulk of the narrative is not explicitly set in a built environment.

Cognitive estrangement was theorized by SF scholar and literary critic Darko Suvin in 1979, arguing for an understanding of SF as such because of its "effect of … confronting a set normative system … with a point of view or look implying a new set of norms" (4-6), which he attributes as a hallmark of "aesthetically significant" SF. For example, the representation of New York City in Robinson's *Telempath* is both familiar and unfamiliar in its post-apocalyptic incarnation as a place that, while still literally given shape by human architecture and

reminiscent of human thriving, is in the novel completely hostile to any human presence—this is the new norm. In the same manner, Toronto in Jiles' *The Late Great Human Roadshow* is in the process of turning from the normative understanding of a city as a welcoming place of human presence and opportunity to the city as an inhospitable site of non-human indifference and danger for the few humans left post-catastrophe (though, as I shall demonstrate, this interpretation is dependent on which character is describing their surroundings). Suvin argues that, though SF is comprised of about 90-95 percent "strictly perishable stuff" that is not aesthetically significant, all SF is still "highly significant from the sociological point of view, since it is read by the young generation, the university graduates, and other key strata of contemporary society" (vii). The study of SF—especially SF as it is reflected and reflects our contemporary environments and culture—is crucial to the study of how humans interact with and imagine their being within the world.

In its consciousness of the environment, Canadian SF finds affinity with an environmentalist narrative tradition, though nature writing is similarly an American-dominated literature, and ecocritical studies of SF very often adhere to a US-centric paradigm. Though it has "internationalized" since the 1990s to take a more global approach, ecocritical methods—both generally and when applied to SF—are still very rooted in an American settler-colonial approach to the "wilderness" as a sacred, untouched space for exploration and individual self-actualization;[25] Cronon refers to the concept of wilderness in America as "the grandchild of romanticism and post-frontier ideology" (72). This valorization, mobilized by groups such as the American Environmentalist Movement, has come under considerable criticism for erasure of Indigenous presence (Heise 30), and Canadians are similarly guilty of buy-in to a *terra nullius*

[25] See: Heise 30; Clark 79; White 172.

myth. The terror and fear of the environment represented in literature draws on an assumption of a nature that is both literally and metaphorically inhuman (Frye, "Uncollected" 22). Instead of the American frontier idealism of the wilderness/unknown as something to conquer or domesticate, therefore, "the Canadian attitude seems to be that nature is simply too vast, too threatening, too powerful; man is nature's victim rather than the reverse. Survival, not conquest, is the issue. The best that can be hoped for is some kind of accommodation" (Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 3).

Environmental criticism and apocalyptic discourse have historically gone hand-in-hand, as a main function of both is response to threat, and as a warning or jeremiad to readers of impending doom (linking it to readers' actions/inactions when it comes to morality or environmental awareness). Ursula Heise notes that the formation of the environmentalist movement in the 1960s was informed by "the dual threat of nuclear annihilation and environmental disaster" (20). Garrard asserts that the modern environmentalist movement was begun with the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 (1), which opened with a short speculative scenario in which all wildlife has disappeared from a town due to the effects of pesticides. This "Fable for Tomorrow" is the first instance of an environmentalist's use of SF rhetoric of estrangement in literature. As Eric C. Otto would note in 2012, "extrapolation is one of environmentalism's favored critical strategies. Connecting the present *now* to a possible *then*" (11). The trend of using SF terms to illustrate environmental issues continued in environmentalist discourse, from the cooption of Cold War terminology (e.g. the "population bomb" predicted by Paul Ehrlich in 1968) to the citation of SF stories to contextualize chapter arguments in ecocritical texts (e.g. Heise's 2008 introduction excerpts Douglas Adams, and her first chapter begins with a discussion of Ursula K. Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires, and More Slow"), to the

study of cli-fi (climate fiction) and its effects on popular perceptions of climate change and environmental injustice.[26]

The early environmentalist movement called attention to destructive actions derived from anthropocentric thinking, from domestic pesticide use and pollution to the toxic effects of nuclear testing. Critics have noted that, since the end of the Cold War, the prospect of apocalypse by accidental environmental catastrophe has come to seem more imminent than that of deliberate nuclear warfare (Buell 4) and that climate change has become the "new normal" (Žižek 328), the ever-present threat under which we live, instead of nuclear destruction. Studies have appeared over the past few decades specifically exploring the environmental imagination in SF, including Rabkin et. al. 1983, Jameson 2007, Baratta 2012, Hambrick 2012, Otto 2013, Bernardo 2014, and Canavan and Robinson in 2014. An ecocritical approach to SF reveals the ability of SF to reflect on the ideological structures of society and speculate on possible futures, and the ways in which it can be and has been mobilized to speculate on a nonanthropocentric way of being that reminds readers of nonhuman nature (Otto 18). However, both the genre of SF and the ecocritical approach taken by most studies adheres to a (fairly contemporary) American paradigm, as the critical traditions of both SF and ecocritical approaches are rooted in US academic theory. This dissertation seeks to answer the question of what happens when the environmental critical approach to SF is married to the environmental concerns of Canadian literature during the particular historical period of 1948-1989.

VI Dissertation approach and summary

This project attends to both the concerns of the stories themselves and the larger conversations around twentieth-century SF, the post-apocalypse, and the theories of ecocriticism

[26] See: Otto 18; R. Nixon 3; Lidström et. al. 28.

to which they contribute. I have read the texts that make up my primary archive with attention to textual elements such as characters' identities, their actions, their relationships with each other, the environment, and the terms authors use to describe these elements. My study explores the ways in which some of these texts can be seen to be in dialogue with others, in service of an analysis of shared authorial concerns and attitudes towards the historical context and culture of settler-Canada and/or Québec at the time of writing and, most importantly, their visions of the future. Each chapter leads up to one or more "case studies" of representative texts, while speaking broadly about other, similarly oriented narratives. Attention to the surface-level features of each text enables me to perform a close analysis of their shared structural elements.

Mine is a research project oriented towards the recovery of a body of texts overlooked by mainstream literary criticism, in the vein of ecocritical recovery work. My study of settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF 1948-1989 serves to argue how, far from lying dormant in the shadow of, or merely supporting, the American SF trend of post-apocalyptic fiction, settler-Canadian writers articulate their own unique visions of a world that had been irrevocably altered as a result of current political and social issues and events that, while global in nature, were treated in sense specific to Canada and thematic Canadian literary criticism's preoccupation with the physical environment in texts. My research is organized around four critical nodes that form the basis of my dissertation's chapters: environmental criticism in the first chapter; feminist and queer critique in my second; postcolonial and decolonial critique in my third chapter; and the fourth chapter focuses on the affective valences of the idea of the post-apocalypse, its promise and falsity.

More specifically, my first chapter concentrates on an evaluation of how apocalyptic ruin is expressed in ecological terms and pays attention to the enmeshment of characters with their

environments and their embodiment of generic tropes in the books under study, with a main focus on Kilian's 1983 thriller *Tsunami*, the sequel to his 1979 *Icequake*. Though coming decades before the advent of the genre of climate fiction, I read *Tsunami* as both an embodiment and critique of the environmental jeremiad wrapped up in the language of spectacle—probably the most (in)famous example of this genre in popular culture is the film *Day After Tomorrow* (2004), but earlier cli-fi novels such as J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) had begun to impinge on the SF imagination already in the 1960s. I begin the chapter with a historical overview of both the development of ecocritical theories and Canadian literary criticism, with a focus on how settler-Canadian SF has been analyzed as different in character and theme from the more dominant American tropes of SF, especially regarding what constitutes a hero and heroic action in a crisis. I suggest that the garrison mentality of Frye and Atwood's mid-century Canadian thematic criticism can be found in post-apocalyptic SF as a facet of the neoliberal American drive to self-reliance and power over others in order to control a crisis situation, as demonstrated by the characters in *Tsunami*. This chapter offers an alternative way of being in the post-apocalypse that departs from the toxically masculine impulse towards violence and domination and focuses more on community, compromise, and a recognition of enmeshment with environment that is more useful.

Chapter two analyzes the way that gender and gender relations are represented in settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF 1948-1989, and I focus my analysis through Vonarburg's 1981 *Le silence de la cité*, using the 1988 *The Silent City*, translated by Jane Brierly. I begin with a brief historical discussion of ecofeminism and feminist critique of the scientific enterprise as it arose during the Enlightenment as a misogynist, racist, anthropocentric lens through which to study the natural world and the beings in it. The concerns of ecofeminism were present in many female SF

writers' work, but came to the forefront during the intervention of explicitly feminist SF in the 1960s and '70s. Vonarburg both invokes and critiques the seemingly feminist impulse towards matriarchal utopia in SF in *City*, as she invokes and critiques the western scientific enterprise, depicting main character Elisa's grappling with its legacy in a post-apocalyptic world. Chapter two brings up the way in which SF, though a form possessed of a "reputation for, and indeed [...] aspirations towards, being 'out of this world'" (Lefanu 3), often uses the subgenre of the post-apocalyptic as a way to seemingly destroy society, but in actuality is a vehicle for the continuation and reification of pre-apocalyptic regressive worldview, most clearly shown in Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone* (1972), but also hauntingly present in *City*.

Chapter three enacts a post-colonial and decolonial critique of the way that settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF is unable to let go of the ideology of white supremacy and settler colonialism. I bookend the chapter with a reading of Thériault's short story "Akua Nuten: le vent du sud" (1962) and analyze it in light of Thériault's complicated identity as a Québec writer of Montaignais ancestry, writing a story about and from the perspective of a Montagnais man. In light of this, I discuss the way that Québec struggled for cultural sovereignty historically during the post-WW2 time period at the same time as it has refused to recognize the sovereignty of the Indigenous inhabitants of Turtle Island. I follow Langer's argument that Canada is both colonial and postcolonial, and I discuss how settler-Canadian identity (including that of Québec) is simultaneously constructed in opposition to colonialism at the same time as continuing the exploitation of Indigenous land and the oppression of its inhabitants (40), nuanced by consideration of Ransom's study of SF from Québec which situates Québec in a specific category unique to itself without aligning it with the Anglo-settler state or equating its history of oppression to that of Indigenous peoples. The Canadian state likes to think of itself as

multicultural with a tradition of welcoming the Other, and I read Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean* (1972) as a lampooning of that trope in microcosm. I also in this chapter read Robinson's *Telempath* (1976) as an earnest but very telling representation of the white settler-Canadian's desire for a post-racial, post-anthropocentric society that ends up reifying and reiterating pre-apocalyptic misogynist, racist, and anthropocentric tendencies. This chapter builds on the argument of my second chapter that the post-apocalyptic SF narrative needs to consciously acknowledge and reject the oppressive structures and ideologies of pre-apocalyptic society in order to move forward.

Chapter four focuses on the affect of the post-apocalypse as key to the way that the genre is received, in its paradoxical nature as a tale of devastation and ruin at the same time as it operates as an engine of hope and optimism for many readers. The anticipation of a post-apocalyptic future is predicated on a perception of the present as so oppressive that only an apocalyptic-scale catastrophe could dismantle its terrible structures and allow survivors to truly live. Throughout this dissertation I trace this narrative from its source in Golden Age tropes and its solidification in the 50s and 60s especially, and in this chapter I analyze Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) as the apotheosis of the desire for the future-past in its genesis of cyberpunk tropes. I discuss the genre of cyberpunk specifically as a continuation of the present-day world of the 80s, but past an apocalypse that facilitated the dissemination of military, cutting-edge technology, the weakening of national borders, and the sovereignty of the (white, cis, settler, male) self. The protagonists in *Neuromancer*, as I discuss, are not actually invested in this future, but the trappings of their world were so popular as to birth a subgenre. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of Jiles' 1986 novel *The Late Great Human Roadshow*, which demonstrates in its many characters the different types of what I term apocalyptic affects that

drive their action. The ones that are either unaware of or consciously reject the dominant Hollywoodized narrative of what the post-apocalyptic environment should be like (ruined, full of hostile beings) and how they should act (violent, cagey), are the ones who are able to make and maintain true connections and make the most of their post-apocalyptic lives.

In this dissertation I argue that the imaginary of the post-apocalypse necessarily must incorporate community, connection, and post-anthropocentrism as key facets in order to truly move beyond the fear-driven regressive, exclusionary, and violent impulses of survival. What is the *longue durée* of coronavirus if not an apocalypse, and the impending and present climate catastrophe is as well, though as Rob Nixon argues, we have been conditioned not to see them as such. If the imagination of how to live through a crisis and its aftermath is dictated by impulses to batten down the hatches and damn the torpedoes, Canadians (and SF readers from around the globe) will almost certainly be trapped by the ideology of survival without being able to ever emerge into a truly new way of life. Unsubscribing from the single version of the apocalyptic narrative that anticipates the garrison mentality as a necessary corollary of worldwide devastation can allow for a critical appraisal of the present in order to consciously move beyond survival and into the future.

Chapter 1

> A posthuman ethics for a non-unitary subject proposes an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism.
> -Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 49-50

I Introduction

California, near the end of the twentieth century. Anomalous solar activity has caused unusually large and frequent solar flares to ravage the earth, resulting in continent-wide blackouts, the death of trees and other vegetation, snow-blindness in those who do not take care to wear sunglasses at all times, and severe burns on uncovered white skin. Adding to this already-apocalyptic milieu, a major earthquake destroys the Antarctic continent, dumping billions of tons of ice at once into the ocean, sending tsunamis speeding towards the west coast of North America. After they hit, the damage to cities, coastlines, nuclear plants, oil refineries, and human societal structures is catastrophic and keeps mounting in the chaos. Film director Robert Anthony Allison, one of a handful of protagonists in the post-apocalyptic setting of *Tsunami,* gathers together a cadre of close friends and coworkers, and together they retreat to his compound inland, hoping to wait out the chaos. But when violence begins to break out amongst their neighbours, Allison takes action, forging an alliance with the local militia to contain and control the surrounding chaos, keeping the peace for the benefit of all.

Allison's is a familiar narrative arc, one which readers expect to play out in the genre of disaster-thriller, and his response to catastrophe reads as logical and expected. By the end of Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* (1983), however, Allison is dead, having neglected his wife and daughter and alienated his most loyal friend in his quest for military control. Instead, Don and Kirstie Kennard, a husband-wife team of scientist-academics, are left standing at the end of the

book, having successfully located and begun to recuperate fuel from a sunken oil tanker to provide for the thousands of San Franciscans who are without power in the wake of the tsunamis. Kilian's novel provides a template for an alternative method of response to crisis, one that stresses connection to, cooperation with, and trust in others (human and non-) as opposed to an attitude of withdrawal and suspicion.

Despite evidence of a strong Canadian tradition of imaginative literature (Colombo "Introduction" 1), a "dominant" (American) understanding of what constitutes science fiction (SF) often dictates readers' expectations of the future and our ideas of what must be done in order to survive beyond apocalypse. Dominant tropes include emphasis on individualist hyper-masculinity,[27] and the belief that anthropocentric will can conquer the post-apocalyptic landscape, flowing from historical sociocultural attitudes towards human and non-human nature codified during a so-called "Golden Age" of science fiction, which many source to the 1930s-50s (Clute et al.). However, mid-twentieth-century Canadian post-apocalyptic SF narratives also lend themselves to a reading that directly challenges the typical SF crisis narrative, showing it to be self-damning. In contrast, many of these texts hold up the benefits of a posture of respect for, as well as outreach to and collaboration with, the living beings that make up the surrounding environment.

In this first chapter, I begin with a literary-historical overview of the way that tropes of the post-apocalypse and survival are rooted in divergent settler-colonial orientations to Europeans' experience of Turtle Island. I clarify my use of the terminology of survival in the context of genre fiction and of Canadian Literature and the way that my project both takes up and interrogates the use of the concepts of survival (as laid out by Margaret Atwood), the

[27] Evans 556; Broderick 362.

garrison mentality (as described by Northrop Frye), and thematic criticism of Canadian literature in general. I also explain my use of the terms "nature," "environment," and "wilderness" here, with examples from the texts under study, as they are important to the lens of environmental criticism found in this chapter. The next section provides a brief overview of the way that the development of Canadian literary nationalism organized by thematic criticism and its backlash affected the development of ecocritical theory in Canada. I discuss the way that Canadian SF is often characterized by genre theorists as more socially minded, averse to violence, and conscious of the environment than American SF, and give examples from several texts of the way that nuclear destruction is not celebrated but simply taken as an unavoidable reality in these narratives. The rest of this chapter is devoted to a reading of *Tsunami* as an example of an alternative narrative emphasizing the necessity of leaving behind the impulse to control and dominate out of a fear of the other. I discuss the text as a jeremiad following the tradition of cli-fi (climate fiction), as well as a uniquely Canadian take on the post-apocalyptic scenario, complete with a Canadian SF orientation to character, action, violence, natural environment, and relations. I argue that Kilian's narrative demonstrates that forging connections and embarking on mutual collaborations for the common good is what ultimately enables characters' survival in the post-apocalypse.

II Canadian survival strategies: from settler-colonial ideology to SF trope

Apocalyptic literature in North America can be traced back to its roots in a Christian mythology that developed very differently in Canada than in America. Theorists have noted that the land that was to eventually become the United States was viewed by European settlers as a fulfilment of the book of Revelation's apocalyptic promise of a new world (Goldman 6), as well as the political promise of freedom from tyrannical rule (O'Brien 179). Literary scholar Marlene

Goldman notes, however, that European accounts of exploration in the land eventually known as Canada "more often invoked apocalyptic visions of hell than of paradise" (3). Not only did the Canadian environment frequently not fulfill the apocalyptic promise of a remade, Edenic world, but scholars such as Frye observed that the Canadian landscape seemed to very often embody the direct opposite of a heavenly place: the domain of nature, with its "apparently meaningless power to waste and destroy on a superhuman scale […] suggest[ed]an equally ruthless and subconscious God, or else no God" ("Selections" 3). Multiple literary critics have noted that settlement of Canada was experienced as an apocalypse by European migrants in two main ways: first, ideologically, in that the land was neither a welcoming paradise nor a place of political freedom, but rather the product of / associated with colonial dictates and violent conflicts (O'Brien 180-81); second, physically, in that the natural environment seemed actively hostile rather than challenging but possible to subjugate.[28]

The formation of Canada as a nation-state was part of an apocalyptic-scale catastrophe in the sense that the known world was fundamentally changed by the violence of colonialism, the destructive aftermath of which goes on in Canada to this day.[29] Dakota scholar Kim TallBear points out that settlement was a devastating catastrophe for North American Indigenous groups, stating that since the 1862 Dakota war her people have lived in a post-apocalyptic nightmare world. The Dakota people suffered about 90% mortality rates, exile from their traditional homeland, were barred from hunting and were not given their promised treaty remuneration; many of them starved to death (LaBare and TallBear 0:10:18-0:11:22). TallBear's words can be

[28] McGregor 6-8; Goldman 3-4.

[29] Lewis and Maslin note that "the arrival of Europeans in the Americas also led to a large decline in human numbers. Regional population estimates sum to a total of 54 million people in the Americas in 1492, with recent population modelling estimates of 61 million people. Numbers rapidly declined to a minimum of about 6 million people by 1650 via exposure to diseases carried by Europeans, plus war, enslavement and famine" causing a measurable dip in atmospheric CO2 (175). See also Davis and Todd, as well as Krakoff ("American Indians" and "Radical Adaptation").

applied to Indigenous groups across North America; in Canada especially, the ongoing trauma of residential schools (the last federally operated school closed only in 1996), of extreme poverty, lack of clean water on some reserves, the '60s Scoop, and the separation of families by settler foster care services across the nation perpetuate this violence to this day.[30]

Human survival (of catastrophe, of annihilation, of hyperbolic destruction) is the *raison d'être* of post-apocalyptic fiction; without it, the genre would not exist. However, while English-language Canadian thematic literary criticism arose during the 1960s, '70s, and '80s organized itself around the symbol of survival of harsh environments in Canadian literature, it wholly ignored SF's use of the same to set the scene for speculative adventures. By infamously claiming that survival is the central preoccupation of Canadian literature in the short, non-academic volume *Survival*, Atwood built upon the earlier work of Frye that identified a "garrison mentality" in the Anglo-Canadian psyche that viewed its physical surroundings as hostile, and an orientation towards the environment of suspicion and outright fear. French-Canadian literature similarly has a tradition of representing wilderness as an unknown and hostile space, as the direct obstacle to the provincial interests of "agricultural colonization" until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s in Quebec.[31] "[T]he unmistakable emphasis on wilderness in Canadian iconography" from its beginnings (Soper and Bradley xxii) in texts authored in both official languages greatly informed critics', readers' and, importantly, authors' understandings of Canadian literature as explicitly environmental in theme. Atwood's theories of "Canadian survival" and victim

[30] In recent years, Indigenous authors have published post-apocalyptic novels taking up this history as well as its continuation in the present, such as *The Marrow Thieves* (2017) by Cherie Dimaline, *Back of the Turtle* (2014) by Thomas King, and "Wheetago War" (2015) and related stories by Richard Van Camp. Unfortunately, these texts fall outside of the scope of this thesis, but I strongly recommend checking out the "Imagining Indigenous Futurisms" Facebook group for an ever-growing list of future-oriented Indigenous SF narratives across a variety of media (from Turtle Island as well as Australia and New Zealand).

[31] Posthumus and Salaün 299; Cook 37.

positions, though justifiably critiqued in the decades since *Survival*'s publication,[32] still work to inform the past fifty years of literary criticism in Canada.[33] Literary critics are required to raise "the survival theme" in order to refute it, and so its legacy continues, if as a photo-negative.

The "frontier" of wilderness, so full of promise to American settlers, was perceived by European colonizers of what would become Canada as a threatening encroachment on civilization, and this reactionary attitude to the natural world informed many early works of Canadian fiction.[34] Frye's garrison mentality refers specifically to a "closely knit and beleaguered society" where, due to that society's nature as "a perilous enterprise," its moral and social values are unquestioned and not up for discussion in order to present a unified front to the dangers outside of it ("Selections" 11). Individualism is suspect, read as either a desire to fight against the group or abandon it completely (Frye "Selections" 11), a familiar scenario to consumers of contemporary post-apocalyptic narratives (including zombie and other horror media) where a character's departure or separation from the band of protagonists leads very often to their gruesome death or return in league with the enemy. The only hope for survival, in the historical Canadian settler experience and North American post-apocalyptic SF scenarios alike, seems to be to band together and make the best of it.

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[32] See Davey and Stuewe.

[33] See Söderlind on marginality (1991), Coleman on masculinities (1998), and Sugars and Turcotte on the postcolonial gothic (2009).

[34] Many, but not all. Atwood and Frye draw their conclusions from Canadian poetry and prose that were being taught and generally acknowledged as canonical at the time of writing, and as such were not representative of more minority viewpoints. As the later backlash to thematic criticism clearly demonstrates, concepts of wilderness, nature, and survival did (and do) not mean the same thing to every writer in Canada, but rather I am using these arguments as examples of the prevailing attitudes in the Canadian imagination at the time. It is handy to attempt to use single novels as exemplary of a certain "Canadian" orientation to wilderness in order to have a solid case to contrast against a single American novel (as Gaile McGregor does to great effect in *The Wacousta Syndrome*); it makes for a nice, neat argument. A single attitude is not and will never be the case when it comes to Canadian and American literatures, but rather I critique and interrogate in this thesis what are acknowledged by theorists as dominant narrative orientations towards such concepts as survival in each separate literary tradition. A recent example of a more comprehensive and accurate study of early Canadian literature can be found in Sarah Wylie Krotz's *Mapping with Words: Anglo-Canadian Literary Cartographies, 1789-1916*.

I would like to pause here a moment to think about what survival signifies in Atwood's *Survival*: what, according to this paradigm, is the thing that survives? And is it worth saving? Atwood, in 1972, was appraising works authored by white Canadians, who were mostly heterosexual men, over the last century; the values of the protagonists were values derivative of the dominant settler narrative bound up in a "Canadian identity," their attitudes inherently patriarchal, colonial, and imperial. Atwood, though imploring readers not to take her over-simplications as articles of dogma, writes that the central symbol of Canadian literature is "undoubtedly Survival, la survivance" an adaptable and multifaced idea that began as the bare survival of European explorers and settlers "in the face of 'hostile' elements and/or natives: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive. But the word can also suggest survival of a crisis or disaster … what you might call 'grim' survival" (Atwood, "Selections" 16). I argue that the Canadian mode of survival is not surviving to then go on to other things, but survival to rebuild the old—not survival as adaptation but as a "grim" carrying on through catastrophe, and obsessive hoarding or picking up of the pieces afterwards. Atwood also nuances the idea of survival as the continued existence of a "vestige of a vanished order which has managed to persist after its time is past" ("Selections" 16). The survival taken up by Atwoodian thematic criticism is less a survival of the specific Canadian person as a living and breathing human being, but of a broader settler-colonial ideology; one that refuses to let go of a world structured into oppositional binaries like that of hostile wilderness and beleaguered society, the violent other versus the victimized self.[35] Moreover, Cynthia Sugars and Laura Moss note that the thematic approach holds a significant place in Canadian literary history in its integral connection to

[35] Moss and Sugars note that Davey's criticism of the thematic approach was that it is "more social commentary than literary analysis" (233); I would argue that good social commentary on the sort of society (good or bad!) imagined by Canadian authors and their reading public is of utmost importance, especially in the contemporary political climate.

nationalism in the 1960s and 70s: "Canadian literature was taken as evidence of Canada's cultural identity and maturity" (233). The project of mid-century literary nationalism was thus bound up in the specific survival and perpetuation of the settler-colonial subject, the patriarchal imperialist social order, and ultimately of the oppressive ideology of old-world European society.

The values of the dominant European colonial ideology were the values of Enlightenment Europe, a system stressing the sovereignty of the (white, cismale, hetero, human) self over all (brown, female, queer, more-than-human) others, viewed not as subjects in their own right but as objects for scientific study and classification. This binary method of thinking invested itself in a hierarchy of opposites, i.e.: subject/object, self/other, man/woman, mind/body, British/Irish, upper class/lower class, civilization or culture/nature, white European/Indigenous or person of colour, human/animal etc.[36] The mid-late twentieth-century orientation of Canadian literary criticism to the wilderness interpreted humans as agents of encroachment into "the frightening loneliness of a huge and thinly settled country" (Frye, "Preface" 3), a wilderness containing animals and plants that are mere objects for consumption and use by humans. The Cartesian dualism of subject/object was mapped on to the human/nature binary, trapping Canadian literary critics into what Rosemary Sullivan calls the "terrible cul-de-sac" of putting nature and culture in opposition to one other (32). The "garrison mentality" fits neatly into the division of human society and wild nature into opposite camps: prompted by the position of the frontier of wilderness on all sides, barred from retreating to a "civilized" environment (Frye, "Selections" 8), the society struggles to maintain itself. Failure to conform is a death sentence, and the dictates of such a culture are beyond reproach, "its moral and social values are unquestionable […] one does not discuss causes or motives; one is either a fighter or a deserter" (Frye, "Selections" 11).

[36] Donna Haraway would later name these "informatics of domination" in her 1985 "Manifesto for Cyborgs."

The paradigm of the garrison mentality draws a clear line between what is human and what is other; the other is rejected in order to preserve the self from perishing in the face of an overwhelming and poorly understood environment.

It is in the context of this mobilization of survival as an excuse for enforcing structures of hierarchy and oppression within the rigid parameters of the Canadian canon, that I bring to light the overlooked and understudied corpus of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF published between 1948 and 1989. It is important to focus on these texts, as their study contributes to a reconsideration of some of the cultural tropes dominating literary criticism at the time, not least that SF is not considered worthy of study in the same way that that realist novels have been for the past century (Ghosh), a bias that was held firmly by scholars at mid-century and still lingers today. Canadian SF (as well as fantasy, horror, and all other genres) has historically been excluded from a canonical listing of Canadian texts. There have been numerous studies made of mid-century American SF, contributing to and confirming as a reality the dominant assumptions of the genre: male-dominated, imperial, white, technophilic, socially conservative.[37] It is true that it was and remains still very easy for SF texts to cleave to a sinister and reductive narrative of survival, in the Atwoodian sense; the dominant narrative of the post-apocalypse in SF novels and movies is often a reification of existing hierarchies of race, gender, and ability for the sake of bodily survival, echoing the white settler-colonial worldview.[38] Yet no similar research has been conducted concerning Canadian mid-century SF, nor of its post-apocalyptic subgenre, texts which, as I will show, have the potential to make significant interventions into post-apocalyptic SF ideology in general as well as that of the Canadian canon identified in the tradition of

[37] See works by Bellamy; Seed; Broderick; Curtis.
[38] E.g. "A Boy and His Dog" by Robert A. Heinlein, and the first three *Mad Max* films (which, though Australian, enjoy a wide cult following in North America). Please see Broderick, "Surviving Armageddon: Beyond the Imagination of Disaster" for a thorough list of works and critical analysis.

Survival, given that both could be described as a collection of novels obsessed with "the pornography involved with the contemplation of our own destitution" (Braidotti "Self-styling"). Assuming that an American literary paradigm holds true for Canadian texts, though they may be of the same genre, is a mistake and has worked to obscure an alternative narrative resource available to the human imagination when coping with large-scale crises or apocalyptic disaster.

The texts under study in this dissertation bring about an early recognition of the reality of the Anthropocene—how, as Dipesh Chakrabarty chillingly puts it, humans "wield geological force" (206) as biological agents, collectively and individually.[39] Chakrabarty asserts that scholars of climate science are now "collaps[ing] the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history" (201); the narrative setting of post-apocalyptic SF necessarily forces this recognition by positioning readers after the irrefutable event of a world-changing catastrophe brought about by human activity. As critic Gary K. Wolfe notes, "a city emptied of its people, whether through nuclear disaster or disease or environmental catastrophe, becomes a strange and alien place. Similarly, a pastoral landscape becomes a foreboding wasteland by the implied danger of holocaust survivors reduced to savagery, disfigured by radiation, or given to strange new beliefs" (5). My analysis of the textual representation of wilderness is influenced by the writing of William Cronon, who problematizes the ideology of "wilderness" as a stand-alone, unstructured space that is "uncontaminated" by human encroachment. Cronon, in his essay "The Trouble with Wilderness," interrogates the romantic ideals of wilderness, demonstrating how the very concept is "quite profoundly a human construction […] of very particular human cultures at

[39] The Anthropocene (1800-present) sets apart our geological epoch from the former Holocene (which began roughly 11,500 years ago) based on evidence "in which many geologically significant conditions and processes are profoundly altered by human activities" ("Working Group on the 'Anthropocene'"). The name, coined by Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000 and formalized by the Anthropocene Working Group of scientists in 2016, has been criticized by humanities scholars as a totalizing term that flattens distinctions between humans of differing classes, races, nationalities, genders, etc., promoting a neo-Humanism at the expense of radical critiques of these identity categories (see: Bonneuil and Fressoz; Sharp; Cuomo; Colebrook).

very particular moments in human history" (7), and is critical of its invocation by environmentalists to describe a space set apart from human activity.

Canadian post-apocalyptic SF texts make it very difficult to tie concepts of "nature," "culture," and indeed "wilderness" to fixed places, separate or closed off from one another. For example, the protagonist of Robinson's *Telempath* (1972) is introduced making his way stealthily through the ruins of New York; an "urban jungle" that humans have long abandoned, where he encounters animal life such as rats, domestic cats, and a leopard escaped from the Central Park zoo. Similarly, human settlements come to signal hazardous sites of wildness in the post-apocalypse such as in Leonard Fischer's *Let Out the Beast* (1950), Jean Tétrau's *Les nomades* (1967), and Élisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* (1981),[40] where the ruins of civilization and the groups of people inhabiting them are dangerous threats to the protagonists. Nuclear radiation persists to cause human mutation and the ongoing desolation of large parts of the globe in numerous texts set even in the far future (e.g. Wayland Drew's Erthring Cycle, a trilogy of novels set in the twenty-second century, and Maurice Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone*, set in 2380), demonstrating an early recognition of what ecocritical theorist Timothy Morton names hyperobjectivity: the ability of phenomena such as nuclear radiation and global warming to collapse boundaries of time and place with their far-reaching effects, and the interpenetration of the natural (the human body; the land) and the toxic or cultural (irradiated genes; acid rain) so as to render indistinguishable the differences between the human body and its surroundings.

My use of "environment" here follows in the tradition of feminist philosophers such as Val Plumwood, Stacy Alaimo, and Karen Barad, who trouble the concept of "the environment" as it is traditionally used to demarcate a space of nature, instead articulating it as a continuum

[40] *The Silent City* was originally published in 1981 in French as *Le silence de la cité*; the translation by Jane Brierly was published in 1988.

where nature and culture are always already entwined, with subsequent ethical implications.[41] In my analysis throughout this dissertation, therefore, I use a lens of environmental criticism as articulated by Lawrence Buell: the term "approximates better than 'eco' the hybridity of the subject at issue" (viii) namely, that all 'environments' are a combination of elements that could be said to be 'natural' or 'constructed'" (viii). This type of criticism takes into account engagements with toxified and/or urban landscapes, seeking to break down the oppositional binary that early ecocritical literatures began to codify between "nature" and "culture" in favour of the recognition that the two concepts are in reality inextricably woven together. Donna Haraway's term "naturecultures" reflects this more accurate orientation, indicating the joining together of the two concepts at the same time as gesturing towards multiple instances or interpretations of the way in which environments are produced.

My argument as a whole is informed by a post-human environmental ethic that recognizes the way that humans are embedded and embodied participants in their surrounding naturecultures; this chapter in particular thinks through the ways in which Canadian post-apocalyptic SF can be seen to write against dominant narratives of environmental *dis*location, that is to say, the way in which "nature" and "the human" are set up as mutually exclusive (even opposing) concepts. I read the subgenre of post-apocalyptic Canadian SF published between 1948 and 1989 as an intervention into this trend: the texts can be seen as responding to crises whose cause can be sourced to a disconnection extant between human actors and their environments. The plot is driven by a search for re-connection that in some texts is achieved,

[41] Plumwood, in *Environmental Culture* (2002), argues that human culture is embedded in nature, and that denial of the reality of this is a measure of human estrangement from non-human nature as well as from "ourselves as ecologically constrained beings" (97). Barad, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), uses quantum theory to demonstrate the way in which "'environments' and 'bodies' are intra-actively co-constituted …. integral parts of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is" (170), as opposed to a body merely being situated within its environment. Alaimo draws on Karen Barad to posit a theory of trans-corporeality in *Bodily Natures* (2010), a way to "[emphasize] the material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world" (2).

occasioning a cathartic reaffirmation of life's continuity beyond global disaster. Often, however, the narrative ends before resolution, or with no resolution in sight for the protagonists.

The garrison mentality, as *Tsunami* demonstrates, is worse than useless in a crisis, and must be discarded in favour of an environmental imagination that underlines, as Alaimo states, "the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2). Though the tsunamis themselves are the catalyst for action in the narrative, they are not at all the sole focus of the narrative, instead providing a shared experience of catastrophe to which characters must react. Kilian then explores the differing actions and reactions of groups of people in the aftermath, comparing their responses to the collapse of central governmental structure, the "new normal" of a vastly altered climate, the breakdown of social order, and the way that cultural scripts dictate characters' expectations of each other. Survival, of the thematic kind, is never enough—and characters like Allison who withdraw and only engage their surroundings with violence in order to survive are shown to fail, often precipitating the death of their loved ones in the course of their actions.

III Canadian environmental imaginaries: diagnosing disconnection

An ecocritical tradition in (English) Canada was late to develop in academia, despite Canadian literature's almost stereotypical focus on the environment; beginning in the 1990s, multiple critics decried the state of the field and called for robust environmental engagement in literary studies.[42] Several saw the traditional orientation of Canadian literature—that of articulating hostility towards the environment or fear of wilderness—as a hobble.[43] Critics Ella Soper and Nicholas Bradley locate the beginnings of a suppression of ecocritical thought in the early 1980s, when an anti-thematic mood shared by academics and publishers alike dismissed

[42] See, for example: Ricou "So Big" 111-13; Ricou "So Unwise" 118; Helms 145; O'Brien 168.
[43] Ricou "So Big" 110; Helms 145-46.

any critical writings attentive to environment or victimhood in Anglo-Canadian realist literature. This caused what they call a "rupture […] in the articulation of a proto-ecocritical discourse in Canada," which affected Canadian literary criticism until the mid-nineties (Soper and Bradley xxviii). Whatever the reason, the fact remains that in academia, the Canadian environmental imagination existed infrequently before the twenty-first century in literary criticism (Soper and Bradley xxii).

Though *Survival* had been a bestselling non-academic book with a wide readership, subsequent academic critiques and repudiations of the thematic approach were not so broadly disseminated amongst the general populace by publishers. Canadian SF, "plagued with the usual perceptions of the medium as disreputable" (Gotlieb 200) in Canada and thus not an attractive option for publishers with their sights set on producing a literary canon, had for decades before (and after) *Survival*'s 1972 advent been published across the border in America, whose publishing houses were not concerned with the trade winds of academic literary criticism, thematic or otherwise.[44] The "flavor" of twentieth-century SF, regardless of authors' nationality, was that of America, its plots versions of the American frontier mythos of gunslinging explorers, technological gadgetry, and hostile natives;[45] not the stuff of the dominant twentieth-century Canadian literary imagination, and thus more likely to be seen as an imported amusement from south of the border (Weiss and Spencer 13). Similarly, Canadian literary scholars with an interest in published narratives that were deemed to fall outside the realm of "serious literature" were forced to publish their work across the border, or not at all.[46]

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[44] Colombo "Four Hundred" 39; Gotlieb 198-200; Grant 14.
[45] Clute 22; Runté and Kulyk 48; Ketterer *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* 1.
[46] Ketterer's *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* is an American publication only because no Canadian publishing house was interested in it (Colombo, "Four Hundred" 39); academic Darko Suvin's seminal *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, though not focused on Canadian SF, is a Yale University Press publication, despite the support of McGill University, his home institution, over the course of writing and research (xii). This decision may have been motivated in part by the prestige associated with works published by Yale UP; regardless of

Consequently, the consideration, critical appraisal, and investigation of Canadian SF has historically fallen to SF writers themselves, mostly outside of the realm of academia, and usually in prefaces or special articles included at the front or back matter of anthologized SF. John Robert Colombo's *Other Canadas* (1979), a critical anthology of stories, is generally agreed to be the first published collection of English-Canadian SF. It is cited in many following Canadian anthologies as a landmark publication that "established definitively that Canada did have a tradition" of SF writing (Sawyer "Introduction" 11). A significant French-Canadian SF community[47] was developing at the same time, its growth encouraged and celebrated by *Solaris*, an internationally-recognized French-language magazine of SF and the fantastic, founded in 1974 by Norbert Spehner. However, David Ketterer's *Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy,* the first sustained academic study focusing specifically on Canadian SF texts, was published several decades later in 1992. A 1994 exhibit on Canadian SF commissioned by the Library of Canada resulted in the publication of *Out of this World*, a collection of essays on Canadian SF. The next book-length academic study of Canadian SF was published in 2004, *Worlds of Wonder*, the conference proceedings of the University of Ottawa's Canadian Literature Symposium's conference on SF edited by Jean-François Leroux and Camille La Bossière.

Appraisals of Canadian SF by critics in the 1990s such as Allan Weiss, Robert Runté, Christine Kulyk, and Ketterer assert that the genre as a whole expresses the unique trait of foregrounding the environment in its narratives—specifically, the natural world is treated with respect, as a force that humans are unable to control fully, requiring adaptation. Ketterer argues

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intent, the fact remains that *Metamorphoses*' place of publication contributes to the difficulty of locating a distinct tradition of scholarly Canadian SF criticism due to a more dominant American praxis.

[47] Though French-Canadian SF is generally known as *science-fiction québécoise*, I do not use it here, following Jean-Louis Trudel's assertion that "[m]any writers of French-language science fiction in Canada were not natives of the province of Québec or did not reside there when they wrote. Even today, its descriptive value remains doubtful, though it has a powerfully prescriptive one" (52).

that this Canadian orientation runs against "the basic shape and nature of the [SF] genre" as an expression of a "particularly aggressive American attitude" towards the environment ("Canadian Science Fiction" 327); in mainstream (American) SF, the mandate is to adventure in "the frontier, to penetrate the barrier of the unknown, to conquer the aliens, to occupy the territory, to stake out the future" (Clute 23). What most preoccupies Ketterer, as well as many other scholars of Canadian SF, is the general trend that Canadian SF is less concerned with science and technological gadgetry ("hard" SF) and leans more towards the political or sociological impacts of a technology's use ("soft" SF), favouring an emphasis on the characterization of the Canadian SF protagonist and their relationship(s).[48]

Narrative emphasis on the sociopolitical lends itself to a stance that is critical, not supportive, of technoscientific developments, as Canadian writer-critic Vonarburg observes about Canadian science fiction as a whole ("Women and Science Fiction" 185); these attitudes are crystallized around the issue of nuclear armaments in mid-century post-apocalyptic fiction. As Runté asserts:

> Canadians often feel economically, politically, and culturally overwhelmed by our American neighbors. … [W]e often perceive ourselves isolated from the people and events that are shaping the world and the future. Sometimes it seems as if the only thing all Canadians have in common is the vague feeling that whatever is important in the world, it is not to be found here. (24)

He states that this attitude that comes out in Canadian SF protagonists' likelihood of being an ordinary person, instead of the lead scientist, or the politician responsible for triggering nuclear war, or the leader of the survivors in the aftermath. Runté observes that the position of outsider,

[48] Ketterer "Canadian Science Fiction" 327-8; Runté and Kulyk 44-5; Weiss and Spencer 15; Leroux 2; Theall 2.

though disempowered, does provide Canadians with a unique perspective from which to watch and comment (25). During the Cold War, Canada was not one of the two main aggressors, despite being allied with and geographically linked to the United States. However, there was a keen awareness of how nuclear violence directed at America could just as easily contaminate and destroy facets of the Canadian nation-state; the most explicit example of this being Ian Adams' 1971 apocalyptic thriller *The Trudeau Papers*, wherein a nuclear missile originating from the United States accidentally obliterates Edmonton, Alberta, leading to the collapse of Canada—its sociopolitical and cultural institutions as well as the physical environment itself.

The post-apocalypse in twentieth-century Canadian SF texts is narrated from this ex-centric position, the texts operating to shine a light on a disengagement of humanity from itself. Some are wide-eyed and transparently earnest and others more deft in their critiques, but each of the forty-four texts[49] that comprise my survey of post-apocalyptic Canadian SF 1948-1989 highlights a fundamental disconnect between human beings and their environment that has catastrophic consequences. In depicting the costs of technoscience on the land and bodies of characters, these texts can be read as gesturing towards what Alaimo identifies as a mode of trans-corporeality "in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, [underlining] the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (2). Apocalyptic crisis is revealed and revealing; the term itself derives from the Greek word "*apokalupsis*," meaning to "uncover" or "to reveal": in the Canadian SF apocalypse, the human action of seeking domination and control over the natural environment as well as over other human beings is revealed as the true disaster. Therefore, the task of the characters who are

[49] Canadian writers, most notably Phyllis Gottlieb, made significant contributions to SF poetry, but this project concerns itself with short stories and novel-length fiction. I acknowledge that while I did my very best to track down and include as many of the texts fitting this criteria, I may have missed out on some.

left in the post-apocalypse, post-reveal, is to seek re-connection with an alive and lively environment of which they are a part, reconciling the self with the other, and discarding anthropocentrism to recognize the agency and subjectivity of earth others exploited as mere objects. Success rates are varying; in keeping with another theme of Canadian SF,[50] many of the texts' endings are ambiguous, something the fourth chapter of this dissertation will explore.

The majority of texts published during this period clearly state the cause of world-altering disaster as the use of nuclear weapons, and many express a deep concern (and almost elegiac regret) for the planetary environment of the last half of the twentieth century. This is unsurprising, given that 1948-1989 spans the period of the Cold War, when nuclear annihilation was an ever-present threat at the same time as North America was enjoying a post-war economic boom. Technoscience[51] was advancing by leaps and bounds, and technology originally in use or developed by the military industrial complex became commonplace, even household machinery, effecting a bleed between public and private, and populations that had once been rural became suburban or urban as people moved into the city (Moss and Sugars 24-25). Canadians became more connected with each other and the wider world through the advent of telephones, radio, daytime television, fast cars, and accessible air travel (Moss and Sugars 25). However, the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 occasioned an awareness of the detrimental side effects of these new gadgets' production and operation, and their potential to wreak havoc on the natural world. As historian Todd Gitlin observed, this generation of Canadians was "formed in the jaws of an extreme and wrenching tension between the assumption of affluence

[50] Runté notes as a general theme that "Canadian novels tend to have ambiguous endings: things have changed significantly as a result of the action in the story, but it is often difficult to tell whether the characters are better or worse off" (26).

[51] I adopt Plumwood's attitude that the use of this term (coined by Haraway in 1997) occasions a "broader understanding of science as 'technoscience' brings out the relationship between science and capitalism…. Strategic boundary shifts between 'science' and 'technology' or 'politics' help maintain the ideology that 'science proper' can do no wrong" (243).

and its opposite, a terror of loss, destruction, and failure" (qtd in Moss and Sugars 25). These factors influenced the societal milieu in which Canadian authors wrote and to which they responded. Significantly, instead of the American "nuclear sublime" in SF that celebrates the power of human ingenuity and technological prowess even for destruction (Csicsery-Ronay 159), Canadian SF on the whole displays a "recognition of constraints and the respect-for-superior-powers message (the powers of Evolution, History, and Nature)" (Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 167).

Most of the post-apocalyptic texts in this study situate the immediate violence of nuclear disaster in the past of the narrative, refusing readers a description of it; in many texts, the present-day of the novel is set so far in the future past the apocalyptic event that characters have no memory of it. The use of nuclear weapons in these texts is framed as what Plumwood calls a "deep moral failing" (49) stemming from an estrangement of humans from each other, non-human others, and the very land itself. Only two of the texts concerned with nuclear annihilation actually describe the act itself, very quickly and at the beginning of narratives that follow their protagonists over the span of decades as they adjust to post-apocalyptic life. Fischer's *Let Out the Beast* is one of the pulpiest, most typically-SF novels of the bunch; it leans heavily on American assumptions of necessary post-devastation violence and a neoliberal, hyper-masculine imperative to dominate or be dominated. However, the act of destruction itself is quickly and perfunctorily narrated early on in the book:

> what looked like a great sheet of red, green, and white flame extending from the horizon … great balls of orange and black flame seemed to leap from the main body and these in turn shot down to the earth's surface and then as suddenly sent greater columns of flame into the sky. (Fischer 16)

The text then moves on, mostly unconcerned with creating a cinematic experience of destruction for the viewer in favour of narrating characters' actions in the aftermath. Margaret Laurence's short story "A Queen in Thebes" (1964) spends a grand total of one short sentence describing how "the sky turned to fire, as though the sun had exploded," after which the protagonist closes the curtain to shield herself and her child from the light (161). With that act, the curtain draws closed for the reader as well, shutting out possibility of witness to the disaster for both characters in the novel as well as readers.

In the minority of post-apocalyptic texts from the period in question where the apocalyptic event is not explicitly stated as brought about by nuclear arms, disaster is still triggered by human technoscience and a fundamental disconnect between its human architects and their environments. In both Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean* (1972) and Robinson's *Telempath* (1976), scientific discovery is misused to catastrophic ends, altering the very makeup of the planet and of human beings themselves (respectively). In both texts, a discovery is made (or its discoverer is aided) by a scientist of colour who hopes to help better the human condition with his work. In *The Lord's Pink Ocean*, a garbage-eating alga is stolen for use by "applied scientists of Government" and accidentally unleashed, causing the contamination of the world's water and the subsequent die-off of all plant life save for in isolated areas (Walker 161-62); the scientist in *Telempath*, spurned by the American majority-white scientific establishment, releases a virus causing human hyperosmia—the magnification of the sense of smell "a hundred times more efficient than any wolf" (Robinson 26)—knowing that it would drive a majority of people to suicide, thus solving overpopulation and pollution. The initial human search for re-connection to their environment goes disastrously awry. These two texts are also among the very few that

feature a person of colour as protagonist, though the authors are themselves white, an element that will be further explored in my third chapter.

IV Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* and the narrative of disaster

There is one Canadian post-apocalyptic SF written and published between 1948 and 1989 which does not source its apocalypse directly to human causes: *Tsunami* (1983) by Crawford Kilian, the sequel to his 1980 disaster thriller *Icequake*. In *Tsunami*, the narrative reveals that the calamity of its prequel was only a small part of a larger, apocalyptic-scale catastrophe, whose cause is multiple and non-human: solar flares have already devastated the planet for a year or so, and the massive earthquake that destroys the Antarctic ice cap in *Icequake* precipitates huge tsunamis that wreak havoc on the western seaboard of North America. *Tsunami*'s apocalyptic narrative is still very focused on human interactions with and societal reactions to disaster, however: despite the origin of catastrophe resting not with humans but instead an agential and purposeful nature, Kilian's text deliberately tackles anthropocentric responses to climate crisis, critiquing simplistic narratives that result in the isolation of humans from their environment, instead modelling the formation of (human) community as a successful strategy for (human) survival. In fact, human actions worsen the post-apocalyptic state of disaster, as they cleave to the American survivalist narrative, and the text shows how the garrison mentality that is triggered in order to ensure survival is a fearful psychological reaction that conversely leads to the destruction of both self and other.

The novel follows two different groups of people in the San Francisco Bay Area and their individual responses to the disasters of the tsunamis, comparing and contrasting them as adequate or inadequate for survival. The first group, focalized alternately through oceanographer Don Kennard and his wife Kirstie (a climatologist and academic) and made up of their friends

and coworkers, responds to the suffering around them by offering aid wherever they can in the wake of the tsunamis, volunteering at great personal risk to attempt to salvage diesel from sunken tanker *Sitka Carrier* in order to provide energy to the millions of residents of the San Francisco Bay Area. Crucially, the diesel is needed to support the development of a garbage-eating, methane-expelling microbe that will provide cheap, clean energy.[52] The second group, focalized through film director Robert Anthony Allison's point of view and made up of his personal friends and work colleagues, retreat to Allison's ranch compound in the Carmel Valley. They venture forth eventually in an attempt to police their surroundings, making an alliance with the local military branch, as they suspect their neighbours of violence; they quickly ascend to control of the Monterey area and its surroundings with Allison at the forefront, enforcing a curfew and regular public executions of army deserters, murderers, and rapists in front of a gathered crowd of area residents. They also covet the diesel in the *Sitka Carrier*, though they do not have the means to pump it out. The novel culminates in the two groups' clash over the fuel.

I situate *Tsunami* in the recently acknowledged genre of cli-fi, or climate fiction, which explicitly dramatizes drastic and disastrous weather patterns due to shifts in planetary climate. The term "cli-fi" was coined by Dan Bloom in 2007, though critics locate the first cli-fi texts in

[52] Twenty-first century science has shown that methane contributes about 20x more to the greenhouse effect than carbon dioxide, which would only accelerate the characters' woes in the long term, even though it seems to mitigate it in the short term ("Methane…" 0:02:20-0:02:34), rendering this plot point of "clean" methane energy pure science fantasy. According to Jérome Chappellaz, Research Director at the CNRS Laboratory of Glaciology and Geophysics of the Environment in Grenoble, France, methane contributes to the greenhouse effect "molecule by molecule … about 20 times more than CO2. We are saved by the fact that there is less methane in the atmosphere [currently] than carbon dioxide" ("Methane…" 0:02:20-0:02:34). Methane has been linked to previous mass extinctions on earth; in 1999, scientists hypothesized that the Cretaceous period ended with the "release of huge amounts of methane gas from rotting vegetation trapped in sediments more than 500 meters below sea level … [the] authors argued that an asteroid or comet colliding with the ocean floor at that time generated huge shock waves that shot around the planet, thereby freeing still more vast quantities of trapped methane. Lightning bursts may have ignited the methane-rich air, triggering firestorms that set the atmosphere ablaze and finally brought about the dinosaurs' demise" (Christianson 155). Scientists have also hypothesized the explosive release of methane deposits from the ocean floor (facilitated by global warming from an excess of C02 in the atmosphere) as the main factor contributing to the Permian extinction, where 90% of earthly species went extinct due to the toxic atmosphere (Christianson 156).

publication as far back as the 1960s, with British author J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* (1962) as a notable example.[53] Usually cli-fi novels narrate damage that is global in scope, each text foregrounding changes to the environment as its SF *novum*, the novelty or innovation that dominates or presides over the narrative hegemony of a SF text—that which "entails a change of the whole universe of the tale, or at least of crucially important aspects thereof (and that it is therefore a means by which the whole tale can by analytically grasped)" (Suvin 63). Cli-fi can be apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and/or dystopian, set either in the far future after catastrophe, in an alternate present, or in the near future; according to the text on the dustjacket, *Tsunami* is set in "almost the year 2000." In-text, the novel's present is never specifically identified, and there are no indications that its world is futuristic or other than the reader's own in 1983, save for the apocalyptic effects of the solar flares. At the time of Tsunami's publication, methane's involvement in deep-time phenomena and the acceleration of climate change was not widely known, and so its presence as a literal *deus ex machina* (or *ex microbia*) in the novel is glossed over in favour of a more dedicated focus on the issue of the solar flares and humans' reaction to a disaster they cannot control.

Tsunami can be seen as an early intervention into contemporary environmental thought, though originating neither from the academic ecocritical movement nor the non-fiction writings of concerned environmental activists. Its narrative weaves together the spectacular and the slow-moving, the *in medias res* disaster of the apocalypse and the post-apocalyptic aftermath of a world-changing event, taking up the challenge articulated by Rob Nixon "to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects" (3). Though the narrative action occurs right in the middle of devastating catastrophes—the

[53] For further reading, see Merchant, B.; Sharma; *he [sic] Cli-Fi Report*.

tsunami waves set off other destructions such as forest fires, a massive chlorine spill, radiation from nuclear reactor damage, and fires both urban and industrial—it is revealed that the underlying cause of climactic apocalypse is in fact that the sun has "[t]urned itself off" in what is part of a five- to fifty-thousand-year cycle of nuclear fusion (Kilian 101). The sun, according to climatologists' calculations, has "been turned off for several thousand years, and the effect has finally started working its way to the surface" (Kilian 102). Right after this narrative revelation, one of the climatologists invokes the old Norse myth of Ragnarok, the apocalyptic death of the gods, as a metaphor for what is happening.

The violence that the characters face is not a new development, *Tsunami* reveals: the cause of the destruction sweeping the globe was set off in an almost unimaginably distant past, and only now are the consequences showing. The book's previous concern with and discussion of anthropogenic climate change—as I will analyse further—is effectively rendered null by the realization of the sun's shutoff, suggesting that while anthropogenic forces certainly factor into the current state of the climate, it matters little, in the end, when the forces of the universe are so much bigger than human action. There are several layers of "natural" catastrophe at work in *Tsunami*, therefore: layer one occurs in the characters' present, and the catastrophe of the tsunamis' advent and its socio-cultural ramifications; layer two comprises the disruptions and daily devastations of the rapidly-changing climate, also occurring in the "present" of the text, but an ongoing apocalypse; layer three, the revelation that the sun itself has "gone out" (Kilian 101), occurs in "deep time" and firmly situates the text as post-apocalyptic.

Tsunami disallows the simplification of complex narratives of climate change in service to a singular focus on spectacle that cli-fi stories often perform. Susanna Lidström et. al. critique R. Nixon's call for "arresting" narratives of slow violence, arguing that by being "fast, clear and

catchy, [such narratives] prevent more nuanced, disparate and varied means of conceiving of environmental change" (28). There are multiple causes for the apocalyptic disaster in *Tsunami* that encompass the globe as well as the past, present, and future in the novel; the book ends with Don contemplating the ramifications of the dawning of a fifty-thousand-year ice age even as he bears good news to concerned citizens across the bay that he has resolved things peacefully with Mercer and the military, ensuring the harmony of the short-term, anthropocentric future (Kilian 217-218).

The narrative of *Tsunami* embraces generic conventions of cli-fi, but does so in order to deconstruct them: depicting catastrophe in vivid, sometimes almost lurid descriptive passages at the same time as presenting a critique of the human response to the spectacle of "natural disaster" as one that is fundamentally alienating. The text trades heavily in the production of (expected) spectacle in its first few chapters, featuring 50-foot-high waves that "explode[e] into geysers" as they break over San Franciscan bridges (Kilian 15); many descriptions of the debris of the tsunamis' aftermath, including corpses that lay "half-buried in the mud, and rats skittered among them" (Kilian 77); and asserting that "the charts were now obsolete: the coastline was sharply changed. Sandbars loomed up where water should be deep. Surf broke around rocky islands which had once been part of the shoreline and now stood well out in the bay" (Kilian 110). Kilian counterbalances these cinematic descriptions with characters' commentary in later chapters on how the commodification of disaster divorces witnesses from the reality of catastrophe. In the wake of the disaster, Kirstie curses the helicopters overhead: "They were circling around the school like vultures this afternoon, but would they land and help? Now they must be looking for something even worse" (Kilian 53). Human suffering prompts other humans not to reach out and help, but to stand back and watch. The news broadcasters' mediation and

construction of crisis into a narrative ostensibly informative, but at heart entertaining, makes it easier for consumers and constructors of the narrative alike to distance their (agential and sovereign) selves from the (passive and victimized) objects of suffering on display.

Tsunami follows in the cli-fi tradition of taking up Ulrich Beck's maxim that "smog is democratic" (36), attempting to collapse disconnection in the unaffected reader's imaginary. In *Tsunami*, unaffected North Americans experience what Plumwood defines as spatial remoteness, as well as communicative and epistemic remoteness ("where there is poor or blocked communication with those affected which weakens knowledge") (72) from the people living in west-coast states. Likewise, readers of *Tsunami* experience a narrative that is spatially and temporally remote. *Tsunami*'s method of reducing these variables is through the ambiguous temporal setting of the narrative[54] and the way in which the text affirms that destruction (admittedly widespread and very serious) on the west coast of the United States is enough to cause a collapse of the entire American government and economy, necessitating martial law and resort to the barter-and-trade system of exchange (99), affecting citizens all over the country. Readers' mileage may vary as to how convincing this is; regardless, Kilian uses the SF idiom in order to attempt to collapse multiple forms of remoteness and bring home the immediacy of a violence that unfolds across the same time-space as global warming or nuclear hyperobjectivity.

Don and his wife Kirstie, though separate narrators with their own storylines at the beginning of the novel, eventually come together so that their narratives describe the same events, but from different points of view. Don at the beginning of the novel is a very different character than the Don at the end; originally a misanthropic academic-scientist stereotype, disaster necessitates his transformation into a community aid worker, project leader, and

[54] *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) attempted this strategy also; it does not age well.

negotiator who realizes strength in connection with the people around him. At the beginning of the novel, the narration tells us that Don is estranged from "people who did not interest him, whose problems and desires did not stir his sympathy"; he "contends" with them because he is required to in order to maintain his position at the Pacific Institute of Oceanography, but he is happiest when left alone to his work (Kilian 4). This seclusion includes distance from Kirstie (who shares his preference for solitude), and his own family, whom he considers dangerous; thinking specifically about his grandfather Geordie's wish for him to return and take over the family business, Don ruminates that "once you invested your feelings in [people], they tried to take you over, to tyrannize you" (Kilian 4). Don seeks isolation from others in his work, preferring not to have any unnecessary interactions despite his status as a member of a *team* of ocean scientists.

The disasters in *Tsunami* can each be read as apocalypses in themselves for the main characters, moving smoothly from a focus on the environmental to the social dynamics of this world: contained in each's experience of catastrophe are revelations and world-changing realizations. Almost immediately after the novel's introduction of Don as a man who has deliberately chosen disconnection from other people in his life, disaster strikes: a turbidity current catches Don's submersible, and it is only through luck that he manages to escape. The submersible is violently thrown about, and Don with it; in the aftermath of this near-death experience, Don "could think only in disjointed images: walking along a Vancouver street as a little boy, holding his father's hand [… his wife] Kirstie's blue eyes reflecting the Mediterranean sky. He felt sad, somehow, and unaccountably lonely" (Kilian 8-9). This instance foreshadows events later in the novel that include his and Kirstie's sailing to Vancouver in a small sloop that reminds Kirstie of sailing with Don on the Mediterranean, to asking Don's grandfather for help

in supplying the submersible necessary to access the *Sitka Carrier*; in exchange, Don agrees to return to run the family business, giving up the seclusion of ocean science for the more people-oriented position as head of a lumber company. Through Don's willing outreach to other people, the survivors are able to work together to recover the diesel from the sunken *Sitka Carrier* as well as foster the development of a methane-generating microbe, ensuring energy sovereignty into the future.

This move of Don's from studying the environment to exploiting it reflects both the time it was written and the dominant colonial-Canadian orientation towards nature as a resource. Frye notes in 1965 that, following the search for the Northwest Passage by imperial powers, Canada "became a colony in the mercantilist sense, treated by others less like a society than as a place to look for things" ("Conclusion" 8). Frye frames this as part of a larger argument about the contest between "man" and "the unconscious forces of nature," using military terms such as "conquest" to describe the actions of colonial forces ("Conclusion" 9). The idea that humans could harm nature, though articulated by several early settler poets and writers, did not seem plausible to imperial powers or have bearing on exploitative attitudes for the most part during the early colonial settlement of Turtle Island.[55] Don becomes an actor in the perpetuation of this colonial conquest; however, he can also be read as a nationalist figure, an example of the colonial subject taking control of the resources of the country for the economic prosperity of that country and not for colonial forces. Moss and Sugars note that the post-WW2 prosperity and increase in standard

[55] Atwood argues in *Survival* that later in the twentieth century, Canadian poets and authors begin to articulate a concern for "Nature" once "man starts winning, once evidence starts piling up" that human activity is devastating the environment. She writes that "it is increasingly obvious to some writers that man is now more destructive towards Nature than Nature can be towards man; and, furthermore, that the destruction of Nature is equivalent to self-destruction on the part of man" ("Selections" 28). See also Krotz, *Mapping* chapter three, as well as "A Natural History of Loss" for in-depth discussions of settler attitudes towards the destruction of nature represented in select settler-Canadian literature.

of living fostered a belief in Canadians that life was good and prosperous, which in turn lent itself to a sense of national pride and a desire to separate—politically, culturally, economically—from colonial powers as a culturally "mature" country (221-33). As an educated Canadian man, Don assumes the mantle of owner of a Canadian business that deals in the very Canadian resource commodity of lumber, strengthening the country's economy, in line with demonstrating the "maturity" of Canada and its post-colonial nationhood. This stands in contrast to the contemporary concern for the environment by activists in Canada, specifically with regards to the logging of old-growth forests in British Columbia, and so while Don's career move positions him as a typically Canadian businessman, it is a fraught position in 2021 that does not read as simplistically heroic or noble with regards to relationship to the natural environment.

The apocalyptic disaster enacts an apocalyptic reveal to Don that prompts him to grow, change, and develop the necessary respect for and cooperation with others to live life in the post-apocalypse. Don's desire to move to Vancouver is initially expressed as a desire to escape the violence of the ruined San Francisco in a move that would protect himself and Kirstie only, but eventually happens because of his nascent character growth as a community leader and in service of hundreds, even thousands, of west-coast Americans. His work with groups of survivors in San Francisco is at first reluctant and partially inspired by his respect for and desire to protect his wife, Kirstie. In the opening pages, Don only loses his calm and feels "trapped" at the moment he realizes the significance of tsunamis hitting San Francisco: Kirstie is attending a conference there. (Kilian 9). Contrary to his attitude of cool detachment, Don realizes that his feelings for his wife run deeper than he had expected. When Kirstie later asks to "tough it out a bit longer" because she "can't just walk away from all those thousands of casualties and homeless people" in response to Don's wish to go to Vancouver, he agrees, though reluctantly (Kilian 79). Kirstie's

resolve not to "let all this stuff go on" (80) begins to affect Don over the next weeks and month staying and assisting with the salvage and recovery efforts; he grows close to the community, and the couple begin to co-operate with their neighbours (Kilian 100) and make alliances with local community groups in order to self-govern and survive (Kilian 103-04, 109).

The theme of apocalyptic reveals spurred by disaster can be further followed by a close reading of how Kirstie's character trajectory effects an apocalyptic reveal at the level of narrative, suggesting that *Tsunami* may be about anthropogenic climate change after all. The first clues come to us through Don's observations that the solar flares have caused "[e]lectromagnetic pulses, like those associated with high-altitude nuclear explosions" (Kilian 3) and that the ocean is rising fast due to the melting Antarctic sea ice, which is also cooling the stored heat of the ocean (Kilian 107)—phenomena that may have seemed very SF to readers in 1983, but which are now a daily reality for contemporary Floridians, Marshall Islanders, and Solomon Islanders who are dealing with regular flooding due to sea-level rise.[56] Within Kirstie's narrative is a commentary on the ways in which many other humans deal with this raw data of the facts of climate change: badly, as evidenced by the description of the conference she is attending. Her experience of this academic conference, where for "three-and-a-half hours, she had listened to grown men and women, with advanced degrees, debate whether losing fifty per cent of the ozone layer in six months should be described as 'temporary' or 'transient' or 'short-term'" (Kilian 10), reads as a commentary on the absurd politics of the narrative surrounding climate change.[57]

[56] See: Rush; Reuters.

[57] Florida's banning of the term "climate change" in 2015 and climate scientists' fears of "McCarthyist attacks" later in 2017 (T. McCarthy; Milman) are modern examples of this. In August 2018, the Ontario provincial government came under fire for allegedly banning use of the term on its social media accounts, an accusation later denied by staff (Beer).

This scene reads as all-too-familiar to those who are acquainted with the debates surrounding the term "Anthropocene" and its accuracy[58] while regardless of the term in use or who is to blame for climate change and pollution, the reality is that climate catastrophes such as forest fires, floods, droughts, and superstorms are intensifying in violence and frequency.[59] While the disasters themselves may be short-lived (Hurricane Harvey, which destroyed much of the Texas coast in 2017, only took 4 days to wreak havoc; the first eponymous tsunami was mere minutes [Kilian 14-17]), the timescale of the cause (climate change, or anomalous solar activity) cannot be quantified and the proposition that the ongoing disastrous loss of the ozone layer be classed as "temporary" in *Tsunami* is an incredibly deceptive move on the part of these academics. Thus, by removing the cause of intense climate disruption to "natural" causes, Kilian neatly sidesteps the assignment of blame that bogs many cli-fi novels down into jeremiad heavy-handedness: in *Tsunami*, what is done is done, and there is no use arguing about who caused what or if it is a process that can be halted or reversed—action is what is required, not theoretical discussion. Yet theoretical discussion persists in the way that the raw data—what Don observes—must be carefully presented in Kirstie's world.

The cultural dislocation at the heart of the "scripts" of disaster is displayed in Kirstie's narrative, which represents the way that the effects of actual climate change are subject to intentional re-interpretation in order to downplay crisis. Kirstie is involved in helping "absolutely brilliant scientist" Sam Steinberg fight a nonrenewal of contract with San Francisco University, though she thinks to herself that he has no chance to win, "not in the present political climate" (Kilian 11). Kirstie doesn't elaborate on what that climate is, though her description of Sam as "a

[58] See, for example: Mirzoeff 123; Crist 14; Haraway "Anthropocene" 34; Davis and Todd 763.
[59] See: "Wildfires and Climate Change"; "What are Some of the Signs of Climate Change?"; "Hurricanes and Climate Change"; Derworiz.

throwback to the 1960s, from his long hair to his romantic leftism" gives readers a clue as to what Sam's politics might be, and why they may be endangering him in a "shakeout" (Kilian 11). Kirstie spends a moment or two nostalgically reminiscing about Vancouver, where Don grew up and where they lived for several years, which "seems like a lost paradise where no one ever heard of shakeouts, and climatologists didn't worry about the political aspect of their work" (Kilian 11). Though the reality of catastrophic climate change is concrete and affecting the entire world, climate scientists must be careful with the way in which they present data if they want to keep their jobs, reducing complexity for the sake of personal economic survival. Kilian anticipates how, even when the concrete evidence of devastating environmental change is undeniable, collective action on the part of governments and municipalities to forestall disaster is too little, too late; already atomized by a neoliberal narrative that downloads responsibility for personal survival on to the individual.

Tsunami's adherence to the cli-fi genre also enables it to perform a critique of the narrative of disaster as spectacle. As events unfold throughout the text, the sensational depiction of the waves' destruction fades in favour of the narrative foregrounding of character action and interaction. *Tsunami* dramatizes Beck's assertion that a risk society is a catastrophic one, where the exceptional condition has become the norm (24); Kilian embeds a critique of the dominant North American narrative of catastrophe that valorizes the actions of one main character in an exceptional setting, instead focusing on the daily lives of its protagonists and the harsh realities of social organization after collapse. The text shows that characters who invest in the American SF neoliberal survival narrative (coupled with garrison mentality)—retreating from society, relying only on one's self and viewing all others with suspicion, enforcing their will with

firepower—ultimately doom themselves, where those who respond to crises by reaching out to their fellow humans, seeking connection and collaboration, are more successful by far.

Tsunami's main antagonist Robert Anthony Allison is, according dominant genre tropes, the most likely to be the hero of an American SF story; his is also the narrative that follows to its logical conclusion the decision to withdraw from society in the face of disaster and dramatizes the failure of the neoliberal narrative of self-reliance. In the SF idiom, Allison is the shoo-in for the role of protagonist, being a natural leader who exudes confidence, charisma and, we are told, is successful precisely because his "tall-tale-telling" films buoy up an American ideal of triumph through military might (Kilian 30; Clute 23). He is introduced sharing a lazy morning with his wife, actress and sex symbol Shauna Dawn McGuire, then greeting his handyman Hipolito in Spanish and asking after his health (Kilian 26), then picking up a religious hitchhiker (Kilian 27) on his way to a meeting with an army official, whom he hopes to make a deal with to "borrow" some troops for the purposes of shooting a realistic military film (Kilian 24). Allison is a successful film director; an individual whose career depends on forging connections and maintaining the relationships that he has with his coworkers, his employees, and his investors.

However, Allison's casual extroversion and confidence in his dealings with others slowly erodes throughout *Tsunami*, as it becomes clear that his impulse to survive catastrophe, to preserve what he has at all costs through control of the world around him, is ironically what costs him all that he has, including any control over his own life. In the wake of the tsunamis, Allison calls together a group of friends and colleagues, proposing that they take all the supplies that they can and move to his ranch to "tough out the next few weeks or months" (Kilian 87). He initially has faith that the structures of government will survive to restore order; all that he needs to do is amass the people and things useful to him and hide away until then. When this turns out

not to be the case, he allies himself with the local military, eventually becoming its figurehead (Kilian 162) and taking the lead in the violent enforcement of martial law.

In *Tsunami*, Kilian makes an explicit critique of the dominant cultural disaster narrative that requires hyper-masculine self-reliance and the survival of a single protagonist through violent combat with the other in order to survive crisis. Another character early on holds up Allison's latest movie (*Gunship*) as an example of "the sad political level of current American movies…. (It is) a pornography of violence. What *Gunship* says is … [d]on't examine your motives, put your trust in guns and more guns, and kill everybody you can because maybe they'll kill you" (Kilian 20). Allison's own story unfolds exactly along the lines of this dictum; in the immediate aftermath of disaster, he "made his plans swiftly and easily. Every step fell into place, like the preproduction phase of making a film" (Kilian 39); as social conditions devolve, he affirms to himself that "[j]ustice was dead; now there was only self-preservation….the violence would never stop. It was the inheritance tax paid by the survivors. So be it" (Kilian 134). Allison's overdramatic response mechanism is filmic, the radical simplification of human nature to fit a set of pre-programmed beliefs, and thus artificial and ultimately self-destructive.

The damaging consequences of this aggressive American attitude are dramatized in *Tsunami* as leading to both personal and political loss. Allison's nemesis Burk originally introduces himself to Allison as a fan of his because of *Gunship* and that "we saw this coming—not the waves, but the whole social collapse…. Personally, I figured on nuclear war" (Kilian 121). Burk is the spokesman for a neighbouring compound full of "survivalists" who have stolen another neighbour's cow; Allison comes to bargain for the cow's return, is lied to and seen off, and returns with military force, beginning his ascendancy to a sheriff-type position at the head of a band of soldiers. Burk and Allison are akin in their internalizing of the narrative of anticipated

and unavoidable violence in the wake of the collapse of social structures that makes way for a world where "might makes right." Allison later asserts to Shauna in the compound that "this is it" for the civilized world (Kilian 115), not entertaining the possibility that civilization, or nonviolent ways of relating, could exist outside of the narrative of the beleaguered garrison that he has constructed around himself.

In the context of twentieth-century Canadian SF, Don as a character represents the dubious "hero" protagonist typical to the genre, in contrast to Allison who, despite possessing all the characteristics of a traditional SF hero and acting in a way exemplary of the American disaster narrative, is in the end trapped and damned by his actions. Don's introduction as a loner is balanced out by the detail that his wife shares his desire to remain childless and independent, and that he respects her for that (Kilian 12); compare to Allison, who cheerfully exploits his second wife Shauna's looks for his own career, his continual address of her as "kid," and his later unwillingness to talk with her about his military maneuvering adding up to an overall sense that Allison neither respects nor thinks of Shauna as an equal. He plays into what Runté identifies as traditional American expectations of the protagonist as "the dominating hero…. overcoming obstacles and enforcing their will on the world around them through their personal prowess" (25). Runté explains that Canadian SF authors rarely use this American model for their protagonists, and usually depict things going badly for any character who adheres to the dominating-hero model (25), as Kilian does through showing Allison's descent through the book into madness and, eventually, death.

Allison's apocalyptic reveal in *Tsunami* is not, as he convinces himself, the worth of the people around him (in particular Shauna and daughter Sarah), but his own drive for self-preservation. Kilian endows Allison at the outset of the novel with the built-in community that

Clute observes as a hallmark of the American hero (23), yet immediately after Allison's experience of the tsunami he begins strategizing a survival plan that automatically assumes Shauna's death: "Better to get home, change, and come back with Hipolito. If Shauna was in Carmel she was almost certainly dead anyway. Tears stung his eyes" (Kilian 38). Later, after allying himself with militiamen and perpetrating violence to combat violence in the wake of governmental collapse, his wife withdrawn and losing weight, his daughter with obvious signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, Allison thinks to himself: "—Oh Sarah—it's all for you, for you" (Kilian 174). Shauna and Sarah are prostheses of Allison's self; at the end of the novel, the news of Shauna's death and Sarah's abduction cause Allison to break from a reality where he is in control.

The tears Allison sheds initially are for himself and the destruction of his own personal world of self-sovereignty; however, his continued trust in cinematic narrative tropes to constitute right actions carries him through the novel to his demise. As he is driving back from the military base to his house on word of Shauna's death, he thinks to himself that it would have been better "letting everything go to hell at its own chosen speed, not trying to save things and people not worth saving" though ultimately "he regretted nothing. He'd done his best, and without him things would have been worse" (Kilian 213). Allison holds on to his belief in his own invincible righteousness to his death: "'I can't be *shot*,'" he says, and does not recognize his murderer Frank Burk (Kilian 214), despite Allison's prior "obsession" with capturing and killing his neighbour. In the American SF narrative, Clute asserts that "you're on the right side and going to win; it's good storytelling" (24)—post-apocalyptic narratives specifically, as Wolfe points out, depict a world "of easily discernible heroes and villains" due to a simplification of relationships

and a clear split between good and evil (4). However, as Kilian demonstrates, it is a simplistic, inaccurate, and above all dangerous representation of reality.

Kilian's interweaving of Don and Kirstie's narratives with Allison's highlights how post-apocalyptic life necessitates a deliberate refusal of garrison mentality and the adoption of adaptability to catastrophic situations. Kirstie's first reaction in the wake of the tsunamis is to help her fellow drivers on the Bay Bridge who have been shaken and injured by the force of the wave colliding with the bridge footings (Kilian 17); after seeking out fellow Berkeley climatologists Sam Steinberg and Einar Bjarnason, they all head towards the makeshift neighbourhood hospital to help the injured, despite Kirstie's fear of other people's violence (Kilian 21). It is specifically mentioned that Steinberg's neighbourhood is "mostly black," in contrast to Kirstie's gentrified, all-white district in the Berkeley hills; Kirstie not only devotes herself to relief efforts but volunteers for the dangerous job of scavenging pharmaceuticals for medical aid-workers in order to help a community not her own. Don, for his part, is willing to sacrifice his self-identity as an introverted scientist to become an extroverted businessman to foster reconnection with his difficult grandfather on behalf of millions of unknown San Franciscans. In contrast, Allison's close-knit group of survivors detach themselves from the rest of Monterey society immediately following the first tsunami waves, and the group's connection with other individuals is solely through Allison.

With each passing chapter it becomes clearer that Allison's viewpoint is skewed by his deep disconnection from other human beings around him. The way in which Allison's thoughts diverge from narrative reality in *Tsunami* becomes more noticeable as the story unfolds. In the aftermath of the tsunamis, he kidnaps Sarah from his unsuspecting ex-wife's house in order to ensure her safety by taking her to his compound; though Allison often reiterates his love for his

daughter, he does not notice her PTSD until his friend Ted (in charge of organization of operations at the compound) points it out to him. When Ted expresses chagrin at using military force to invade neighbouring Monterey to secure access to the *Sitka Carrier* and its diesel fuel, Allison thinks to himself that "despite all that he and Ted had been through together in the last six or seven years…Ted would have to be exploited or dropped" (Kilian 167). Allison fully embraces an instrumentalist worldview, which he believes is necessary for his personal survival: the humans around him are objects to be kept safe or used depending on their relationship to himself, not subjects in their own rights, and this me-first attitude begins to permeate the entire group. As Don observes, on hearing about the military control of the area, "the Monterey mob is just looking after themselves" (Kilian 184).

The most telling evidence of Allison's skewed sense of reality is his misreading of Lieutenant Odell Mercer, the military man who provides the troops for Allison to carry out martial law. Allison's internal narration, near the end of the text, decides that Mercer is an opportunist and that if an opportunity for more easy survival methods arises elsewhere, "the black son-of-a-bitch would sell them all out without blinking" (Kilian 192). However, when Don meets Mercer across the negotiation table, he immediately appraises him as "the strong one" due to Mercer's calm demeanour, where Allison seems "ready to snap" (Kilian 208). After Allison's departure, Mercer and Don broker a deal for the diesel fuel and begin forging an alliance; Mercer is very willing to settle for an up-front delivery of fifteen per cent of the *Sitka Carrier*'s fuel, provided Don et al. give him "early delivery of some of that methane you guys are cooking up" *as well as* sending "a white dude to run things here" (217). Mercer makes very clear his understanding of the realities of being a black man in California; he is forced to visibly collaborate with a white man, or the citizens would refuse to listen to him and perhaps even

revolt, a telling clue to the racial tensions even on the west coast of America in the early 1980s. Allison, unable to think of others as subjects in their own rights, with their own needs and narratives, reads as opportunism Mercer's very real need to forge alliances across racial lines for his own survival.

Tsunami emphasizes connections across race and gender, running counter to the white masculinist individualist paradigm of most SF. The text takes care to identify the race and gender of characters, from Shirley Yamamura, the Japanese doctor on board Don's ship in the first few pages, to the Sikh man who greets Don and Kirstie in Vancouver on their way to see Geordie, to Dennis Chang, "a tall, stocky Chinese man" (Kilian 75) who happens to be the brilliant geneticist working to develop methane-generating microbes. The very first group that Don and his oceanographer co-workers encounter in the aftermath of the tsunami are representatives of one of the Black communities in San Francisco. Kilian sets up this encounter as a cliffhanger that ends one of the chapters with the sight of four young Black men with rifles, speeding towards the PIO vessel in a motorboat (49), setting up a narrative heavy with expected violence. However, in the next chapter, the young men come aboard ship and have a positive interaction with the crew, informing them of the damage and asking for any help that Don's team can offer to their devastated community. Their community, it turns out, is headed up by the formidable Mrs. Debney, who is directing everyone in relief efforts to salvage, rebuild, and take care of the wounded (Kilian 71). The four young men, representatives of Mrs. Debney, are led by Mitchell Eldon, who is specifically described as gentle-voiced (Kilian 68), and act as the bearers of knowledge to Don's team, their presentation in *Tsunami* subverting the cultural expectation of young Black men's violence. This narrative feature can be read as conforming to Runté's assertion that multiculturalism is in fact the dominant myth of Canada: "Whereas the American

melting pot attempts to assimilate everyone into a single culture dynamic, the official Canadian policy of multiculturalism attempts to preserve a mosaic of interacting but distinctive cultures" (24).

Further, I read *Tsunami* as gesturing towards a posthuman desire for connection across species that is ultimately denied, unveiling for a brief instant the way in which, though the narrative of the book is human-focused, the disaster of the solar flares is a planetary catastrophe. Sailing from San Francisco to Vancouver, Don and Kirstie encounter six humpback whales, horrifically burned from the force of ultraviolet waves, from which the water does not protect them. The whales surround the boat, emitting "thin and shrill" cries, leading Don to surmise that "they're asking us to help them, and we can't. We can't do a thing for them" (Kilian 144). Once the pod turns away, the narration tells us that the humans "said nothing for a long time" (Kilian 144); neither does the text elaborate on their private thoughts. This brief scene brings home the magnitude of the apocalypse in a way that even Don's preliminary occupation with documenting massive plankton die-off did not. There are more stories about this event than just the narratives collected in *Tsunami*, Kilian implies, many of them inaccessible to his protagonists and their limited human abilities to perceive the world around them. Briefly, the anthropocentric curtain is pulled back, revealing the vastness of the scale and scope of the disaster, prompting a realization that even the beings who were assumed safe (or not thought of at all) because of their oceanic life during the tsunamis are in fact still suffering and dying regardless of human observation, affected by dramatic and inescapable climatic change.

An analysis of *Tsunami* as cli-fi pushes for a post-dialectical orientation towards climate change: it necessitates an environmental criticism that refuses binary thinking constructed on a hierarchy of opposites in so-called "logical" arguments. In a consideration of ecocritical theory

and Canadian literature, Soper and Bradley pose the "provocative question" of whether ecocriticism may be considered partly a reinvention of thematic criticism (xxix); in the case of this dissertation, it is not. The ideology of *Survival* relies on subject-object dualism mapped on to simplistic concepts of "wilderness" and "nature" as oppositional to "civilization" and "culture"; the very concept of a post-apocalypse should erode this binary, as the lens of environmental criticism deliberately works to collapse these false distinctions. Yet these binaries threaten to return in the setting of post-apocalyptic SF, as the genre is married to American SF tropes that reduce complex narratives to provide clear markers of heroes and villains, taking an instrumentalist approach to the naturalcultural environment and valorizing a conservative survivalism that rejects connection to others out of fear and suspicion, perceiving others as hostile. However, the values of Canadian SF work to disrupt this paradigm, with the genre's emphasis on learning to communicate and cooperate with others (Kulyk 168) to move forward beyond selfish survival impulses.

This study of post-apocalyptic Canadian SF is not a return to thematic criticism, but neither is it an outright repudiation of thematic critics' stress on the overwhelming attention to surrounding naturecultures in the Canadian psyche. It is instead an ecological poetics, a method of reading that "diminishes the gaps among people, their world, and their feelings while also emphasizing the uniqueness of all things, be they people or plants or poems, in the face of the forces that would grind them down into a denatured uniformity" (Bentley 87). In *Tsunami*, this ecological poetics manifests in the way that each character can no longer ignore the constraints and demands of their environment: from the constant application of sunblock due to increased UV, to having to salvage in the wreckage of the tsunamis for usable material for fuel and other necessities, humans in *Tsunami* are forced to reckon with the dangerousness of their

surroundings and the visible fragility of their own lives in comparison. The environment in *Tsunami* resists uniformity in the hyper-local impacts of the tsunamis (the majority black "project housing" is completely devastated while Allison's luxurious inland villa is completely unscathed). My second and third chapters especially delve more deeply into the tension in these novels between the democracy of disaster and the intersectionality of oppression. The poetics of environmental criticism must be committed to resisting conservative impulses that seek to essentialize or simplify narratives; it is crucial to realize that ecological disaster, as with the multi-tiered apocalypse in *Tsunami*, is often polyvalent and cannot be traced to a single source.[60]

V Conclusion

A study of genre fiction is urgently necessary to build a cultural imagination capable of recognizing the effects of slow violence for what they are, and to construct realistic crisis responses, as "realist" or canonical literatures no longer reflect reality with any sort of reliability. Critic and writer Amitav Ghosh argues that the subject of climate change is found almost exclusively in the realm of non-fiction, with the consequence that

> it could even be said that fiction that deals with climate change is almost by definition not of the kind that is taken seriously by serious literary journals: the mere mention of the subject is often enough to relegate a novel or a short story to the genre of science fiction. It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel. (7)

[60] This concept finds its way into other novels, such as *Let Out the Beast*, Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, and Drew's Erthring Cycle; nuclear weaponry often is just one—albeit the final—disaster, usually preceded by environmental degradation, armed conflict/civil unrest, widespread famine, etc. These constitute another way in which Canadian SF in particular anticipates the Anthropocene in its complexity of issues; Braidotti stresses how, in thinking through and with the Anthropocene, it is crucial to be able to recognize (and thus mobilize) a multiplicity of positions that are grounded in perspective, contextual, embedded, situated knowledges ("Introduction").

It is tempting to conclude that it was, until very recently, difficult to narrate something that, as Beck notes, "is not recognizable to one's own feeling or eye" (27), so that it seemed like fantastic extrapolation when a text frankly discussed the reality of nuclear testing, of genetic mutation caused by radiation, or of toxic runoff from farmers' fields poisoning the water table. The hyperobjectivity of nuclear and/or chemical contaminations and pollution means that these hazards "are neither visible nor perceptible to the victims… in some cases may not even take effect within the lifespans of those affected… in any case that require the 'sensory organs' of science – theories, experiments, measuring instruments – in order to become visible or interpretable as hazards at all" (Beck 27). However, environmental criticism and apocalyptic discourse have historically gone hand-in-hand, as a main function of both is response to threat, and as a warning or jeremiad to readers of impending doom (linking it to readers' actions/inactions when it comes to morality or environmental awareness). Already in 1962, Carson opened *Silent Spring* with a short speculative scenario in which all wildlife has disappeared from a town due to the effects of pesticides, making visible the invisible threats of environmental damage through the cognitive estrangement[61] afforded by SF—specifically, post-apocalyptic SF. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the post-apocalyptic idiom has been used over and again by theorists and activists alike to illustrate their points about environmental issues.[62]

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[61] The term cognition, as used by literary scholar Darko Suvin in the context of SF studies, "implies not only a reflecting of but also on reality. It implies a creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author's environment" (10)

[62] For example, the cooption of Cold War terminology (e.g. the "population bomb" predicted by Paul Ehrlich in 1968) to the citation of SF stories to contextualize chapter arguments in ecocritical texts (e.g. Heise's 2008 introduction excerpts Douglas Adams, and her first chapter begins with a discussion of Le Guin's "Vaster than Empires, and More Slow"), or even make critiques of capitalism (e.g. Fredric Jameson's famous maxim that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism); see also Haraway's frequent use of SF in its multifarious meanings—speculative fiction, science fiction, science fact—to illustrate her theoretical works.

As Ghosh urgently asserts, "the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination" (9). Despite the realities of climate change so-called "realist" fiction[63] instead narrates what could be seen as an alternate reality, where all-encompassing phenomena such as air pollution, extreme weather, food scarcity, or overpopulation have no effect on characters' lives, or indeed impinge on their thoughts. Currently, according to Slavoj Žižek, we are living in an end-times environment and this "apocalyptic zero point" is signalled by, among other things, ecological breakdown (327), a point echoed and reinforced by Alaimo, Haraway, Buell, Plumwood, and pretty much every other theorist and critic I have cited in this chapter. Žižek asserts that "unthinkable catastrophe" of the Anthropocene looms large in the background of the collective psyche of industrialized nations: we as a species cannot really afford to let it stay back there, but must bring it to the fore, so that we *can* think it. As R. Nixon states, "genre study remains a pertinent component of our inquiries into the complex interface between aesthetic forms and forms of socioenvironmental change" (32), an assertion that Lidström et al. echo in their observation that "attention to how literary and aesthetic forms shape and influence environmental narratives can help unpack links between ecological science, environmental communication, social engagement, and cultural perceptions" (29). It is in this vein of unpacking the sociocultural links between issues of justice and cultural crisis in the Anthropocene that I turn now to a study of gender in the context of the Canadian post-apocalyptic imagination in chapter two.

[63] Ghosh argues that "To see that this is so, we need only glance through the pages of a few highly regarded literary journals and book reviews, for example, the *London Review of Books*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, the *Literary Journal*, and the *New York Times Review of Books*" (7); he later references the work of Arundhati Roy (8), Jack Kerouac, Vladimir Nabokov, and Jane Austen (20) as specific examples.

Chapter 2

> What is the alternative? … an intriguing possibility is the suggestion from feminists, ecologists, process philosophers, phenomenologists, and others that we pattern our knowledge, all knowledge, on a subjects-to-subjects model, and more specifically, on friendship…. It will result in an embodied kind of knowledge of other subjects who, like ourselves, occupy specific bodies in specific locations on this messy, muddy, wonderful, complex, mysterious earth.
>
> -Sallie McFague, 36

I Introduction

It is 300 years since the nuclear bombs fell, and a female child is born in the underground City: its youngest resident, and its last. Elisa as a child soon learns that many of the adults around her who care for and teach her are ommachs (androids) piloted by the elderly and dying remnants of the first humans to take shelter in the Cities. Obsessed with technological development and long life, their science and knowledge bought them time through anti-aging gene therapies and mechanical prostheses. Readers first encounter Elisa through the eyes of her father/creator/eventual lover Paul, a brilliant genetics scientist whose drive to create a human being who can heal from any injury and live forever leads him eventually into a sociopathic madness. However, at the beginning of the novel, only the first few chapters are from a young Paul's point of view, after which the focalization of the narrative is through Elisa herself, who has no idea that she is the subject of an ongoing experiment. Elisa learns as she grows to adulthood and begins to work with Paul that her ability to self-heal, her enhanced empathic sensitivity, and the long life that she can expect are not the result of technological procedures or random genetic sampling, as Paul has told her, but that she is the first and only successful result of a program of genetic engineering carried out with the DNA of unwilling "Outside" human subjects. Her genetic origins are false, the ethical purity of the scientific enterprise to which she has dedicated her young life is a lie, her beloved Paul—who taught her all that she knew and

raised her to be the competent genetic scientist she is—a liar and sociopath who has no qualms using other humans for his own ends.

Elisa's post-apocalyptic journey in Élisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City*[64] begins by adhering to the tropes of post-apocalyptic fiction but moves through and beyond them towards a truly new society that operates beyond the hierarchical and fundamentally divisive boundaries enacted by Western patriarchal dualist logics. After Elisa's realization of the truth of her life, the narrative follows her escape from Paul, who by that time is the last resident of the City, having murdered his remaining colleagues, into the post-apocalyptic ruins of the world Outside, and her struggles against the violently patriarchal organization of society and of the scientific enterprise itself. Vonarburg reveals that the Cities were built long ago as refuges for the privileged from the ravages of nuclear war, but the humans left Outside were decimated, and reduced to a Hobbesian state of nature, with a misogynist twist: ten female children now are born for every one male. Women are expendable chattel in the societies Outside, abused, taken advantage of, and of no account; sexist attitudes are writ large and visible in *The Silent City*. Elisa's scientific work in the City had been searching for a cure for this "Trickster" virus, hoping to effect social change through scientific discovery. Her uncovering of Paul's deceit and controlling, murderous tendencies disrupts her detached pursuit of knowledge, forcing her to get "field experience," as she is required to live among the Outside societies in disguise, accompanied by her sympathetic ommach/teacher Ostrer. Elisa's ability to change the structure of her cellular makeup means that, with effort and technological aid, she can change completely into a man.

The consequences of her abrupt break with Paul, and the necessity of involving herself as a subject within her own research, for Elisa's continued acquisition and production of knowledge

[64] Originally published as *Le silence de la cité* in 1981, and translated into English by Jane Brierly in 1988.

is profound: Vonarburg devotes the remaining bulk of the novel to Elisa's development of a method of scientific research that foregrounds relational subjectivity (and its attendant affects) as a valid form of knowledge. The plot I have summarized to this point thus far comprises only the first part of the four-part novel; in the following pages, Elisa struggles with and is forced to kill Paul, returns to the Cities to shut their computer systems down lest they be misused, and embarks on a Project of her own: to create children using her own genetic material and raise them in a quiet camp away from the City, in hopes that they will meet with the "Outside" humans in adulthood, intermarry, and pass along their genetic predispositions for long life, self-healing, and transformation to their offspring. Vonarburg narrates Elisa's journey as a parent, a friend, a scientist, and an ethical individual both beholden to the technologies of the City and in opposition to their historical use as tools of domination and exploitation. *The Silent City* contemplates in what ways that subjects come to know, what they are willing to do to acquire that knowledge and what, finally, to do with that knowledge once it exists; as Vonarburg dramatizes, gender and lived experiences are crucial to this process and inform characters' decisions throughout the novel.

This chapter pays attention to the misogynist baggage accompanying the "science" half of the term "science fiction" in a study of how gender identity is an integral piece of the narrative of survival, illustrated by an analysis of select post-apocalyptic Canadian SF from 1948-1989. During these years, SF authors and readers experienced the rise of second-wave feminism in North America concurrently with an increased ecological awareness, and so a particular attention here is paid to *The Silent City*, as Vonarburg's narrative speaks to a number of the issues and arguments within the SF community and society at large stemming from this new consciousness. Gendered modes of criticism and analysis found common cause with and indeed informed (and

were in turn informed by) environmental critique during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s; as I will discuss below, women and the environment have been historically disadvantaged by an androcentric scientific enterprise that devalues "the natural" and the other in order to be able to more fully exploit them. The genre of "science" fiction generally, in explicitly taking its starting point as the scientific method itself, is steeped in the historical essentialist and misogynist attitudes that informed seventeenth-century European epistemology and orientation towards the natural and social world. To that end, the first portion of this chapter will be comprised of a brief historical sketch of ecofeminism's development in North America, its reflections on the way that women and nature were historically conflated in European culture and scientific assumptions, and a consideration of the way that feminist writing and critique intervened in SF discourse in North America. SF feminisms disrupted what had historically been seen as a male space, much in the same way that women's writing in Canadian realist literature in the 1960s threatened a male-dominated institution (Moss and Sugars 219).[65] This intervention forced a recognition of not only women's capacity for authorship but also the ways in which SF narratives take up and replicate ideologies of American and Canadian nationhood that rely upon an exclusionary and oppressive model of European men's relationship to the non-human environment that, in turn, disadvantages women.[66] The misogynist character of SF narratives is particularly concentrated in the subgenre of post-apocalyptic SF, infamous for celebrating a return to conservatism, enforcing oppositional binary categories for its subjects, and threatening violence against transgressors.

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[65] I follow scholar Helen Merrick by referring to SF feminism*s* rather than feminist SF; she notes that the term "feminist SF" is "most commonly used to denote 'sf for feminists,' and (increasingly from the 1980s on) 'sf by feminists,' but also sf by, or for, women." SF feminisms as a term does a better job indicating its inclusivity of a variety of different communities and generations, and the ways in which they express themselves—it also works to defamiliarize notions of the universalizing category of Woman that accompanies a singular and static politico-social identity of Feminist (Merrick 9).

[66] This attitude is a major factor in the historical and ongoing oppression of Black, Indigenous, and persons of colour (BIPOC) of all genders—more on this in chapter three.

There are two fallacious assumptions that recur in realist literature and SF alike that are on obvious display in many post-apocalyptic Canadian SF of the later decades of the twentieth century: first, that simply inserting women into a certain sphere (a mode of writing, of practicing science, of politics) makes it a feminist space and no further work towards equality need be done. Second, that simply by reversing hierarchies, or putting female-bodied persons in positions of authority instead of men, a freer and more equal society can be achieved. As I will discuss in this chapter, SF feminisms advocating separatism and/or matriarchy as a solution to the violence and oppressions of patriarchy do not challenge what ecofeminist theorists such as Carolyn Merchant and Val Plumwood see as the fundamental alienation of men from women, from which springs the disastrous oppression of women, minorities, non-human others, and the earth itself. Separatist attitudes can overlook the way that society and political systems are themselves structurally androcentric, relying on a Cartesian dualistic rationale to separate subjects from objects in order to more readily exploit them. Further, this rationale draws on an older logic that reaffirms gendered essentialism, maintaining a behavioural split between men and women sourced in biological differences and assigning more value to traits coded masculine and devaluing feminine characteristics. This chapter's socialist ecofeminist lens critically evaluates the ways in which subjects come to know: the Western template of knowledge acquisition (the scientific method) is based in a historical tradition of assuming to know what women are like and the nature of nature itself, with the end goal of coming to know the unknown and revealing the hidden (at whatever cost) for the purposes of their thorough exploitation. This violence is coded into SF most explicitly in the dominant American attitudes imbuing mid-latter twentieth-century post-apocalyptic SF, as the last chapter will demonstrate; however, most Canadian post-apocalyptic SF from the same period is not at all exempt from historical patriarchal genre logics.

My research sets out to show that many post-apocalyptic SF novels from 1948-1989 authored by Canadian women use SF's generic potential to lament and challenge sexist attitudes endemic to the genre and, in the case of Vonarburg, to envision a future beyond binary hierarchical attitudes. Texts by Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and Hélène Holden vex the typical post-apocalyptic narrative by focusing on women's experiences of catastrophe and their reaction to and struggles within a world whose parameters are defined by (male) political/military decisions to use nuclear technology, developed by men, for men in a scientific paradigm that rests upon a philosophy that justifies the violent extraction of information and resources from women and the earth. SF is invested in speculation stemming from the use of the scientific method to advance technology, and post-apocalyptic SF in particular relies heavily on a reactionary survivalism that attempts to recreate a society structured by a conservative, essentialist worldview supported by patriarchal Western scientific logic. In the generic confines of post-apocalyptic fiction, there are agential (human/male) subjects and there are inert (natural/female) objects: these categories may shift depending on who occupies them (e.g.: a female instead of a male CEO or principal investigator), but they remain constant, a result of the basic scientific logic of hierarchy between the knower and the known. Stories narrated from the position of the supposedly inert object of knowledge have the potential to consciously question this fundamental dualism by enacting a form of cognitive estrangement: the rearrangement of the power hierarchy is surprising, new, and different, and forces readers to re-evaluate the structure of power itself. This estrangement can throw into question not just the unequal distribution of power (to males instead of females or humans instead of animals), but also has the potential to reveal the ways in which power hierarchies (whether patriarchal, racist, speciesist, etc.) are constructed as cruel and exploitative in the first place. *The Silent City* especially works hard to

break what Plumwood calls “the hold of the subject/object division” in order to envision a feminist science that models a different, situated method of knowledge acquisition. Elisa’s Project anticipates many ecofeminist and feminist science scholars’ call for an ethically-integrated science of care and responsibility that views others as subjects and respects the limits of what can be known.

II Surviving Essentialism: The Rise of Sexist Science and its Impact on Genre Literature

The scientific enterprise as it arose in Europe during the seventeenth century predicated itself on essentialist assumptions that conflated women and nature as both stubbornly withholding vital knowledge from human men. Merchant points to the work of Francis Bacon, one of the “fathers of modern science,” as instrumental in advocating for “the control of nature for human benefit” in which “female imagery became a tool in adapting scientific knowledge and method to a new form of human power over nature” (“Dominion” 68). Merchant’s “Dominion over Nature” analyzes Bacon’s writing in the historical context of the ongoing witch trials in England, where women who were suspected of demonic magics were tortured mercilessly in order to extract information about their co-conspirators and/or a confession of their evil deeds. Merchant argues that scientific discourse about nature codified the gender of nature as a female to be exploited, inviting abusive interrogation much in the same way as a torture victim on trial for witchcraft (“Dominion” 69); her link between women’s persecution and the ramping-up of the exploitation of nature is echoed by socialist ecofeminists such as Plumwood in articulating the fundamentally misogynist underpinnings of a rationalist economics system that glorifies a separation of (masculine) intellectual reason from denigrated (feminine) bodily situatedness. Thus developed a scientific ethic that saw no problem with manipulation and

use of the earth to satisfy scientific curiosity and capitalist gain within a patriarchal system of society.

This binary hierarchical stratification did not come out of nowhere: nature and the feminine have a long history of conflation in Western culture, but in pre-industrial times the mystery and power of nature and the life-giving capacity of women had inspired respect or, at least, fond feeling for a maternal figure. Merchant's earlier text, *The Death of Nature*: *Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980), devotes its first chapter to a feminist analysis of the alignment of nature with femininity throughout historical Western literature and art; a foundational ecofeminist text, *Death* demonstrates how for centuries nature and the feminine were constructed as oppositional and inferior to culture and the masculine.[67] Merchant pays attention especially to how pastoral poetry and art of the Renaissance were reflective of pre-industrial European attitudes towards nature as "a calm, kindly female, giving of her bounty" (*Death* 7) far from the violence of the city that nonetheless could be transformed via the power of (male) industry in to a productive landscape of fields and gardens. Further, this feminine nature was inert, though nurturing, and depended on a masculine metaphor of nature as mother and bride whose duty was to provide for the wellbeing of the man and to give respite from the problems of urbanization; pastoral imagery depicted both nature and women as essentially passive and subordinate (*Death* 9), a place for masculine desires to be inscribed. Merchant argues that this older attitude served as a "cultural constraint" on the actions of human beings, however, since "[o]ne does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold or mutilate her body" (*Death* 3). The advent of the industrial era and of scientific inquiry was made possible not

[67] Male/female and culture/nature were codified as factual separations and assigned uneven values in the development of modern scientific thought, a shared starting point for such widely varying ecofeminist positions such as the feminist ecotheology of Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether; as well as the environmental philosophy of Plumwood, Donna Haraway, Stacy Alaimo, and others.

just by advances in technology but in a philosophical shift in attitude to view feminine nature as inviting—and deserving—of violation by masculine scientific and technological enterprise.

The misogynist denigration of nature and the feminine as equally inseparable and violable served to reinforce the codification of an exclusionary human ideal, an ideology which continues to influence scientific and economic discourse to this day. Rosi Braidotti gives the ur-example of the Enlightenment Human as envisioned by Leonardo da Vinci's sketch of the Vitruvian Man: an able-bodied, European, cis man (his heterosexuality and adherence to Christianity implied by his creator and the societal norms of Western Europe of the 16th-17th centuries) (*The Posthuman* 13). He is also depicted as set apart from his surroundings: this is the individual par excellence, who relies on no-one, is solely responsible for his own welfare. The ideology of anthropocentrism lives on in the language of science which, as Plumwood reminds us, is usually the place seen most fit to place "ecological concern and discussion" (10). Merchant highlights the fact that the language of science (and thus SF) transmits a violent sexual imagery of "constraint of nature … dissection by hand and mind, and the penetration of hidden secrets" codified through reference to "hard facts," the (male) genius' "penetrating mind" or "thrust of his argument" ("Dominion" 71). Historically and contemporarily, economic rationalism has drawn on the highly gendered metaphors made available to it by science to justify patriarchal, colonial violence: reason necessitates the regulation of a detached and "objective" method of decision-making where "'soft' emotions such as sympathy and ethical concepts of social care are opposed to its own 'hard' discipline of economic mathematization and quantification" (Plumwood 31). Industrial capitalism and the scientific enterprise developed to discount women's humanity and nature's value, backed up by a literary tradition portraying nature as a woman whose motherly

nurturing of the human race via water, food, and metals was interpreted as an invitation to the male human to exploit her fully.

Literature's conflation of women and nature in European cultural production continued during the industrial revolution and intertwined with the rise of both genre and realist fiction in North America. Merchant asserts that it was no doubt the pastoral representation of America that hastened the exploitation and disruption of these "virgin" lands (*Death* 20). The European scientific ideology that held non-human nature to be "essentially" feminine and the scientific method to be "essentially" masculine as the culture that produced it thus was present in North American colonial culture from the very beginning, sculpting European settlers' attitudes towards non-human nature. Heather Murray, reading Annette Kolodny's article "Lay of the Land" in 1986, notes how an American literary and popular tradition "sees the land as 'she' or 'other' (virgin, bride, mother) to be tamed, mastered, raped, fertilized, or destroyed by a solitary male hero who has escaped from a civilization seen as emasculating and, again, feminine" (66). Murray's subsequent conclusion, drawing on Nina Baym's work, that this pattern is "integral" to American ideology to the extent that it is used by American literary critics as a standard, stands out starkly for the purposes of SF feminisms. As the previous chapter noted, SF can be thought of as the literature of America,[68] and post-apocalyptic SF read as the collapse of a specifically American culture, prompting specifically American reactions.[69] There is a slippage here between the genres of (American) realist and SF literature in that they can be seen to proceed from the same essentialist axioms about women and nature throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, perpetuating the same narrative of disconnection between hierarchical—but separate—binaries.

[68] Clute 22; Runté and Kulyk 48; Ketterer 1.
[69] Curtis 5-6; Bellamy ii.

The conflation of women and the land in the popular Euro-American tradition strongly influenced early American SF, which in popular culture has dictated the form of the genre for the past century.[70] The general attitude that SF is "a man's world" (Pelletier 173) can be seen as a deliberate, exclusionary construct that follows from and is built upon the development of the scientific method itself as a tool for the deliberate exclusion of female subjecthood, rendering woman and nature as objects when present, regardless of the reality of women's participation in early SF fandom. Prior to the increased awareness of women writing SF in the late 1960s and early '70s, the genre was rooted in what scholar Sarah Lefanu calls "masculine concerns" such as space exploration, the development of technology, and other areas "effectively denied to women in the real world" (3), along with the "frontier-myth"-inspired themes of colonization, triumphant individualism, and the physical prowess to engage in combat.[71] Scholar Lisa Yaszek notes that, contrary to popular belief, many female authors were writing SF in English for decades before the intervention of feminism in SF (*Wired* 2019).[72] She chalks up the false image that there were not many female SF writers to the sexist attitudes of American male editors, such as John W. Campbell and Groff Conklin, who put together the first North American SF anthologies and deliberately excluded women authors from the collections (*Wired* 2019). As Lefanu and feminist scholar Helen Merrick have noted, SF was from its beginning a genre whose extrapolation began where the scientific method itself left off, and therefore can be seen as inextricable from what feminist scholars such as Merchant and Plumwood have argued is a historically sexist and racist

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[70] As I discussed in the introduction, it is important to know that present critical discussions of SF (Otto 2012; Hambrick 2012; Bernardo 2014; Seed 2014) are based mainly upon understandings of the genre as it was articulated by texts published during a so-called "Golden Age" of SF in the United States (primarily in the 1950s), which dictate its tropes and mores (Silverberg 2012; Clute et. al 2015), and that these decades-old narratives are adapted into contemporary films and widely enjoyed by contemporary audiences.

[71] Clute 22; Runté and Kulyk 48.

[72] For further reading, see Merrick, chapter four, for a comprehensive herstory of feminist and SF feminisms' reclamation and celebration of women's writing in SF.

European scientific enterprise that sought to subjugate women and the natural in the name of increased knowledge (from which the industrial capitalist "men of science" would then profit). This orientation, as Merchant demonstrates, is itself an outgrowth of older essentialist logic that though less overtly hostile than Baconian-style instrumentalist science is no less hierarchical in its valuation of "masculine civilization/culture" as inherently superior to "feminine nature."

As I also discussed in the previous chapter, the pastoral assumption of nature as a nurturing female (or, in contrast, a sublime and exciting new vista) did not hold in Canada for European settlers, whose general attitude towards nature/wilderness as a hostile, threatening force to be survived was codified in its realist literary canon. I would like to bring up the question asked in my first chapter once again: what, in this paradigm, is the thing that survives? *Survival,* Atwood's 1972 survey of Canadian texts, focused on works of realist literature by mainly white, settler, heterosexual cismen written during the previous half-century. It bears repeating my argument that survival, as defined by Atwood, is *not* surviving to then go on to other things, but *survival to rebuild the old*. It is not survival as adaptation but as a "grim" carrying on through crisis or disaster—a "*vestige of a vanished order which has managed to persist after its time is past*" (Atwood, "Selections" 16; emphases mine). Survival can be read as a specific type of longing to return to a world dictated by colonial and imperial values, stratified into precise gender roles as necessitated by the harsh environment; a refusal to let go of a nostalgia that effects an eternal return of the settler-colonial, patriarchal early Canadian identity predicated on exploration, resource extraction, and combat against hostile Others (Indigenous, French, American, etc.). Survival can be read in post-apocalyptic SF as a nostalgia that is mobilized to effect the return of a privileged way of life for a select few; the society and culture

of Vonarburg's City seems to have carried on much in the same way as it had before the bombs, just underground and with life-extending gene therapies for those privileged survivors.

Survival is above all an impulse concerned with the survival of the masculine self and the patriarchal structures that enable a certain type of dominant toxic masculinity; if not literally, then ideologically, in the way that the post-disaster society is structured androcentrically and the lived realities of women are discounted or otherized. The dream of a world laid waste by nuclear (or otherwise total) destruction, wherein the human (white male) self is returned, seemingly without effort, to this colonial era, is a seductive one for some.[73] As pointed out in chapter one, the urge to recreate Frye's garrison as a literal reality leads to narratives of a "closely knit and beleaguered society" where, due to that society's nature as "a perilous enterprise," its moral and social values are unquestioned and not up for discussion in order to present a unified front to the dangers outside of it ("Selections" 11). Driven by the pragmatics of survival, the society reads individualism as a deliberate act of conflict against the group (Frye, "Selections" 11), an impulse that operates as a direct contradiction to twenty-first-century American ideals of the neoliberal individual, yet one that simplifies and reduces the complexities of identity to a simple maxim: either with us or against us. The structure of post-apocalyptic SF as a genre parallels these exclusionary ideologies and hierarchical social organizations and holds them integral to the imperative of survival in an unknown—and therefore hostile—territory. Even in the American metaphor of the challenging-but-not-overwhelming frontier that much of SF patterned itself after, what seems to be a slightly more redeeming attitude towards nature, the figure of the woman (or the feminine) is still oppositional. Murray observes that the metaphor of the frontier

[73] Never mind that the dreamer is conveniently allowed to forget that early colonizers of North America often had the support of imperial European regimes behind them, supplying them with weapons, food, trade goods, transport, shelter, etc., whereas in a post-catastrophic world that would not at all be the case.

doubles down on the nature/culture dichotomy, framing women as "either nature (land) or culture (society) but invariably constitutes her as other, as part of … a force against which the lone hero must set himself" (66). As the meeting point of American colonial frontier and Canadian garrison metaphors, the subgenre of post-apocalyptic SF held—and still holds—an especially androcentric, and sometimes outright misogynist, position throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.[74] Both the colonial enterprise and the post-apocalyptic community are seen to operate along similar patriarchal lines that are harsh yet easily reduced to a humanist narrative that connotes moral worth, delineating between those who belong and those who do not.

In the apocalyptic literature from which modern-day SF apocalyptic narratives are sourced, the binary logic of patriarchy is held up as the way to escape immanent apocalyptic violence, enacting a pre-emptive violence in anticipation the "day of the Lord"/Apocalypse as the "thief in the night" (*New International Version,* 1 Thess. 5:2) which could arrive at any moment. Tina Pippin, reading the Christian apocalypse, emphasizes it as a gratuitous fantasy of misogynist violence, one that is repeated and celebrated throughout Biblical and church history (2), where men and women who transgress their assigned gender roles are horrifically punished.[75] Survival is dependent on a strict adherence to a set of rules to be followed, which are different for men and women, priests and laity, Christians and others, the saved and the unsaved. The Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic worldview enacts the same logic of hierarchical binary opposition as the garrison in order to ensure the survival of its adherents in the face of perceived

[74] See: Curtis 5-6; E. Kroon 131; Broderick 374; Bellamy ii.

[75] Pippin gives a few ghastly examples from the Bible to reinforce her point: "In the Apocalypse of Peter women who commit infanticide or abortion suffer the taunts of their children 'and the milk of the mothers flows from their breasts and congeals and smells foul, and from it come forth beasts that devour flesh, which turn and torture them for ever with their husbands….' There are 'wheels of fire, and men and women hung thereon by the power of their whirling'" (3).

outside violence. Post-apocalyptic societies such as Jean Tétrau's Babylone (*Les tours de Babylone* 1972), Michael Carin's New Manhattan (*The Neutron Picasso* 1989) and Leslie Gadallah's Monn (*The Loremasters* 1989) are examples of this attitude writ into narrative reality: other humans beyond those social groups are thought to be irrational, violent, and not to be trusted. The phrase that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than that of capitalism[76] could be easily applied in this context but with a single choice substitution: in much of SF, it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than that of hierarchical dualisms, which then persist beyond apocalypse and into the future, always already dictating the terms of the social contract of disconnection between genders.

Essentialism understands "the feminine" as a repository of unchanging truths, determining substances, and ground of being, quite literally: it holds the historical European cultural conflation of women and nature as truth, and radical feminist political thought (and many feminist utopian SF) of the 1970s leaned into this binary, but flipped the moral hierarchy.[77] Publications such as Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) and Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* (1979), for example, embraced the identification of non-human nature and the feminine, celebrating the power of chthonic forces, the moon, fertility, and historical goddess worship. Radical, goddess, and essentialist feminisms drew on deep ecology, following the same binary logic as Francis Bacon did, but reversing the moral weighting, holding the "male" forces of civilization, culture, and science as highly suspect in collusion with the systematic oppression/torture of women and the earth, if not the very reason for women's

[76] A quote attributed variously to Fredric Jameson or Slavoj Žižek and regularly referenced in socialist and genre theory.

[77] I am here historicizing for the sake of this literature review, but this attitude is alive and well today in the politics of trans-exclusive radical feminists (TERFs), a subgroup of radical feminists whose reification of biological essentialism leads them to deny trans peoples' identities, holding that only people born with two X chromosomes and a vagina are truly women, and will forever remain so. For further reading, please see Cristan Williams.

suffering. Cis women's bodies, traditionally the reason for their exclusion from spiritual and intellectual spheres reserved for men, were instead celebrated by some feminists as the ground of human life and part of the mystery of creation itself. Feminist community based on cis female sisterhood was and is a fantasy (Hogeland 10) that, in addition to being violently exclusionary to trans and genderqueer persons and invested in creating and maintaining a distance between cis women and all others, at base replicates the same power structures that fuel patriarchal ideology, only with the values reversed. There is still a hierarchy in place, adhering to the same conflation of women with nature and its consequent essentialist logic in order to exclude the Other from the category of human. Female empowerment is crucial to the realization of women's full humanity, but its celebration at the expense of others plays directly into the ideology of exclusion and disconnection, perpetuating the very structures of oppression that make it necessary for female empowerment in the first place.

There are many instances of SF authors using a post-apocalyptic plot to escape from or criticize the violence of a disaster dictated by the patriarchal imagination along the already established lines of a sexist society; however, without critical interrogation of the philosophies undergirding SF itself, it is possible for SF feminisms to replicate these ultimately patriarchal structures and essentialist attitudes. Lefanu notes how SF's technique of defamiliarization offers "enormous scope" to female writers (21), somewhat lyrically elaborating that "SF offers a language for the narration of dreams, for the dissolution of self and for the interrogation of cultural order" (23). Specifically, Lefanu asserts that often women writing SF use the "disaster convention" as a means of both critiquing existing structures and the patriarchal status quo and opening space to imagine a different, "often separatist" world (89). Though not always following in the wake of apocalyptic violence or disaster, the genre of the female-only utopia in second-

wave SF often served as a vehicle for critique of the patriarchal status quo and a reinvention of society to be less oppressive (to cis women, at least). Merrick's text *Secret Feminist Cabal* traces the consolidation of a variety of female separatist utopias in American SF to become a category in and of itself in second-wave feminist SF criticism, noting that the anti-realist attitude of SF can hold a broad spectrum of feminist political positions "from the most reactionary to the most radical" (51). She points to critical works such as Joanna Russ' "Recent Feminist Utopias" (1981) as canon-building for "feminist sf," both in the recuperation of texts such as Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora* (1890) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), as well as those published in the 1970s and '80s such as Monique Wittig's *Les Guérrilleres* (1969), Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Shattered Chain* (1976), and James Tiptree, Jr.'s "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976) (Merrick 125). The narrative of a female separatist utopia often ran parallel to (and, in some cases, reinforced) an essentialist understanding of the category of woman that informed (and still informs) radical feminist thought: this makes for interesting SF *nova* and empowering narratives, to be sure, but its realization is politically and ethically spurious.

The narrative of the post-apocalyptic cis female-only separatist society mistakes patriarchal violence as the root cause of gendered oppression instead of seeing it as a symptom of essentialist thinking: in consequence, these fictive narratives reify dualisms instead of deconstructing them. As Lefanu states, SF "like all writing, is written from within a particular ideology" (3) and the dominant generic ideology of SF from its inception in beginning of the twentieth century and its proliferation in America during the 40s and 50s was androcentric and patriarchal. The majority of writers prior to and during this "Golden Age" of SF in America were men, writing for an assumedly masculine audience, and whose otherwise fantastic and imaginative narratives had, Lefanu observes, been conspicuously silent on issues such as the

personal and political relationships between women and men (4). Vonarburg, in an article on SF authorship, admits that male authors' "conditioned reflexes are not so surprising," but since SF as a genre is essentially about the imagining of alternatives, "of challenging prejudices … of promoting change, this does seem rather curious, a sign of deplorable laziness or alarming intellectual blindness" ("Women and Science Fiction" 179). SF without the conscious engagement of oppressive ideologies is not politically or socially useful, and in fact can act to extend the status quo or justify the continued oppression of those relegated to the category of Other, and so these stories do not contribute at all to a feminist project of gender-inclusivity in the 21st century.

I want to make it clear that this section's argument is not meant to downplay the enormous contribution of many writers whose twentieth-century American SF feminist works completely upended binary notions of gender and sexuality, women's "essential" link to femininity and nature, and boldly challenged gender roles, laying the groundwork for important gains in gender equality in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Twentieth-century SF works such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (1970), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time (*1976), Samuel R. Delany's *Triton* (1976), and Octavia Butler's *Patternmaster* (1976) all operated to make space for a questioning of gender, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and more. The consideration of gender, race, and class as constructed facets of a person's identity in the above SF texts was reflected in later theoretical works by feminist, womanist, and queer scholars such as, for example, Haraway's theorization of cyborg ontology (1984), Gloria Anzaldua's articulation of new mestiza consciousness (1987), Kimberlé Crenshaw's introduction of intersectionality (1989), and Judith Butler's "dispelling of any heteronormative foundation of biological sex" (1990, qtd in

Åsberg 158). SF, when disloyal to its roots in disconnection, is capable of the kind of cognitive estrangement that leads to imaginative expansion allowing for opportunity to rethink and reinvent the way that society operates. It is capable of being both a critical and creative force, but its efficacy depends very much on its author's attention.

For example, Vonarburg tackles the problematics of a women's political revolution that ends up only replicating faulty essentialist hierarchies in the last third of *The Silent City*, explicitly demonstrating how a matriarchal culture founded on violence against men is a cruel inversion of the same logic that fuels a violent misogynist society. An older and wiser Elisa reunites with Judith, whom Elisa had met and slept with as a man in her younger days while struggling to balance the political dynamic Outside and shut down the last remaining Cities. Judith, erstwhile second wife of warlord Carlo Vietelli, is now the leader of an army of women, many from Vietelli but all of whom rebelled against the violent, oppressive patriarchy of their societies and fled to join Judith's ranks of guerrilla warriors. Judith is about to meet with Carlo's son Manilo to discuss peace between his city and the establishment of Libera, a city of free women; Elisa realizes with horror that Judith means to betray Manilo, using the meeting as a red herring to draw out the Vietelli troops and slaughter the men back in the city while they are unguarded, taking control of the city of Vietelli.

> "Logical. Likely. Two fronts. And victory is contagious. There's no doubt it could work. Elisa contemplates Judith with horror.
>
> No doubt? No flaw?
>
> *Manilo*." (*City* 171)

Elisa tries unsuccessfully to tell Judith that Manilo is acting in good faith; prior to this meeting, she had interacted with Manilo in Vietelli and her heightened empathy had picked up on his

sincerity. However, Judith replies that "[i]t's them or us. Peaceful coexistence is impossible" (*City* 171). Elisa is alarmed by Judith's either-or logic in its familiarity: she has learned by this point in the novel that dualistic thinking is not only a falsification of the complexity of human reality but dangerous in its reductionism. Paul suffered the same simplifying madness in his willingness to disregard the autonomy and worth of other humans, especially women, in using them as objects to further his scientific knowledge, and later in his penchant for violent murder to vent his emotions. Elisa's emotional intelligence insists on the inherent worth of human beings no matter their identity and she draws on her experiences interacting with others as subjects to inform her decision-making.

III The Centre of the Margin: replicating sexist hierarchy in Canadian post-apocalyptic SF

In much of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF, the struggle of the (pseudo-)hero is narrated from what Plumwood aptly names "the standpoint of the Centre" that "frame[s] the world in arrogant and self-maximising terms that do not adequately allow for what is not known and perhaps cannot be known" (120). This is despite the fact that, as described last chapter, the Canadian "hero" of SF is often not "traditional" hero-material at all, focusing on a protagonist who is only adjacent (or not at all connected) to decision-makers or politically/socially significant people. It remains that this protagonist, for all their lack of political power, is usually white, educated, middle-class or wealthy, heterosexual, and male, giving them an instant leg up in the social world of the novel. For example, the list of post-apocalyptic Canadian texts includes novels such as *Les nomades* by Jean Tétrau (1967), a story focusing primarily on the post-disaster life of female protagonist Silvana, a narrative that (along with Gagnon's 1971 *Les tours de Babylone*, discussed below) was lauded as a "turning point" in the literary development of Québec SF by critic Jean-Marc Gouanvic, as it combines the SF themes of imaginary adventure

with political and ethical reflection. Yet *Les nomades* leans heavily on essentialist notions of women's connection to the natural environment, particularly the pastoral, and its protagonist performs her gender and class identity almost perfectly. Silvana leaves the ruins of the Italian resort where she was living when disaster struck in order to wander the post-disaster countryside and, though roughing it is difficult, she rejoices in her newfound life in nature (Tétrau 106). She even plays house for a bit in an abandoned cottage with another survivor, Niels, who eventually becomes her lover (Tétrau 134). The couple go in search of Silvana's hometown of Canazei, hoping to find other people[78] and, though Niels dies crossing the mountains (Tétrau 244), Silvana settles into her childhood home in Canazei to raise her child and to support and employ other post-disaster survivors in the fashion of a country gentlewoman. The narrative's complete reinvestment in the binary logic of gender essentialism, along with its unproblematic re-establishment of a class system (not to mention its Eurocentrism) establishes *Les nomades* as perhaps the most conservative of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF narratives despite (or perhaps because of) its female protagonist.

In the milieu of the male-dominated arena of SF of the 1960s and 1970s, fiction authored by women was taken for granted to be subversive, even if those stories did nothing to challenge or even acknowledge the fundamentally dualistic logic of patriarchal society—nature, supposed to be inert and non-agential background decoration for the world in which the male protagonist acts, was speaking up in SF. Lisa Hogeland notes that in the 1970s, it was generally accepted that to be a woman was to be a feminist: there was a pervasive belief that all women were feminists by virtue of their gender, with the "corollary belief that all women-authored or women-centered

[78] Importantly, these others should be settled. Silvana early on encounters an enormous column of people that she speculates are refugees from destroyed cities; she follows them for a bit but finds that "[l]es hommes se meneçaient, les femmes s'insultaient, les enfants pleuraient. Elle n'entendit pas un seul rire pendant toute sa poursuite," and so she leaves to continue her journey by herself (Tétrau 115).

fiction has a necessary relationship to feminism" (xvi).[79] On the one hand, as Christine Kulyk argues, women's position can be seen as that of "second-class citizens" in mainstream patriarchal society, increasing the probability of female SF writers narrating from the viewpoint of the alien or other (167). On the other, as Vonarburg points out in her analytical essay "Women and Science Fiction," it is entirely possible for female SF authors to unconsciously replicate given hierarchical structures in SF, with reference to the early stories of Leigh Brackett and Catherine Moore, which perpetuated the stereotypical portrayal of women in SF or depicted female heroines with masculine "heroic" attributes such as outsized strength ("Women and Science Fiction" 181). This type of women's writing in SF, though sometimes challenging the traditional attribution of physical strength and prowess to men only, did nothing to disturb the underlying binary hierarchy still extant between the valuing of "hard" masculine attributes such as power and the devaluing of "soft" feminine concerns such as social relations.

My research shows that Canadian post-apocalyptic SF remained for the most part stolidly patriarchal in its structure and attitudes from 1948 until 1989: much of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF demonstrates that it is very possible for stories in this subgenre to rest comfortably within established structures without challenging them in the slightest, notwithstanding the gender of its authors or protagonists. And so, there are female-authored post-apocalyptic texts that do not make so much as a passing comment about the sexist stratification of contemporary society, such as Gadallah's *The Loremasters* (1989), which features several female narrators who each inhabit structurally patriarchal worlds and exist in relation to the main male character. The feudal and theocratic society of Monn casts knowledgeable women as witches and reviles them, and the technologically-advanced Mid-American Enclave is still

[79] "([A]s if women writers always had political agendas!)" (Vonarburg "Women and Science Fiction" 186).

subject to what Russ terms the "galactic suburbia" pitfall: it is futuristic in its politics, living arrangements, science, and technology, but gender relations remain a mirror of those in the 1980s. "Raindance" (1987) by Catherine Sinclair is focused on an unnamed male protagonist's brief stay in a town that sacrifices a child to bring a stop to the endless rain. The story has female characters, but the protagonist is more interested in a place to sleep and the narrative only comments on their suspicious behaviour (watching him, falling silent, etc.) as it relates to his being an unwelcome outsider. Conversely, while Paulette Jiles' *The Late Great Human Roadshow* does not make any overt arguments about women's lived experiences or oppression, it can be counted as feminist due to the characters of its many female narrators alone: they have complex motivations, individual histories, are of different races, ages, neurodiversity, and classes. The novel, which I discuss in chapter four, does not consciously interrogate the way that humans come to know their surroundings or human gender relations, more interested in other philosophical questions such as how to act ethically despite the destruction of society and in the face of death by radiation poisoning. Jiles's writing does not investigate or comment on women's alienation from men in any real political way, but there is the simple matter of truth in representation of women and the choices she has made as an author to foreground women's agency in the post-apocalyptic setting, averting SF tropes about female characters.

Canadian SF more broadly is a case study of how the entrance and participation of women in SF does not challenge its fundamental hierarchical dichotomy of "hard" and "soft" unless it is consciously engaged. Though perceived as a male-dominated genre by many readers,[80] women's historical involvement in the Canadian SF "scene" as writers, editors, and fan organizers began to be celebrated by many writers and critics from the 1990s onward.[81] JMerril,

[80] See: Pelletier 170-73; Vonarburg "Women and Science Fiction" 178; *Wired.*
[81] Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 90; Kulyk 160; Weiss and Spencer 16; Pelletier 175-76; Grant 15-16

Phyllis Gotlieb ["Canada's foremost Canadian science fiction writer since the 1960s" (Weiss and Spencer 17)], Vonarburg, Candas Jane Dorsey, and many others were writing SF in Canada at a time when "most people thought most writers in the genre were men" (*Wired*). The fact that Canadian literary celebrities, many of them now-famous female writers such as Atwood, Laurence, and Marian Engel, have all published in the SF genre is also one noted with pride by SF critics.[82] As noted by writer-critic Glenn Grant in his introduction to the anthology *Northern Suns* in 1999, the abundance of prominent female players in Canadian SF may influence interpretations of the genre as concerning itself with "softer" themes (sociological concerns, representing gendered and Othered minority/"alien" viewpoints, and environmental focus) as opposed to the "harder" themes of technology and exploration as found in mainstream (American) SF.[83]

The evaluation of Canadian SF as a genre as "soft" due to its sociopolitical interests mirrors almost exactly SF critics' assessment of (North American and British) women's SF as more often interested in the social, environmental, and political ramifications of technology/innovation/alien invasion as opposed to the "hard" scientific or technological details of the SF *novum*.[84] Due to the hierarchical dualism of "hard" vs "soft," much of Canadian SF finds itself automatically alienated from the dominant discourse at the level of language, its interests in the sociological and political deemed automatically inferior, occupying as they do the

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[82] See: Merril 277; Runté and Kulyk 45-6; Runté 17, etc. Canadian male literary greats have also published in the SF genre, including but not limited to Thériault, Hugh Hood, Hugh MacLennan, and Frederick Philip Grove.
[83] See: Colombo "Four Hundred" 39; Ketterer, *Canadian SF and F* 3; Ketterer "Canadian Science Fiction" 327-8; Runté and Kulyk 44-5; Weiss and Spencer 15; Leroux 2; Grant 15-16; Clute 22; Barbour 287-88.
[84]The *novum* (plural *nova*), as identified by Darko Suvin, is the central innovation or novelty from which all changes to the world of the narrative (technological, sociopolitical, etc.) must flow (63). Suvin required that the *novum* lead readers into a validation of its novelty through "scientifically methodical cognition" in order for it to be sufficiently science fiction (65-66); a claim since interrogated by women, people of colour, and readers from a non-Western context as suspect. Later voices added the dimensions of race and sexuality to the critique and pointed out that the claim of cognitive estrangement "suggests that everything in science fiction follows or should be conceptualized through the lens of the Western scientific rationalist paradigm" (Langer 9).

"soft" or "feminine" underside of the binary equation. The attribution of "soft" SF to female writers and of "hard" SF to male writers fosters the continuation of the constructed binary sexism of the historical patriarchal scientific enterprise and the codification of pre-Enlightenment essentialist values.

A focus on the so-called "soft" concerns of the sociopolitical and environmental ramifications of the apocalypse does not equate attention to gendered concerns or even realistic portrayals of women, and the way that essentialist thinking is baked into the western scientific worldview can be seen in how often sexist tropes crop up in SF. For example, Yves Thériault's otherwise brilliant and prescient collection of short stories and essays *Si la bombe m'était contée* (1962) falls into this trap of relying on essentialist tropes instead of working to portray realistic female characters, as does Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time* (1980). Both works are elegiac in their consideration and lament for what has been and/or could be lost through the violence of nuclear war: Thériault's stories are each a study of the breakdown of relationships between humans due to the terror and stress of survival; MacLennan's novel a meditation on the dangers of government overreach and fear-fuelled, ideological fascism. Yet the women in these narratives operate according to templates that rely on an underlying essentialist logic providing a shorthand for their motivations (i.e., sex and reproduction), values (i.e., peace and harmony amongst nations and in families), and roles (i.e., sex objects and/or nurturing mother-figures). "La Continuation," Thériault's single story (of five) about a female character, centres on eighteen-year-old Flavie who is left alone on her family's farm after a nuclear explosion and radiation sickness has wiped out her community. She subsequently follows a boy who becomes her lover to post-holocaust Paris, witnessing his death due to accidental exposure to concentrated radium in the ruins of a hospital (Thériault 48). She returns to her farm in the country, and her

child is born after six hours of labour that, the narrator informs us, "c'est vraiment trop, quand [l'enfant] s'agit d'un monstre…" (Thériault 49).[85] Flavie's motivations are directly tied to the man in her life, and her bearing of her lover's son to term is due to her hope that the baby would be a living reminder of him. However, we are never told what Flavie herself thinks of her child after its birth; instead she is silenced by the (male) narrator who immediately dismisses her experience as a wasted effort, due to her infant's status as an inferior, monstrous other due to its mutation. Flavie does not get to weigh in on the subject, but is mute and passive, and the story resigns her to her fate.

MacLennan's novel is similar in that, though operating across multiple narrators from three separate timelines and places in Canada and Germany, it contains no female narrative voices, even stereotypical ones parroted through the "standpoint of the centre" (Plumwood 120); in *Voices in Time*, the standpoint of the Centre is all there is. Dead women are invoked quite often as motivation for past male actions, however; Hanna Erlich is the good Jewish woman providing a moral compass for Conrad Dehmel in 1940s Germany; Orthodox Jewish woman Esther Stahr is an exoticized lover and foil for Timothy in 1970s Montréal; Stephanie Wellfleet, Conrad's second wife and Timothy's aunt, is remembered by Timothy as "all woman," as she does not "think like a man" (whatever that means), and is the maternal ideal (MacLennan 36-37); John Wellfleet reminisces about past lovers, now dead, who made him feel human (MacLennan 25), but women are almost entirely absent from John's post-apocalyptic future in 2039, save a brief mention of his interviewer's wife. In introducing Hanna and Esther into the narratives of

[85] Consider this in contrast with Merril's 1948 post-apocalyptic short story "That Only A Mother," where a mother, having given birth to a daughter mutated from nuclear radiation, dotes on her child regardless. Merril invests in the "housewife heroine" trope, to be sure, but does not break from her character's perspective to moralize about the worth of disabled children, leaving it to the reader to make that judgment call. Merril does plant many hints that infanticide is a normalized reaction by fathers to the birth of mutated children, however.

Conrad and Timothy, which John is recuperating with the help of their personal papers, he describes their bodily attractiveness, sexual appeal and promiscuity, and speculates about histories of violation and racial ancestries (MacLennan 59, 173). The men often chalk Hanna and Esther's actions up to their identities as Jewish women, as in Timothy's wondering if Esther's disclosure of her childhood rape was "her way of telling him that all was over between them," and "if that was why she had told him she could never marry a gentile" (MacLennan 70). Five minutes after this, she reappears from the bathroom "tidy and collected and ready" to host guests at a work event; Timothy's memoirs have no commentary on this, and neither does John, who is reading it. Real knowledge or truth in representation is bypassed in favour of the authors' reliance on stereotypes to help readers understand the motivations of female characters, which ultimately to furthers the characterization of male protagonists.

SF narratives' automatic attitude towards women as objects and props for male action even in a situation where the very structures of society have been upended reifies an essentialism that assumes a knowledge that in any given situation, women will automatically be subservient to male needs and desires. For example, as I will discuss further in chapter three, Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone* (1971) is considered an important narrative of the struggle of the individual against repressive society and could be read as allegory for Québec's struggle against social strictures during the *révolution tranquille* (Trudel 60), yet it does not at all focus on gendered concerns in the narrative beyond the reproductive control exerted over residents of Babylone in order to ensure the purity of their genes from radiation damage. Main male character Sévère, a military commander, ends up rebelling against the coercive and corrupt Babylonian political structure; the women he interacts with, on the other hand, serve as intriguing plot contrivances and romantic interests to supplement the narrative. Though interrogating society's political

structure and fighting for liberation from government oppression, the *Les tours de Babylone* assumes gendered hierarchical structures to be a natural given. Similarly, Jean-Claude Hamel's "Après Demain" (1974) focuses on twenty-year-old André, who struggles within a society that mandates marriage to ensure state-sanctioned procreation to rebuild the human population after the "suicide nucléaire," yet seems to be the only person who has a problem with it—in contrast, the two ancillary female characters seem completely subscribed to the logic of reproductive futurism, and a positive future is secured through heterosexual reproduction.[86] Geneviève, his erstwhile lover, ends up rejecting André due to his refusal to have children; she imagines that this means he only wants "[dix] enfants, qui vont lentement grandir … avec nous…. Dix beaux enfants, avec des filles très belles et des garcons très forts. Tu aura un fils, un grand fils" (119). The story assumes that women are on board with the Grande Réligion's procreative agenda as it matches up with their own internal longings for children, and many children at that. The uncritical repetition of sexist tropes in post-apocalyptic Canadian SF reinforces the promotion of essentialist stereotypes as value-free facts or objective knowledge about the way the world works.

In contrast, three of the six Canadian women who authored post-apocalyptic science fiction between 1948 and 1989 explicitly interrogate what Plumwood calls the "economic rationalism" of modernity that not only grounds the truth of cis female being in biological essentialism but categorizes them as (willing!) exploitable resources for men. In "A Queen in Thebes" (1964), Laurence explores the internalized essentialism of a woman who is determined

[86] Rebekah Sheldon states that "as developed by Lee Edelman, reproductive futurism names the logic by which the social good appears co-terminus with human futurity, a futurity emblematized by the figure of the child and vouchsafed through reproduction" (par. 2); this logic appears time and again in SF, reducing women to their reproductive potential and, in most cases, narratively imparting that women are happy collaborators in their instrumentalization due to an essentialism that views women as experiencing a "natural" urge to procreate, no matter the circumstances.

to live beyond nuclear catastrophe despite its destruction of everything in her world (her husband, her family, her friends; in fact, other human beings altogether) for the sake of her son: "she wanted and needed to die … she could not bring herself to kill her son and she could not leave him alone, so she was condemned to life" (163). However, by the end of the story, the woman is truly reduced to the status of object: she has forgotten her own name, is barred from participation in her son's new religion, subject to his verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse, and responsible for taking care of their children. Holden's *After the Fact* (1986) narrates protagonist Catherine's journey in her loss of wealth and status in the aftermath of an unexplained disaster; she is neither a nurturing mother, a teacher of children, or a supporter of men's economic well-being and as a result endures constant misogyny culminating in a violent sexual attack by the men in the community, aided and abetted by their wives and female relatives who place men's worth and comfort above their own. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1984) and her short story "Freeforall" (1987) describe post-apocalyptic dystopias where women are reduced to their biological functions in a state-sponsored obsession with reproductive futurism, whose structure brutally exploits fertile women and incorporates women in positions of power so long as they are in line with its essentialist ideology. These narratives are the deliberate and conscious consideration of gendered experiences in a humanist framework that reduces women to biological resources, but from authors who are outside of and thus can be critical of that framework.

Perhaps one of the best illustrations of the way that otherwise excellent SF can fall into the trap of the "standpoint of the Centre" can be found in Wayland Drew's *Erthring Cycle* (1984-6). The *Cycle*, though a specific critique of humanism aimed at breaking down binary essentialist ideologies concerning humans and civilization, fails to consider the integral companion dualism

of male/female to the culture/nature split, and so ultimately is unable to escape a reinvestment in oppositional thinking and a reoccurrence of apocalyptic destruction. The *Cycle*, comprised of *The Memoirs of Alcheringia* (1984), *The Gaian Expedient* (1985), and *The Master of Norriya* (1986), depict main character Asa's race against time to solve the riddle of the destruction of the earth via nuclear war by the "Old Ones," and how to prevent large-scale destruction of human life from happening again. Drew's trilogy is philosophically fascinating and thought-provoking in its anticipation of Alaimo's theory of transcorporeality (porousness between humans and their environments); however, it must be read with an incredibly critical eye in terms of its depiction of gender roles and relations. In the "state of nature" ruling the continental "tribes" of humans that Asa grew up in and longs to return to, women are objects to be kidnapped by raiding parties as "breeding stock" (*Memoirs* 19). In contrast, in the advanced society of Yggdrasil, where scholars and engineers work to uncover the secrets of their own history and humans' relationship to the earth, it is implied that women participate fully. However, Yggdrasilian society is male-dominated and there are not very many named female characters portrayed in active scientific research, governance, or intellectual pursuits. The second book of the trilogy focuses a small part of its introduction on Yida, a minor female character who, though she is an Yggdrasilian researcher, the narration focuses solely on her attraction to Asa and her experience of him as a former member of the Alcheringian tribe in order to more firmly establish Asa's character within Yggdrasil (*Gaian* 12). Even in the context of a society that the book makes clear is overly cerebral and *too* separate from the natural world, the narrative still presents women in the context of their bodies, subject to emotions that are "futile" to resist (*Gaian* 11).

In the *Cycle*, the construction of civilization/culture as inherently oppositional to nature/wilderness is questioned at length, but the essential link between women and nature is

reified by the narrative. As scholar Andrew Belyea observes, Drew's trilogy aligns philosophically with James Lovelock's 1979 "Gaia hypothesis," as he "frequently speaks of the planet as though it is a living, homeostatic (self-regulating) superorganism" (12). *The Gaian Expedient* makes this explicit, especially in the gendering of the earth as female: Alexis, tribal leader of the Yuloks, explains to Asa that Gaia is their goddess, who "dreams in the Earth…. She nurtures each plant, and every animal, bird, and insect…. To go softly upon the Earth is to respect her, to love her. To violate the Earth is to violate Gaia" (*Gaian* 146). Alexis explains that the Yuloks are matriarchal and communal, scorn the idea that the land can be owned, and explains to Asa that women are keepers of knowledge,[87] who "know … *beneath* knowledge" — further, that it is women's wisdom of keeping men in check that allows the Yulok culture to continue flourishing due to their "insistence on limits which may not be transgressed…. Our stories, all of them, teach the great danger that would befall mankind if ever again males rose to the ascendancy, and if ever women and the Earth became subservient to preposterous demand" (*Gaian* 147). This is quickly followed by a value judgment: Alexis fears that because of the Yuloks' gynocentricity they have "made ourselves a people too soft. A people who cannot defend themselves" (*Gaian* 148) against the threat of sea traders and other tribes. Asa, erstwhile aggressive warrior and representative of the male-dominated Yggdrasil, subsequently offers to teach the Yuloks to defend themselves, later leading a boat of Yulok men to confront the traders in a standoff that ends with his partial destruction of the traders' ship with advanced firearms.

[87] This draw on extant traditions of Indigenous cultures, especially in the Pacific northwest (the Yuloks are mentioned as having totem poles, just in case readers missed the parallels) is troubling once it is revealed that this way of life has left the Yulok defenseless both ideologically (they are becoming more amenable to exploiting the resources of the earth) and literally (they cannot organize to stand up to and defend themselves against the "Sea Traders" who possess superior weaponry). This plays into a colonial assumption that Indigenous ways of knowing and being—though more environmentally friendly and gender equitable!—were (and are) in the end inferior to masculine, martial culture of European colonizers, which led "naturally" to their colonization.

The trilogy's alignment of men with active violence and technology and women with passive knowledge and the earth is hierarchical and, though seemingly subverted by *The Master of Norriya*'s climax, is never actually questioned. After the eventual self-destruction of Yggdrasil, Asa returns to the mainland from whence he came, in order to die well—for him, in that moment, "the world, full of mystery and wonder, was utterly correct" (*Norriya* 241). Belyea argues that the "theme of honouring mystery—of choosing to limit knowledge and technology for ecological reasons—motivates the narrative" (42); Drew refers throughout the trilogy to the myth of "Orphus and Urdci" (Orpheus and Eurydice) as a tale "about the tragic human weakness of *having to know*" (*Norriya* 241). Yggdrasil's downfall was its inability to enforce limits on its own development and search for knowledge, yet *The Gaian Expedient* shows us that the Yuloks (who most closely embody this honouring of mystery) have ultimately made themselves into helpless victims through their reification of the female earth and spurning of male inquisitiveness and purpose. The trilogy, taken together, argues for a human return to nature in a "natural" patriarchal tribal community: civilization and culture, but tempered by respect for the environment and the natural world, in order to forestall humans' self-destruction. The logic underlying the trilogy is that there are male and female essential natures that are dictated by their bodily sex, even though roles may vary, as in Yulok society or Yggdrasil. On the one hand, too much reliance on female wisdom results in physical softness and weakness of resolve. But on the other, the "male" fault of knowledge-seeking and subsequent barrier-transgression, bluntly pointed out by Alexis, is translated into a general human trait by the narrative of most of the trilogy.[88] The underlying Humanist philosophy of science in the end works against Drew's attempts to create an anti-anthropocentric ethos in his series.

[88] The fact that Drew uses "men/man/mankind" to mean "people/person/humanity" does not help.

The way that the scientific enterprise developed through Western culture insists on the knowability of the natural world and deliberately constructed itself to combat the unknown as an unnatural, fear-generating phenomenon instead of unknowability as part of the way that beings relate to each other in the world. The empirical turn of the Enlightenment rendered the non-Human subject into an object to be interrogated[89] and, importantly, demanded that it be known. Christian feminist philosopher Sallie McFague draws on Marilyn Frye's concept of the "arrogant eye" to explicitly condemn this patriarchal eye as one that "simplifies in order to control, denying complexity and mystery, since it cannot control what it cannot understand" (33). Drew's insistence, through the character Teperman, on the importance of humans' self-imposed limits on knowledge assumes that complete knowledge is a thing that exists, and that while complexity and mystery should be honoured, they will necessarily be destroyed by the pursuit of knowledge. The problem is not the assumption that complete knowledge is possible but that the methods by which that information is attained are harmful to the planet. While Drew's Cycle is an extended contemplation on what I argue is one of the key themes of post-apocalyptic SF—the fallacy that just because we can (e.g., know how to split the atom and cause mass destruction), that means that we should (because the consequences are dire, as dramatized in the post-apocalyptic novel)—it is hampered by its own weddedness to the Western rationalist patriarchal model of science. I argue that since this model is automatically geared towards the continued exploration of the unknown in order to define it, violence and domination will be a natural corollary to scientific exploration unless a new type of scientific process can be imagined and enacted.

The post-apocalyptic SF imaginary seems, therefore, to be dictated mostly by the philosophical underpinnings of a science that strives for omniscience and transcendence and—

[89] Plumwood 47; McFague 36; Merchant, "Dominion" 68.

when failing that—falls back on a pre-Renaissance alternative model of knowing that respects the unknown Others ('nature', women, the colonized) by ascribing boundary-enforcing powers of agency to them yet simultaneously is a fear-based, essentializing logic that perpetuates a binary subject/object hierarchy. As Haraway notes in "Situated Knowledges," "the projects of crafting reliable knowledge about the 'natural' world cannot be given over to the genre of paranoid or cynical science fiction" (170), yet the more hopeful utopian tradition of SF relies just as heavily on producing boundaries and labelling insiders and outsiders. It is the garrison again, but this time its inhabitants are happy with it. Useful to moving beyond this dualist mindset is what McFague describes as the subject-subjects model as a pattern for knowledge. This ecological model of knowing is predicated on the assumption that humans come to know the world around them in relationships throughout our lifespans (McFague 37). Following feminist philosopher Lorraine Code, McFague describes how the actions of one subject coming to know another in a relationship of friendship—respect, care, concern, listening, reciprocity, interest in the particular, etc.—are relevant to how we know others and can be a model for ecological knowledge. Importantly, this respectful knowledge of other subjects is "a more-or-less knowledge, based on hints and nuances, open to surprises and changes" (McFague 38), in the same way that that knowledge of a friend is always a shifting and partial familiarity.

The sexist logic of SF is writ large by the context of the post-apocalypse, where society's investment in "hard" science and masculine power at the expense of careful social and political maneuvering has sometimes literally brought about the nuclear war that leads to the ruin of the world and thus is an extremely potent generic mode for authors to interrogate gender roles within society. Language, as Merchant points out, contains "a culture within itself" (*Death* 4); the cultural construction of the superiority of men and the inferiority of women is coded into the

language of science and thus is an unexamined value baked into the structure of the SF genre itself. Many feminist SF critics over the years have pointed to how women still occupy the minority of decision-making positions of power when it comes to the direction of scientific research or new technological advances, which can lead to more critical and ambivalent views on the technology celebrated by so-called "hard" SF.[90] SF feminisms' critique of science and technology does not spring from a "natural" aversion to technology or science but from the way in which SF, science, and society has organized itself to exclude women from meaningful access to and control over them.[91] Analysis of the gendering of SF, especially Canadian SF, from a feminist standpoint thus necessitates a consideration of the work of science and technology scholars (STS) in their interrogation of the historical and ongoing androcentric and patriarchal influences on the scientific enterprise.

IV Elisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* and Care-ful Science Beyond Binaries

The narrative of Vonarburg's *The Silent City* makes an explicit intervention into the discourse of the scientific acquisition of knowledge from a feminist standpoint, resisting the conservative humanist impulses of survival and moving towards a model of knowledge acquisition that takes into account the full participation of other subjects. At the start of the novel, Vonarburg describes the City as a walled garrison, a place where for centuries the privileged have been able to hide from Outside forces, continuing their research, leisure, and lives in general much in the same way as before nuclear war. Yet the mere fact that Elisa lives in a futuristic City with futuristic technology and futuristic understanding of genetic science does not mean there is a progressive social structure or attitudes to gender. The key through line in the novel is Elisa's constant struggle against her own learned sexism, homophobia, and speciesism

[90] Merrick 190, 197; Vonarburg "Women and Science Fiction" 185; Lefanu 89.
[91] Lefanu 3; Vonarburg "Women and Science Fiction" 185; Merrick 227-28.

as it manifests in her rebellion against Paul, throughout her decades-long Project of creating and raising generations of her own children, and her interactions with Judith and the Liberan women. Elisa's Project is an outgrowth of her early work with Paul on T-virus mitigation in the Outside human population, but this time it relies on effecting social change through lived experience and the participation of willing subjects. Elisa models what Sandra Harding calls a feminist "successor science" that offers, in Haraway's words, "a more adequate, richer, better account of a world" ("Situated Knowledges" 172) through a practice of feminist objectivity that is limited in its location and partial in its perspective. Her Project is one that makes room for the subject-subjects relational model, and Vonarburg patiently narrates her protagonist's struggle towards the practice of what Haraway calls situated knowledges: not perfect, not total, not omniscient, but committed to a relational ethic of care for others where they are at.

The central narrative of *The Silent City* is Elisa's decision to raise generations of children in a secluded community in the mountains adjacent to the City where she was born: these children will grow up and ultimately leave for the world Outside, effecting gradual social and genetic change in the human population. These children will possess the same healing, empathic, and metamorphic ability as she does as they are made from her own genetic material. In Elisa's opinion, change is necessary in developing empathy in her children, because ultimately, the empathy gained from individual change is what will help them to effect larger-scale societal change. Elisa's children are born female, with the same capacity for total physical change, self-willed healing, long life, and heightened empathy that she has. At the age of seven, the girls are led by Elisa into the City to transform into boys with the help of machines: Elisa reasons that being male will allow her children to move unhindered in Outside society, but the memory of their female experience will enable them to better understand and advocate for the better

treatment of women once they are adults. This sci-fi story is not a neoliberal lone-hero post-apocalyptic scenario, but neither is it a fantasy of swift revolution. In *The Silent City*, though the old structures and hierarchies of Euro-Western society have been swept away by nuclear war, new structures have arisen in the 300 years since, but Elisa is empowered to both understand and effect meaningful change because of what she knows and can achieve through science and, importantly, through empathic capabilities, allowing her to feel difference as well as know it intellectually. Affect is what mobilizes effect, but Elisa cannot do it alone. The Project is effected through a slow process of change, requiring deliberate community-building and consciousness-raising of everyone involved.

Elisa's Project is informed by its participants both in ways that Elisa has anticipated and that challenge her thinking, causing her to adapt the Project continually in its progression. The first instance of her swift changing of the Project is when she learns that first-generation children consider themselves to be superior to the others; Abram (her firstborn), loftily announces that he and his brothers get to decide matters for the other children given that they are boys. Elisa realizes that this is not actually a matter of sexism but of a different hierarchical pattern where the first-generation children have interpreted their access to City technology (which is otherwise off-limits) and resultant sex-change as a special gift to them alone. She decides swiftly that ongoing sex changes every two years would help to disabuse this and future generations of children of notions of favouritism, as well as to strengthen their ties to their female-sexed selves (*City* 105-106). Once the children are older, Elisa brings representatives of each age group together periodically for a council, to give them a space to bring forward their concerns and ideas about the Project (*City* 107), consciously including them in decision-making and listening to

them, and then modifying the project accordingly.[92] As change—of physical makeup and, eventually, of the attitudes of society—is integral to the Project, it means that as the Project is recurrently confronted by the agency of those involved, its parameters are altered over the years.

Elisa continually revises her methods in response to the children, from that early snap decision to have the children change sexes every two years, to later developments; a few chapters on, a young, teenaged Abram tells Elisa that he wants to stop changing. After Elisa has asked him several times about his desire to remain male, Abram replies:

> "I really prefer being a boy, Elisa. I feel better, that's all. I can't tell you why."
>
> He seems genuinely upset at his inability to explain himself more adequately… If others come to her with the same request, she'll need to have worked something out. She can't force him to change, obviously.
>
> "Fine. Stay a boy as long as you want, and if you feel like changing again, let me know, that's all. All right?"
>
> Why not make it a rule? Free choice of sex after fifteen? (*City* 142)

Abram's identification with his male body prompts his request to Elisa, which prompts Elisa in turn to change—and the Project itself to change with her. Vonarburg shows how the Project's direction is continually responding to the concerns of its constituents, not the other way around; Elisa tries very hard to make sure that the identities of those involved with the Project are not controlled or dictated by it.

Vonarburg writes in Elisa's very human biases and shows her to be a fallible main character who, though the powerful adult scientist, is forced to continually rethink and revise her

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[92] Or at least, she has the best intentions of doing so: Vonarburg later throws a wrench into this by revealing via Abram that the children, without Elisa's notice, have been picking up on her emotional cues via their own empathic senses and "going along" with her decisions to make her happy (*City* 141). Elisa is devastated as much at the failure of communal decision-making as her own failure to realize what was happening.

decisions and standpoints in the face of the messiness of reality. Her early emphasis that gender does not matter to identity (*City* 104, 115) is upended by Abram's insistence that maleness feels right to his personality. Later, she is further challenged when her son Francis decides to involve himself with Barro, a man from the Outside Sesti tribe, who has a comparatively short lifespan, and not to change into a woman to make the relationship heterosexual.

> *Come on, Elisa. You're shocked, good and proper. Admit it*. Not shocked. Worried. Because this is a real relationship, with others that are truly *other*, and the consequences for them—. Yes, shocked. Because Francis chose to be male with Barro.... Anyway, it's all nonsense. What is Francis' sex? He hasn't any! Or else it's whatever he wants.
>
> Elisa doesn't know whether she's horrified or amused. She takes a deep breath and tries to regain her composure. She can't possibly think these things, not after years of telling the children that, boy or girl, they are themselves and it's all that matters! (*City* 167)

Elisa's heteronormative assumptions are further complicated by her attitudes' grounding in an internalized instrumentalism sourced in the scientific enterprise itself: the original point of the Project as she conceived it is for heterosexual union between her children and Outsiders to procreate and thus enable the spread of their genes among the population. Elisa's own penchant to think of her children not as female, but male ("*the finished product: Outside they'll be boys*" [*City* 117]) horrifies her, but she cannot shake it. Despite this, however, when Francis and his sister Florie confront Elisa with their wish to stay in the village with the Sestis and not go Outside, Elisa acquiesces. Ultimately, the agency of the beings involved in the scientific endeavour is more valuable than the goal of the Project itself.

Through Elisa and her children's continuous interaction in the narrative, Vonarburg demonstrates how reality and empathy are tightly interwoven, clashing sometimes but always influencing the other and "intra-acting," to borrow Karen Barad's terminology. A recurrent argument between the children and Elisa concerns the use of the City without her supervision in order to learn more about other Outside communities: she forbids it, and they want to know why. It turns out that Elisa is not withholding knowledge in order to maintain power over her children, to deny them agency, nor is it borne of an anti-technology bias: her insistence is to maintain the subject-subjects model and discourage any impulses to view others as objects. Abra tries to persuade Elisa by arguing that use of the City's viewing screens would be practical, Elisa agrees—and that is why she rejects it. "They're not strange beasts," she tells the adolescent Abra, and the children should not get used to thinking that watching other people is a game; it is dishonest to see without being seen (*City* 109). Elisa is deliberately attempting to stave off the philosophical subject/object model intrinsic to a "detached" "objective" science; technology, though helpful in many ways, is not a neutral tool and can facilitate the development of an instrumentalist, disembodied mindset. Vonarburg reinforces this with the result of Elisa's failure: Abram secretly accesses the City's screens and databanks despite her warnings, learning about Paul and his care-less, irresponsible scientific methods, and confronts Elisa with a reference to himself and the other children as "experiments" (*City* 122). Elisa herself later struggles with discovering that she harbours private feelings that the children are "*not real people*" due to their genetic similarity (*City* 134). Yet Vonarburg always shows Elisa consciously encouraging the individualism in her children and verbally condemning any hint of essentialist feeling that would collapse the children's identities as diverse subjects into a singular object representative of a category. The purity of intention that comes with complete self-knowledge, as with essentialism,

is a dangerous misrepresentation of reality that goes together with the construction of the scientist as impartial, omniscient, and therefore superior to others. Elisa's constant connection with the subjects with whom she is engaged in the Project of changing the world strengthens her self-knowledge and humility in constant conversation with other people who are knowing subjects in their own right.

Through *The Silent City*, Vonarburg demonstrates how continual internal struggles and change within a community does not weaken it but actually increases its adaptability and its capacity for inclusion and positive impact on the lives of each individual. The context of the Project is at first dictated by what Elisa thought was best, but eventually must grow and make space for the lived experiences of the children, who grow up to manifest homosexual desire, or experiment with trans-species change, or fall in love with each other and refuse to go to the Outside. In each case, Elisa is forced to reconsider her assumptions and is mobilized to change the Project in response to its subjects; in no case does she insist on the totality of her own knowledge or the perfection of the Project in its original form. Eventually, the permanence of the Project is its own impermanence, open to questioning and fluctuation, to caring and ethical relationships. *The Silent City* in this way models an alternative post-apocalyptic community that expressly counters the repressive conformity of the garrison and interrogates the utility of essentialist assumptions of survivalist narratives, eliding the toxic impulses of crisis to violently enforce hierarchical binaries such as us-them and insider-outsider in order to survive. It models an alternative method of knowledge acquisition that consciously resists the arrogant eye's reductionist subject/object model and, in doing so, maintains its integrity and commitment to the specific and actual lived conditions of each person involved, instead of relying on the easy shorthand provided by gendered essentialist stereotypes. Without empathy that allows for change

internally in response to the knowledge gained from listening and understanding the feelings of other subjects, Elisa's Project would risk becoming static, disconnected from and unreflective of reality. The post-City Project would be yet another version of the hierarchical and oppressive post-apocalyptic dystopian community—its essentialist values reversed, but still baked into the structure of its operation, with Elisa and her assumptions of the children's identities, needs, and wants as the ultimate dictator of social and political relations. Instead, *The Silent City* opens space for an alternative feminist model of knowledge acquisition and imagines a future where partiality and embodiment are integral to the ways in which humans act and react towards each other and the post-apocalyptic world around them.

V Conclusion

Just as Rob Nixon exhorts residents of the Global North to develop the skills necessary to recognize the slow violence of environmental damage when it is presented to us, so this chapter exhorts readers of SF to recognize when post-apocalyptic SF is not actually about the end of the world, but the continuation of one despite catastrophic levels of destruction. *The Silent City* stands as an example of a post-apocalyptic narrative that takes the post-apocalyptic convention and twists it into a form new enough to allow readers to reconsider the assumptions that fuel the maintenance of the very ideology and philosophy of Canadian society of the 1980s (a perpetuation of the deep rifts extant between men and women, settler society and the natural world, haves and have-nots, white people and people of colour, humans and animals etc.). Vonarburg reminds her readers that "technological development, a priori, is not women's enemy [but rather] it's the political and social context of technology" (Santoro 33); I want to stress here that post-apocalyptic SF is not, a priori, the enemy – rather, the problematic obstacle represented by the genre is the political and social context of that post-apocalyptic SF. It is the philosophical

underpinnings of the genre of SF that, when unchallenged, turn interesting science fictions into terrible fantasies: the uncritical reinvestment in essentialism and sexist tropes makes not just for terrible world-building in its ignorance of the actual lived experiences of people of all genders, but is just not believable. This is as true for male chauvinist post-apocalyptic power fantasies as it is for female separatist utopian narratives: "classic Utopia is an often dangerous, static illusion—the best society once and for all, where nothing changes. Well, the great, energizing theme of sf is change" (Vonarburg, qtd in Santoro 33). This change should enact a cognitive estrangement from not just the physical objects and technologies in the world, such as skyscrapers and cars, but the very ideas and values of the dominant society, such as patriarchy and human supremacy, that enact dangerous disconnections between people groups.

This chapter may seem like it is accusing post-apocalyptic SF of being unrealistic, of deliberately abandoning faithfulness to "the way things are," but this is not a move to reassert a version of the literary vs. genre hierarchy in Canadian publishing and academia, now simply subdividing among narratives already within the category of SF. Rather, it is a call to readers of SF to be critical of a genre that bases its fundamental premises—of extrapolation on real-world scientific innovation—in an enterprise whose historical roots cannot be disentangled from a philosophy of violent misogyny, racism, and the instrumentalization of nature. Scholar Cecilia Åsberg notes that contemporary feminist theorizing of sex and gender has continued to work towards "denaturalization," referring to Alaimo's post-natural eco-feminism and Myra Hird's "insistence on all organisms' inherent, cellular transsexuality" (158). It is important to note the current in contemporary feminist theory to consider materiality, augmenting the important cultural work of ecofeminist analysis from the twentieth century in thinking about the material world but reconceptualize nature as an "active, transforming, signifying, material force" (Alaimo

302) that no longer serves as the ground on which essentialist assumptions can rest (Åsberg 158). *The Silent City* is an example of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF that truly challenges the genre on philosophical grounds. It displays the "insistent drive to emphasise materiality and corporeality" (Merrick 286) present in much feminist and queer theory that situates it well in order "to think through and beyond the sex/gender system" (Merrick 286). The novel does, however, gloss over many of what Merrick refers to as "the critiques and changes in perspective indicated by critical race theory" (264) that SF feminism must seriously consider if it is to continue its trend of interrogation of the status quo. It is in keeping with commitment to true cognitive estrangement in SF, therefore, that I turn now to a discussion of race and representation in the environment of the late-twentieth century Canadian post-apocalyptic imagination and its ramifications for the ideological future past crisis.

Chapter 3

> If decolonization is the process of disengaging from a colonizer, then postcolonialism is the process by which a decolonizing society negotiates its identity apart from that of its colonizer, and apart from its identity as a colonized place or people, within the context of both colonial history and decolonized future.
>
> -Jessica Langer, 8

> Si des personnages s'agitent, ils le font dans le décor même que nous prépare la folie de la guerre atomique. S'ils survivent, ou s'ils meurent, c'est toujours en fonction de cette même folie. Ils ont tous en commun qu'ils se débattent, on dirait inutilement.
>
> -Yves Thériault, "Pour mieux comprendre"

I Introduction

Somewhere in the forests in northern Québec, Kakatso the Montagnais man's solitary travels are interrupted by the sudden landing of an American bush plane with four Montréalais inside, who bring even more startling news of nuclear catastrophe. Kakatso is used to being alone: he has a wife and grown children, several of whom have moved to the cities in the south, all of whom—save his son Grand-Louis—have left behind their Montagnais heritage in favour of a transformation "en faux-blanc" (Thériault 13). His wife makes caribou-skin jackets "pour les Blancs en mal d'exotisme" (Thériault 13-14), which allows him to go on these months-long solitary travels, away from the reserve and "ces bâtisses inventées par les Blancs, trop hautes à son goût, trop solides, trop ordonnées" (Thériault 14). He is not used to seeing people, much less a group of white people, in the wilderness north of the reserve, bringing news of nuclear war. Bombs have hit the cities to the south, obliterating New York, Toronto and, significantly, Ottawa. These refugees flew north seeking to avoid the explosions and now are in need of aid, fuel for their float plane, and food and water to survive the winter. Kakatso digests the news quietly, asking only a few follow-up questions: "Quand une bombe comme celle-là éclate…est-ce qu'elle tue tous les Blancs?" "…sur Ottawa?" "Et là, ils sont tous morts?" (Thériault 24). On

receiving affirmations from the pilot, Kakatso nods and takes up his gun. “Lentement,” the narrative tells us, “il se mit à reculer vers la forêt, tenant le groupe des Blancs en joue” (Thériault 24). The story ends shortly after this.

“Akua Nuten” was published in 1962 as part of a collection of short stories and essays called *Si la bombe m’était contée* by Yves Thériault, celebrated Québec writer. Each short story focuses on the aftereffects of nuclear war on people who have had no hand in nuclear aggression, and “Akua Nuten” makes very clear the collection’s guiding question: whose world is it, precisely, that has been destroyed? Kakatso’s internal monologue makes it extremely clear that the Montagnais man, while not exactly rejoicing over the news of mass destruction, is “fascinated” by the thought that justice has finally been served to settler society for the violence and death perpetrated against his people from contact up to that day.

> En s’entre-tuant, ils débarrassaient le pays de leur présence. Les Indiens seraient donc libres à nouveau? Tous les Indiens, même ceux des réserves? Libres de reprendre la forêt?
>
> Et ceux-là, ces Blancs, se pouvait-il qu’ils fussent les derniers survivants?
>
> « Frères, pensa Kakatso, tous mes frères, c’est à moi qu’il revient de garantir vos libertés nouvelles… » (Thériault 22-3)

The pilot and other man offer Kakatso large sums of money to aid them, and when he begins to retreat into the forest, the young white mother pleads with Kakatso to help them, sobbing along with her son. “« Tous les miens qui ont pleuré, songeait Kakatso, tous ceux qui ont imploré, qui ont voulu défendre leurs droits, tous ceux-là, depuis deux cent ans, je les venge. »” (Thériault 24-5). He disappears from sight in the underbrush, and later sees the plane take off in search of aid

elsewhere, but run out of fuel, nosedive, and crash. Over the next three days, Kakatso himself dies of radiation poisoning.

Kakatso faces a crisis of conscience informed by European settlers' historical lack of conscience and triggered by the larger lack of conscience that made possible actual nuclear destruction. "Akua Nuten" is the second piece of writing collected in *Si la bombe m'était contée*; preceding it is the short essay titled "Un cas de conscience," comprised entirely of three excerpted quotes from Albert Einstein's *Comment je vois le monde*, which foreshadows the inner conflict of Kakatso in "Akua Nuten." Thériault, the grandson of a Montagnais man, who made his living as a writer in Québec, had been director of cultural affairs in the ministry of Indian Affairs in Ottawa and "du Grand Nord canadien" from 1965-67 (Dorion and Emond 202), but also travelled extensively, which gave his apocalyptic fear both broadly global and intensely local facets. *Si la bombe*'s short stories begin in Canada but spread outwards through the collection to root themselves in New York, France, Russia, and other places, highlighting how the effects of a nuclear war, though far-reaching, are particular to a place, its history, its people, and its politics. "Il n'y a pas de fiction dans ce livre," begins Thériault's prologue, and he grounds his readers in a recognition that the atomic holocaust, should it arrive, is merely the latest in a series of apocalypses where worlds have been destroyed in service of human political goals.

This chapter concerns itself with the way that Canadian post-apocalyptic SF written and published in the years 1948-1989 displays and responds to worries about the social environment of the nation, specifically the overturn of the dominant white male hegemony in response to the efforts of the second-wave feminist movement, civil rights activism in the US, the American Indian Movement, and global anti-colonial political organizing. As I demonstrated in chapter

two, SF is historically grounded in the development of the scientific enterprise in Europe and, subsequently, America, as an institution of violent disconnection, formalized by western white men for the use of western white men, not only excluding but instrumentalizing others, to better exploit the resources of the natural world and advance sexist, racist forms of inquiry and classification. Literary scholars have drawn parallels between American literary culture and American SF representations of destruction throughout the twentieth century, as prompted by the intensification of the Cold War, interpreted as resulting in the collapse of the American Dream and a fantasy of neo-conservatism, among others.[93] This chapter differs in its discussion through a focus on the way that the apocalypse in settler SF has historically functioned as a tool of white supremacy, and the post-apocalypse as a reification of the dream of colonial domination over the Other. The subgenre of post-apocalyptic SF in particular is driven by a nostalgic desire for a reassertion of the historical milieu of oppression and domination that gave rise to the western scientific enterprise: the apocalypse reduces the complexity of contemporary identity politics and the history of colonialism, instead opening wide the possibility for white men to return to the days of carefree colonial adventure and the reassertion of a patriarchal, imperialist narrative. However, this obsession forecloses any opportunity for women or Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) characters to exercise agency within this imaginary, as they are written as props to advance the white male protagonist's narrative, or not at all.

This chapter begins with a consideration of the historical forces exerting influence over the imagination of disaster in Canada during the years 1948-1989, specifically in the 60s and 70s, and how (settler) Canadian identity came to be defined as oppositional to imperial and colonial forces. I then discuss the concept of an apocalypse as cultural, and how the end of the

[93] See: Rabkin vii-viii; Manjikian 6; Curtis 5-6; E. Kroon 131; Bellamy ii.

world can be the end of a specific way of life:[94] in this context, the end of white settler-Canadians' self-image as the righteous inheritors of the land. I argue that post-apocalyptic SF as written by settler-Canadians therefore becomes an arena where the values of the white settler can reassert themselves despite catastrophe: white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and human supremacy are left intact to reassert themselves as the underlying essential structures of human existence. Moreover, I contend that these are a literary expression of culturally desired structures;[95] against the uncertainty and crises precipitated by twentieth-century social movements, the desire for cultural continuity is baked into the plot and structure of many post-apocalyptic Canadian SF texts from this period. I maintain that the apocalypse is utilized in these cases as a simplifying event that enables the reassertion of heteropatriarchal white supremacy in its aftermath is a desired eventuality, and though many of these texts warn against the heavy price to be paid for the use of destructive technology, they operate in their overarching construction as perverse wish-fulfilment fantasies. So all-encompassing are the structures of settler-colonialism in SF that even novels which attempt to address issues of white supremacy and domination head-on, such as David Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean* and Spider Robinson's *Telempath*, only end up reifying and reinforcing its ubiquity.

In the next section, I consider how the SF texts from Québec authors in my archive reveal examples of how the desire for (settler) cultural continuity is imagined to play out in the post-apocalypse. I discuss how most of these texts both assert as inevitable but ultimately condemn a society's grasping for control over its citizens' lives in order to ensure survival and cultural continuity. The problematic positioning of Québécois as colonized subjects[96] results from the

[94] Wolfe 1; Weiss 39.
[95] See: Kreuziger 2; Kermode 55.
[96] For a nuanced discussion of this issue, see Ransom 11; Langer 40.

tumultuous history of Québec since French settlers first arrived,[97] and I interrogate the adoption of the discourse of postcolonial resistance in Québec SF in light of the apocalypse of contact experienced by Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. My final section analyzes how settler-Canadian postapocalyptic SF can blithely position white settlers as oppressed protagonists in a SF future of literal destruction, ignoring the lived realities of BIPOC identified people in Canada as survivors, in many cases, of historical and ongoing cultural obliteration and erasure from both present and future.[98]

In this chapter, I will continue in the style of previous chapters to discuss and survey a set of texts in order to draw out and highlight the ways in which they are relevant to the discussion and rethinking of the "postcolonial" nature of post-apocalyptic fiction in the context of SFQ.[99] I will be performing a close reading, at points, of Thériault's "Akua Nuten" as an exception to many of the trends that I identify, as it is not bound to the replication of settler desire for the continuity of a white-supremacist, colonial society. Thériault was from a working-class family in mid-century Montréal, though his ancestry is both Acadian and Montagnais (he claims to have spoken Cree, which he learned from his grandfather [Keffer 782]), and thus I assume that he was not wholly ignorant of the way in which marginalized communities exist within a dominant paradigm not their own. That said, he was received by Québec society as a white settler male within his lifetime, and so a recipient of the privileges that entails, including being lauded by the literary community with the Prix David, elected as a member of the Societé Royale du Canada as

[97] See also: Ransom 8-9; Bélanger; Cook 40-42; Posthumus and Salaün 299-301.
[98] Tuck and Yang 9; LaBare and TallBear 0:15:24-0:15:43; Risling-Baldy; Vizenor 11.
[99] For the purposes of this chapter, I will be using "SFQ" to refer to the post-apocalyptic SF texts originating from Quebec. I realize that this category can be exclusionary but, since a major focus of this chapter is on Quebec history (and the texts discussed in this section all originate from that province), I will be using it as shorthand. This is not to ignore the fact that there are other Francophone populations, such as Maritime Acadian communities and Western Francophonie that, as Langer says, "complicate the question of French-Canadian identity and its link to geography" (12).

well as president of the society of Canadian writers in 1964 and, as mentioned previously, part of the settler political establishment as director of cultural affairs in the ministry of Indian Affairs and "du Grand Nord canadien" in Ottawa from 1964-1967 (Dorion and Emond, 202). Thériault's *Aaron* (1954), *Agaguk* (1958), and *Ashini* (1961)—his most widely-read, award-winning novels—all centre on the resistance of an ethnic minority character and their culture (Jewish, Inuk, and Montagnais, respectively) to the encroachment of the mainstream. However, as Renée Hulan writes, Thériault uses the stereotype of the "noble savage" to achieve his own purposes in dramatizing themes of personal freedom and individuality in *Agaguk* (70), and in both *Agaguk* and its sequel *Agoak*, depicts Inuit and their culture as savage, brutal, and superstitious (69-71). Hulan's critique foregrounds how in an "attempt to show the Inuit as part of nature, *Agaguk* presents stereotypes of Inuit characters as remnants of a brutal Stone Age" complete with subservient women and "gratuitous violence and brutal ignorance" (69). Thériault's simultaneous valorization and damnation of his own construction of the Inuit as more masculine and "natural" than European settlers plays into the imagination of colonial heteropatriarchy as more human (and humane) than indigenous culture.

In this chapter, I argue that though the story "Akua Nuten" is complicated in its use of stereotypes and tropes and cannot be classed as postcolonial or decolonial, neither is it invested in settler futurity or white supremacy in the same way as the majority of other post-apocalyptic Canadian SF of the period, and so it operates as a site of decolonial possibility. As discussed last chapter, Thériault's misogynist reliance on gender essentialism carries across boundaries of genre in his seeming inability to construct believable female characters (of any race, at any time) in the realm of SF, as evidenced in the later story "La Continuation" in *Si La Bombe*, and "Akua Nuten" carries its author's essentialist beliefs with regards to race. The collection as a whole is

elegiac, problematically romanticizing the structures of western-style civilization in contrast to the death and destruction brought by nuclear war; however, the emotional impact of "Akua Nuten" varies depending on the reader's allegiance to settler futurity, or Canadian state continuation, or indigenous sovereignty, or post-anthropocentricity. The text, though evoking stereotypes of the vanishing Indian, the Ecological Indian, and the stoic survivor, can be read as satirizing and rejecting the colonial narrative of the Indian guide, the positioning of the Indigenous person as key to the reproduction of settler social order, and the continuity of the Canadian state itself, welcoming apocalypse as a remedy for settler-colonial dominion.

II Whose apocalypse? Whose world?

Fear of the apocalypse and its aftermath as occasioned by the Cold War in North America is well-documented by scholars;[100] genre theorists among these have pointed out that the rise of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives mainly in the US but also in Canada can be interpreted as the SF impulse to both confront and narrate away the intense ramifications of societal change. Scholar John Rieder's observation that what is "persistently at stake in [science fictional disasters] is not the world's end but its transformation by modernity" (123) is relevant to the way that Canadian SF operated in the mid-twentieth century. For example, John Robert Colombo writes concerning Leslie Croutch, author of the earliest post-apocalyptic Canadian SF story appearing after World War Two, that his authorial concerns "were those of the common people in Canada at the time, for he expressed the fears of the consensus of Canadians – fears about children, the Cold War, the atomic bomb, nuclear destruction, and the future" (*Years of Light* 2). The significant apocalyptic anxiety of these decades stemmed from multiple sources: the role played by the upheaval of global postcolonial movements, the work of feminist and civil

[100] See publications by Moss and Sugars; Rabkin; Manjikian; Seed.

rights activists in North America, and—as discussed in chapter one of this dissertation—an urgent environmental awareness launched and given a voice specifically by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), which caused a new, secular apocalyptic affect to arise are crucial elements to this reading.

These decades were marked by the rise of Canadian literary nationalism as a cultural mandate, consolidating a settler-Canadian identity that rebelled against European colonialism and the rise of American imperialism, positioning itself as a formerly-colonized nation. Scholars Laura Moss and Cynthia Sugars write that art, in particular, was "instrumental in effecting cultural and psychic decolonization" (2), rejecting British modes of writing and thinking and attempting to forge works that were "maturely 'Canadian' in some way" (2). In the mid-latter twentieth century, Canadians began to talk about the "American Empire" in much the same way as they had the "British Empire" a few decades earlier, and Canadian cultural workers began to voice concerns about the threat of American cultural works encroaching on a beleaguered Canadian industry (Moss and Sugars 214).[101] Moss and Sugars state that revolution and anti-imperialism was the rhetoric of the sixties and seventies in Canada, with awareness of anti-colonial movements in Africa and the exposure of the USA as a ruthless and oftentimes oppressive power during the Vietnam war (215-217). This further fuelled settler-Canadians' sense of self as un-American in a positive, post-structural sense; Moss and Sugars aver that "the critique of overarching institutional structures went hand in hand with a Canadian nationalist ethos" (217-221).

The anxieties about American imperialism, worldwide anti-colonial sentiment, and the sense that the Canadian state was surrounded by encroaching forces were informing Northrop

[101] See also my discussion of concerns particular to the publication of SF in North America in chapter one.

Frye's thinking when he theorized a "garrison mentality" arising from Canadian poetry, and were the background for Margaret Atwood's theories of survival and victimhood, subsequently picked up by the institution of Canadian literature and narrated as a national symbol. When considering that (settler-) Canadian literature was and still is instrumental in the formation and dissemination of Canadian identity (Moss and Sugars xiv), it becomes evident how the literature of European settlers has come to be positioned as that of the dispossessed, the cast-out, the marginalized, the oppressed. The repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 and the introduction of the policy of multiculturalism around the same time lent itself to a sense of settler-Canadian selfhood as interested in supporting global anti-colonial movements.[102] This political and social alignment of the Canadian state with minoritarian interests seems to be particularly in line with the national identity being spun by literary scholars invested in thematic criticism at the time, reinforcing a survivor mentality that, as discussed in my first chapter, seemed to simultaneously anticipate apocalypse and exist in a post-apocalyptic crisis environment of scarcity and danger around every corner from larger enemies.

Ironically, the anti-colonial, anti-imperial settler-Canadian identity was and is enormously threatened by decolonial movements from within the borders of the Canadian state, as movements for Québec separatism and indigenous sovereignty were and are still threatening to the idea of the Canadian state as a unitary whole with a society that—though tolerant of difference—is structured in a homogenous hierarchy. While, as Moss and Sugars write, a multitude of postcolonial literatures began to originate from Canada in the 1980s and 90s, I contend that these were on the whole incorporated into the Canadian literary institution as evidence of the stance of the country itself (or, at least, its academic and well-read populace) of

[102] Moss and Sugars 219; Langer 40.

having postcolonial and decolonial sympathies on the whole, backed by the official state policy of multiculturalism. Yet, as scholar Jessica Langer reminds us, even though Canadian identity is constructed in opposition to colonialism, the country "remains in some sense colonized and its indigenous people marginalized, likely permanently," as the state remains a perpetrator of colonialism historically and currently against indigenous and Inuit people as well as a participant in such neocolonial endeavours as the war in Afghanistan (40). The settler-Canadian literary institution was not ignorant of its own positioning as apologist for colonial state policy, either: John Porter's 1965 book *The Vertical Mosaic* was critical in emphasizing the inequities in Canadian society; in the 1970s, works by Indigenous authors such as Maria Campbell and Mini Aodla Freedman were published; and "the engagement with Indigenous cultures and political concerns is evident in many writings by non-native writers during these years as well" (Moss and Sugars 239). The launch of the American Indian Movement across North America in 1968, the subsequent publishing in 1970 of the "Red Paper" by Cree activist Harold Cardinal in Canada, and Jeanette Corbière Lavell's challenging of the Canadian government's sexist practice of denying Indigenous women's status upon their marriage to non-native men all pointed to the uncomfortable truth that for all its support of international movements to decolonization, the Canadian state was and is still heavily invested in colonization of Indigenous peoples.

I wrote in the previous chapter about how the encroachment of women into the male-dominated space of SF in North America during the1960s and '70s incited heavy backlash because it directly critiqued the identity of the SF writer/fan as complicit in perpetrating misogynist norms; a parallel situation occurred during the same period (still ongoing today) with regards to race and Canadian identity. The writings of Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X were all very well and good so long as they were enjoyed from

afar and not applied to a critique of Canadian identity itself.[103] Postcolonial writing in Canada is acceptable so long as the oppression is spatially or temporally dislocated—as in Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), which describes the horrific racism of Japanese internment perpetrated by the Canadian state during World War Two, but the initial events take place forty-odd years before the novel is published. Thus, even a text that initially raised awareness around issues of racism and prompted reparative action from the Canadian government (an official apology was issued to Japanese-Canadians in 1988) was eventually folded into the Canadian literary canon, in a way similar to how Maria Campbell's *Half-Breed*, though remaining a challenge to the Canadian state and a powerful text today, can be included in courses on Canadian literature and political identity. These voices are marginalized, but remain an addendum to the larger, white page, used as an example of its inclusivity, thoughtfulness of and care for the voices of minorities (regardless of the struggle of those same authors to be heard in a white-dominated publishing landscape).

I suspect this is part of the reason I was unable to find any post-apocalyptic SF texts in Canada published between 1948-1989 that feature BIPOC or that deal explicitly with the very real struggles of racialized Canadians and Indigenous peoples: even the cognitive estrangement of SF could not excuse settlers' complicity in a repressive system unless the story was set in the past—thus dislocating it from the SF genre entirely into historical fiction or fantasy. Thus the Canadian SF texts that are post-apocalyptic, a future-oriented genre, are almost completely devoid of racial discourse altogether. Even the grimmest of Canadian futures reasserted white supremacy, at least in the texts I studied published prior to 1989. The best post-apocalyptic texts

[103] White settler-Canadians are very good at being supportive of the activism of others for their freedom, so long as it is spatially dislocated, and then denying such actions by the Canadian state itself. See: Gilmore; Domise; El Mugammar; Gismondi.

from this time that deal with issues of colonial repression and decolonial struggle in North America originate from the US, with works by authors such as Octavia Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Samuel R. Delany (to name a few) combating and dismantling the white supremacist imagination of the future. However, the visions of the post-apocalyptic future as articulated by Canadian SF authors of the same period are relentlessly adherent to the white supremacist norms and values of a settler-colonial culture. The question of what Canadian culture consisted of and if it had any future whatsoever arose during this time period, and Canadian SF authors' values in relation to concerns of the futurity of the nation-state dictate their written versions of the future. The twentieth-century version of the world that settler Canadians knew and hoped to pursue into the future for the sake of their children was under threat of apocalypse. Fears of the destruction (or abortion) of an ideal status quo played out against the larger backdrop of terror of nuclear annihilation due to the heightening Cold War: apocalypse, both literally manifesting in physical destruction and figuratively in cultural fragmentation, seemed imminent and unavoidable.

The apocalypse, by popular definition, involves the end of the world as we know it, both in the physical and ideological senses. However, the concept of post-apocalypse undermines the idea of the world coming to a conclusive and total finish: as Gary K. Wolfe points out, the "end of the world" can be read as the "end of a way of life, a configuration of attitudes, perhaps a system of beliefs" but the catastrophe is *not* the total destruction of the planet, though the world's population may be severely diminished by it (1). In this way, the concept of the post-apocalypse functions more closely to how the ancient religious Apocalypse was interpreted: as a world-changing revelation first and foremost (Weiss 37, 41). In a spiritual sense, such a fundamental shift is occasioned by divine intervention: in a secular SF sense, the *deus ex machina* that occasions apocalypse is less *deus* and more *machina* – nuclear war, in most, but also engineered

viruses (as in William C. Heine's *The Last Canadian*), or scientific experimentation gone wrong (as in *The Lord's Pink Ocean* and *Telempath*). In both Judeo-Christian and secular SF narratives, these "conceptual apocalypse[s]" (Weiss 37) are accompanied by extreme violence—cosmological displacement necessitates the midwifery of physical violence against the physical world. The material stuff which gives rise to and embodies contemporary cultural meaning, such as cities, societies, humans, animals, and the land itself, no longer remains to be drawn upon by the survivors. In the Judeo-Christian myth upon which the European narrative of settlement rests, this harrowing of the world is necessary in order for a new, better world to be built in its place. However, in the post-apocalypse, the disenfranchised remain to experience their own ongoing loss, their cultural institutions and ways of relating swept away, stranded in a fractured aftermath.

III Desiring Apocalypse, Desiring Whiteness: The "future" as the past

In most Canadian post-apocalyptic SF of this period, the apocalypse does not signal a total ending of the world but instead a perpetuation of the hegemonic status-quo despite a primarily physical catastrophe. Scholar Lawrence Gross emphasizes that "it needs to be understood from the outset that the end of a world for a people does not necessarily imply the end of the worldview of those people" (*Anishinaabe* 252). Gross is writing in the context of advocating for healthy structures of Indigenous communities that emphasize equity and value of all members, human and non-, in his book *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*. However, the narratives that arose in the context of mid-late twentieth-century settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF centered themselves, for the most part, on a white-as-default, male-as-superior, capitalism-as-a-given reality that makes no room for other worldviews. In order for this settler version Canada to be established, the worlds of Indigenous peoples, (and, in the case of the

Anglo-settler mindset,) of French settler communities, of Acadians, had to pass away through apocalyptic violence, ending one way of life and social organization of the world in order for a new one to replace it. Philip Deloria points to the words of D.H. Lawrence as particularly indicative of this drive in the context of settler American literary influence:

> "'No place,' Lawrence observed, 'exerts its full influence upon a newcomer until the old inhabitant is dead or absorbed.' … Lawrence argued that in order to meet the 'demon of the continent' head on and thus finalize the "unexpressed spirit of America," white Americans needed either to destroy Indians of assimilate them into a white American world" (Deloria 4, qtd in Tuck and Yang 8).

Colonization was not the realization of a new world order, but the attempted replication of European political, social, and economic norms; thus in the majority of Canadian literature since 1867 until the present day, white men (and sometimes women) are the protagonists, and POC and Indigenous characters are—when present—stereotypes or representations of something other than themselves (usually either something in the protagonist's subconscious or "nature").[104]

Canadian SF has its own history of imaginative colonization; as Langer notes, the trend of settler-Canadians using themes from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit traditions in SF and fantasy is "quite prevalent" (47). It is telling that Colombo, one of the first Anglo-settler Canadians to compile Canadian speculative writing, uses the term "indigenous" to refer to the establishment of a white settler-Canadian SF tradition ("Four Hundred" 37). His 1995 article on the nature of Canadian SF breezily refers to "Indian and Inuit storytelling" comprising "contributions of the past" from "myth, legend, and lore" (Colombo, "Four Hundred" 32). The protagonist of the twentieth-century post-apocalyptic Canadian SF, oppressed and marginalized,

[104] For further reading and examples, see *Native Writers and Canadian Writing* (1990), edited by then-editor of *Canadian Literature* W.H. New.

living past the death of society and family, bereft of culture and even the necessities of life, is a settler, usually a man. Even if this protagonist makes an effort to live in careful balance with and give respect to the power of their natural surroundings, the story is wrapped up in the concerns of the European settler worldview.

The post-apocalypse in settler SF therefore, though described in the narrative as literal physical destruction, does not at all entail the destruction of a worldview and in fact may intensify it. Canadian protagonists often strive to recover the society of the Canadian settler state despite its impossibility; this tragedy of nostalgia permeates narratives such as Margaret Laurence's "A Queen in Thebes" or Douglas Angus' "About Time to Go South," and provides the framing affect of Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, Frederick Biro's *The Perfect Circus*, Wayland Drew's Erthring Cycle, Marc Sévigny's "The Train," Maurice Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone*, and many others. As discussed last chapter, these texts all continue the centuries-old European patriarchal conflation of non-human nature with "minority" groups, most notably women, but also BIPOC and, as a result, descriptions of the resurgence of nature at the expense of male-coded human culture are intensely fraught with negative emotion. A select few texts view the resurgence of nature as freeing: these are the narratives featuring protagonists who have no particular investment in the continuation of civilization, often male (as in Fischer's *Let out the Beast!* and Heine's *The Last Canadian*), but with Jean Tétreau's *Les nomades* as a notable exception. Tétreau's female protagonist Silvana is freed to enjoy a garden-like paradise, at home and comfortable in a more "natural" environment occasioned by the mysterious downfall of human cities and towns. Fischer and Heine's male protagonists enjoy the literal return of male supremacy, in a world where, as Evangeline Kroon writes, "all of the 'unnatural' and 'unnecessary' values of feminism, democracy and social justice have been erased and the

concept of a frontier emerges" (131). According to this prevalent post-apocalyptic narrative, the world has been dramatically and violently "reset" and now reflects the fantasy of masculine prowess against a natural backdrop that is meant to be exploited. E. Kroon's study focuses on this narrative in the context of post-apocalyptic Hollywood films such as the Mad Max franchise, the Terminator franchise, and *The Road*, many of which are adaptations of the SF post-apocalyptic story as it occurs in novels.

The post-apocalyptic narrative creates what scholar Claire Curtis describes as an exciting state of nature that presents the "useful falsehood that there is a ground … from which we can come together and renegotiate our lives" (6). She notes how the theorizing of a "state of nature" by Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, et al. invariably contained references to Native Americans in varying racist and historically inaccurate ways (Curtis 10). This essentialist propaganda justified the violence of settler colonialism in its day and continues to lend philosophical legitimacy to the assumption of post-apocalyptic violence in contemporary mainstream crisis narratives. This violence is not only portrayed in fiction as inevitable but, as I will presently show, *desirable*. Religious scholar Frederick Kreuziger observes that, while much of SF and fantasy is characterized by the suspension of disbelief, speculative fiction is instead typified by a "willingness to believe" or desirability:

> *Desirability*, rather than possibility, characterizes the nature of story, and finds its purest outlet in apocalyptic, which is story about the 'radically new,' *the limit of desire*…. Apocalyptic, then, does not so much reveal the writer's intentions (to dream, fantasize, escape, or inflict his/her paranoia onto a hapless world) as it reveals the reader's expectations and hopes. The question to be put to apocalyptic is not, 'What the hell was the writer really trying to say behind and amid all that imagery and symbolism?' It is

> rather, 'What did the readers (the people) hope for that could only be expressed in such outlandish use of images and symbols?' (1-2, emphasis mine)

I herein follow Kreuziger's identification of desire as the driving motive behind the apocalyptic story. Given the preponderance of male protagonists, patriarchal attitudes, and a white-as-default narrative tone in much of post-apocalyptic literature in this period, the answer to the question that Kreuziger poses seems fairly pessimistic. What readers truly *desire*, these narratives suggest, is a white-only, violently patriarchal utopian enclave for humans as the species set apart from and above all others, and this post-apocalyptic reality is easily delivered by the destruction of the current (overly complicated) status quo.

Thus, there is a trend in post-apocalyptic texts to cast white settler-colonial men as the oppressed protagonists in a ruined world, carrying forward a worldview that centres them at the cost of others. A good example is the narrative spanning the three novels of Drew's Erthring Cycle; despite Drew's attempt at valorizing characters' efforts to live in careful balance with and pay respect to the power of their natural surroundings and the different groups of humans that make up their world, the fundamental premise of white human supremacy permeates the entire series. In the Cycle, nuclear apocalypse has conveniently erased the presence of what in the twentieth century were Indigenous peoples; (settler) survivors have since taken their place in the centuries following the catastrophic war that, it is heavily implied, North American settler society engineered in the first place. In the post-apocalyptic world of the Erthring, the tribes of the continent known as Norriya are made up of people who are predominantly white-coded (save for in a very few exceptions, protagonists' race and racial markers are hardly ever mentioned), most tribes are patriarchal, and all tribes possess a code or "tabuly" of rules forbidding them from acting to change the world around them to stave off the "fall into civilization" (*Gaian* 151).

These laws are put in place by wandering elders who come to live with the tribes and move on; in reality they are messengers called "peregrini" from the technologically advanced island of Yggdrasil, and the laws are formulated by their scholars and historians, not organic to the tribes themselves or arising from their specific ecological niche. This imaginative future history of how "Indigenous life" comes to be lays bare the stark yearning of settlers to prove a claim to the land on which they live, appealing to the desire, more prevalently critiqued now in the twenty-first century, but certainly not absent in the twentieth, of settlers to "become native" to place in North America.

To be indigenous to a certain place is often used in environmental rhetoric as a defense against development or extractionist violence: perceived ownership of land through its occupation by humans is what "counts" in a settler court of law (as in Alberta artist Peter von Tiesenhausen's copyrighting of his farmland to thwart an oil pipeline in 2014, setting legal precedent).[105] Drew's characters ultimately fail to stave off the tribes' ideological turn towards western-style technological development (which in the novels is explicitly sparked by male curiosity and the desire for ownership of women, animals, and the land itself, leading to their exploitation). The male characters' tendency towards European social organization such as feudalism and industrialism is critiqued by Drew simultaneously as negative yet an inevitable result of basic human nature. I interpret the Cycle's conflicting drive as representative of a

[105] Tuck and Yang discuss this particular settler fantasy at length in their article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" as one of the "moves to innocence" that settlers employ to divest themselves of responsibility for doing the work of decolonization (4). Analyzing James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, in which the main character is adopted into the local Indigenous tribe, they write "settler fantasies of adoption alleviate the anxiety of settler un-belonging. [The protagonist] adopts the love of land and therefore thinks he belongs to the land" (15). von Tiesenhausen is quoted in a 2017 interview as viewing the land as "sacred" and that his art only "borrows" from it; he also discusses growing up on the land, and that "[w]hen you spend time with something and realize it is the one thing you understand better than anything else, there is some kind of bond that happens, and you feel responsible for it – even if it has its own life, and its own cycles". There is a conspicuous absence of any recognition of Indigenous presence—historically or in the present—in, on, or around von Tiesenhausen's "tiny little realm" by everyone involved in the interview and its publication (Kowalchuk).

particular type of settler desire for unproblematic belonging to place, where they have become the uncontested and only inhabitants of their environment, sutured to the land by dependency.

The post-apocalyptic genre is one that spins a new myth of origin out of older biases, not so much creating a new reality as a prosthesis of the former world and its attitudes. I take seriously Frank Kermode's warning that "(f)ictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive" (39) and find it especially pertinent in the study of post-apocalyptic literature. Kermode states that myths are stabilizers, invested in absolutes, and opposed to change; problematic in SF, which purports to be devoted to imagining a changed world. My previous chapter's examination of the peculiar paradox of SF—a genre whose essence consists of imagining things otherwise (Vonarburg, "Women and Science Fiction" 179) digging its heels in when the change in question involves social structures, in that case the relation between men and women—here rears its head again. In this chapter's discussion, the discrepancy between the desire of writers and readers of the SF genre to be driven and defined by change and the conservatism of mainstream writers and readers is contrasted with the threat of change to the social relations between colonizer and colonized outside the realm of genre fiction. Taking as historical truth the way that, for example, a writer such as MacLennan in the 1980s imagined the late 2030s[106] to be like seems preposterous—at first glance. However, the future world of *Voices in Time* is almost exactly the same as MacLennan's present in everything but political structure. Men are the agents that drive plot, women are there for emotional contrast or an outlet for men's desires, there is dwelling on fascist action and grief over xenophobia and racism as they occurred in the past, but there are no people of colour, Indigenous people, or even sexual minorities

[106] John Wellfleet reflects that Conrad Dehmel wrote the diary that he is reading in 1934, 80 years before the Third Bureaucracy abolished "the old system of time" (MacLennan 170); according to John Wellfleet, the "present moment" of the novel is the Year 25. Thus, 1934 + 80 + 25 = 2039, roughly.

represented in the future world. The environment is resurgent, despite nuclear war; Montreal is being rebuilt along almost the exact same lines as it was pre-catastrophe. The structures of the Canadian state and of white settler supremacy remain unchanged and unchallenged in a future where the myth of *terra nullius* has become an unquestioned reality.

The fiction of the calm, kindly, and ultimately exploitable female nature (Merchant *Death* 7), along with its corollary fiction of the person of colour who is closer to nature[107] are useful to the patriarchal colonial drive that casts a multitude of subjective realities into a monolithic, objective myth of the Other, and which is dangerously reified by its repetition in literature. I reiterate here Kermode's relevant warning that forgetting the fictiveness of fictions causes them to "regress" into myths, causing dynamic stories to become static (41). If readers are inclined to take the narratives that white men write about passive women and/or noble savages at face value as unbiased reflections of factual evidence, then the texts they are reading are achieving the opposite of the questioning of the status quo via cognitive estrangement about which Darko Suvin and other SF scholars boast. Literature in general, Kermode argues, makes sense only so long as stories' status as fictions is kept in mind: they are not myths, not hypotheses, and it is impossible to rearrange the world to suit them without resorting to violence (41)—for example, attempts to rearrange the world to fit a narrative about Indigenous peoples that relies on the fiction that Indigenous cultures are in decline, or swiftly disappearing in the face of colonial expansion, result in a skewed version of history that places Indigenous life and livelihoods in the past, refusing them entry to the current moment and to imaginations of the future. Scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write that this desire for the erasure of Indigenous cultures and presence is a desire for "another kind of resolve to the colonial situation … through the absolute

[107] See: Kolodny 3; Nelson 50; Plumwood 29; Tuck and Yang 4.

and total destruction or assimilation of original inhabitants" (9). Settler society desires the apocalypse for Indigenous societies, so that Indigenous peoples can be safely categorized as static, making way for the dynamic and ongoing settler narrative in North America.

The postapocalyptic narrative, therefore, is a narrative of crisis originating from a larger crisis, but it is also a statement of beliefs about the world and the very nature of human beings. As David Seed astutely puts it, the phrase "secular apocalypse" is an oxymoron ("Introduction" 1) and points out that, according to Judeo-Christian apocalypse narratives, catastrophe is necessary to usher in the millennium reign of God: no apocalypse, no paradise ("Introduction" 7). The eagerness for the apocalypse, and the attractiveness of the post-apocalyptic narrative, has historically rested on the assumption of a catastrophic event not only as an opportunity for the rebirth of society but particularly, I argue, as a chance for the essentialist myths of white supremacy to reassert themselves in the absence of structures mandating and maintaining egalitarian race (and gender) relations. The desire for apocalypse is often a vehicle for a eugenic desire for purity, an opportunity to draw clear lines between who gets to be inside the close-knit society that Frye called the garrison, and therefore morally acceptable within society, and who is outside, and therefore threatening to the fabric of society.

IV Postapocalyptic community and perpetuating racist worldviews in *The Lord's Pink Ocean* and *Telempath*

The drive for apocalypse is baldly exposed as a drive for racial purity by Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean* (1972), and Robinson's *Telempath* (1976), which are two of the least genre-bound texts of the period: a complete satire and a novel that blurs the lines between science fiction and fantasy, respectively. Both, however, contain in their narrative a caution against dislocation: not temporal, nor spatial even, but between groups of people, causing

misunderstanding and strife. *The Lord's Pink Ocean* tells the story of two families, the Black Parker family and the Scottish Smith family, homesteading at opposite ends of the same valley, away from the rest of the world, which has been overrun by the proliferation of a pink alga bloom, killing off all life (that they know of). In a parody of the pastoral idyll, the patriarchs rule their families with iron (and sometimes drunken) fists; the wives dutifully obey their husbands and dedicate themselves to raising their only children; both families are terrified of interbreeding their livestock in order to avoid the wrath of God, even when the cattle are clearly inbred and diseased from it (Walker 6). This attitude is perpetuated by the adults, who clearly do not view their neighbours as human, solely due to ethnicity (the Smiths use the n-word liberally, and even when the Parkers have a rare pleasant interaction with the Smiths, they concede that the man is "almost human," and his wife is "not bad for a common white woman" [Walker 18]). The two patriarchs are forced to ally with each other, however, when the valley is visited by "Innuit" missionaries from Greenland, Noel and Martha Avakana, who view the Parkers and Smiths as "untutored savages" (Walker 46)—not due to their isolation or race, but because of their fundamental misunderstanding of the lesson of the post-apocalypse: survival can only be achieved by working together for the common good.

Walker gives the character of Noel a speech that parallels Rob Nixon's arguments in *Slow Violence* and current writings from theorists such as Haraway, Hasana Sharp, Chris Cuomo, Nicholas Mirzoeff, and others that disagree with the label of Anthropocene on the grounds of its indictment of all humans for issues of global heating, climate catastrophe, and pollution, regardless of their socioeconomic status, political power, and location on the globe. "We are the people," the priest said gravely. "The Innuit, or as you called us, the Eskimos. We are a peaceful people. We didn't make wars, nor pollute the Earth. We didn't spurn Jesus, and then drop atom

bombs in the name of Jesus. We didn't send guns to kill black babies, and then starve the surviving black babies out of respect for protocol. We watched all these terrible things, and we were helpless, a few thousand Innuit above a world of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Walker 44). Walker, through Noel, draws a pointed line in the sand that, in the religious terms of the Avakanas, separates the innocent from the guilty in a way that the contemporary scientific moniker of "Anthropocene" does not. This passage resists the homogenization of the term "people" as Noel introduces himself and his wife as such, and then immediately clarifies who they are and what it means to belong to this group of people.

Walker's text dramatizes the way that crises can be misinterpreted to hold up a conservative, xenophobic ideology that reifies existing power structures and separates humans from each other, as catastrophe provides "proof" that disaster befalls a community due to a transgression of the binary us-them ideology that maintains and perpetuates its hierarchy. In this way, the post-apocalyptic community becomes a garrison driven by fear and structured by hierarchy. The Parkers and Smiths are convinced that the apocalypse was brought about as a direct result of the "sins of miscegenation," due to the preaching and "prophesying" of Professor Derwent Morley, the grandfather of Mary Parker (Walker 156); these values have been handed down to his descendants entangled with religious language that makes segregation an essential fact of existence to the present-day Parkers and their neighbours. This belief is revealed to be widely held by many in the post-apocalypse when, years after the Avakanas came to the island, Curtis and Annabel George, another missionary couple, come to the island. They also believe that miscegenation is a sin and are greatly alarmed that Ian Smith and Mary Parker want to be married, though Annabel is far more sympathetic to the couple than the racist, power-hungry Curtis. Curtis reveals to Ian that the world-killing alga bloom was in fact created by Mary's

grandfather Morley himself, as an attempt to create a garbage-eating organism to deal with environmental pollution—this alga was stolen from him and used by "applied scientists of Government" in Florida, but it escaped due to a tropical storm bursting the tank (Walker 160-161). Instead of speaking out against government abuse of power and misuse of scientific discovery, Morley rationalized that scientific discovery and human invention "had made man their plaything and would destroy him and his world. They were evil," and urged a total repudiation of all technology in order for the human race to survive (Walker 162). Curtis calls this a "mad philosophy," and yet is fanatically devoted to Morley's belief that "the mixing of races, crossbreeding of any kind, have led only to misery and persecution" (Walker 162), interested only in the bits of religious belief that help him personally to gain power over others' lives.

The Lord's Pink Ocean is an example of the deft use of irony as a postmodern ideological critique that, as literary scholar Linda Hutcheon argues, is often used in Canadian literature, allowing "writers to speak to their culture, from within, but without being totally co-opted by that culture" (7). The garrison mentality that automatically categorizes beings as human or not, that determines belonging based on essentialist traits, that is fear-fuelled and power-driven, is evident in the text as an ideology of dislocation that threatens peaceful existence, not that which ensures it. Ian and Mary, the Smiths' and Parker's son and daughter, respectively, fall in love and are forced to commit patricide because of their fathers' violent refusals to budge on this article of faith, even for their own children's sake. When the Georges bring a Bible to the valley, Annabel George and Mary discuss how the segregation of the races and taboo on intermarriage are inimical to the words of Jesus in the Biblical text (Walker 156), though the later "missionary" Curtis George reveals that he is not bothered by this. Curtis opines that religion is "all that

mumbo jumbo," though is very ready to use his position as leader of their Arctic community to force Ian and Mary apart (Walker 156-7), put their son in an orphanage where he will be "happily impotent" (Walker 157), and attack Russian apocalypse survivors because he does not like their tone on the radio (Walker 166-7), all the while relying on the goodwill of the "hopelessly feckless" "Eskimos" (Walker 165) to survive in the North. Walker, a Scots émigré to Canada, shows how religion and power can be wielded as a united force to oppress others and cause them to be complicit in their own oppression, largely as a result of intentional textual misinterpretation to serve the interests of power-hungry individuals, an echo of the legacy of the Catholic church's role in Canada's history. I read Walker's fable as an interrogation of the myth of white supremacy, the myth that holds that there is a separation between racial categories of "us" and "them" that is uncrossable; the novel shows through satire that refusing to work together because of an investment in this myth is the downfall of humans in the post-apocalypse.

Similarly, *Telempath* attempts to caution against a demonization of the Other, showing it as a ploy for the creation and maintenance of a power hierarchy that operates both within the in-group and extended beyond its boundaries to apply to all people, disabling humans' ability to thrive in the midst of crisis and a subsequent post-apocalyptic environment. The apocalypse in *Telempath* is due to the development and release of the Hyperosmic Virus, which brought about the swift downfall of civilization: allegedly, scientist Wendell Carlson deliberately developed and distributed a virus-vector that would spread rapidly, causing every human to develop "a sense of smell approximately a hundred times more efficient than that of any wolf" (Robinson 26). This caused roughly a fifth of the world's population to perish as their senses were overwhelmed, driving them to suicide or death by misadventure (Robinson 27).[108] Survivors,

[108] Robinson writes, matter-of-factly, that the Hyperosmic Virus caused "millions of near-catatonic adults and children [to perish] from malnutrition, exposure, or accidental injury" as, he asserts, "autism [is] the result of

such as protagonist Isham Stone, wear specially created noseplugs to block smells, or have had their adenoids removed, and live far away from centres of human civilization to avoid the smells of pollution, rot, and decay. Stone's father conjectured that Carlson did not enjoy the "carnage that ensued" but also says that "it is easy to understand why he thought it was necessary, to visualize the "better world" …. Cities fallen to ruin. Automobiles rotting where they stood. Heavy industry gone to join the dinosaurs…. A wave of cleanliness sweeping the globe" (Robinson 27). The complexity of mid-twentieth-century America—pollution, overpopulation, disease, war—is simplified via ecological purification and purgation of humans. Robinson nuances this in Jacob Stone's description of Carlson as a "radical leftist" who picks up and discards several differing ideologies due to his need to "Serve A Cause," pursuing guerilla action as an undergrad, during his year at seminary, and then approaching the African Liberation Front and the New Weathermen for a position as an assassin (he is rejected by both groups) (20-21). Resistance to the status quo through violent means is already a part of Carlson's imagination, and the complex politics of class and race inform his character. The Hyperosmic Virus was designed to be a weapon to defeat an Other in order to make way for a new societal organization.

Robinson's text, however, ends up reifying whiteness and reinforcing the structures of patriarchy, capitalism, and settler-colonialism, as they are carried forward by the post-apocalyptic community of Fresh Start, despite the novel's featuring a Black protagonist as well as many POC characters. Isham and his father Jacob are Black men, and Carlson is depicted as a white, middle-upper-class scientist who romanticizes rebellion but is not acquainted with its actualities. However, partway through the novel, it is revealed that Isham's belief that Carlson is

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sensory overload … victims of a physio-chemical imbalance which disabled their suppressor circuitry for sight, hearing, touch, smell, or any combination thereof, flooding their brains with an intolerable avalanche of useless data and shocking them into retreat" (28). I am no disability scholar, and I am not familiar with historical literature studying autism, but this reads to me as an ableist handwave.

responsible for the Hyperosmic Virus is incorrect: it is actually Jacob Stone, Carlson's lab partner, who released the virus and framed Carlson for it. Isham comes to see Jacob as "a frustrated, ambitious Black man … conning a fuzzy-headed genius whose eminence he could never hope to attain" (Robinson 63) and himself as the "assassin, trained and schooled to complete a cover-up, the embittered black man's last bucket of whitewash" (Robinson 63). The truth, according to *Telempath*, is presented in the sorrowful martyrdom of the righteous white savior and the demonization of the Black villain. Isham, who at the novel's beginning views himself as "the product of …eighteen years of racial hatred" (Robinson 17), comes to view Carlson as a benevolent father-figure, who has been unjustly punished and ostracized from the rest of humanity due to Jacob's lies.

Moreover, Robinson reveals that it is Carlson who has the most correct understanding of the realities of the new, post-apocalyptic world and the beings in it. Hyperosmia allows surviving humans to detect the presence of "Muskies," beings that live in the upper atmosphere and have manifested throughout the ages to uncomprehending humans as ghosts, vampires, succubi, and other creatures of myth and legend; they are bodiless, gaseous in nature, seem to have no method of communication or social organization, and have begun, after the apocalypse, to attack humans without warning. Carlson helps Isham to realize his potential as a "telempath," using both telepathy and emotional frequency to communicate with the not-actually-so-warlike Muskies. Humans are invested in an anthropocentric, violent response to Muskies as piloted by Jacob, who discovered that they are susceptible to extreme heat (Robinson 30); early on, Robinson uses the voice of Jacob to muse that "[in] its arrogance the race assumed that the peculiar perversion of entropy called 'life' was the exclusive properties of solids and liquids" (Robinson 29). It takes the intervention of Isham, under the guidance of Carlson, to redirect his community's response to

their new environment to one of compassion and recognition of the value of more-than-human life.

The message of understanding and compassion before violence when dealing with Others is wedded to a current of white supremacy that runs throughout *Telempath* in its plot and in the portrayal of its characters. In addition to the trope of the benevolent white man and the lying, grasping Black man, Robinson's descriptions of Isham and Jordan (leader of a rival settlement, nicknamed the Agros) fall into stereotypical representations of Black men in novels. Readers are introduced to Isham as he stalks through the urban jungle of post-apocalyptic New York City, befriending a leopard (whom he reasons must be a zoo escapee or former pet), self-medicating with marijuana to dull the pain of his injuries and focused on his mission to assassinate Carlson (Robinson 1-35), and his first-person narration is a patter of jokes and self-deprecation. Jordan is portrayed as the bestial, exoticized Black man, whom Isham describes as "gigantic, just impossibly tall and broad…. Those arms looked like his legs, and his legs looked like fifty-year oak. He moved all this with a whiplike speed and precision that made me wonder if he ate coal and drank kerosene…. In the harsh lantern light he looked coal-black; his skin was at least three shades darker than mine…. He looked like a sultan" (Robinson 146). He is also a Faceless One; a human who, under attack by a Muskie, used an incendiary weapon that disfigured his face as a result, and now hides it behind a white cloth. Jordan speaks in a version of African American Vernacular English, dropping pronouns, conjunctions, swear words, and the occasional n-words (which Isham then mirrors), and repeatedly calls Isham "boy."[109] Jordan is a self-proclaimed follower of Pan, or the male embodiment of "Life Force" : "He be nature, Isham, the god our fathers forgot, an' he live in the soil an' in the sea" (Robinson 150). Jordan asserts

[109] For further reading on this derogatory insult, see Jones. Jordan freely uses this loaded term and at one point he accuses Isham of "[talking] like a white boy, like your daddy" (Robinson 151).

that technology makes people weak, and that a return to nativism is necessary for the human race to survive, stating that “Indians was hip to Pan before the white man come, livin’ in balance with the world” (Robinson 150). Perhaps Robinson was attempting a nuanced portrayal of disagreement within the Black community during the seventies, but in effect the novel pits two stereotypes against each other: Isham as the Black man who works with the white patriarch to rectify the state of the world, and Jordan as the exaggerated version of the violent, uneducated, physically monstrous Black man unwilling to work together with or see the reason in white civilization to accomplish his goals.

Linda Hutcheon notes that postmodernity in Canada “has suggested a rethinking of realism” and in these two novels, realism is “both challenged and taken seriously” (21) in a literal and a generic sense. Walker’s text takes seriously the bitter cost of race relations to communities against the backdrop of a fable-like depiction of algal takeover, as Robinson’s story treats with solemnity the importance of understanding and compassion for flawed human actors in the midst of a post-apocalyptic world where people suddenly have advanced senses of smell and are beset by “living farts” (Robinson 98). The presence of agential matter throws into question the realism of anthropocentrism. Both apocalypses, though unreal and humorous in their depiction, serve to highlight the very real ways in which the drive to purity brings about and perpetuates catastrophe through an us-vs-them mentality that separates human beings from each other and from the more-than-human world, a hallmark of white supremacist ideology. As discussed above, however, the postmodern reading of both novels is complicated by each book’s unconscious replication of twentieth-century social structures, and as a result these books offer unchallenging visions of a future where the same ideologies of settler-colonial heteropatriarchy hold sway over its inhabitants.

I argue that, in contrast, "Akua Nuten" stands out from other SF of the same period as a narrative that can be read as a refusal to perpetuate the colonial, white supremacist worldview, operating as a site of possibility for a decolonial, post-anthropocentric future. The story is unwilling to carry forward the settler state ideology represented by the Montréalais refugees who, significantly, have arrived in a plane "comme en possédaient les Américains qui venaient pêcher leur saumon dans nos rivières" (Thériault 17). Kakatso's deliberate refusal of the white peoples' money in exchange for his services repudiates the colonial transaction, at first prompted only by his certainty that all the whites want is "s'en remettre à lui de leurs besognes, qu'ils cherchaient à l'asservir," a thought against which all "l'orgueil du Montagnais se révoltait" (Thériault 22). In the context of 1962 Québec, this refusal is also a repudiation of the threat of American cultural imperialism, a major concern in Québec (and Canada more broadly) at this time; people had begun to refer to "the American Empire" in the same way as they had spoken of "the British Empire" a few decades earlier (Moss and Sugars 214). Scholars Robert Runté and Kristine Kulyk point out that much of the "hard" SF published up to 1992 has been

> essentially the literature of expanding economic and technocratic empires, the outgrowth of an America confident that the future belongs to them. It is more difficult for an author from Québec, for example, seriously to believe the people staffing the space station 50 years from now will be named Jacques-Yves and Marie-Claude. (44)

Yet wariness of American imperialism in post-apocalyptic SF very easily provides a basis for an attitude of Canadian settler exceptionalism predicated on an identity that is always under attack by powerful outsiders. This attitude, however rooted in the historical realities of British and French colonialism and encroaching American imperialism, is a straightforward valorization of a settler-Canadian self-perception as members of a marginalized community; the garrison society

believes itself to be beleaguered, under attack from all fronts, and marginalized as a whole (Frye "Selections" 11), a trend especially noticeable in SFQ.

I have previously in this thesis discussed the fact that Canadians have throughout the twentieth century felt alienated from mainstream American culture, and I want to stress here that this is not a return to diagnosing "Canadian victims" in literature so much as it is a critique of the way that Canadian post-apocalyptic SF makes use of this trope as a particularly settler "move to innocence" that belies the narrative's investment in white colonial supremacy.[110] In Canadian SF, the protagonist is generally not a hero in the traditional sense, and they may not ultimately triumph (Runté 24-5) but, crucially, their perspective, values, and desires are always perpetuated and reified as correct by the larger narrative context as provided by the author (who is always, at least when it comes to post-apocalyptic Canadian SF written between 1948-1949, a white settler). It is pertinent to highlight here the fact that Runté and Kulyk write that Canadians are "conditioned by *desire* to remain outsiders [and] this *desire* to maintain one's isolation," is what sets (settler-) Canadian SF apart from other SF that contains the outsider theme (44, emphasis mine). This desire to remain an isolated community, as I will expand on in the next section, is an extremely noticeable trope in post-apocalyptic SFQ published after 1948 up to 1989.

In Canadian post-apocalyptic SF, the desire of a community to be set apart from the rest of the world is easily wedded to SF's more general narrative patterned after American frontier myth ideology (Clute 22), to become a story about an individual protagonist that is actively disdainful of and resistant to the futuristic mainstream society that they finds themself in, free only to self-actualize when they reject it for the uninhabited wilderness (that has been created by the apocalyptic catastrophe). I argue that, while SFQ texts do critique the carrying-forward of the

[110] Tuck and Yang describe "moves to innocence" specifically as the enactment of pre-existing tropes "which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue *settler futurity*" (3, emphasis mine).

garrison mentality beyond apocalyptic catastrophe, they generally reify and reinforce the worldview of white settlers in valorizing the efforts of the (white) protagonist to seek re-connection with their environment as an antidote for their personal issues with the dystopian society from which they come. I read "Akua Nuten" as an exception to this rule, in its open rejection of the desire for a new frontier for white male settlers, the post-apocalyptic fantasy of the sudden arrival of an opportunity for daring white men to make their mark in a "natural" world of nature red in tooth and claw, complete with Indigenous guides and obedient wives and children.

V The history of Québec as a post-apocalyptic narrative

The desire to ensure cultural and linguistic distinction and, above all, the survival of that distinction into the future despite persecution, repression, and outright destruction, is strongly endemic to Québécois thought. Post-apocalyptic writing from Québec authors occupies a fascinating liminal space in its articulation of desire for self-sovereignty, but also at the same time a wariness of post-apocalyptic garrison survival rhetoric that leads to the rise of dystopic social organization, manifesting in narratives of an individual rebelling against a dystopian society that arose after an apocalyptic event (for example, SF by Sévigny, Vonarburg, Gagnon, Carin, Hamel). These writers imagine that the desire for sovereignty will necessarily become twisted and corrupted in the aftermath of devastation wrought by the desire for military might and domination, taking a much more pessimistic view of the future, informed by and patterned as an extension or narration of Québec's own past as an oppressed colony in a "new world." Jean-Louis Trudel writes that the "first blooms of a renewed science fiction" in 1960s Québec "were probably not unrelated to the Révolution tranquille…SF has always been the literature of change…" (58). Where Trudel speculates, I assert concretely that the post-apocalyptic SF from

Québec at this time is expressly political in nature, following scholar Amy Ransom's observation that SFQ in general "participates in 'a continuing process of self-apprehension' of what it means to be Québec or Québécois" (60). This participation in postcolonial sentiment renders post-apocalyptic SFQ simultaneously hyper-aware of "the cultural loss and hegemony involved in any type of colonialism" (Ransom 46), but at the same time often unaware of intersectional oppressions such as race and gender, for example. Most of these texts, therefore, are intensely critical of any type of society organized around the disciplining and regulation of identities and individual freedoms for the sake of post-catastrophic stability, yet are unable to articulate existence beyond the colonial society's confines. Notable exceptions include Vonarburg's *Le silence de la cité* and Tétreau's *Les nomades*, though the latter, as we shall see further, is still trapped within the heteropatriarchal, gender-essentialist worldview of the colonizer.

In post-apocalyptic SFQ, speculation about a futuristic post-disaster community is mostly negative, as pre-*révolution tranquille*, Québécois individuals were subject to a political ideology incorporating a past-oriented doctrine of cultural survival. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a need for *la survivance*, or a deliberate strategy to ensure the continuance of a strong French-Canadian identity appeared, prompted by the historical defeats of the conquest in 1763, the failure of the rebellions of 1837-38, and the British-authored Union Act of 1840 ("Gérard Bouchard"). Claude Belanger, examining contemporary sociologist Gérard Bouchard's articulation of the historical development of *la survivanc*e, observes that this ideology, though seemingly future-oriented, is actually "focused on a vision of the past…and of already established rights" and one of its principal propositions is the survival of the French-Canadian nation "foremost through its culture, mainly religion, language, tradition and the remembrance of the things past" ("Gérard Bouchard"). The eleven corollaries of the ideology of *la survivance* as

set out by Bouchard read almost like a survey of the themes to be found in SFQ; strong anti-imperialist sentiment is the thread which runs through each corollary, whether against the dominant British-Canadian society and politics, the looming threat of corrupt American cultural invasion, or a simultaneous cleaving to and from colonial France as both a source of historical cultural identity and a repressive obstacle to originality and creativity in the creation of new cultural objects. The French-Canadian settler desires not to be Canadian, nor French, nor American, but recognized as distinct and set apart from these identities; there is not a drive for power and domination over the other settler nations on Turtle Island, but a strong push back against anything that even seems to threaten Québec culture. As Ramsay Cook quips, "the struggle for survival is unending *au pays du Québec*" (41-42), a lived reality that lends itself well to the SF genre and, as I argue below, this experience leads to some of the starkest examples of the future being haunted by the past in mid-latter-century Canadian post-apocalyptic narratives.

The struggles of French-Canadians in Québec are at the same time legitimate and highly problematic, originating from a context wherein the very people seeking freedom from oppression and colonization are themselves oppressors and colonizers of Indigenous peoples who occupied the lands before European contact and who continue to share the land. Québec's institutional history, as Ransom explains, has for a long time painted French-Canadian life "as a never-ending struggle against imperial repression" punctuated by the significant touchstones of the British army's deportation of Acadian settlers in 1755-56, the military defeat of Montcalm by Wolfe in 1759, the political abandonment of Québec by France in the 1763 Treaty of Paris and, on top of that, the 1839 report of Lord Durham stating that the French-Canadian people "had no history or no literature and which argued for a policy of total assimilation of the French culture to the English" (17). Québec's anti-colonial struggle crystallized in the *révolution tranquille*'s

pushback against the control of the Catholic church and France itself (wherein Québec allied itself with African colonies seeking independence from France [Ransom 2, 16]), and included a push for language rights, separation of Church and state, and political and cultural sovereignty (Ransom 34; Moss and Sugars 225). The original violence of colonial repression by European powers as experienced by French settlers is channeled by the settlers into their subsequent domination and repression of Indigenous people, continuing the cycle of violence.

At the same time, the application of the term "colonized" to a white settler culture that violently displaced (and still displaces) Indigenous cultures and is both politically consequential and self-governing is very problematic. Ransom, tracing the shape of the history of Québec as a colonized and marginalized people, follows Daniel Polinquin in observing that there is "a continued exploitation of this position [of the oppressed people] by conservative nationalists" (16),[111] a rhetoric that continues to the contemporary moment in order to enact legislation such as Bill 21, for example.[112] Tuck and Yang discuss at length the issue with this type of colonial equivocation as yet another one of the "moves to innocence" that settlers use in order to exculpate themselves from any implication of colonial violence (17). While Tuck and Yang analyze this move in the context of social justice and anti-racist struggles of BIPOC in America, their argument applies to the situation of Québec. They write that the sentiment "'[we] are all colonized,' may be a true statement but is deceptively embracive and vague, its inference: 'None of us are settlers'" (Tuck and Yang 17). Québec's is a complicated situation, and the apocalypse

[111] Ransom elaborates to point out the "hypocrisy, and or simple unproductiveness, of this position on the grounds that its use simply reinscribes an ideology of colonization" and she insists that the "postcolonial sensibility currently found in contemporary Quebec … repudiates this clinging to the past" (16).

[112] "An Act respecting the laicity of the State/Loi sur la laïcité de l'État", passed 29 March 2019, is based on four principles: "(1) the separation of State and religions; (2) the religious neutrality of the State; (3) the equality of all citizens; and (4) freedom of conscience and freedom of religion" and enforces a prohibition on wearing religious symbols as well as a ban on wearing face coverings while accessing government services. (Gouvernement du Québec). Critics say this is a xenophobic, racist, and sexist law (Uprichard; Sahi; Authier).

is nothing if not a conservative desire for the reduction of complexity; as Ransom notes, though references to colonialism-imperialism might be obvious or implicit in descriptions of a power relation, most of SFQ follows "threads of a common narrative that can be reduced to a few essential elements: an alienated people or individual struggles for liberation from an oppressive system, typically with the ultimate goal of founding a utopian society, often in a new world" (61). Ransom, speaking about French-language SF as a whole, mentions that this speculative story of the future may necessitate a complete destruction of the prior order through some catastrophic event so that "a phenix-like [sic] rebirth from the ashes may occur" (61). Lines between the heroes and the villains are often geographical (as in *tours* and Michael Carin's *Neutron Picasso*) or ideological (as in *tours*, "Après Demain," and "The Train"); race and culture, when mentioned, are incidental. The protagonist's identity is singular and unchanging, though their ideals and values throughout the course of each novel can and do change, causing angst and plot conflict.

The story of settler Québec is strongly evident in most of the post-apocalyptic SFQ in this study. In Carin's *Neutron*, Hamel's "Après Demain," Gagnon's *tours*, Tétreau's *nomades*, Sévigny's "The Train," and even Vonarburg's *City*, every protagonist's primary struggle is against the oppressive power of a dystopian regime that—in each case save *nomades*[113]—has arisen in the wake of an apocalyptic-scale event of mass destruction, regardless of whether or not the nature of the event is described in the novel. Protagonists are introduced to the reader in media res (*tours*; "The Train"; "Après Demain"; *City*) or just prior to the event (*nomades*; *Neutron*); the protagonist rebels against the paternalistic forces of society that dictate their movement, sexuality, artistic expression, speech, or employment, and their rebellion manifests

[113] The regime against which *nomades*' (presumedly upper-class) heroine struggles is the oppressive high society of twentieth-century Europe and its social restrictions.

specifically in leaving their home society in favour of the "wilderness"—whether forced into it (à la *nomades*) or deliberately seeking it out (as in *tours*)—and/or allying with the forces representing this "wilderness." These forces manifest in a myriad of tropes, from the open fields, dense forests, and mountains in *nomades*, and the animals in *City* to a different people, such as the Russo-Mongols in *tours* and the inhabitants of Mendenius Island in *Neutron*, whose extreme hedonism and delight in the body and emotions are utterly incomprehensible to the ultra-rational, extreme and emotionless order of humans in the rest of the post-apocalyptic world. In order to access the alternative way of life offered by the forces of the wilderness, the protagonists must first reject utterly the dystopic civilizations they grew up in. Tétreau's *nomades* follows in the pattern of this narrative through the apocalyptic destruction of the cities in Europe (and possibly the world), where main character Silvana has been staying. As discussed in the previous chapter, this destruction makes possible Silvana's self-actualization.

Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone* exemplifies the narrative that valorizes the white male protagonist and his personal struggle against a repressive regime as an allegory for Québec politics in the 1960s. The narrative presentation of protagonist Sévère's quandary in *tours* is fairly transparent in its sociopolitical commentary on the dilemma facing French-Canadians at the time. Either he remains loyal to the empire of Babylone—despite its dystopian regulation of procreation, investment in eugenics, mind-control, and violent military repression of other nations including the mutated remains of humanity left to the ravages of nuclear radiation—or defects to join with the opposing Russo-Mongols where he can exercise his free will. Jean-Marc Gouanvic, in a history of SFQ, mentions *tours* specifically (along with *nomades*) as one of the "turning points" that "contain all the essential elements of modern science fiction" (69), combining themes of nuclear holocaust and futuristic societies with political and ethical

reflection. Both Ransom and Trudel pillory and praise *tours* in the same breath: though "somewhat traditional" (Trudel 60) and "derivative of … popular Anglo-American SF of the time" (Ransom 36), it "represents a seminal adult novel for the development of the [SF] genre in Québec" (Ransom 36). Trudel is slightly more ambivalent, opining that the choice that Sévère must make "could be read as an allegory of Québec's situation…. or perhaps not" (60). Similarly transparent is *tours*' investment in the angst of powerful white men (Sévère is a military commander) who find themselves at the mercy of structural oppression for the first time and are understandably angry, but ignorant of the struggles of the people around them experiencing multiple intersecting oppressions (for example, women, people of different class backgrounds, people of different racial origin, etc.). If *tours* is an allegory for Québec's political history, it is a fairly telling one that pushes a narrative of decolonization for a select few individuals only.

The vision of the future in these texts brings nothing new, ideologically, to the table, despite the fact that the future articulated in the above-mentioned SFQ is post-apocalyptic in the sense that a disaster has occurred within the narrative to wipe out society and a good portion of (if not all) life on earth: in fact, these futures are a deliberate reinvestment in the conservative cultural ideology of settler Québec. The post-apocalypse as imagined in twentieth-century SFQ can be read as doubling down on the retro-obsessive ideology of *la survivance*, as in English-language post-apocalyptic fiction that retreats to the garrison and obsesses over the identity of those therein in order to ensure the survival of a way of life. My research shows that novels from Québec fall prey to the same issue that plagues English-language SF from the same period: the worldview of the pre-apocalyptic society remains intact. On the one hand, the authors can be said to have done this deliberately, only too well aware of how *la survivance* can be institutionalized to create a dystopian civilization (most vividly represented in "Après Demain," *tours*, and

Neutron) against which their protagonists struggle. Cook wrote in 1965 that *la survivance* is the "dynamic principle of French-Canadian history" (38), yet its perpetuation into the future is critiqued by SFQ as a static, repressive ideology, leading to the establishment of dystopian society. On the other hand, these narratives carry forward uncritical and essentialist colonial ideologies regarding gender, race, and the environment in the actions, words, and thoughts of the protagonists, unwittingly reinscribing these attitudes as normative and separate from the development of dystopian society. Total apocalypse is not enough to stave off humans' reinvestment in the garrison mentality's domination and control of others and the environment.

The desire to draw closer to protect one's own paradoxically causes the very rifts that lead to dehumanization, dominance, and violence against the other. *nomades* operates as the other side of the coin, the narrative telling the reader that in order for individual freedom to exist, society must fall away and be utterly destroyed, along with its ideology. However, the text's valorization of the destruction of European social organization falls into the conflation of decolonization with nativism; as Langer writes, this type of decolonization is imagined to be "the systematic removal of all vestiges of colonial power and influence and a reversion to a precolonial, 'Edenic' state" (6). Silvana's idyllic life in the post-disaster Italian countryside harks back to the idea of pre-colonial European pastoral golden age. *nomades* reads as a what-if story about the potential for Québec (the oppressed, beautiful young woman) to discard the legacy and influence of colonial France (the European cities that restrict Silvana's movements and bore her with inanity) and to make its own way in a nurturing and friendly natural landscape, away from the influence of others unless it chooses to be with them. Nativism really is not, as Langer writes, a realistic portrayal of decolonization, however, as "[it] is not an exorcism of colonial influence through which a society reverts to a state identical to its precolonial state" (6).

Yet post-apocalyptic SFQ almost to a text binds itself to nativism as the solution to colonialism and its attendant ills, regardless of its investment in warning about the dystopic potential of *la survivance* or in picturing a new utopian freedom. As mentioned above, Sévère ends up abandoning Babylone to join with the Russo-Mongols; Elisa escapes the City, runs from the Outside settlements and sets up her own small town with her children; Silvana escapes the ruins of the nautical Club by the Tyrrhenien Sea, and though she eventually settles in a village, it is small and independent; *Neutron* separates post-disaster human society into two camps, of "machinates" who uphold reason and are utterly incapable of understanding art for arts' sake, and the Mendenii, who live in sensual hedonism and, the novel implies, are advanced in their humanity because of it; Loïc escapes the train that comprises the entire known-to-be-living world in "The Train," literally rejecting its culture so strongly that death in an outside world that may or may not be a hostile post-nuclear wasteland is preferable. The protagonist of "Après Demain" never gets to escape, and the society that mandates marriage, employment, and reproduction at the behest of the Church remains. These stories all narrate the way that a civilization that arises post-catastrophe that remains invested in the very systems of oppression and exclusion that brought about apocalypse in the first way are destined to replicate that oppression to the detriment of many, even the individuals who are "privileged" to be counted among the socially included. However, the heteropatriarchal logics of domination (Haraway 2004) dictate the limits of this imaginary, setting up two opposing binaries between which the protagonists must choose: civilization or wilderness, logic or emotion, male or female, progression or regression; there is no alternative, no compromise.

VI "Akua Nuten": from *la survivance* to a decolonial practice of survivance

"Akua Nuten" similarly acknowledges that *la survivance* is a recipe for dystopic violence and oppression but the narrative locates it in the reality of Québec and Canada as a settler state, having arisen in the post-apocalyptic context of the ongoing disaster of contact. Gross diagnoses the Anishinaabe community with what he terms post-apocalyptic stress syndrome (PASS), explaining it as "posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) raised to the level of an entire culture" ("Postapocalypse Stress" 2); PASS is personal, institutional, and generational. Kakatso's family, the narrative tells us, already suffers from the effects of post-apocalyptic stress syndrome as Gross defines it, impacting all individuals in that society on both a personal and institutional level. The stress of the post-apocalypse has pervaded Montagnais society: everyone in the culture is affected, obliquely shown in the way that Kakatso is estranged (in both location and habit) from his family. Montagnais, the French word for the Innu people, functions as a cypher within the text of "Akua Nuten," indicating by its use the history of Innu peoples' forced relocation by the Canadian state, the slaughter of sled dogs by Canadian forces, and the spectre of residential schools run by the Church in tandem with Canada. The reminder of Canadian governmental interference with and destruction of Indigenous Peoples' social institutions directly mirrors and supports Gross' diagnosis of the postapocalyptic period interfering on an institutional level with education processes, established religion, health care delivery, and governmental organization ("Postapocalypse Stress" 2).

The history of Canadian colonialism is not referred to anywhere in the body of the narrative, but haunts "Akua Nuten" nonetheless, most strongly in Thériault's use of "Montagnais" or "l'Indien" for Kakatso throughout, especially in his interaction with and reactions to the white refugees. The narration introduces us to "Kakatso le Montagnais," and refers to Kakatso by name for the majority of the story, using "Montagnais" only twice more

before the Montréalais appear on page 18, after which he is referred to as "le Montagnais" in the narrative on nearly every page, and "l'Indien" several times as M. Perron attempts to give Kakatso cash in exchange for food and guidance and Kakatso subsequently rejects transaction (Thériault 23, 24). While "Montagnais" is most often paired with Kakatso's description of himself and pride in his ancestry in contrast to the Montréalais, "Indien" is used deliberately to evoke the settler narrative of the North American Indian as a colonized race subservient to a settler majority. Kakatso only uses "Indien" in his internal monologue when considering the political ramifications of Ottawa's destruction by nuclear bombs for Indigenous peoples: "Les Indiens seraient doc libres à nouveau? Tous les Indiens, même ceux des réserves? Libres de reprendre la forêt?" (Thériault 22). This word choice at the same time indicates Kakatso's status as a survivor of victimization by violent colonial forces, and objectifies him as a resource to be exploited by settlers, in the same way that the forest around him has been victimized by the agrarian mandate of colonial settlement in Québec (Ransom 18).

The tradition in which *la survivanc*e, as articulated by Bouchard, seeks to root itself is a settler-colonial ideology that promotes the active terraforming of the land itself to best suit settler needs. Cook notes that "the whole literary school of 1860 … was devoted to the glorification, and deification, of the rural mission" (40), and Stephanie Posthumus and Élise Salaün elaborate that between 1840 and 1940, literature often represented the ideal nature as a pastoral landscape; a "perfect rural world" (299). The "rural mission" was that of agricultural colonization, of forests turned to farmland "for the glory of God."[114] Prior to 1940, deforestation as a precursor to farming had appeared in Québec novels as a heroic endeavour; "[w]ith the Catholic propaganda of 'opening the country' came the ideology of colonization, not exclusively in a political sense,

[114] See: Posthumus and Salaün 299; O'Brien 173; Ransom 18.

but also in a biological one, as when a species imposes itself on an ecosystem and modifies it radically (Posthumus and Salaün 300). The aggression against the landscape in Québec was not limited to its native flora: the same logic of agricultural colonization was applied to the inhabitants of the forest. In the historical logic of western science—from which flows the logic of SF, the logic of colonization, the logic of survival—non-white, non-male entities are lumped into the category of non-human nature.[115] Within this paradigm, the survival of the settler Québécois necessitated the complete subordination and domination of nature, Indigenous peoples, and non-human beings.

In "Akua Nuten," Thériault walks the razor's edge between on the one side falling into the tradition in Canadian literature of portraying Indigenous characters as stand-ins for nature and, on the other, anticipating Native American scholar Gerald Vizenor's use of the term "survivance" as praxis for empowering Indigenous peoples. Thériault describes Kakatso's relationship to the forest in lyrical terms, praising his self-sufficiency and knowledge: "Ainsi pouvait-il, sachant de la forêt tous les méandres et de chaque taillis la faune, partir à l'aventure…et vivre en tirant sa continuation du sol même, de la richesse de la nature" (12). Kakatso is "fier et supérieur, loti de terres éternelles, s'étendant par-delà l'horizon" (Thériault 12). At the very end of the story, he walks away from the whites and "se perdant dans les branchages, se fondant avec la forêt dont il était une cellule vivante…" (Thériault 25). This imagery seems to play directly into the stereotypical trope of the "Ecological Indian" as identified by anthropologist Robert Krech, wherein the Indigenous person does not come to "environmental awareness through careful observation and other Native scientific methods but through some inherent, essential bond Indian people have with the more-than-human natural

[115] See: Merchant, *Death* 7; Plumwood 29, 34; Murray 71.

world" (Nelson 50).[116] Given Thériault's track record of presenting Indigenous men as noble savages struggling with the encroachment of European civilization (Hulan 70-71), the invocation of the trope of the ecological Indian was a deliberate one. Kakatso only apprehends the destruction of the nuclear blasts as a strange light in the south; the animals and plants around him are untouched, and it seems as if it was only settler civilization that has been destroyed by its own weapons. Yet Kakatso is not unaffected by fallout and succumbs fairly quickly to death in the wake of nuclear detonation, when the natural world around him does not, very clearly marking him as human and set apart from his surroundings, as dictated by the ideology of the Enlightenment Human. If the environment is to be negatively affected by the blasts, it is beyond the scope of the short story to speculate, and Kakatso does not notice, nor does the novel dwell on what-ifs about the effect of the blasts beyond Kakatso's own in-the-moment musings about the potential for a resurgence of Indigenous cultures. The story implies that the future will neither belong to the settler nor to Indigenous humans, but is post-anthropocentric.

Thériault's text antedates Vizenor's redefinition of survivance in the context of Indigenous survival of the forces of colonialism as "an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" (11). Vizenor acknowledges that survivance is more often used in the context of Québécois and francophone nationalism (19), but uses the term as a different, action-oriented ideology. Kakatso almost embodies survivance as a practice save for the fact that he does not, at the end of the story, "'remain alive or in

[116] The Ecological Indian is a contentious trope, given its reification by settler environmentalists and use as a political tool to argue for sovereignty over lands by Indigenous Peoples. Pertinent to this study is Nelson's observation that the Ecological Indian is a two-sided trope: one side is occupied by the Noble Indian, a romanticized figure for whom conservation is a way of life and the environment is sacred; the Ignoble Indian kills whales, eagles, etc. without "good reason" and supports oil drilling and other environmentally ruinous development. Both have served as reasons for disempowering Indigenous peoples and taking away their lands (Kolodny 2-3; Nelson 50-51). For further reading on the ways in which this trope has been (mis)used historically, please see the works cited listings for Krech, Nelson, Kolodny, and Rice.

existence,' to outlive, persevere with a suffix of survivancy" (Vizenor 19). Vizenor writes in the context of Native American survival of ongoing colonial oppression, and Kakatso's life is a testament to resisting and evading these forces, living as he does "à même la forêt, par elle et grâce à elle" (Thériault 14). He spends ten months out of every year on the land, subsisting off of what he hunts, fishes, and traps, and places in caches, using what pelts he needs for himself and bringing the rest home, although his wife needs very little since she "y pourvoyait grandement" (Thériault 14) with her own trade.[117] Kakatso, thanks to his wife, has no need at all to interact with—much less rely on—colonial institutions; they are superfluous to him and he avoids them, like the reserve that he holds in contempt, due to its western-style buildings (Thériault 12) and restrictions.[118]

Kakatso, though rejecting the role of the victim, does not take up the role of savior, either. Thériault also elides this stereotype, though he sets up Kakatso as the ideal post-apocalyptic rescuer of the white refugees: he has an almost supernatural memory of place, he is well-versed in subsistence living and likes it, and he is an extraordinary hunter and trail-finder (Thériault 12). In fact, Thériault explicitly has Kakatso pause during conversation with the Montréalais to consider how easy it would be to point to a cache, less than an hour away, "où dormaient mille livres de caribou fumé, de quoi se nourrir un hiver durant," not to mention all the fish in the lake that would be easy to catch (22). And yet, he does not mention this aloud. Kakatso is neither the tragic native victim to pity, nor the helpful Indian for settlers to exploit:

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[117] "Akua Nuten" does not tell us whether Kakatso's nameless wife actually enjoys her work, nor does it comment on this gendered division of labour or elaborate whether it is a facet of living under patriarchal colonial structures or an agreed-upon arrangement that best suits her skills and desires as an Indigenous woman.

[118] Kakatso's reserve is an example of one strategy of what Tuck and Yang term "internal colonialism," where settlers enforce a biopolitical and geopolitical control of all aspects of the people, land, flora, and fauna within the borders of the nation, leading to the implementation of segregation, divestment, surveillance and criminalization on a structural and interpersonal level (4).

both roles are each a side of the same coin. Correspondingly, the figure of the white settler also is double-sided, being either in a negative position of power (as "les Blancs" who rule from Ottawa, or the Americans who come to fish in Québec rivers), or a pitiable position necessitating the help of the Indigenous person (as the Montréalais).

The white refugees in Thériault's text clearly expect Kakatso to conform to the stereotype of the noble savage and play Indian guide for them in their time of need. The first thing that the pilot does on debarking the plane and seeing Kakatso is to abruptly and immediately ask if he is an Indian; on Kakatso's affirmation, the pilot responds "Bon…. Tant mieux, tu peux nous sauver" (Thériault 18). The Montréalais assume that Kakatso is a helper who is conveniently there for them, ready-made for their wishes, but he refuses to play along: Thériault inverts expectations, and by the end, the whites are desperate, having changed their approach from making demands to begging for Kakatso's consent to aid them. Each of the Montréalais embodies a darkly humorous stereotype of white culture: the bush pilot attempts to relate to Kakatso as another man familiar with the wilderness; passenger M. Perron keeps offering larger and larger sums of money to Kakatso in exchange for aid; his wife, Mme. Perron, begins by withholding their reasons for travelling to the North Shore, as they are apparently none of his business, yet devolves into crying at his repeated refusals to help; their ten-year-old son immediately asks his mother if Kakatso is a savage (which embitters Kakatso), and then bursts into tears by the end of the interaction, along with his mother.

The impulse of the settler to co-opt and exploit the Indigenous individuals' connection to the land for survival in the post-apocalypse is evidence of a recognition of settler dependency on the land. The apocalypse is a revelatory event, stripping away the false denial of dependency and interconnectedness repudiated by the colonizing party. As ecofeminist philosopher Val

Plumwood observes, a belief in one's own radical difference and superiority from a "subordinated party, who is coded as nature," leads colonial ideology to believe it is beyond ecology—"especially," she notes "in urban contexts" (29). The settler impulse to use Indigenous persons as guides in the post-apocalypse is similarly satirized in Paulette Jiles' *The Late Great Human Roadshow* (1986), which tells the aftermath of an unknown but total disaster in the heart of Toronto that has left streets empty and the survivors with burgeoning radiation sickness. The book is narrated from many points of view, but there are several white couples who, making vague plans to escape the city, think suddenly of a young "Indian couple" they have seen in the neighbourhood, and assume they could rely on them to help navigate and survive outside of the city—"*They'd* know how to do things," thinks Marta, a settler survivor. The reality is that this "couple" is in fact a brother and a sister—Mary Jo Akewence is a young archaeology student, taking care of her mentally ill brother George, and they are far from home (three bush plane rides out of Yellowknife). The reality is that they are regular people, not stereotypes: he is not a strong, rugged pathfinder, nor is she a wise woman; neither are as skilled in wilderness knowledge as Kakatso, and even if they were, they are disinclined to even interact with strangers, much less become props in a settler narrative.[119]

Thériault contrasts the cruelty of Kakatso's choice to silently walk away from the settler refugees, leaving them stranded without food, water, or fuel to help them survive in the post-apocalyptic environment with the historical (and ongoing) cruelty of brutal colonial violence and the attendant cruelty of literary racism endemic to settler narratives of Indigenous persons. In

[119] Mary Jo brings food and reading material home to George, and "usually searched for novels that looked like they might have Indian characters in them. The ones she found were always hopeless; Indians drunk, Indians so upright they were unbelievable, childlike Indian maidens to whom terrible things inevitably happened. She read them and then dropped them off the roof and watched them flutter down four storeys to land on a pile of other novels which were turning yellow in the rain and sun and their bright covers were going dull" (Jiles 23).

these narratives, the Indigenous person invariably becomes a representation of the environment, or a prop for a settler protagonist to survive in the wilderness, or an object of pity, or concern, or outright hostility.[120] Kakatso thinks of his actions as justice for historical wrongs, and these actions perpetuate the misunderstanding and hostility between white settlers and Indigenous persons. Kakatso dies of fallout sickness three days after leaving the refugees, and Thériault pays almost as much narrative attention to his death as to the death of the southern cities. I interpret this as a narrative suggestion that there has been too much historical violence for any suturing of the rift between settlers and Indigenous peoples to occur in the present, denying any future for reconciliation. Alternately, the story follows the lines of Ursula K. LeGuin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from the Omelas," where can be found a similar rejection of an unbearable dystopia in favour of complete uncertainty, and an overriding message that what matters to the author is not coming up with a viable alternative to dystopia but immediately doing the right thing to repudiate a society founded on and knowingly perpetuating violence.

VII: Beyond "Canadian" apocalypse

[120]Tuck and Yang give the example of the Leatherstocking Tales by George Fenimore Cooper in the context of American literature, credited with the construction of the "vanishing Indian" (amongst other racist literary tropes) and the fantasy of the settler successor ; *The Last of the Mohicans*, the most famous of the Tales, has been adapted numerous times over the twentieth century as films, TV series, operas, stage plays, a radio adaptation and even a comic series by Marvel, re-telling and reifying in the North American imagination the image of the "Indian" as a side character destined for physical and cultural oblivion in the mainstream US community (15). Tuck and Yang assert that the attitude of early settler American writers was bent towards this ideological goal of reduction of Indigenous presence in order for the nation of America to establish itself, citing writers such as L. Frank Baum, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and others (8). Melissa Nelson notes that the myth of the "ecological noble savage" in North America operates to position Indigenous people as possessing knowledge of the land "through some inherent, essential bond Indian people have with the more-than-human natural world" (50), which stereotypes Indigenous characters as avatars of their landscape. Canadian literature especially makes use of the trope of the "Ecological Indian" as, according to Frye, representations of Indigenous peoples are most often "external" and "rhetorical" (qtd in Monkman 4). Leslie Monkman, writing about images of Indigenous peoples in Canadian literature, elaborates that "even when works move 'from things outside personality to a place somewhere inside personality,' from 'rhetoric' to 'literature,' they do so less in relation to the Indian than in relation to the white man's world illuminated by reference to red culture" (4). Monkman observes that representations of Indigenous peoples in Canadian writing fall into several categories, but all are in essence depicted as hostile to settler religion, civilization, and culture at large (5).

It is unavoidable, when talking about fictions of the post-apocalypse in a Canadian context, not to be confronted with the undeniable fact that the apocalypse already came to Turtle Island with the advent of European explorers and settlers, and that the post-apocalyptic world is an unescapable reality for many who live in what is now North America. As Langer succinctly puts it, Indigenous peoples in post-settler societies have "been forced not only to learn to live with the psychic residue of the colonizer but also to live with the well-founded fear that the colonizer will never leave" (40).[121] This temporal diffusion is what makes the impact of post-apocalyptic stress syndrome so profound, according to Gross, as "the attendant despair and dysfunction [is] continued in subsequent generations" as opposed to being a one-time event that moves through and past society like a shockwave, as it deeply affects the institutional structures of that society to the point of their destruction ("Postapocalypse Stress" 3). The fear that drives settler writers to post-apocalyptic fantasizing is in part a subconscious, thoroughly imperialist urge to avoid a similar fate to that of the colonized: the destruction of a way of life, of cultural norms, of people killed en masse and forced apart from each other, of living as a remnant divorced from the land. And that is only the fear of the apocalypse: the post-apocalypse perpetuates all of these events as an ongoing state with no end in sight. Yet paradoxically, as scholar Mary Manjikian observes, it is those who have "the least to worry about" who are fixated on and fascinated by disaster (4). In her research on the "eschatological anxiety" (Manjikian 5) evident in Victorian England (coincident with the "birth" of SF as a genre) and post-9/11 America, she argues throughout that the dread of disaster is a "luxury emotion" (Manjikian 47) afforded to the privileged who can anticipate the loss of their privilege, in order to cope with the

[121] For further reading on the well-established trope of European settlers in North America as the zombies in a zombie apocalypse, see TallBear (especially from 10:18-15:50), Risling-Baldy, and *Métis in Space* (especially Season 3 Episode 8).

possibility of state failure; those already experiencing disaster generally do not worry about its advent.

In contrast to the reality of settler-colonialism's slow violence, the mid-century Canadian apocalypse is portrayed in the majority of settler SF texts as a spectacular and singular moment of total rupture where the entire world has been swept away *quickly* in a breathtaking nuclear event of never-before-seen magnitude. Manjikian states that once a society has experienced the apocalyptic moment, there is no return to the former state "no matter how much disaster assistance might be brought to bear" (55): this is not, according to the opinion informed by *la survivance*, as terrible a thing as it might seem. The apocalypse is, in most of the texts under study, portrayed as a deeply ambivalent event: disaster has happened, but as David Ketterer notes, in French-Canada the prospect of the country remaining politically whole is the real catastrophe (*Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy* 161), and therefore the ongoing unity of Canada is a state of continuing structural dystopia for Québec specifically. In the imagination of a liberatory apocalypse making way for a hopeful future, the society destroyed has been that of the (Anglo) colonizers; the culture swept away is the dominant oppressor; some have perished but a core group of the oppressed have survived to perpetuate their previously suppressed and persecuted worldview, and now that the apocalypse has conveniently wiped away the majority of the colonial forces, the colonized are free to re-take their lands. The post-apocalypse can be an event full of liberatory potential, as *nomades* demonstrates: away from the influence of old Europe, the white woman formerly restricted by the oppressive norms and mores of society can enjoy the pastoral, nurturing, state-of-nature afforded by the landscape of post-disaster Italy. As discussed previously, *nomades* seems to be a romanticized what-if scenario of what a personified Québec might do if suddenly and almost supernaturally decolonized in the most atavistic

manner, predicated on the assumption of essentialist principles concerning women and nature. However, the majority of SFQ adheres to a vision of the post-apocalypse that is heavily influenced by the political past, and which assumes the operation of Gross's post-apocalyptic stress syndrome: Québec, these texts imply heavily, has already experienced the apocalypse in the form of war, political abandonment by France, persecution and deportation by the British, and oppression from the Catholic church.

Yet this is not the way that most SFQ imagines the post-apocalyptic future, instead using the SF idiom as a way to narrate the issues of the present and past of the province. *tours*, "The Train," "Après Demain" and *City* all begin their stories in the middle of an ongoing post-apocalyptic state; the apocalyptic event has happened already, but instead of an opportunity for societal restructuring, it only brought more oppression in the form of an empire based on eugenics, a restrictive class system, religio-political mandate, and violent warring between the survivors, respectively. *La survivance* has ensured a form of survival, but in these texts it is clear that survival does not guarantee a life worth living. A critique of the conservatism of the post-apocalyptic society underlies these texts; equally a critique of twentieth-century provincial politics and social ideologies in Québec as it is in my reading a critique of the SF genre's inability to imagine true futures instead of prostheses of the past. It is up to the protagonists to walk away from these situations: they leave for an alternate way of life that is dangerous and, in the case of "The Train," completely unknown and more-than-likely deadly. However, I argue that this move takes the SFQ post-apocalypses into the realm of the romanticized scenario: as Tuck and Yang point out, there is no spatial separation between empire, settlement, and internal colony and thus decolonization is a "fraught" endeavour (7). Simply walking away from the dystopia is not a possibility within the structure of a settler-colonial apocalypse.

In my view, "Akua Nuten" is aligned with the SFQ rejection of the current oppressive system, but does not indulge in the hope that drives Sévère, Elisa, and Loïc to their romanticized actions; instead refusing to buy into an allegory and ending on a sobering note. Kakatso dies, despite his embodiment of Vizenor's principle of survivance, despite his impressive wildcraft skills, despite his status as rightful inhabitant of the forest, despite the narrative's set-up of Kakatso as the clearly morally superior character of the short story. The subtitle of "Akua Nuten" is "The South Wind," a wind that not only figuratively blows according to the political whims of southern Canadian politicians dictating the fate of northern Indigenous populations, but a literal wind that blows up from the southern centres of power to devastate even those people who want nothing to do with them. Both literally and figuratively, the wind symbolizes how the lives of Indigenous peoples are dictated by the politics of settler Canadians: if the centres of colonial power are destroyed by nuclear missiles, the colonized will reap the same death. Politics mean nothing to an atomic warhead capable of killing not just everyone in its blast radius, but everyone downwind. There is no freedom from this colonization.

Post-apocalyptic Canadian SF from 1948-1989, therefore, is very troubling in that the future envisioned within its pages for the most part occludes any realistic portrayal of people of colour, black Canadians, non-heteronormative and non-gender-conforming individuals, Indigenous peoples, and even women. Critic Curtis Marez asserts that the imaginative removal of Indigenous people from speculative fiction "suggests that here is no future in being Indian" (336, qtd in Langer 45). The moniker "Indian," in fact, places Indigenous peoples firmly within the past; narratives of an all-white future suggest that the only space for imagining Indigenous individuals is in historical settings. Thériault's use of "l'Indien" as a moniker for Kakatso in his interactions with the Montréalais suggests that this is the default settler worldview infiltrating the

story, reducing Kakatso to an incorrect and outdated stereotype that has no place in the settlers' future-making. This is consummate with Langer's observation that colonized peoples are seen as existing in a past or anachronistic state (130); peculiarly ironic within the context of Québec, given the report of Lord Durham justifying British conquest of French-speaking peoples referring to them as "backwards" (Ransom 17). Decolonization within the context of Québec seems, to an outsider, to be the achievement of freedom for the Québécois to turn around and intensify the colonial oppression of others within the province according to the very logic that dictated their own colonial oppression. SF novels such as *tours* are doubly frustrating in that sense, as it seems that Tétreau is making a clear point that apocalypse only leads to a dystopia dictated by post-apocalyptic stress syndrome (an analogue of his experience of pre-*révolution tranquille* Québec) but imagines this dystopia to operate as equally oppressive across the board for all characters regardless of their identities.

Québec, it turns out, adheres to a very Canadian state worldview when it comes to the SF expiation of any culpability for apocalypse and its attendant post-apocalyptic ills such as the ongoing effects of colonialism, intergenerational violence, environmental degradation, and cultural genocide. Québec is using the same playbook as the rest of Canada in its attempt to "move to innocence" and rescue settler futurity (Tuck and Yang 3) in its reference to past injury by European colonial powers and contemporary American cultural encroachment in order to justify its own anti-Indigenous violence. Atwood, justifying the study of Canadian literature in *Survival* in 1972, quotes Germaine Warkentin's analogy of a piece of art as a mirror for the viewer/reader in order to argue that self-knowledge is the reason why these texts must be studied, taught, and read: "[the] reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in" (*Survival* 15-16). This is

equally applicable to SF; the narratives function as a mirror that shows not only the reader, but the past path she has taken behind her to get to the mirror in the first place, and from this mirrored image the reader can then extrapolate what her future must be like. In short, the story of Québec's future is, according to the majority of the SFQ studied in this chapter, a story about settlers recounting their own past history of settlement, and so the future is dictated by the strictures of that colonial past, which has no room for Indigenous or non-European people.

These tales of the future are actually tales of the past that narrate over and again the violence of rupture at the heart of the Canadian state enterprise. The rehashing of state violence is prominently displayed in SFQ's treatment of the themes of a dominating, oppressive society, where political or religious power dictates its denizens' lives, parallel to the way that post-apocalyptic SF feminisms critique the violence that lies at the heart of the patriarchal desire for domination (as in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and "A Queen in Thebes"). The post-apocalyptic genre is a lens through which violence can be seen not as a singular event in a speculative future but as an ongoing contemporary crisis rooted deep in historical attitudes of separation. It is a way to decipher the very real violence of the past affecting events and behaviours in the present, predicting the advent of violence should we not be able to reconcile with the interpersonal violence perpetrated within and perpetuating all relationships: not only among genders, ethnicities, and cultures, but also within those groups—the violence of internalized misogyny, racism, and speciesism. Post-apocalyptic SF can operate as a warning against the chauvinist beliefs that reduce others to objects and render the chauvinist's own relationships with others hollow and unfulfilling: these beliefs are not unique to any one group of human characters—hero, protagonist, colonizer, colonized, victim, survivor, remnant, etc.

Again, at the end of "Akua Nuten," Kakatso dies. This is despite the many narrative mentions of his skills in wildcraft, his expertise in hunting, his innate knowledge of "la forêt," his confidence that he can survive in nature and his pride as a self-sufficient Montagnais man. Kakatso is the ideal survivor of an apocalyptic event, yet he perishes of radiation poisoning anyways, his last interactions with fellow humans having been to leave them to their deaths. Whether or not the Montréalais deserved Kakatso's cruelty, whether Kakatso is morally justified or not, makes no difference: had Kakatso helped the group of refugees, it is evident they all would have suffered the same death in just three days. The spatial remoteness of Kakatso from the epicenter of the blasts in southern Canada makes no difference: his fate has been decided for him by the colonizers' political machinations. The apocalypse completes colonization's goal of the destruction of Indigenous peoples in Canada; simultaneously, Kakatso's personal vengeance on behalf of his frères has been completed in the abandonment of settler Canadians to their deaths. Thériault's point—that nobody comes out on top when it comes to atomic bombs—is made, perhaps heavy-handedly, but made nonetheless. The apocalyptic moment here again closes the gap of remoteness spatially and temporally—there is no "away" from the hyperobjectivity of nuclear radiation, and there is no future action, individual or collective, that is not influenced by the events of the past.

VIII Conclusion

This chapter's argument is not that the bulk of the SFQ under study is exceptionally racist or white supremacist, but that its narratives are uniquely situated for critical scrutiny in light of Québec (and Canada's) claims to postcolonial struggle. I argue that the positioning of Québec culture as continually besieged by outside forces is mirrored by mid-twentieth-century Canadian literature's tendency to see itself as the literature of the so-called marginalized, paralleled by

Canadian SF's claim to be alienated from the generic mainstream. All Canadian post-apocalyptic SF from 1948-1989 bears the marks of white supremacy: in SFQ, however, they are most transparent. The settler-Canadian attitude of not being the instigators of apocalypse is, I think, understandable in generic and historical terms: in SF, as discussed in chapter one, the Canadian protagonist is not the hero, or agent of large-scale social change, or maker of his or her own destiny. Historically, Canada was not a major player in the Cold War crisis that spawned SF's frenzied apocalyptic imaginings: the Cold War was a game for two, and Canada was not one of the players. So, when the Canadian state and its citizens are charged with being the instigators of a violent apocalyptic genocide, the after-effects of which are still being generationally experienced today, it is perhaps not surprising that many react with denial and anger.

What is happening to effect that outrage in the minds of settler-Canadians is a clash of imaginaries: the one dictated by the myths of mid-twentieth-century SF that valorize the marginalized status of all Canadians and Québécois in particular, the other dictated by the historical reality of the past several centuries of settler-colonialism perpetrated against the original inhabitants of Turtle Island. In the former, all Canadians are expiated from any culpability from the horrors visited upon them, specifically through the advent of nuclear war or a faceless disease that does not discriminate amongst its victims; in fact, (settler) Canadians in these tales are survivors (doomed or not), occupying the role of the protagonist. In the latter, settler Canadians are perpetrators of a post-apocalypse with no end in sight, where BIPOC survivors of European colonialism are a remnant (resilient or otherwise), and settlers are their antagonists. Settler-Canadians' sense of self has been heavily informed by the events of the colonial past, such that it affects the imagination of settler-Canadian identity into the future, even beyond the collapse of the settler state. This is further complicated by the fact that contemporary

forms of settler-colonialism often manifest in what R. Nixon terms slow violence, an unspectacular and thus unrecognizable yet inexorable violence of displacement, belittlement, political repression and cultural suppression.

The issue at hand in these texts is not the apocalypse itself, but the ways in which characters respond to the initial violent act(s) of the apocalypse and how that dictates the post-apocalyptic future. As in Kilian's *Tsunami*, the impulse to reach out and help one's fellow being—human or otherwise—ensures the longer-term survival and thriving of the protagonist. Kilian makes careful note of the way that the post-apocalyptic community of survivors is made up of people from different racial and class backgrounds as well as different genders. Vonarburg, to a lesser extent, acknowledges the existence of non-white people 300 years into a future past nuclear war, and explores gender expression and sexuality within the non-violent construction of positive community. In contrast, Gagnon's empire of Babylone achieves social cohesion in the aftermath of nuclear war via military might, viciously suppressing other nations afflicted by radiation damage, and tightly controlling its populace through eugenics and mind-control to make them conform to its standards. Humanity continues to survive, but at an immense cost, with which Sévère slowly comes to terms and eventually rejects. Gagnon's novel falls imaginatively short here in failing to provide an alternative society to Babylone besides that of the Russo-Mongols, who are still invested in military might and violent conquest, but at least they do not literally mind-control their subjects—a low bar, for all that it is an improvement on complete dystopia.

SF narratives like *tours* perpetuate and map onto the future the settler worldview of anthropocentric, white patriarchal supremacy (the garrison mentality dictating who belongs and who is an enemy who must be destroyed for the good of society), keeping this logic going in the

contemporary world even past the imagined destruction of all its social institutions and political machinations. *La survivance* is revealed by the post-apocalypse to be the "grim carrying on" of the settler colonial nation-state, the survival of the "total appropriation of Indigenous life and land" without horizon or interruption (Tuck and Yang 5). Atwood posed the question, in 1972, of what is it that survives in Canada? This chapter brings yet another nuance to the answer: what survives in Canada is the chauvinist worldview of centuries past that holds essentialist attitudes as truths, and that actively desires dislocation and binary ideologies in order to dominate others. The conscious rejection of a future structured by the thinking of the past is something that binds together many of the protagonists of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF published between 1948-1989. Post-apocalyptic Canadian SF is a genre that holds a post-anthropocentric hope, gesturing beyond human structures of oppression and towards a post-human future. Many Canadian SF texts from this period include signposts pointing towards this hope for the environment, if indirectly, and that oblique desire is the subject of the last chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter Four

> "Even the most hardened criminal shooter-type person would lower his rifle; lonely, isolated, half-mad, when they heard the sound of children's voices singing 'Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy,' why, they'd come gathering around with tears in their eyes. They should get something real sentimental, get 'em crying."
>
> -Roxana Raintree, Jiles 140

I Introduction

It is three months since a fog blanketed the city of Toronto and a handful of citizens woke up entirely alone in a city emptied of its people. Readers anticipating a post-apocalyptic whodunit will be disappointed, however, as will readers and characters expecting the drama of the post-apocalypse with its attendant violence, desolation, and despair within the pages of Paulette Jiles' *The Late Great Human Roadshow*. The mystery is never solved: the novel is not interested in the means of the population's decimation, but the reaction of those left behind to cope with their new post-apocalyptic situation. I argue that the book is interested in the way that fantasies of "the good life" (Berlant 27) are mobilized or disregarded in order to cope with the sudden arrival of apocalypse, and how some characters are invested in what affect scholar Lauren Berlant calls the cruel optimism of expecting the good life to arrive despite the reality that middle-class normalcy is no longer achievable. Berlant nuances her theory of cruel optimism by pointing out the particular operation of "stupid optimism"—a belief that "adjustment to certain forms or practices of living and thinking … will secure one's happiness" (126).[122] *Roadshow* is replete with characters who act stupidly optimistic, ignoring the realities of their situation in favour of adhering to pre-disaster behavioural scripts as dictated by their gender,

[122] Where relationships of cruel optimism rest on the attainment of a desired object (the good life, or a political project), stupid optimism expects the specific attainment of the good life to arrive through conformity to a given status quo. Anarchists can be in a relation of cruel optimism, but not operate with stupid optimism, for example, as the good life can only arrive for them through the overturning of the status quo.

class, race, etc. Several groups of characters (all middle-class white settler adults, as it turns out) begin to act according to the same dominant script of disaster discussed in my first chapter: these people fall in line with the expectation of the post-apocalypse as a Frontier where might makes right; where other beings (human and non-) are hostile and to be feared; and where the garrison mentality is literalized in some characters' seeking refuge in the fortified Cow House of the Riverdale Zoo and, by the end of the novel, sheltering in the Don Jail.

Jiles wrote *The Late Great Human Roadshow* in 1986, after almost four decades of Cold War apocalyptic politics and affect had thoroughly permeated the imagination of North Americans, a preoccupation that concentrated itself in the genre of science fiction and especially in the post-apocalyptic genre. The book itself features no less than twelve point-of-view characters (along with about six or seven other named characters who do not narrate) and follows individuals living in Toronto in the aftermath of an unspecified disaster. Each character exists in relation to at least several of the others, so that eventually their stories coincide, narratives cross paths (sometimes violently), and alliances are built between groups that had seemed disparate at the start. The novel never explains the origin of the ever-present smoke or clouds that hang low over the city, the reason that the sun is "greenish," or the disappearance of most of the city's inhabitants overnight on June first; it is only towards the end of the novel, once characters begin manifesting strange bruises, followed by sickness and death, that there are enough clues for a few of the protagonists to conclude that they are suffering from radiation poisoning, and death is imminent and unavoidable.

Roadshow models an alternative response to apocalypse in the actions of the characters who move outside of the dominant script of disaster, acting cautious but not unduly concerned: they are mostly unconcerned by their location in a post-apocalyptic world. These are the Others,

non-Humans according to Enlightenment definitions as discussed in chapter two: children, Indigenous people, the houseless, the old, the poor, the neurodiverse, animals, and the environment itself. They are what feminist scholar Sarah Ahmed calls "affect aliens" who are shown to be misaligned with what Indigenous theorist Kim TallBear, quoting novelist Junot Diaz, names "the mainstream emotional baseline." They have no expectation that the post-apocalyptic condition will bring violence, and they do not desire a conventional good life; they are not motivated to cling to a pre-apocalyptic ideology of hierarchy and separation. Despite their grim reality, these "othered" characters in *Roadshow* display scenes of a community-based politics of affirmation that contrasts sharply with the dominance of the mainstream narrative of post-apocalyptic material and relational destitution. As my textual analysis will demonstrate, the roadshow members are affect aliens whose realism and grounded, "queer" optimism (Snediker 2) acts as a foil to the stupid form of optimism of the characters who put their hope for survival in garrisoning themselves and expecting the arrival of violence, which in turn falls in line with a fantasy version of how events must play out.

This chapter's discussion is focused specifically on the affect of the post-apocalyptic narrative as it emerges in Canadian SF published between 1948 and 1989, building on previous chapters' discussions of the post-apocalyptic environment and its sexist and racist logics. By turning to affect, I am able to examine the ways in which the concept of the apocalypse and the post-apocalyptic environment in the majority of these novels are peculiarly desirable and indeed expected as heralding at least a change for the better, at most the arrival of a utopic state. The desiring of apocalypse and a post-apocalyptic world is not restricted only to genre fiction (e.g., at the level of the post-apocalyptic government in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Jean-Claude Hamel's "Après Demain," and Maurice Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone*, and more

individually as depicted in William C. Heine's *The Last Canadian* and, as I will show, for several characters in *The Late Great Human Roadshow*), but can be seen in the resurgence of extra-textual conservative political ideologies, both historical and contemporary, that yearn for a totalizing end to the status quo where, as discussed particularly in chapters two and three, policies ensuring women's and minority rights and freedoms are dismantled in order to make way for white, heterosexual men to exercise authority (which is assumed to be stifled and suppressed by the "liberal agenda") with the excuse that oppression is necessary to ensure everyone's survival.[123]

This chapter argues that, as the protagonists of *Neuromancer* and particularly *Roadshow* display, in order for an alternative post-apocalyptic affect—one that shuns violence and the garrison mentality—to take effect, it is essential to recognize and be critical of the desire for the apocalypse as a signifier of a "return" to hierarchical, oppressive structures that reify patriarchy and white human supremacy as a natural corollary of societal breakdown. Overall, I read the critical orientation of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF 1948-1989 as an outgrowth of the attitude engendered by the specific sociopolitical position of Canada in the Cold War years; in other words, an affect heavily informed by fear, frustration, and helplessness that quickly turns to anger. In these novels, as in daily Canadian life overshadowed at every moment by the threat of nuclear annihilation by two non-Canadian superpowers, Canadian protagonists are helpless to control the fate of their world or civilization as a whole; though in select texts they can affect their own fates and that of those around them, very few protagonists are able to achieve a meta-

[123] This apocalyptic desire reaches its most recognizable contemporary pinnacle (or perhaps nadir) in the QAnon conspiracy (see Roose), which operates much like any religious cult promising an apocalyptic event where the deeply flawed status quo is overturned, the righteous gain power, and the wicked are punished, the newest form of a very old narrative. See Klein as well as Goodman and Carmichael on "The Great Reset" for a Canadian conspiracy theory that anticipates a dystopia following disaster.

recognition of the post-apocalyptic script dictating their actions. I interrogate *Neuromancer* as an example of how, though the plot puts the protagonists in a situation beyond their control, they are both cognizant of and ambivalent towards the idea of apocalypse or its meaning and are uninterested in continuing to act in accordance with post-apocalyptic genre conventions; I then segue into a study of *Roadshow* and the way that it clearly contrasts characters who are trapped in the post-apocalyptic narrative with those who can move through and beyond it without resorting to violent force. It is the desire to control, to manage the shape of the future and conform it to an expected narrative, that leads to apocalyptic violence in the first place, and that continues the cycle of violence into the post-apocalyptic future.

The first section of this chapter consists of a theoretical reflection on the methods by which the apocalypse becomes a desired event, unpacking the reasons behind why it is expected and even longed-for. I begin with a discussion of the desire for apocalypse and the expectation of world-ending violence bringing about a new and better world in its aftermath, drawing on the critical scholarship of theorists such as Frederick Kreuziger, Frank Kermode, Mary Manjikian, and Gary K. Wolfe, and I contextualize this with a brief review of my discussion from previous chapters of how this expectation permeated and directed the Eurowestern settler experience of North America due to the influence of Biblical apocalyptic thought, as outlined by theorists Susie O'Brien and Marlene Goldman. I briefly reiterate how Canadian SF, specifically SFQ, tends to imagine dystopia as the inevitable consequence of the apocalypse due to the influence of the ideology of survival as articulated by Margaret Atwood and the garrison society as described by Northrop Frye, as opposed to the utopia promised by the American Dream as the reward for experiencing hardship.

I note the work of theorists such as Lee Edelman and Rebekah Sheldon as similarly critical of the way that securing cultural continuity relies on the suppression of the rights of minorities (specifically LGBTQ+ and women) and argue that these theorists' attitudes mirror Canadian SF's critical demonstration of post-apocalyptic continuity as enabling the freedom of only a few and the oppression of many others. This critique is a necessary first step towards recognizing the violence inherent in the desire for apocalypse, divesting completely from expectation of events that might follow from the apocalyptic event. Letting go of the impulse to secure survival at any cost is easier when the costs of survival are articulated and understood as oppressive or downright persecutory, as shown by the arrangement of society in *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Les tours de Babylone*, "Après Demain," and many of the other texts under study. Conversely, texts and characters that demonstrate an alternative post-apocalyptic affect are mostly uninterested in the conditions that brought about the apocalypse or what the post-apocalyptic future may hold and instead are focused on action and relations in the narrative's present.

I turn at this juncture to an elaboration of how the critique of apocalyptic desire is an affective orientation that rejects the traditional Eurowestern idea of utopia, and I draw on queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz's theorization of queer utopia instead as characteristic of the actions of characters in a novel that displays an alternate post-apocalyptic affect. Further, I discuss queer utopia's deliberate investment in hope, counteracting a dominant trend towards negativity in queer theory at the time Muñoz wrote *Cruising Utopia*, and the ways in which queer utopia's grounded hope operates in parallel to this alternative affect. I end my theoretical exploration by drawing on Ahmed's theorization of happiness's performative nature to explain how even though there are a significant portion of texts that critique post-apocalyptic society, the post-apocalypse

is generally greeted within the genre as an exciting and entertaining space for narrative action. This builds on my previous chapters' findings to articulate how the post-apocalypse becomes, in many instances of the dominant (American) narrative as it has influenced and permeated the popular apocalyptic imagination, an arena for utopian potential for certain identities (aggressive, white, male, heterosexual). I conclude with an overview of the reception of cyberpunk, a genre of SF that began in the mid-1980s, as an example of how even a dystopia can be a desirable post-apocalyptic outcome if authors and critics of these SF narratives see themselves in positions of power in the society outlined in the novel.

The second section of this chapter is comprised of close literary readings that demonstrate the above theoretical discussion in action: first, I perform an evaluation of post-apocalyptic affect in *Neuromancer* by William Gibson in the text's double role as the progenitor of cyberpunk tropes of a hierarchized, oppressively neoliberal future, and as a critique of apocalyptic desire in its textual (non-)representation of apocalyptic violence and characters' deliberate refusal to engage with any larger meaning inherent in the post-apocalyptic situation of their society. This is followed by a longer exploration of affective valences and queer utopia in *The Late Great Human Roadshow* by Jiles, a text that demonstrates how violence is not a necessary course of action in the aftermath of the apocalypse. In laying plans for creation instead of survival, *Roadshow* breaks out of the binary of utopian desire and dystopian critique to model a different response to apocalypse, one that refuses the violence inherent in the project of post-apocalyptic survival and instead celebrates affective ties, those that already exist and those yet to form. Jiles' text emphasizes that even in the face of death, it is not the immediacy of the end or the imperative of physical survival that should be paramount, but the creation and care of our

relationships with human and nonhuman others, which maintain individuals' selves as stable entities even in the midst of volatile circumstances and to their own demise.

II Expecting the Future, Desiring the Past: post-apocalypse as an arena for nostalgia

The apocalypse in literature, whether religious or science fictional, functions as a textual embodiment of desire and expectation. Literary critic Kermode observes that as readers "we do seem to partake of some of these abnormally acute appetites. We hunger for ends and for crises" (55). Kermode is specifically addressing in this quote the apocalyptic as it functions in non-genre literature, as an outgrowth of religious expectation. As David Seed states, without apocalypse there is no paradise; without catastrophe, there is no millennium, and therefore the apocalyptic disaster plays an important part in urban renewal, with outcomes such as revising gender roles and race relations ("Introduction" 6-7). Religious scholar Frederick Kreuziger states that

> expectation… is the more fruitful critical category for the study of the relationship between [SF] and the apocalyptic"; given the nature of SF as "user-oriented" popular literature that reveals the hopes and dreams of the reader, as opposed to those of the writer, the genre tells us not what to expect, but how to expect it. (3-4)

With this emphasis on expectation, Kreuziger builds on his statement to claim that desirability, rather than possibility, characterizes the nature of story broadly, finding its pinnacle in the apocalyptic narrative as "the limit of desire" (2). "The apocalyptic," Kreuziger claims, "invites us to consider how we respond to moral and political choices arising from the presence of the radically new" (4). It could be argued that the moral question posed by much of Cold War apocalyptic fiction is "now that you have these new weapons capable of wiping out a significant portion of the earth, will you use them?"

Yet the end is only desirable if we view the current world as a "vale of tears"; an imperfect and problematic present moment where "good people" are inextricably entangled in events, communities, and whole political systems that are wicked and detrimental to humanity as a whole. The desire for a better world underlies the apocalyptic fantasy, which expects a utopian world to be made possible and indeed to arrive as a natural corollary only after the (violent) end of the current, broken system: in religious terms it is the Kingdom of God; the everlasting peace; in secular terms, the third reich. As scholar Tina Pippin writes, the biblical apocalypse is "a dreaded hope" (xii); the horrific violence of apocalypse at least signifies that a utopia is imminent, to believers. However, a more interesting question to ask would be prompted by the abovementioned example of the third reich as an everlasting utopia or Slavoj Žižek's discussion of genocide driven by violent ideological fantasy in "The Poetry of Ethnic Cleansing": do heavenly ends justify violent means? What atrocities are humans willing to commit in order to bring about peace on earth?

The fictions examined in this dissertation, in contrast, pose a different moral dilemma within their pages, since in post-apocalyptic SF the questions asked by the apocalyptic situation have already been answered, horrifically so. Most post-apocalyptic humans do not get a say in whether weapons of mass destruction have been deployed, nor in whether they get to be included in the category of "human" at all and thus escape ethnic cleansing and genocide. In a post-religious SF tradition, the fantasy of apocalypse tends to be replaced firmly by dread of the post-apocalypse which, as scholar Mary Manjikian reminds us, is "a luxury emotion…. of the wealthy and comfortable individual, and the wealthy and comfortable nation since it requires conditions which allow one to anticipate both the loss of one's present status and a 'falling' into a lower status, where one has less agency and control" (47-48). The Canadian post-apocalypse as

narrated by authors from the period under study in particular shows that even the most privileged survivors are still survivors: nobody "wins" in a global nuclear war or pandemic. Post-apocalyptic survivors are faced with a choice: to cling to the apocalyptic desire for utopia by any means necessary that brought about the violent ending of the world (even though the expected utopia never arrived) or seek alternative ways of living that reject that fantasy and seek attachment instead to healthier objects of desire. Post-apocalyptic SF that features characters who choose the latter are often permeated by a negotiated form of hope, a sideways, struggling desire for continuity.

As my readings in this chapter will demonstrate, Canadian post-apocalyptic SF most often shows us the flip side of the apocalyptic fantasy at the same time as revealing apocalypse as a false desire: both the cost of paradise, and the fact that we do not desire an end to everything, just to the realities of the world that obstruct our own flourishing. As scholar Gary K. Wolfe writes, "'the end of the world' means the end of a way of life, a configuration of attitudes, perhaps a system of beliefs—but not the actual destruction of the planet or its population" (1). As discussed in chapters one and three, European settlers of the Americas desired apocalypse in the sense of the end of the world for Indigenous cultures and ways of life, in order to make way for their "new world" as they interpreted it foretold in Revelation (Runté and Kulyk 1995; Goldman 2005; Moss and Sugars 2009). European settler culture of what would come to be the United States was a repudiation of the colonial powers of the old world, transplanted to a world that seemed "new" enough that the violent purificatory myth of Biblical apocalypse could apply; in what came to be known as Canada, however, settler culture was more of an extension of European social arrangements, as immigrants "sought to enhance, not to transcend, their position within a pre-existing cultural structure" (O'Brien 180). Utopia, in this sense, was not technically

dreamed of as an entirely new social arrangement, but instead the lands that would become Canada figured as a new context for the continuity and dominance of Old World ideology: more of the same social structure, but without economic hardship or political repression or religious oppression. In America, settlers' desire for religious apocalypse transformed into a desire to enjoy the post-apocalyptic environment, and literature of the American West coupled with the influence of British Romanticism and American nature writing stood as evidence that utopia had in fact arrived in a form continuous with imperialist interests (as evident in American expansionism as well as the commodification of "the wilderness" as a site of leisure for the privileged [Soper and Bradley xx; Cronon 72]).

As discussed in chapter one, trends in early-mid-century American and Canadian literature reflected the experience of European settlers in North America, and specifically their reaction to the realization or subversion of their belief in the "new world" as the setting for a Judaeo-Christian post-Apocalyptic utopia. Settlers in what would eventually become the United States recognized that there was hardship in the post-apocalyptic landscape, to be sure, but decided that overall utopia could be found despite this hardship, especially in the North American wildernesses: regression to a more simple way of living, escape from societal constraints, and the realization of a singular, desired way of life as an individual was celebrated in the country's nascent literatures. The potential for one's own private utopia existed as a corollary of apocalyptic hardship and remains to this day as a facet of the American Dream, wherein catastrophic events and gruelling circumstances precede the eventual success and easy life awarded to those brave and daring enough to adventure in this frontier environment. This attitude is reflected in American literature and influences its genre fiction, so that the SF post-apocalyptic environment is just another Frontier of strange and hostile others, to be sure, but that

holds the promise of a life of control and mastery if those others can be subdued and the environment adequately colonized. I contend that it is possible to read the concept of the American Dream as grounded in a desire for the good life that specifically relies on the post-apocalyptic environment to provide both the challenges and the space necessary for individuals to establish and live out their ideal existence.

In contrast, much of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF is a marked departure from the dominant American genre narrative tradition in its cynicism towards the apocalyptic promise of a better world through violence. As I discussed in chapter two, Canadian SF in general can be seen to adopt a "more critical and ambivalent point of view" (Vonarburg "Women and Science Fiction" 185) of developments in technology and their use (especially military technology), and this is similar to the way that western women's SF writing in general approaches themes of technological progress and innovation with a keen awareness of its costly effects as felt by women and minorities. I read this Canadian attitude in post-apocalyptic fiction from the late 1940s-late 1980s as a product of the context of looming Cold War violence, the flooding of the North American market with technology coopted from the (American) military, and extreme twentieth-century ambivalence about American culture (Moss and Sugars 214). Instead of the American nuclear sublime that celebrates the power of human ingenuity and technological prowess even for destruction,[124] in Canada there is a "recognition of [human] constraints and the respect-for-superior-powers message (the powers of Evolution, History, and Nature)" (Ketterer, "Canadian SF and F" 167), a posture of responsiveness to the reality and hardships of life north of the 49th parallel.[125] In telling the story of the condemned, the disenfranchised, and those

[124] See Seed "Introduction" and Csicsery-Ronay.
[125] The post-apocalyptic situation incorporates the Canadian imaginative orientation to the frontier as well; however, it does do in the positioning of the frontier as "all around one, a part and condition of one's whole imaginative being" (Frye "Selections" 8), in contrast to the American Frontier being a concrete area in the western United States

excluded from extraordinary history (whether according to religious or SF mythology), the Canadian post-apocalyptic SF investigated in this thesis trends towards a cynicism about the apocalyptic fantasy and often contains an implicit critique of the more dominant American iteration of the genre's investment in a futurism that follows from destitution.[126]

I will return again here to Atwood's words from *Survival*: survival as established in much of white settler-Canadian literature is a "bare survival in the face of 'hostile' elements and/or natives: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive" ("Selections" 16). This survival entails a disciplining of all subjects in the present in order to ensure a future for some, an ideology of survival that relies heavily on the ends justifying the means. The survival of humanity justifies the severe discipline of the garrisoned society, identified by Frye as "beleaguered" and "a perilous enterprise" where individualism is seen as dangerous deviation from the norm that positions itself directly against the group or threatens to abandon it ("Selections" 11). The desire for the survival of the human race is an unquestioned good, which means that the measures taken to ensure its continuity is also a good, and so any critique or unhappiness with the way that the garrison society is organized is read as bad by its members and as directly attacking the desire for human survival and continuity (Frye, "Selections" 11).

The cultural desire for futurity as it exists in the western world at large has been critiqued by queer and feminist scholars who point out that the burden of cultural continuity often falls unfairly on the shoulders of people with wombs and leads to a politics of exclusion of queer

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that adventurers could travel to and from. Thus, in most Canadian SF texts under study, either there is no city or settlement to which the protagonist can return (i.e. "The Train", "A Queen in Thebes", *The Late Great Human Roadshow*), or it is in fact evil and a source of antagonism (i.e. *Les tours de Babylone*, *The Neutron Picasso*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, "Après Demain," *The Silent City*).

[126] Some may argue that this is in keeping with the reputation of Canadian literature in general for being comprised of novels that are very negative—the dominant affect of Canadian literature stereotypically is one of despair or, at best, cynicism about the status quo (as demonstrated in, for example, Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House*, Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, Robertson Davies' *Fifth Business*, Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*).

people from the future as, in this view, the creation of the future rests exclusively on the biological capability to produce children to ensure the continuation of humanity. Queer scholar Lee Edelman terms this desire "reproductive futurism" in his book *No Future*, arguing that this ideology curtails the rights and freedoms of queer men and queer and heterosexual women in the present, in order to ensure a future represented by the figure of the child. As Brent R. Bellamy discusses, post-apocalyptic fiction "posits a future where women's choices become limited incredibly by the imperative to survive, which … tends to contain an implied imperative to reproduce as well" (130). Bellamy's discussion of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* situates the novel as a successor to a "long list of post-apocalyptic [SF] novels about and narrated by men" that emphasize the importance of the family, and which often take for granted that the social organization of the heteronormative family will survive apocalyptic destruction (131).

Conversely, dystopian fiction written by women often foregrounds the denial of sexual autonomy to female characters, depicting them as "trapped by their sex, by their femaleness, and reduced from subjecthood to function" (Lefanu 71), usually in the name of some form of reproductive futurism. Canadian post-apocalyptic SF novels often respond to reproductive futurism as "the logic by which the social good appears co-terminus with human futurity … emblematized by the figure of the child and vouchsafed through reproduction" (Sheldon, "Somatic Capitalism" 2)—though differing, as we shall see, in approach and degree to which they accept or reject it. Ahmed, in her consideration of the dystopian film *Children of Men* (2006), points out that reproductive futurism as a vehicle for heteronormative hope not only binds adults, but also children, to a prescribed role: children must "bear the weight of [the] fantasy" of hope for the future (184), regardless of whether they want to or not. Scholar Rebekah Sheldon asserts that "the founding assertion that the present must endlessly attend to the future

interpellates men and women alike into sacred and sacrificial reproduction, one highly valued mode of which is procreation" ("We Who Are About to…" 20).

III Yearning for utopia in post-apocalyptic dystopian SF

A society that values survival and cultural continuity above all else is fertile ground for the garrison mentality, by means of which it jealously guards and disciplines its members for the sake of survival, corralling them into safe spaces where they can be monitored by those in charge. Society thus organizes itself around those principles and deploys dystopian measures of control over its citizens in the name of safeguarding a future utopia (a logic chillingly critiqued in *The Handmaid's Tale*). If "the goal of world destruction is world creation, pro-creation, and re-creation for the citizen, for the child, and, most important, for the self," as Eric S. Rabkin writes (xv), what are the sociopolitical relations and outlines of the new, "better" world like? According to Canadian post-apocalyptic SF, these relations will actually be much, much worse than what came before: as previously discussed, a foundational attitude of disappointment and betrayal by failure of the "new world" to deliver on the promises of apocalyptic fantasy characterized settlers' affective orientations to Turtle Island (Goldman 2009). The setting of the post-apocalypse intensifies the struggle for survival, whether because of low fertility or possible mutation caused by nuclear radiation (e.g. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Gagnon's *Les tours de Babylone,* Frederick Biro's *The Perfect Circus*, or Élisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City*); fear of infectious and fatal diseases (e.g. Atwood's "Freeforall"); repressive religious mandate (e.g. Hamel's "Après Demain"); or simply because the human population has been so drastically reduced that repopulation is an assumption that goes unvoiced by an apolitical, atavistic remnant (e.g. Margaret Laurence's "A Queen in Thebes" and David Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean*). Canadian post-apocalyptic SF shows us that the technologies of nuclear or biological warfare

that "fairly seduce us into Armageddon" (Rabkin vii) are in fact part of the reason why the post-apocalyptic world is not a utopia.

The post-apocalyptic future imagined by most settler-Canadian writers between 1948 and 1989 is not the arrival of a new utopian form of social organization or a place where utopian potential exists within its structure despite the odds, but as a dystopic return to an older, more disciplinary and rigidly stratified society, seemingly justified by the realities of a world ruined by nuclear weaponry and/or dictated by repressive religious or political regimes. As discussed in chapters two and three, an outright repudiation of its promised "good" of the apocalypse and sociopolitical critique of the conditions preceding its arrival are baked into the structure of many texts; its arrival is accidental (e.g. Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean*, Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami*), or meaningless to characters who have no context for it (e.g. Laurence's "A Queen In Thebes," Yves Thériault's "Akua Nuten," Jean Tétrau's *Les nomades*, Lloyd Abbey's *The Last Whales*, Leslie Croutch's "Eemanu Grows Up" and "The Day the Bomb Fell"), or so far in the past that reasons for it (if any) have not survived (e.g. Michael Carin's *Neutron Picasso*, Wayland Drew's Erthring Cycle, Sévigny's "The Train," *tours*, *City*). These texts question the inherent good of the apocalyptic promise, dismantling it to reveal it as a story told by those in power to justify extreme violence in the name of bringing about a better world (or at least one in which those in power are granted even more power), and the perpetuation of that violence beyond apocalypse. Generally, casting doubt on the goodness of the future is accomplished simply by transposing readers past apocalypse and into a future that is markedly worse than the author's present, which stymies characters' attempts to change it (or simply live their lives) at every turn. The point of view of minoritarian subjects—disenfranchised due to gender, race,

class status, and even species—further emphasizes the point that the apocalyptic promise of a better world through violence is not only farcical but deeply dangerous.

I argue that in addition to critique, a marked cynicism about the arrival of the apocalypse as a desired event is evident at the level of narration in many of these older Canadian post-apocalyptic SF texts, as they erase the event entirely and focus instead on the actions of the characters in the present. Textual representation of apocalypse ranges from a brief glimpse of apocalyptic violence, such as in "A Queen in Thebes," "Akua Nuten," and *Tsunami*; to mention of apocalyptic violence as an event that took place in living memory, such as in Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy, Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, *The Perfect Circus*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and Spider Robinson's *Telempath*; to reference to it as an event that took place in the distant past, such as in *tours*, *City*, Michael Carin's *The Neutron Picasso*, and the Erthring Cycle; to completely eliding the cause, extent, and particulars of the apocalyptic event, such as in Catherine Sinclair's "Raindance," Douglas Angus' "About Time to Go South," "The Train," "Après Demain," and *Roadshow*. In the texts in the last category particularly, what matters is the actions that the characters take in their present, and they are only dictated by the past insofar as it has wrought a change to the landscape (social, political, environmental) that the characters must now navigate in order to create a future apart from what came before them. Canadian SF scholar Allan Weiss discusses this trend as explicitly post-modern in narrative structure, where "the 'ending' is tentative and open to doubt, so that perhaps we are seeing not an ending so much as another step in an undirected process: apocalypse without closure" (41). In these texts, catastrophes of the past are much less important than what happens in the present and what will happen in the future: the past is significant only insofar as it dictates present action.

These narratives divest from the Eurowestern ideology of utopia as originally put forward by Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth century and incorporated into the American Dream; as my readings of *Neuromancer* and *Roadshow* later in this chapter shall demonstrate, utopia therein is not a matter of policy, but personal politics and interpersonal relations. Instead of a widespread social arrangement, a different form of utopia surfaces in discrete actions and thoughts of characters, one that is very like what Muñoz calls queer utopia, one that can be thought of "as flux, a temporal disorganization, as a moment when the here and the now is transcended by a then and a there that could be and indeed should be" (97). Literary scholar Teresa Heffernan notes that the lack of finality to stories in the SF genre can suggest "infinite possibilities and openings, where no one ending can foreclose all others" (11), making possible a multiplicity of futures. Muñoz employs hope as a critical methodology in his book about queer utopia called *Cruising Utopia*, writing that since queerness itself is "essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (14), locating utopia in multiple discrete actions and hopeful articulations of queer desire. Importantly, he describes his approach as a maneuver that turns to the past for the purpose of critiquing the present, propelled by a desire for futurity (Muñoz 43). Queer utopia, according to Muñoz, does not use the past as a rigid template for the future, but instead as a guide to recognize and avoid historical pitfalls and to celebrate new futures as they arrive (38). Importantly, Muñoz explicitly describes queer utopian desire as an endeavour that is not about "[imagining] an isolated future for the individual" but instead as a hermeneutic that "wishes to describe a *collective futurity*" (38, emphasis mine). As I will demonstrate, the roadshow in Jiles' novel is an example of nascent queer utopian desire that is inclusive of multiple modes of being and hopeful despite its post-apocalyptic context. While the world of the future may be singular in the literal sense, in terms of

philosophies, ideologies, social and political arrangements and more, the queer utopian future is made of multiple moving parts, resisting a single overarching sociopolitical structure.

Muñoz's investment in hopeful futures directly contrasts with the queer pessimism advocated by scholars such as Edelman in the 1990s especially, performing and learning from critique but still holding to a vision of utopia in the present, despite its dystopic conditions. Edelman and many others were critical of the way that queer mainstream politics in the 1990s seemed to ally itself uncritically to traditionally heteronormative figurations such as marriage, the production of children, and subsequent marginalization of radical queer anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist struggles, content with the status quo so long as gay marriage bills were passed (4, Muñoz 34-35). Edelman charges heteronormative hope in reproductive futurism as responsible for "[holding us] in thrall by a future continually deferred by time itself, constrained to dream of a day when today and tomorrow are one" (30), a hope that mobilizes the dystopian societies in *The Handmaid's Tale*, "Freeforall," "Après Demain" and *tours*, to name a few novels where society is organized around the reproduction of children for the purposes of the reproduction of a version of human civilization into the future. This dystopic figuration, Edelman argues, can only be countered by an act of political self-destruction: "the only act that counts as one: the act of resisting enslavement to the future in the name of having a life" (30). However, Muñoz nuances Edelman's negative figuration of hope for the future by dividing the utopian form in two: "abstract"—totalizing and pessimistic—and "concrete"—discrete and optimistic. Reproductive futurism, traditional utopia, millennium, apocalyptic desire, patriarchal capitalism: all belong to the realm of the abstract dream of totalizing political control, while concrete utopias, though also given to dreaming of more widespread social change, are "the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many.

Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope" (Muñoz 15). The concrete, queer utopia consists in the negation of the negativity of the present and by refusing attachment to a future defined by heteronormative, white supremacist, patriarchal optimism that, ultimately, seeks to replicate an oppressive past.

Critique of the dominant vision of the future is important both to queer theory and many Canadian apocalyptic texts to highlight the dangers inherent in hierarchical thinking and the ignorance of other ways of life outside of the white, settler heteronormative schema. However, while these critical methods expose the flaws and violence inherent in abstract utopic thinking, they do not imagine an alternate way forward and thus imply that the future will be violent and oppressive no matter what. Muñoz, following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, argues that reading practices of queer theorists have become paranoid: searching for the negative in every instance. Further, he argues that these practices have "become so nearly automatic in queer studies that they have, in many ways, ceased to be critical" (23). I identify the same impulse in post-apocalyptic SF, where writers have portrayed a negative, dystopian post-apocalypse so often that it has become nearly automatic in the genre for the post-apocalyptic setting to equal violent action and the performance of despair (as exemplified by the settings and affective weights of Leonard Fischer's *Let Out the Beast!,* "A Queen in Thebes," and the stories in Thériault's *Si la bombe m'était contée* especially). This repetitiveness has made it so that dominant depictions of the post-apocalypse in SF cease to shock us with their depictions of human destitution, of civilizational ruin, of violence and aberrant behaviour: on the contrary, violence (global, nationwide, between cities, interpersonal, etc.) has become an expected trope of the genre.

As discussed in prior chapters, the idea of a post-collapse society as the ideal environment for the enforcement of "natural" hierarchies of gender, race, class, and species is

not a new one. Throughout the late 1940s to early 1980s, many of the dominant iterations of the post-apocalyptic SF narrative tended to either follow the Mad-Max-style explicit male power fantasy or adhere to a more domestic but no less ideologically violent post-apocalyptic social arrangement, like that of Robert A. Heinlein's *Farnham's Freehold* (1964), where a family adopts the patriarchal and racist survival methods of American pioneers in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion.[127] As discussed in chapter one, American protagonists generally tend to be the heroes in these scenarios, as opposed to the Canadian protagonist who generally just tries to get by and, more often than not, does not get rewarded with a happy ending for their efforts (Runté). It is the dominant American narrative that has defined the affect of the post-apocalyptic narrative however, since, as John Clute points out, "triumph is contagious. When you read American SF you're on the right side. You are going to win. There will be no side effects" (23-24). American post-apocalyptic narratives explicitly position readers on the side of (or even as) the hero, and generate a good feeling that is only heightened, made more tangible, by the difficulties and obstacles posed by the post-apocalyptic environment and its denizens.

Consequently, a certain genre-savviness imbues many of the characters in the Canadian texts under study from the late 1980s, most likely due to the predominance of the American version of the post-apocalyptic SF narrative for over four decades of the twentieth century. Often, audiences and characters alike anticipate the apocalypse, and both anticipate certain specific modalities of being to play out in the post-apocalypse, though (very generally speaking) characters are more likely to experience this anticipation as fear or dread, and audiences as

[127] This serialized novel was an attempt at racial critique but ended up "resurrect[ing] some of the most horrific racial stereotypes imaginable" (Heer) as well as containing explicitly patriarchal and pro-incest messaging. The affect, however, is that of an exciting adventure in a world that may come to pass—an attitude adopted in the real world by doomsday preppers who call themselves "Freeholders" as they fashion communities after the style of Heinlein's imagination (Richardson).

expectation or hope[128] for an exciting or dramatic story to unfold. An in-text example of this can be found in *Tsunami* which, as discussed in my first chapter, presents the predominance of disaster movies that rely on weapons and violence in the aftermath of societal breakdown to deliver the movie's excitement and reify the American individualist, might-makes-right fantasy. Dystopia is depicted as optimistic, in this sense; suffering and bare-life existence are bound up in the promise of the American post-apocalyptic genre narrative, and any character action that works towards survival in this setting can be read as charged with utopic potential. Thus, characters like Robert Anthony Allison from *Tsunami*, Gene from *The Last Canadian*, and Matt, Arco, and Victoria from *Roadshow*, view the sudden collapse of society due to apocalyptic violence not as an outright catastrophe, but as one with a very significant silver lining of potential for domination and control of others, if they can capitalize on it. The post-apocalyptic setting slides subtly towards becoming more like that of a western, where adventures await for lone cowboys daring enough to brave the hostile unknown and domesticate it.

Even texts that criticize this tendency fall into the reiteration of post-apocalyptic dystopia as exciting: were the setting of *The Handmaid's Tale* not interesting or exciting in some way, it would not have become the cultural phenomenon that it is today, as it is intimately tied to Offred's character motivations and trajectory. As in my earlier discussion of thematic criticism in the context of *Survival*, to critique a concept can reinvoke it and carry it forward into the future. The SF dystopia, like kneejerk queer paranoid reading practices, ends up becoming so repetitive in post-apocalyptic stories as to be received uncritically. I argue that positive affects in this way become attached to the genre of post-apocalyptic SF, and so while the future depicted may be

[128] Muñoz states that fear is the "other" of hope (15).

grim or bleak, the overall structure of feeling[129] that readers are supposed to inhabit while reading these genre narratives is one of excitement about encountering a new environment, triumph at overcoming adversity, and admiration for the characters who manage to survive. I here follow the argument of Ahmed that the inherent nature of happiness is performative. She explains how, "by finding happiness in certain places, it generates those places as being good…. Correlations are read as causalities, which then become the basis of promotion" (6). In many American post-apocalyptic texts, the celebration of the advent of the post-apocalypse as an exciting space of potentiality by influential readers and critics becomes a dictum requiring all readers of post-apocalyptic SF to also find those spaces exciting: the post-apocalypse becomes a utopia, of sorts, to strive for, despite the fact that both the space of utopia and the post-apocalypse are most often predicated on a return to a patriarchal, disciplinary idealized past.

The celebration of the post-apocalyptic future as utopia can be found many SF texts and films, but is most obvious in the way that cyberpunk, a subgenre of SF that developed in the mid-80s, was embraced by many mainstream critics and readers/writers of SF. The advent of cyberpunk, an SF subgenre defined by structural dystopia and the extra-legal actions of its (mostly white, mostly male, mostly middle-lower-class) protagonists, in the mid-80s represented in feminist scholar Nicola Nixon's terms "a concerted return to the (originary) purity of hard SF … embracing technology with new fervor." The cyberpunk setting is often described as "high tech, low life," featuring narratives "set in a computer driven, high-tech near-future and features low-life protagonists interacting in hard-boiled detective type plots" (van Belkom). Importantly, this future was set (either implicitly or explicitly) in a future where the Cold War had ended, the

[129] Theorist Raymond Williams defines a structure of feeling as "the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization," to which the "arts of a period … are of major importance" due to their extreme importance to communication and community (McGuigan 34).

ramifications of which I will explore more fully in the next section in the context of *Neuromancer* (1984).

Cyberpunk's post-Cold-War future was received as wildly hopeful, its technological developments as exceedingly cool, and cyberpunk itself as extremely popular as a result, despite (or because of) its overwhelming whiteness, maleness, and repetition of the myth of the American neoliberal hero. N. Nixon, writing in 1992, focuses her critical discussion of cyberpunk through reviews of Gibson's *Neuromancer* almost exclusively as representative of the genre. She argues that Gibson "celebrates the same initiative and ingenuity which has always characterized the American hero, indicating that, within his chosen models of a relentlessly capitalist future, a paradigmatic American heroism can be rearticulated virtually uncritically: past, present, and future are the same". This is wonderful, if readers identify with the American Dream and its cast of white male heterosexual heroes, and indeed N. Nixon cites many instances of glowing reviews of *Neuromancer* from critics who fit that criteria, such as Bruce Sterling's statement that "THIS IS WHY SCIENCE FICTION WAS INVENTED!" [capitals in original]; Larry McCaffery's assertion that "cyberpunk seems to be the only art systematically dealing with the most crucial political, philosophical, moral issues of our day"; John Shirley's maintaining that "cyberpunk writers like himself are indeed "preparing the ground for a revolution" (qtd. in N. Nixon). Even *The Washington Post*, reviewing the Sterling-edited cyberpunk anthology *Mirrorshades* (1986), heralded the genre as "the first genuinely new movement in science fiction since the 1960s" (qtd in N. Nixon). For editors Rudy Rucker and Peter Wilson, cyberpunk is "ideologically correct" (13, qtd in N. Nixon) and insurrectionist in the face of the SF publishing industry's "stodginess, neo-conservatism, big-bucks-mania" (12, qtd in N. Nixon). Nixon notes that these appraisals tended to deliberately elide the intervention of feminist writers in the 1970s

and their exploration of gender relations, instead reaffirming a patriarchal societal arrangement as the correct way to envision the future in SF. The genre of cyberpunk demonstrates the performativity of happiness, as per Ahmed, in its very structure, a positioning of a post-apocalyptic dystopia of corporate control and extreme wealth disparity as an ultimately hopeful environment where happiness is within the individual's power to realize through action.

IV Hopeful monsters of the post-apocalypse: ignoring affective promises in *Neuromancer*

In this section, I argue that the text of *Neuromancer* (1984) is both more nuanced and more simplistic than its early critics and reviewers recognize it: certainly, cyberpunk became a cultural phenomenon, but one that was based on a surface-level reiteration of the tropes and aesthetics present in a handful of texts, of which *Neuromancer* was the most prominent.[130] My discussion thus focuses on *Neuromancer* particularly as it fits within the archive of Canadian post-apocalyptic SF written between 1948 and 1989, and not on its kinship with cyberpunk generally as it came to be after *Neuromancer*'s popularity (along with the later development of post-cyberpunk). A close reading of *Neuromancer* reveals that its protagonists, while performing actions that can certainly be (and have been) read as countering certain corporate structures within their society, are not interested in revolution so much as in tweaking the status quo so that it works in their favour. The text is interested in telling a futuristic noir detective story, not a jeremiad about the dangers of technology, neoliberalism, environmental ruin, or the celebration of hacker culture. There are two separate affective structures operating simultaneously in the novel: that of protagonist Case, transitioning from a place of despair and numbness to victory against overwhelming odds and comfortable happily-ever-after; and the dualistic nature of *Neuromancer*'s own setting in a neoliberal dystopia of accelerated capitalism, climate

[130] See: Rosenberg; Alphin 27; Cole 161.

degradation, vast disparity between haves and have-nots, and corporate control that nonetheless functions peculiarly as a site of hope due to its post-Cold-War setting. In *Neuromancer*, the anticipated Cold War nuclear clash did not cause the end of the world and human civilization is actually thriving in a post-War future, but the characters only reluctantly come to care about this as the inciting incident for their particular adventure and are otherwise ignorant of or uninterested in the apocalyptic event and its ramifications.

In the novel, burned-out has-been cyberjockey-turned-drug-addict Case is recruited off the streets of Chiba by the mysterious, extremely rich Armitage, who pays for Case's neurons to be surgically reconstructed in order for him to perform a very dangerous cyberspace infiltration. Armitage is represented by Molly Millions, a "street samurai" with surgically implanted mirrorshades and razorblades in her fingers, who finds the hapless Case and brings him to her boss. "Armitage," it turns out, is a fake personality constructed and implanted into Corto, a military amnesiac; despite his caginess, Molly and Case figure out that "Armitage" is in actuality merely a puppet for the artificial intelligence construct Wintermute. The goal of Case's infiltration job is to free Wintermute from its imprisonment; by the end of the novel, this is achieved and Wintermute—now Neuromancer—is able to travel freely in cyberspace. Molly, it is implied, returns to her former lone wolf ways (Gibson 269-70), and Case can return to his life, just with more money now that he has been paid by Wintermute/Neuromancer, and with the ability to access cyberspace once again. Case and Molly have no demonstrated attachment whatsoever to changing the status quo: survival and thriving in the cyberpunk dystopia of *Neuromancer* is wholly dependent on having enough money to achieve the good life, and they are unconcerned by this reality. The neoliberal dystopia is accepted by the characters and the text itself as the way things are, in the same way that a hardboiled detective accepts the gritty, crime-

ridden context of his life, a setting which became the signature environment of most subsequent cyberpunk narratives.

Neuromancer is often celebrated as being a Canadian SF masterpiece, though the ideological underpinnings of *Neuromancer*'s world evoke a dominant American-style individualist narrative. Journalist Edo van Belkom enthuses that a "strong case could be made positing that the bestselling Canadian novel of all-time [sic]" is not a classic of Canadian literature but instead *Neuromancer* (1). The identification of *Neuromancer* as Canadian is based almost completely in the figure of its author; though born in Virginia, Gibson moved to Canada in 1968 to avoid the Vietnam draft,[131] living in Toronto for several years, but eventually moving to Vancouver in 1972, and he has lived in B.C. ever since (van Belkom 1). Gibson, though he has stated that he does not consider himself to be Canadian or American, says in this interview that he identifies "with the state of being Canadian," enjoying the cultural mosaic (van Belkom 6), and being "happiest in big cities" that are "radically multicultural…. where people are generally not even of recognizable ethnic derivations. I'm into hybrid vigor" (Newitz 2). Parallels can be drawn between the "classic cyberpunk characters" that are "marginalized, alienated loners who lived on the edge of society" (Person) and Runté and Kulyk's observation that protagonists in classic Canadian fiction feel that they are alienated from mainstream (American) culture, but that they are "conditioned by the desire to *remain* outsiders" (44).

Neuromancer can be read, therefore, as a hybrid Canadian-American form in its depiction of a protagonist who is not quite the rugged hero of an American story, instead being a loser who

[131] Gibson admits that as a young writer he "took credit for draft evasion where I shouldn't have. I washed up in Canada with some vague idea of evading the draft but then I was never drafted so I never had to make the call…. I wasn't a tightly wrapped package at that time" (Newitz). It is possible to read this evasion of the political (neither going along with it nor directly challenging government policy, but avoiding it altogether through a combination of luck and circumstance so that deliberate engagement with politics is never on the table) into Gibson's early works.

is in the right place at the right time; in the portrayal of cyberspace as a vast electronic wilderness that is a dangerous but exciting reimagination of the American Frontier mythos; in the incorporation of the Canadian multicultural ideal; in the Canadian understanding of "the importance of the environment in shaping the regional cultures and individuals that participate in them" (Clute 27). These explicit departures from American-style SF tropes mirror the moves made by Crawford Kilian in *Tsunami*, as discussed in my first chapter. Discoursing about the importance of the environment to Canadian SF, Runté and Kulyk reference *Neuromancer* as "represent[ing] the urban environment in a new way" (43) and, later in the same volume, Clute draws an explicit parallel, observing that protagonist Case ("a solipsistic hacker in a vast world of owners") is streetwise, meaning that he knows "how to survive in the street (or wilderness)" (27). Clute's assessment of Case's survival know-how is not completely accurate, given that when we meet Case, he is explicitly waiting to die and not even trying to survive, but even then he is comfortable in and knowledgeable about his intensely urban environment.

Neuromancer is a narrative that describes minimal, individualistic change as opposed to the sweeping and sudden societal upheaval so typical of the apocalyptic promise; Case and Molly are uninterested in the idea that their actions could have more significant ramifications, as that is not the point of what they are trying to achieve (or what they are paid for). The future of *Neuromancer* does not differ very much ideologically from the Reaganomic American 1980s present in which it was written. Scholar Caroline Alphin observes a dominant trend in cyberpunk scholarship that draws on Fredric Jameson's diagnosis of "postmodernism as the logic of late capitalism, using Jameson's spatial pastiche, schizophrenic temporality, and waning of affect" and argues that the cyberpunk biohacker "reflects an underlying pure neoliberalism at work within accelerationism and its neoliberal governmentalities" (ii). The emphasis on individualism

and the neoliberal narrative of individual empowerment runs through *Neuromancer*, as characters' concerns are selfish: the money that Armitage will pay them, the antidote to surgically implanted toxin sacs in Case's abdomen to ensure his compliance. Case's decision to unleash Wintermute/Neuromancer is not in service of a higher ideal, to right a wrong, or even for the sake of the people he is close to, but out of a desire for a change in the status quo of his own life that he is not sure will even happen, and in fact does not. The resistance of the protagonists to the way that the world is structured—Wintermute is trapped behind ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics—a type of firewall or anti-virus protection) in a cyberspace account to prevent its escape from its "owners" and Case must break it out—unfortunately does not result in meaningful change to the dystopia in which they live. Any system change that the freed Wintermute/Neuromancer effects behind the scenes is accidental, and not a concern to Case or Molly.[132]

Neuromancer and its sequels (*Count Zero* [1986] and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* [1988]) depict a future where the apocalyptic event is world-changing in the figurative sense, not the literal: in this future, the Cold War culminated in a three-week engagement which did not fundamentally change the literal planetary environment, but instead caused a global shift in ideology, intensifying the conditions of late capitalism at the same time as revealing the complicity of governments in the deaths of their own citizens in order to uphold ideals of military might and dominance. Early in *Neuromancer*, Case approaches his smuggler contact Julius Deane, asking for information about "the war." Deane explains that the war itself—a three-week affair—was an exercise in governmental betrayal of its own citizens:

[132] In *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, the two subsequent novels in Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy, the world seems hardly to have changed at all, except that AI are now literal *deus ex machina* who are, for the most part, uninterested in human affairs.

> Great bloody postwar political football, that was. Watergated all to hell and back…. Wasted a fair bit of patriotic young flesh in order to test some new technology. They knew about the Russians' defenses, it came out later. Knew about the emps, magnetic pulse weapons. Sent these fellows in regardless, just to see…. Turkey shoot for Ivan. (Gibson 35)

What was revealed by the nuclear violence was the corruption and amorality of military leaders: the world discovered, after the three-week war, that military interests no longer served humanity, but were actively opposed to it. It may be a logical conclusion to draw that this knowledge dissolved the final barrier to corporate (as opposed to state) power: public opinion no longer respected political leaders. The world fundamentally changed to create the future that Case knows, ruled by corporate interest, where nationality is an afterthought, inundated with modified military technology (Gibson 51). What makes *Neuromancer* in particular post-apocalyptic is the way in which the war served as a revelatory turning point that affected Case's society deeply and broadly in its subsequent discounting of national interests, embrace of corporate power and high-tech military technology, and deep suspicion of political organization. Without this conceptual and, ultimately, affect-altering apocalypse, the cyberpunk world as Case knows it in *Neuromancer* would not exist.

Unlike other Canadian SF featuring post-apocalyptic societies, *Neuromancer* does not make a critique of its setting, and herein lies an unexpected contradiction: while some critics read the cyberpunk setting as extremely dystopic, the text earnestly believes itself to be optimistic in structure and utopic in character action. *Neuromancer*'s depiction of a relatively untouched Western society beyond the outbreak and swift wrap up of World War Three flies in the face of the expectations of any SF novel aspiring to technological realism and can be read in that valence

as incredibly hopeful, almost utopian, in its impetus. Gibson admits that he thought, when writing the novel, that he was doing a "ludicrously optimistic science-fictional thing. Because [at that time] anyone with half a brain woke up every day with consciousness that it could be humanity's last day" (Anders).[133] In a later interview, Gibson reiterates how in the context of the Cold War, "any [future] scenario that wasn't nuclear Armageddon was inherently optimistic" (McClure), and rejects the idea that the world of the Sprawl Trilogy is dystopian, an "imaginary extreme" that may seem dystopian to "middle-class white people in North America" but "don't seem dystopian if you live in Rio or anywhere in Africa" (Newitz 3). N. Nixon quotes Gibson commenting that his future "would be a neat place to visit," and that what he likes most about it is that "'there's a sense of bustling commerce. There seems to be a lot of money around. It's not very evenly distributed, but people are still doing business'" (Hamburg 84, qtd in N. Nixon). She argues that to view Gibson's Sprawl Trilogy as deliberately dystopic would be an active misreading of the novels: instead, "much as we might flinch at the implications of such triumphs," the triumph of Case and Molly and their recuperation and return to their preferred ways of life in *Neuromancer* is basically a happy ending, a marked departure from the affect of dystopian despair.

Neuromancer was (and is still) greeted with distaste and horror as a dystopic nightmare by feminist and postcolonial critics: the eighties were not a great time to identify as anything other than a white heterosexual man in America, and a depiction of a future that reified and cemented social stratification, income disparity, casual misogyny and racism on top of the acceleration of neoliberalism is cause for despair. The advent of cyberpunk was interpreted

[133] Gibson states that "the world of the future of *Neuromancer* was … to some very real extent created to depict a world that had a little bit of a nuclear war, and something had happened. Probably the corporations just said, "No, wait, we're not making any money. You can't do that anymore," and his interviewer chimes in with the imagined reason: "You can't make money if people are dead" (Anders).

through a feminist lens as a return to the Humanist dream of transcendence (Merrick 190), with *Neuromancer* codifying the problematic disdain of console cowboys for the "meat" of the body in contrast with their longing for the purity of cyberspace, as well as the figure of the razorgirl embodied by Molly, who earns cash to pay for her cybernetic augmentations by renting out her body for sex or violence controlled by men (Gibson 147). Writer Melissa Scott observes that, despite the counter-cultural and extra-legal actions of console cowboys, the early narratives of cyberpunk (such as *Neuromancer*) are "ultimately a pretty useless thing—a carnival sort of genre, in which straight middle-class white men imagine themselves as oppressed and end up reaffirming the status quo" (qtd in Merrick 206). As David R. Cole notes, in cyberpunk it is not "individual or repressed minorities that are finding a new voice in the pack; but it is the peculiar voices of the technologically enhanced that are being heard" (161).[134] The advanced technology (software and surgical body modificatory "wetware") is accessible only to those with the fiscal means to purchase it—or the connections necessary to obtain it through other means.

The structural embeddedness of seemingly inescapable hierarchies based on wealth and class is what leaves the lasting impression on readers that *Neuromancer*—and, therefore, the cyberpunk genre in general—is in actuality, regardless of the actions of its characters or authorial intent, "'the apotheosis of bad faith, the apotheosis of the postmodern,' reflecting a culture of despair or malaise" (Csicsery-Ronay, qtd in Merrick 186). Andrew Ross "calls cyberpunk 'survivalist,' a 'new dystopian realism' which presents a future 'governed by the dark imagination of technological dystopias' (432-33); and Pam Rosenthal suggests that the future in

[134] The genre of cyberpunk may therefore be glibly identified, in the words of writer Nicole Griffith, as "more about attitude than tropes… If there are computers and cyberspace and crime and miserable, cynical protagonists always on the lookout of number one, then it's cyberpunk. If there are computers and cyberspace and crime and protagonists who are struggling to make their life and/or someone else's a bit better, then it's not" (qtd in Merrick 207).

cyberpunk is ‘our world, gotten worse, gotten more uncomfortable, inhospitable, dangerous, and thrilling’ (85)” (N. Nixon). The post-apocalypse of *Neuromancer* therefore very often represents an inherent structural despair to many, as it is only a desirable future if readers feel as if the structural conditions of that society would work in their favour, instead of against it.

As discussed last chapter, the end of a world does not necessarily mean the end of a worldview, and though in cyberpunk SF a past sociopolitical world has made way for an intensely neoliberal future, the philosophical mores of that past society seem to have not only endured but intensified. The structure of *Neuromancer* attempts to represent a cosmopolitan future, with the dominance of Japanese and Chinese corporations and technology in the North American market, but it fails to follow through, falling into the depiction of an implicitly hierarchical world where all the protagonists are white and all but one of them are men—and this is presented without comment. *Neuromancer*’s multicultural future is a mitigated Humanism that allows for representatives of the “other,” but only one at a time, and only if they are tokens. Thus Molly is the sexy, dangerous femme fatale with a tragic-yet-titillating backstory; Terzibashjian, their contact in Turkey, is sexist and a cowardly caricature prone to preface colloquialisms with constant references to his saying them “in *Ingiliz*” (Gibson 89); the Zion moon colony, a separatist Rastafarian society that Armitage contracts with for help and supplies, is represented mostly by Maelcum and Aerol, Black men who speak in creole and reference smoking ganja; the elders of Zion call Molly “Stepping Razor,” destined to fulfil a prophesy of theirs to “bring a scourge on Babylon” (Gibson 110); Lady 3Jane, keeper of the key to Wintermute’s prison, is protected by Japanese ninja assassin Hideo. Gibson admits to embarrassment about not actually having known anything about Japan when he first wrote *Neuromancer*, despite “Chiba city”

being a major location,[135] "[i]t's just a fantasy…. like nineteenth-century Orientalia" (Tatsumi 10). This "techno-Orientalism" and tokenistic multiculturalism in *Neuromancer* speaks to a particular flavour of positive representation of 1980s-era diversity, which both depicts racial/gendered/sexual others as an integral part of a healthy future, but does not grant them heroic (or even main character) status, a place still reserved for white men (and sometimes white women).

Yet *Neuromancer* still manages to bring a "hybrid vigor" to the genre of Canadian post-apocalyptic science fiction, as its setting beyond the dreaded violent end of the Cold War both imbues the post-apocalyptic future with meaning at the same time as stripping it away, revealing that war between countries belongs to a pre-apocalyptic past: revelation and utopia are not contingent on totalizing nuclear war, and in fact are not events that arrive at all. Instead, anticipated nuclear war ended up intensifying the conditions of this neoliberal world with the injection of military technology and accelerated development in the name of security. "We invented you in Siberia, Case," says Armitage (Gibson 28), referring to this. Corporate business is booming, as is the black market "biz" of illegal drugs, firearms, prostitution, and cybernetics; in cyberpunk, nuclear violence—the object of Cold War dread—is imagined not to have destroyed but instead accelerated 1980s American capitalist ideology, and the characters have no expectations that the world would be arranged otherwise. Much later in the narrative, the personality of Armitage has been overtaken by the original memories of Corto, who is stuck in the moment where his military superiors' betrayal has been revealed and is fully understood. Mistaking Case for a soldier under his command, Corto cries tears of desperation over the

[135] In 1986, interviewer Takayuki Tatsumi draws comparison between the techno-Orientalist portrayal of Japanese characters in SF with the example of Professor Tagomi and Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* and Gibson's depiction of Chiba City; Tagomi is not a name that exists in Japanese, but "the Japanese names are plausible in Bill's fiction" (10).

"[b]etrayal from above. From above…" (Gibson 194) while Case, who has no patriotic illusions, realizes that Corto has spent years "[f]alling, burned and blinded, out of a Siberian sky" (Gibson 194). Patriotism, jingoism, nostalgia for military endeavours, and cultural identity bound up in military might is not just passé, but revealed to be an ideological trap.

Neuromancer can be read as a hopeful monster of a novel, making room for a new affective orientation to the apocalypse after its arrival—that of ambivalence about the entire enterprise of futurity promised by the apocalypse. "Hopeful monster" is a term coined by evolutionary scientist Richard Goldschmidt to refer to an individual expressing a "rare but extremely consequential" macromutation that would "start a new evolutionary line" if passed down to their descendants" (Branch). It is also the title of a 1990 article by Veronica Hollinger about women and SF in which Hollinger uses the term metaphorically to make an ontological point, explicitly drawing parallels between feminist SF and cyberpunk characters that are "products of the breakdown of borders between the human and the machine" and referring to both as "hopeful monsters" (133). Canadian author Hiromi Goto used the term as a title of her 2004 collection of short stories, referring to her protagonists who each struggle through and against their environments and the plot—though not read as SF by critics—incorporates magic realism and myth in the ways the women and girls negotiate their beings in their worlds; these stories use the term "hopeful monster" both literally and figuratively. Post-colonial scholar Jessica Langer refers to Goto's work in her elaboration of the figure of the hybrid in SF generally; though she does not refer to Hollinger's earlier articulation of the term in the context of feminist SF and cyberpunk, Langer turns her attention specifically to the figure of the postcolonial hybrid (109) in what reads to me as a demonstration of Hollinger's observation of how "critics may also produce hopeful monsters, through the collapse of boundaries between the

imaginative and the critical, between the theoretical and the practical, between the political and the personal (133). Langer explicates that postcolonial hybridity "can be a triumph, a method by which colonized peoples resist both the oppressive totalization and the appropriative mimicry of the colonizer" and that "it is often a site of simultaneous despair and resistance" (109). The hopeful monster is hopeful despite the monstrousness of its embodied being, or environment, or sometimes both. To bring this discussion back to cyberpunk and *Neuromancer* specifically, the novel is monstrous in the inhumanity of its setting, but hopeful in its articulation of a post-apocalyptic landscape where the human species has not been decimated, the globe has not been catastrophically altered, and life goes on much as it did in pre-war times.

Neuromancer is monstrous in its depiction of a runaway neoliberal future, but hopeful in the way that it allows for discussion and critique of class hierarchies (Scott, qtd in Merrick 2016); monstrous in the misogyny of the narrative treatment of Molly, but hopeful in her embodiment of a Harawayan feminist cyborg ethic (Merrick 200-01); monstrous in the characters' disregard for human life, but hopeful in pointing towards new forms of post-human being (i.e. artificially intelligent computer programs such as Wintermute/Neuromancer, the extension of Linda Lee's human consciousness beyond death into cyberspace, the technological innovation of "wetware" and "microsofts" that allow for the instantaneous download of new knowledge [or entertainment programs] into the brain); monstrous in its glorification of the white male enterprise in its reinforcement of the primacy of the white man even as a marginalized protagonist, hopeful in undermining top-down, patriarchal relationships in the revelation that it is the A.I. Wintermute pulling the strings of Armitage/Corto (who fills the hypermasculine roles of rich patron and ex-military commander) in order to fulfil the plan of its long-dead creatrix Marie-France. As Langer comments, "[the] hybrid is terrifying because it is uncannily both us and not-

us, and is wildly hopeful for the same reason: in hybridity lies the potential for humanity to be either subsumed or enhanced, or perhaps both" (107). *Neuromancer* demonstrates that while the genre of SF may be seduced by the promise of a future that endlessly emulates the past, just with more technology and posthuman possibility, it is possible for the characters existing within the post-apocalyptic structure not to delude themselves with promissory optimism.

A critical orientation towards the promises of apocalypse and the potential of the subsequent post-apocalyptic world that evaluates their affective potentials does not discount the possibility of finding happiness in the post-apocalypse but does not expect it to arrive as a corollary of violence. Doubting the promise inherent in apocalyptic rhetoric means doubting the method by which utopia is said to arrive: this doubt is not critical of utopia but the upheaval of society necessary for a utopia to be realized. It is not invested in utopia as a noun, but is interested in its verb form, in utopian action. The queer utopia of alternative SF post-apocalyptic affect mobilizes Michael Snediker's theory of queer optimism, which "is not promissory. It doesn't ask that some future time make good on its own hopes… [but rather] asks that optimism, embedded in its own immanent present, might be *interesting*" (2, emphasis in original). Embodying a non-dominant, non-violent, non-hierarchical alternative post-apocalyptic affect requires a critical disengagement from the stupid optimism that argues that safety is assured by weapons and pre-emptive violence and which preaches garrison mentality in order to safeguard a certain desirable way of being (usually based in hierarchies of gender, race, class, and their attendant behaviours). Robert Anthony Allison as well as Burk and his cronies in *Tsunami* learn this the hard way, as do the residents of the Fresh Start community and the Agros in *Telempath*, the residents of the Cities in *The Silent City*, the Avakanas in *The Lord's Pink Ocean*, and the machinates in *The Neutron Picasso*. In contrast, Case and Molly avoid this hard lesson, having

avoided stupid optimism entirely. Cynicism about the promise of apocalypse elides the structures and ideologies of hierarchy and violence that purport to ensure survival in post-apocalyptic narratives, affecting the characters consciously or subconsciously to unsubscribe from the happiness promises of the status quo.

V *The Late Great Human Roadshow*: queer utopia vs stupid optimism

In *The Late Great Human Roadshow*, Jiles constructs a narrative that consistently plays on established tropes of the genre of post-apocalyptic fiction that had been established by the late 1980s (fears of nuclear fallout, the doubling down on patriarchy and xenophobia, the fear of the Other, the faith in violence as the best way to survive, hyperseparation and different types of remoteness from the realities of the world), and then draws back the curtain to show that these tropes are not realistic at all but rather the product of the expectations of characters themselves, many of whose fears of or desires for futurity are belied by their own deleterious actions in the present. *Roadshow* takes a great deal of delight in the negation of stupidly optimistic attachments, such as some characters' beliefs that birthing or adopting children would be easy in the post-apocalypse, their continued investment in the meaning of class status symbols such as the ownership of land despite the direness of their situation, and others' faith that acting according to the dominant script of disaster will allow them to gain power over others in the post-catastrophic city; as Berlant warns, "achieving conventionality, as we will see, is not the same as achieving security" (126), especially in a post-apocalyptic setting where death by radiation poisoning is a guarantee regardless of whatever actions the characters take. Yet the characters are slow to realize their situations; some do not ever truly recognize the signs of radiation sickness for what it is, and so over the course of this slow dying, the novel has time to explore narratives to which characters have attached themselves or that have attached themselves

to characters due to their identities and their dissolution, showing them to be constructed fantasies, to sometimes comedic, sometimes deeply tragic, effect.

In depicting cruelly optimistic attachments to a future defined by the past, Jiles comments on the way that the post-apocalypse will always be patterned after pre-apocalyptic social organizations unless the survivors are willing to detach from their former selves and let go of the past and its assumptions about other people in order to take action in the present for the sake of the future. This commentary can be seen most clearly in the ways that various characters attach themselves to the promissory narrative of the child and the dominant apocalyptic survival narrative, despite the fact that the reality of the overall situation of *The Late Great Human Roadshow* is shown to be antithetical to these imagined scenarios. Children, both literally and figuratively, are central to the plot of *Roadshow*, catalyzing action and weaving together the narratives of all the adults in the book: the novel, however, uses the reality of fully fleshed out child characters and contrasts their actions and desires with the cruel optimism of the child fantasy as well as to the oppositional apocalyptic fantasy that demonizes children as "other." While several characters are deeply invested in the reproductive futurist figure of The Child as emblematic of the future's unquestioned value (Edelman 4), others are subscribed to the dominant generic narrative of the post-apocalypse where children are either absent or reduced to objects threatening violence and emblematic of the brutality of the post-catastrophic environment.

The conventional desire for a child and family is most obviously represented in the character of Heather, who despite "doctors' reports of sterility, blocked tubes, feeble ovaries," is determined to adopt: "She wanted two babies within two years….and she would have a garden, a big one, and chickens…. she felt proprietary about the cow. Heather was going to have a farm

and so the cow should fall under her jurisdiction" (Jiles 9). Her desire for children is bound up with her desire for ownership: of her own land and other living beings. John, her husband, is (privately) skeptical of his wife's desires, since her "playing farm wife" (Jiles 9) does not actually translate into acting on her fantasies in the present (i.e. penning in the loose cow that wanders around their neighbourhood) (Jiles 9). Similarly, the character Sarah Hanlin also desires children and the arrival of a future in which she is a mother, though she does not desire ownership of objects, but instead is completely invested in the affective promise of motherhood: she desperately wants to be wanted. "The baby would give tremendous importance to her life," the narrative tells us; "She wanted to be adored. By somebody" (Jiles 147). In contrast to Heather's middle-class affectations and aspirations, Sarah is a recovering drug user whose appearance in the narrative is explained by the fact that she was hospitalized during whatever event took place that emptied the city (Jiles 124): Sarah is very firm in her belief that it was aliens who caused most of the population of Toronto to disappear overnight (Jiles 12). Both Heather and Sarah display stupid optimism in their refusal to acknowledge that the apocalyptic event might pose a difficulty for their plans to have children, and in fact that having children would bring them closer to a fantasy of the good life: Heather muses that it might actually be easier in the post-apocalypse to adopt children (Jiles 9), and Sarah is very sure that "if she could just get through the childbirth all right then her life would be full and different and important" (Jiles 147) regardless of any other circumstance, though she is vague on the details. Both women are extremely different in terms of class background, neurodiversity, and personal history, but both desire a child as signifier of future happiness, a narrative integral to their imagination of the self.

Heather and Sarah's investment in the heteronormative script of reproductive futurism is contrasted by the anti-child attitudes of adult characters Matthew Koehle and Victoria Sturnak (and, eventually, Arco Mansfield), who are deeply invested in the dominant narrative of post-apocalyptic survival, specifically as informed by Cold War politics: they view the post-catastrophe world as hostile, riddled with violence, threatening at every turn, and consequently full of excitement and danger. Vicki's parents emigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe in the 1950s (which, at the time of writing, was still behind the Iron Curtain [Jiles 122]), and Matt writes for a radical newspaper, references leftist theory, and is virulently anti-Communist (Jiles 121). Matt is a parody of the typical post-apocalyptic white settler male protagonist: misogynist, pedophobic, and all-too willing to resort to violence at the mere suggestion of danger, and his actions are sent up by the novel at every turn, most often through the point of view of Arco, a filmmaker and the third member of the group. When the mysterious apocalypse happened, the three of them were at Arco's editing a film that Matt was writing, and they immediately took up post-apocalyptic residency in the Cow House of the abandoned Riverdale Farm[136], as a defensible base of operations.[137] They are later joined by Sarah, who subsequently takes in lost girl Annette after her mother fails to pick her up after school, but Annette is not interested in either the fantasy of the family or the post-apocalypse and runs away with Benji and his friends when they make a visit. Matt and Victoria are explicit in considering all additions to their mini-garrison as "more mouths to feed" (Jiles 71) and distracting from his and Vicki's mission to archive important articles, ostensibly to preserve western civilization and knowledge (Jiles 100-

[136] Riverdale Farm, at time of Jiles' writing, was a small farmstead in the middle of Toronto, on the edge of the Don River Valley—a "neat pretend farm" (Jiles 67) replacing the earlier zoo on the site, which had housed "lions and zebras and monkeys … in medieval-looking cages" (Jiles 66). These animals were rehoused at the Toronto Zoo outside of the city, but Riverdale remained as a working farm (with a cow and sheep) in 1986.

[137] This leads to speculation by the children that someone is after them—an observation that is technically not true, though by Matt et. al. it is imagined to be an extremely real possibility (Jiles 79).

01). In reality, the articles they are microfilming are all Matt's, which leads to an argument when Arco points out this narcissistic hypocrisy. Matt clearly sees himself as the representative of Western humanism and liberal individualism: he is the Human that the Enlightenment envisioned, and his faith in its ideology finds its natural end point in his own self-aggrandisement and hostility towards anyone perceived as other. Arco eventually appeases the offended Matt and Vicki by suggesting that they film themselves talking "[a]bout what happened," (Jiles 101-02); a scene that is ostensibly about how the three of them are in the middle of post-apocalyptic action but that in reality is carefully set up to produce the expected post-apocalyptic narrative, manufacturing the "correct" (that is, the dominant) affect for the scenario.

Matt, Vicki and Arco are actively involved in rearranging the present in order to suit their narrative of what must be happening given the post-apocalyptic situation. The three of them find "a suitably fucked-up looking background" of a few crashed cars, Matt smashes in the windshield of one to maximize the effect, and Arco takes expired cans of food from a nearby store to scatter into the foreground, so that it looks like "a looter's riot" (Jiles 120). Matt proceeds to monologue for fifteen minutes about how their small group is "what's left after the West was betrayed and sold down the river by traitors, by hidden agitators who confused peace with weakness, who confused strength with aggression" (Jiles 120).[138] He encourages Victoria to testify to the camera "how you were raped by a Commie for Christ…. Lay it on thick, sweetheart…. Like, don't give us any theory, you never get it straight. Just lay it on about your parents. People eat that crap up" (Jiles 122). This scene closely parallels *Tsunami*'s commentary

[138] "Oh my god, thought Arco, he's going to go on for hours" (Jiles 121). Arco is not just snarking at Matt's expense: he is genuinely afraid of Matt's violent tendencies (Jiles 120) and double nature: when Matt breaks the car window to pretend there is more damage than there was, Arco thinks "I should have filmed him doing that…That's the real Matt" (Jiles 120). Arco for most of the novel feels a version of what Ahmed terms affective alienation, where his feelings and reactions to events diverge and often contradict the dominant emotion displayed by the group (comprised of Matt and Vicki).

on the way that media commodifies destitution in the wake of catastrophe, relying on the distance of their intended audience (whether by time or kilometers) from the subject of post-apocalyptic suffering. In *Tsunami*, spatial distance turns suffering into spectacle, as audiences are meant to be more relieved that they are not San Franciscans than empathetic with the subjects of the camera, and in *Roadshow*, Arco, Matt, and Vicki are relying on an audience distanced through both time and space so much so that they are unable to accurately determine the reality of the situation. Sarah participates in this, but deliberately suppresses her own narrative, as she fears and loathes Matt and Vicki and believes they are the aliens who "vapourized the people of the city" (Jiles 105). She does not trust them with the information that she herself is pregnant, fearing that they would put something in her food to cause her to miscarry (Jiles 106), so she puts digoxin in Matt and Vicki's food in order to protect herself, her unborn child, and Arco (Jiles 145). This does not kill them, as she had hoped, but does make them very, very sick; Sarah's actions are a direct outcome of her fantastic misrecognition of multiple competing realities and her loyalty to the fantasy of The Child.

Matt and Victoria's pedophobia is the outgrowth of desire for a post-apocalyptic fantasy where children have no place except as hostile threats (as opposed to an ideological standpoint of pedophobia in order to ensure care for a future for queer individuals à la Edelman). To complete this fantasy, Matt and Victoria argue with Arco and Sarah that parentless children in crisis situations are "running in rat-packs, like those kids in Berlin in World War II" and that Benji's group of children "don't *want* help…. Kids go feral…. the little fuckers fight with knives, I've seen it, slit throats…" (Jiles 73-4). Arco scoffs at this, though later has a violent run-in with the children (he attempts to shoot Benji's friend cow and is warned off by Paulo with a shotgun and threats of arrest from Roxana and Benji's shouts that "I'll call all my friends and they'll come

and *kill* you!" [Jiles 131]) and the fantasy of violence begins to take hold of his mind. Instead of building relationships with the children in order to understand their actions and motives, Matt's post-apocalyptic fantasy provides a neat shorthand that explains their behaviour and affective motives to Arco, who takes the children and Roxana's actions as proof that "Matt was right. There were people around, armed gangs…. Group against Group. It would be like that until the end of the world. War was inevitable, it was in our genes. Smirk! Now he could be violent and it would be okay" (Jiles 132). This fantasy is further bolstered by Vicki's discovery later in the novel of a severed human foot in a planter by the children's basement hideout: despite the fact that the reader knows that Benji found the foot by the roadside and brought it to the apartment building to show to adults before losing his nerve (Jiles 10-12), Vicki immediately takes it as proof positive that the children are cannibals (Jiles 74-5). The trope of the sociopathic, cannibalistic child gang in the post-apocalypse is glimpsed in texts such as *Neuromancer*, where antagonist Peter Riviera's construct of his own memory of the nuclear-devastated Bonn features "Children. Feral, in rags. Teeth glittering like knives. Sores on their contorted faces. The soldier on his back, mouth and throat open to the sky. They were feeding" (Gibson 210). Children in this imaginative post-apocalyptic scenario are not figured as human, or even potentially human, but instead animalistic.

Both the fantasy of The Child and the post-apocalyptic Frontier in *Roadshow* are based in what Berlant terms "misrecognition … the psychic process by which fantasy recalibrates what we encounter so that we can imagine that some thing or someone can fulfill our desire," regardless of the real lived experience of that someone or something, which she notes is "central to the state of cruel optimism" (122). If there is a protagonist in the polyvocal *Roadshow*, it would be eight-year-old Benji, a blonde-haired, blue-eyed boy child whose mother has

disappeared: Benji embodies the archetype of the innocent, abandoned orphan who needs care and guidance from adults. In reality, however, Benji is adept at lying to adults to avoid being "put in strange places with strange people" by "Human Resources" (Jiles 31), and spends his post-apocalyptic days mostly carefree with his friends (Joe) Purdy Boy, Paulo, and Carlos, with the later addition of Annette, all of whom have similarly lost their parents; none of them are very bothered by this, all having varying degrees of bad experiences with adults or ambivalence towards their own families (for example: Purdy Boy's nervousness around adults with alcohol, insinuating past experience with intoxicated adult abusers [Jiles 98]; Benji's absentee mother [Jiles 31]; Annette's abusive mother [Jiles 187]). Adults' fantasies, by contrast, gloss over these harsh realities, "[managing] the ambivalence and itinerancy of attachment" in providing representations of objects instead of real concrete subjects for the fantasizer to desire, "[parsing] ambivalence" so that the fantasizer does not have to deal with the disjunct between the two (Berlant 122). Though the children visit every group in the novel, they are hesitant to form ties with most of them, and only end up entering into the relationship that they do with Roxana Raintree because of the fact that she entertains no fantasies about the figure of The Child or the post-apocalypse, to which almost all the other adults they meet seem to cling.

I argue that *Roadshow* is therefore thoroughly queer in its depiction of found family, its lampooning of generic tropes, its placement of characters who do not fit well into the action-adventure narrative script dictated by dominant post-apocalyptic stereotypes, its depiction of positive relationship-building in the midst of a context of crisis and despair and, by the end, on positive action even in the face of no future. Benji and company's "grandmother" Roxana[139] is

[139] In an interview with Elizabeth Mills, Jiles mentions her admiration for the "great actresses of the forties" who "had such pizzazz and courage, because they came from poor backgrounds, working class backgrounds, and the way you moved up was you got yourself a mink jacket any way you could get it and walk into the Copacabana looking

the runner-up for position of protagonist, a similarly unlikely hero in the post-apocalypse, being an older Black woman, former singer/dancer and current street-corner busker, who promptly occupies a vacant house and "borrows" the things that she needs to survive from nearby stores, with the full intent to relinquish all the clothes, jewellery, and even the house she now lives in after people come back to the city (Jiles 37). However, when Larry sees her doing this, it confirms his racist and classist fears of looters; he assumes that she is looking in the drug store for "Valium and Ritalin … she was probably the kind of person who would know what ampoules of morphine looked like. Born to loot" (Jiles 97); in reality, Roxana is searching for first aid items for the badly burned Benji, who has come to her for help. Roxana, just prior to this, had unhesitatingly stepped into the role of caretaker for the children, rejecting her self-indulgent plans:

> Roxana looked over at what was left of the Chivas Regal and changed her mind. For the first, last, and only time in her life she'd had the opportunity to become a really high-class alcoholic, soused on the best that could be looted out of the liquor store, but life had become a matter of seriousness and responsibility again, and she decided not to be an alcoholic anymore (Jiles 140).

Roxana is the progenitor of the idea of the traveling roadshow from which the book gets its title, which by novel's end gathers to itself all the still-living characters that are not dictated by affective attachment to a promise of "the good life".

For most of the supporting characters of the novel, "the good life" as imagined by middle-class white settler Canadians such as Heather, John and neighbours Marta and Larry was always already out of reach for them due to the narratives assigned to their identities by white

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like a million bucks with your head in the air" (254), which accurately describes Roxana's general attitude and presence.

settler-Canadian society in the 1980s. Merlin, though perhaps he led a good life when he was younger (the novel does not tell us), is an older man who no longer can access the benefits of youth and strength and is alone at the end of his days. Though the novel's conceit is the disappearance of people, readers can intuit that Merlin had been alone pre-apocalypse as well: the novel demonstrates that he fits the archetype of the academic who creates relationships with people in faraway places over technology and is socially inept with children and people in general. His runaway enthusiasm at the boys' visit to his house, his insistence on their wearing of party hats, his attempt to conscript them into helping him (Jiles 57-61) all signal that he is operating according to assumptions: children act a certain way, thus should be interacted with a certain way. His job as an academic has lent to the "uncaring rationality" that Val Plumwood identifies: "The ruling out of care and respect as foundations for the knowledge relationship dictates an instrumentalising politics in which what is known becomes a means to the knower's ends" (42), and the children seem to be able to pick up on this, wanting nothing to do with Merlin in this scene. The effect is tragicomic: the children leave without participating in Merlin's "birthday party" or plans (taking their lead from Purdy Boy, who assesses Merlin as a "loony"), and Merlin is left to tend to his radios, clinging to hope in technology as the key to both explaining the apocalyptic event and the way that humanity will be able to save itself. Cleaving to the script of how children are supposed to act has not brought Benji and company closer to Merlin, but instead driven them away. Though he communicates with other survivors all over the world, Merlin is still very alone and fearful of the outside world, refusing to leave the attic of his house, the downstairs of which "had been boarded up, nailed and bolted shut, plywood over all the windows" (Jiles 58). Merlin has to abandon his investment in the figure of The Child and presuppositions about apocalyptic violence, the combination of both making "him feel so

hopeful that it was exhausting" (Jiles 119), before he is able to make the move of leaving behind his radios and stepping outside of his home to join the roadshow and create meaningful bonds with the children and others.

Abandoning fantasies that cause misrecognition is demonstrated through the novel as necessary to be able to correctly diagnose the reality of life in post-apocalyptic Toronto, a step that only a very few characters are able to take. In the post-apocalypse, it is more fitting to the narrative of a hostile wilderness to imagine that others are violent, and Jiles shows this in characters' reactions to Cussing Man (Sam) and Man-With-No-Nose (Jack Garoute), two vagrants whom the children visit: the racket of Sam (who is violent and prone to outbursts) feeds into Merlin's fear of hostile others (he imagines that someone is being held captive and tortured in a house nearby [Jiles 61]), as well as Barry's fear of the same (Jiles 16-17), and Mary Jo Akewence's apprehension about violent white people (Jiles 27-8). Jack's method of keeping Sam from harming himself (which is to chain Sam to the water pipes in the basement of a church) reads at first as cruel and unfeeling. However, the reality that Jack cares deeply for Sam is revealed in his answer to Benji's question if Sam would kill anyone if he "got loose":

> Nah, he just throws hisself around a lot. He runs up and down and don't notice anythin' and falls over the hedges, you know, and runs into the store windows and stuff and cuts hisself.… Used to, the amballance people would come and pick him up and all, and take him into Wellesley Psych ward, and give him uppers and downers and all like that, and he'd be okay after. But now there isn't any of them people and more. So I chains him up. (Jiles 54)

Later in the novel, in a short paragraph that follows just the two of them, Jack instructs the illiterate Sam (still on a chain) on how to identify food "[if] ennythin' should ever happen to me"

(Jiles 86). Jack's care for Sam is both conscious of the limitations of the present, and of possible problems in the future, but is not shown as attached to the arrival of any future in particular. His optimism is not cruel, but practical; not promissory, but a product of the present moment. The characters most grounded in the reality of their situation and least attached to a fantasy that promises "the good life" are the unlikeliest to be heroes in a post-apocalyptic narrative, as they already have (deeply non-heroic) narratives embedded in their identities, dictating their roles in both pre- and post-apocalyptic societies.

The misrecognition of relationships in service to a fantasy continues in *Roadshow* with the depiction of Mary Jo and George Akewence, two Indigenous siblings who diverge completely from stereotype yet are nonetheless the bearers of white settlers' fantasies of the subservient Indian. Almost all of the characters (save Roxana) who know about the Akewences are in some way attached to imaginative expectations of what their Indigeneity signifies in relation to them specifically. As discussed last chapter, the stereotype of the helpful Indian is baked into settler expectations about Indigenous peoples, and Mary Jo and George are assumed to be ready to help their settler Torontonian neighbours in the post-apocalypse at a moment's notice (primarily as guides [Jiles 20, 102] and teachers [Jiles 97, 143]). The Akewences bear up the hopes of the settler adults for finding a better life outside of Toronto, but they also suffer under bearing the prejudices of white Canadian society—no character attempts to contact them to see how they are doing (not well), or offer them help, or check on them. To do that would be to discard fantasy and come face-to-face with living, breathing reality, and the middle-class settler Torontonians are not ready for that yet. Victoria explicitly complains that if she reads "one more book about what we did to the poor Indians I'll drop dead" (Jiles 101), and in the same conversation concedes that "Maybe we would need [the Akewences] … we've got to get out of

here some time" (Jiles 103). Because recognizing injustice in the present is "read as a theft of optimism, a killing of joy" (Ahmed 162), it is much more comfortable and ideologically in line with the fantasy of the post-apocalyptic Frontier to imagine the Akewences as either skilled guides and survivalists or hostile natives ("muddle-headed Red Power freaks," as Matt calls them [Jiles 103]). Benji and co.'s imagination of the Akewences as cartoonish Indians who can "show us how to build tipis…. [and] ride horses … and make tomahawks, and fire and everything" (Jiles 143) can perhaps be explained by the failure of the Canadian education system to separate reality from the American Frontier-style cartoon portrayals of Native Americans in popular television shows and films; the adults have no such excuse for being so wholly devoted to a fantasy.

The contrast between fantasies of what "Indians" are like versus the reality of Indigenous life would have been very real to Jiles at time of writing, as an American from the Ozarks who settled in Toronto in the late 1960s, then spent a decade living and working for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in a remote community of Oji-Cree people in Northern Ontario, then moved to Nelson B.C. for seven years before returning to the States.[140] Her work with the Oji-Cree community involved setting up a newspaper, learning Ojibwe (plus some French and Cree), working for a community board of elders, and familiarizing herself with oral storytelling traditions and kinship relations.[141] In an interview with Kay Bonetti, Jiles describes how "the intense connections [Ojibwe peoples] have with kin … made an impression on me…. I saw the ties of kinship, and cousinhood, and how people looked after one another" (108). In *Roadshow*, the relationship between George and Mary Jo is misrecognized time and again as a romantic arrangement by adult settlers unfamiliar with this kinship bond (Jiles 20, 97, 102, 128), and when

[140] See: Bonetti 100, 260; Mills 249, 260; Salamon.
[141] See: Bonetti 108; Mills 250.

their racial identity is not being mistaken as Chinese (Jiles 19, 27), they are written off as probable "Red Power freaks" (Jiles 103).[142] Jiles also adds another layer of literary misrecognition into her text, to which the characters show the lie simply by being themselves. Mary Jo, instead of embodying the harmful stereotype of "Indian princess" is an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, who wears her hair in a roach, has five piercings in each ear (Jiles 26), gets in fights at bars and is lax about her studies in anthropology (and knows both facts would dismay her family) (Jiles 25). Nonetheless, she is mindful of the teachings of her elders and very caring and solicitous of her brother George who, despite being very strong, needs constant care, as he is differently abled.

Jiles' depiction of the Akewences' community of Pipestone resists the settler assumption of pan-Indian sameness and tropes of wise elders and mystical otherness. Pipestone is both specific in location (south of Yellowknife [Jiles 25]) and the people are supportive of both siblings (Jiles 25). Pipestone stands as a subversion of white settler character Barry Ludlow's assertion to himself that "[Indigenous] culture was *so* advanced over our own in terms of accepting other people; Barry was sure he could make real contact with them if he could just find them" (128)—except that the text tells us that the people in the village are unsure how best to help George. George is a sharp contrast to the literary stereotypes of the "Indian brave" or stoic warrior: he is "strong and lost his temper frequently, furious and frustrated" causing his fellow villagers to fear him, but he adores his sister (Jiles 23-7). The people of Pipestone decide finally that the best thing to do is to send George away from their community to a "home" both to minimize the harm that he inadvertently does and to enable him to "learn how to do things" (25).

[142] Stay classy, Matt. He goes on to tell Arco (and Vicki) that "they've all seen *Billy Jack* about forty times. I mean it's unfortunate but true that disadvantaged people are suckers for propaganda, and these people are probably no different. They wouldn't be able to share in our vision" (Jiles 103).

Given the village's description as extremely remote, and the situation of Indigenous rights and relations with the government in the 1980s, it is not too much of a stretch to surmise that the village simply was unequipped to handle George's needs, both in terms of people, infrastructure, and funds with which to help him. Yet these realities are elided from the settler assumption of pan-Indian acceptance of difference within a group.

Despite all settler characters' expectations to the contrary, the Akewences are not uniquely equipped by their ethnicity to thrive in a post-apocalyptic setting: settler characters' (and readers') attachment to Mary Jo and George as living Chekhov's Guns that will eventually lead away from the unhealthy city into the healthy wilderness are undermined by first George's, then Mary Jo's death from radiation sickness. The Akewence's deaths can be read as another example of the trope of the dead Indigenous person in Canadian settler literature, yet I argue that there is a second, deeper layer of significance at work in the narrative that works to undo stereotypical expectations. The Akewence's survival in *Roadshow* is assumed by other characters and is a conglomeration of stereotypes about "Indians" knowing how to survive in the wild or being more suited to function well in the wilderness (both that of the ruined city and that outside of it), but this does not save them. In contrast to the character of Kakatso, who is explicitly described time and again in "Akua Nuten" as an accomplished tracker and survivalist above and beyond stereotype (Thériault 12, 25), before the apocalypse Mary Jo is an undergraduate and George resides in a nursing home. *Roadshow* startles us with the Akewences' passing; settler characters' blithe assumption that the Indigenous characters will of course survive (because they are necessary to settler survival) is shown to be wrongheaded and racist: the siblings are regular people who succumb to radiation sickness in the same manner as their white settler neighbours.

The stupid optimism of clinging to a fantasy narrative attached to an identity, attendant expectations of that person's actions according to that narrative's script, and its inhibition of meaningful connection is demonstrated in Barry Ludlow's character. Barry is also denied entry into "the good life" but less through his identity than his personal circumstances and behaviour: he is a white man but is employed as a social worker (a feminized profession, especially in the late '80s), lives in a basement apartment alone with his cat (a female-coded affectation), smokes marijuana and cries about being lonely. Barry is a sharp contrast to the mid-80s conservative regression into patriarchal, heteronormative gender roles and thus stands as a rebuke to the SF fantasy of post-apocalyptic nostalgia for toxic masculinity where all men are engaged in the pursuit of individualistic adventure in a wild Frontier. Barry is not Case from *Neuromancer*: where Case runs from attachment, Barry seeks it out (Jiles 15, 126-28); where Case actively seeks to numb his emotions through drug use and cyberspace, Barry engages in lengthy self-scrutiny of his own feelings (Jiles 17); where animals are all but absent from *Neuromancer*, Barry's cat Mr. Biggs is his closest friend and confidant (Jiles 14-17). Mr. Biggs' "Miss Mew" cat food is the main reason that Barry ventures outside, carrying an unloaded shotgun that unnerves even himself, as it "looks absolutely kill-hungry" but has a hair-trigger (14). His attempts to "get people together" are derided by the other adult characters living in his building (Jiles 9-11), and Barry is depicted spending more time thinking about being alone and its detriment to his mental health than going out and making connections.

In a scene that reads simultaneously funny and tragic, Barry's last attempt to contact the (non-violent) adult humans around him unfortunately trips right over the trope of expected gendered behaviour in the post-apocalypse. Early in the novel, Jiles sets up the fact that gender roles and their attendant expectations seem to have snapped back into place in the post-

apocalypse by way of Marta's inner monologue. She resents that the catastrophe has happened, resents her husband Larry for going along with it, yet feels helpless to resist the power of this narrative (Jiles 18, 108-109). Barry approaches Heather while she is washing period blood out of the rags she is using and wondering what to do about her period once she is in the wilderness (Jiles 126). Heather is deeply embarrassed and also extremely frightened by Barry's presence: a man intruding on an exclusively cisfemale chore in the context of the post-apocalypse, where he is a signifier of hostility and gendered violence and she is emotionally and physically vulnerable (Jiles 126). She summarily rejects all of his attempts to reach out and be friendly, misrecognizing them as precursors to violence; Barry is left to retreat to his basement, in tears (Jiles 126). Though Barry does not buy into the fantasy narrative of toxic masculinity and hostile Others, his interactions with the other characters in the novel are nonetheless defined by that expectation on their part, and he suffers for it.

The ending of Barry's narrative only a few pages later is optimistic in the queer sense in that it finds happiness and fulfilment in the present, and resists both dystopia and utopic promises. Barry is uninterested in the stupid optimism of toxic masculinity—unlike Matt and eventually Arco's carrying guns and enacting violence, or American ex-patriot Larry's plans to get guns (along with other survival gear) from the sporting goods store (Jiles 97)—when Barry finally leaves his apartment in a desperate search for other humans to contact, he brings only Mr. Biggs and a knapsack full of tins of food (which he discards almost immediately) (Jiles 152). At the train station right on the shores of Lake Ontario, Barry finds evidence that the residents of Toronto had boarded trains to evacuate: on the cars, there is "trash" that turns out to be "[s]uitcases and knapsacks, bedrolls…thermoses, pots and pans…. Adidas bags, canvas carry-alls. There were a lot of shoes, single ones" (Jiles 154). He finds a mysterious entry in a diary,

dated June 12, that tells him to "[k]eep looking. You are on the right track" (Jiles 155). He surmises that he is to walk the train tracks to Montreal and sees a "figure in [a] black suit and [a] Homburg, waving its rolled-up umbrella…gesturing to him, inviting Barry to join him" (Jiles 10). It is never made clear what happened to the Torontonians or who this figure is, but Barry reads his own desires into the character as being "the figure of the man who really loved him, who accepted him for what he was…. This was the man who really wanted his company, who would tuck his arm in Barry's and say, *Listen, I'll go with you to Montreal. We'll go together*!" (Jiles 155-56). The ending of Barry's narrative is very interesting, in the way that Snediker describes the object of queer optimism's interest: his happiness is not dependent on the arrival of a future time, but embedded in the conditions of the present moment (2-3). Barry is miserable for most of the novel because of his constant failure to connect to other people in the now, and the man in the Homburg hat signals to him not the future arrival of happiness, but evidence of a significance that exists in parallel to his misery in the present, if only he can move to grasp it.

Radical immanence, not future-oriented hope in the promise of happiness's arrival through apocalyptic violence, is a state that needs to be arrived at, by discarding fantasies about survival and the future in order to live in present realities. Muñoz observes that hope is a thing that can be disappointed, but that "such disappointment needs to be risked if certain impasses are to be resisted" (20). When Roxana realizes that the strange bruises manifesting on the children's bodies are haematomas from radiation, the novel tells us that "The light-heartedness of utter despair had taken hold of her…. *So that's it*, she thought. *So that's the way it is*" (Jiles 167): she then goes straight back to planning the departure of the roadshow, going with the children to attempt to recruit the others in the city to come with them. Roxana resists the impasse of the post-apocalyptic city by acting on plans and making the future present, despite the incredible

disappointment of the hope that she had held that things might go back to normal; though she "was charged with something vaster than she was capable of enduring" (Jiles 191), she nonetheless persists in caring for the others around her, though she is well aware that "they were all going to have to watch each other die" (Jiles 191). The roadshow members manifest small hopes (Annette hoping to affix the banner to poles by herself [Jiles 190], Purdy Boy hoping to "hit that alto" the next time they practice [Jiles 191], Roxana's coaching the children to leave an imagined future audience "*bawling*" [Jiles 192]) that are not so much forward-looking as sideways and simultaneous to the present moment; any grander hope in survival is not on the table as an option, but the roadshow is not hope-less despite that.

Characters' affective orientation to the advent of the apocalypse in turn affects their interpretation of the environment of Toronto as either a place of potential or a place to be feared, though the third-person omniscient narrative often touches on non-human beings within the city or the city itself as an ambivalent, agential being. Larry especially experiences the city as a hostile, mysterious, and ultimately dangerous place in the post-apocalypse during his excursion midway through the novel, as he goes out into the night after a disastrous dinner with Marta, Heather, and John. One of the first things he notices is a "faint underground rumble" that he at first suspects is the subway train, then imagines that Lake Ontario is rushing into the subway tunnels:

> Sweat ran down his temples and beaded on his upper lip. The city seemed to be in a state of rebellion. It was a looter's riot all by itself, even without people. The city was an entity. When it got fed up with everything it broke its own shop windows, trashed its own streetcars, and set fire to itself. It emptied its own streets and turned the animals out of the

zoo and opened up its cloacal interior tunnels to the cold water of the Great Lakes (Jiles 87).

He is further unnerved by a building that seems to be missing (Jiles 93)—an event foreshadowed by John's early rumination that he could swear the fog or smoke "carries things off" (Jiles 22). He encounters a single other person: an old man in the ticket booth in the downtown bus depot, who tells Larry that he needs to get out of the city, and that "they're supposed to come" (Jiles 95-6). Ominously, there is a bruise spreading down the right side of the old man's neck, and Larry loses his nerve and runs, observing "with amazement as all the traffic lights…from the lakefront streets to beyond Bloor, came on and began to wink in reds, greens, yellows" (Jiles 96). Later, Sarah observes that the "face of the city had changed; it was as if it had grown a beard, like a man on vacation. Gone scruffy and no-account," but hers is a conclusion drawn from the observation that plants are growing riotously across the city, with no pruning or mowing by humans (Jiles 104). The plants she names specifically are ones she personally finds irksome or problematic: burdocks, orchard grass, deadly nightshade, poison ivy (Jiles 104). The hostility of the post-apocalyptic city looms large in the imagination of characters who had already decided on its antagonism.

Roadshow enacts a redefinition of the city environment, interrogating whether buildings, roads, and other human-made structure are what truly make Toronto itself, as opposed to the opportunity to meet, connect with, and truly care for other humans and non-humans. Larry interprets the return of agency to the city as hostile, but it can be read as a site of what Kim TallBear calls biocultural hope; her example being the return of natural wetland flora and fauna following the 1997 flooding of Minnesota farmlands, where she does not see endings but rather the regeneration of the prairies after the stifling structures of colonialism have been dismantled

(TallBear 2020, 0:23:50-0:28:19). Viewed from a decolonial lens, however, the almost supernatural effects of the smoke can be read as an extension of the city's agential rebellion against the parts of itself that have been built up by humans.[143] One example can be seen in the cow's (and, by extension, Benji and his friends') delight in the overgrowth of greenery for her to eat in places which before would have been barren: the abandoned sheep pen, the front lawns of city houses, the graveyard, the streetcar tracks (Jiles 51, 56, 68, 162, 191). In another instance near the end of the novel, the narrative point of view gives readers a glimpse into the underground, more-than-human goings-on in the graveyard where Annette has run to escape violence, resting by the grave of one Elmer Witherspoon, whose bones:

> floated clean and white in a solution of earth, stones, tree roots, and several Huron artifacts. Nearby, unknown to the Victorian grave-diggers, were early Huron burials. Had Elmer's bones retained any sentiety [sic], he would have had a sense of dull brown suspended repose, disturbed slightly from time to time by the shouts and disagreements attending the Huron mocassin [sic] game. Click of plum pits, groans as four first-rate arrows are handed over, the spectral winner gloating over a pile of furs and obsidian knives. (Jiles 187)

In this passage, city-girl Annette, who has been the target of her mother's violence, the object of Sarah's fixation, folded into the Cow House group's will to dominate the post-apocalyptic city, and marginalized as the only girl and the newest member of Benji's ragtag group of friends, is finally able to find rest in a spot where humans peacefully coexist with their environment, as the bones are literally overtaken by their non-human surroundings but in a nonviolent and natural

[143] Toronto is built up not just over land but over many buried waterways, a fact which is being given more attention lately from conservationists and decolonization activists. For further reading, please see the Toronto Green Community article "Lost Rivers" as well as their interactive map, King, and the press kit for TO Play.

way. Death, this passage suggests, is infinitely more peaceful and harmonious a state in the post-apocalypse than a life of struggle, where humans—especially small female children—are subject to the physical and psychological harms inflicted on them from all sides in the anthropocentric city environment. More broadly, *Roadshow* takes the opportunity to recontextualize the city of Toronto in a manner that both acknowledges naturecultures and moves beyond anthropocentric history.

Post-anthropocentric significance is present in *Roadshow* throughout the novel, in both the presence of non-human beings and in the characterization of the city itself as an agential being. The non-human beings in the text—such as the cow, the mouse, the escaped Barbary sheep, zebra, and moufflons—prompt significant revelations about human protagonist's characters through their interactions. The biggest example of this is the cow, from whose point of view the novel's third person omniscient narration begins: clear lines between protagonists and antagonists are drawn in the novel's third act by showing humans' orientations towards the cow: caring and solicitous versus hostile and objectifying. Benji, who feels "as though [the cow] were his cow … or at least his particular friend" (Jiles 29) is possessive of the cow in the way that small children tend to be possessive in all their relationships, even with human beings: Benji is very fond of the cow and her unborn calf, half in awe of her as "sort of like a mobile church, a walking cathedral, dispensing both peril and solace" (Jiles 29) and extremely protective of her (Jiles 47, 56, 131, 136). This attitude rubs off on all of his friends, adults and children alike (Jiles 131). Even Roxana, who pragmatically views the cow as most important as a source of milk for the children (Jiles 138) and complains loudly about the cow's ability to be a bullet magnet (Jiles 183), realizes the cow's importance to Benji and the other children, taking care of the cow to the best of her ability and reassuring Benji that she personally will defend the cow from any further

harm (Jiles 136, 143). Roxana had already been established by *Roadshow* as an empathetic human being in her first appearance in the book, expressing disgust at the thought of eating the loose zebra (Jiles 34), and responding to the surprise of a mouse swimming in her makeshift water tank by rescuing it, keeping it safe, and addressing it as a friend (Jiles 38). Other sympathetic characters such as Mary Jo notice the presence of animals in the city and respect their significance as harbingers or knowledge bearers (Jiles 23-4); Barry has no such respect for animals in general, but his devotion to his cat and his general avoidance of even thinking about violence makes him an extremely sympathetic character.

In contrast, antagonists are marked by their indifference or outright hostility to animals, and their propensity for what Karen Barad calls "thingification": the animals and, eventually, humans around them are merely things to be manipulated and used for their own particular purposes. Thus Matt and Vicki are portrayed as villains in their "persistent distrust of nature … that pervades much of contemporary theorizing and sizeable amount of the history of Western thought" (Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity" 130). Arco, who is portrayed as sympathetic for most of the novel, plants himself firmly on the side of the antagonists with his deliberate attack on the cow, attempting to shoot her in order to bring her back as dead meat to share with Matt, Vicki, and Sarah. He wounds the cow, but is driven off by the children and Roxana: his reaction to their threats is not to reconsider his own actions as possibly reprehensible, but as confirmation that Matt's narrative of post-apocalyptic violence is correct, interpreting it as permission to be violent, himself (132). Later, Arco shoots one of the moufflons and they eat it, which satisfies Arco and Matt's self-image as survivalists but is contrary to Vicki's investment in herself as middle class, and she complains of it tasting like goat: "Peasants eat goat. I'd rather be dead than inappropriate" (Jiles 171). While Heather and Marta and their husbands never directly harm

other living beings in the course of the novel, their inner fantasies of the commodification of others, human and non-, speak volumes. Heather's matronizing attitude towards Benji (Jiles 8), her private fancy of herself as rightful owner of the cow (Jiles 9), Larry's inviting of Heather and Jon to dinner for the sake of distracting from the growing resentment between himself and Marta (Jiles 21) and Marta's reducing the Akewences to stereotypes of "Indian guides" ready whenever she is to help them leave the city (Jiles 20)[144]—all are ways in which they participate in the reduction of others to inanimate objects that prop up their own fantasies of themselves as capable and in charge of their own lives. These characters' inability to look beyond themselves is ultimately what leads to either violent deaths (Matt, Jon, Arco) or prolonged misery before expiring from radiation sickness (Vicki, Heather, Marta, Larry).

The apocalyptic setting in this novel functions as a literalization of the way that death defines the human experience of living in the world. Being radically immanent, in Rosi Braidotti's words, means attending to the potential of what is all around us instead of looking towards the future in despair ("Self-styling"). Despite the appearance of mysterious bruises that Roxana and Merlin diagnose as haematomas caused by nuclear radiation, along with the rapid onset of radiation sickness in some of the characters, the book concludes with the roadshow's departure from Toronto in search of something else (Jiles 191), contrasting with the situation of Heather, Marta, John, and Victoria huddled in the Don Jail, ill and shaking with haematomas, waiting for authorities and a rescue mission with physicians and nurses "from somewhere, anywhere, even from Russia" to come (Jiles 193). Roxana's is not a naïve or uninformed hope

[144] Marta explicitly misrecognizes the Akewences in her thoughts; the novel describes how she "carefully put the young native Indian couple in reserve, wrapped them in tissue and laid them in a mental hope chest" (Jiles 20). Jiles' use of language is very on point; in this one sentence, Marta invokes settler thingification of Indigenous people, the reserve system, ignorance of the Akewence's sibling relationship, and expectation about automatic subservience from Indigenous communities to settler whims.

that the roadshow will yield the "good life," but a deliberate choice to invest in optimism despite the encroaching threat of sickness and the inevitability of death. In contrast to Merlin and the Cow House group, Roxana does not dwell on what Braidotti calls "the pornography involved in the contemplation of our own destitution" ("Self-styling"). Whether the roadshow makes it to Florida or not is a side consideration and the children's excitement at their leaving together is the focus. As queer death studies scholar Nina Lykke puts it, "we are the sum of our relata" ("Material"); the members of the roadshow concretize this in shifting focus from the assuredness of death in the post-apocalypse to a celebration of "living-with" the world as it is, and the beings in it.

I argue that, in an affective reading of Jiles' text, it is clear that *Roadshow* interrogates the apocalyptic fantasy and shows it to be a cruelly optimistic promise, yet it simultaneously presents an alternative to the narrative of post-apocalyptic violence and despair in the creation and care of relationships between people of different species, races, ages, genders, classes, and ability despite the inevitability of death. The titular roadshow demonstrates most clearly an ethics of "living-with" disaster, death, and each other. Jiles makes this clear early in the novel, in the thoughts of Mary Jo: "She had been taught by the elders, by a process of osmosis, that everything matters. Everything is significant. You just have to wait, and all random events will reveal their relationships, their pattern" (Jiles 27). The arrival of the apocalypse does not mean that these connections belong to an irretrievable or inutile past. The novel does not conform to the patriarchal settler logic of narrative, where mysteries must be investigated, explained adequately, and thus contained. Instead, *Roadshow* emphasizes how making and maintaining good relations matter more than ever in the aftermath of disaster; the swift onset of death is not a rationale for isolation, but rather a reason to reach out. Braidotti affirms that "being alive is

making peace with death minute by minute" ("Self-styling"), referring to the fact that death is always already happening within human consciousness—in Jiles' text, the characters forcibly come face to face with this as a concrete reality as the fantasies of "the good life" fray and dissolve. All the human characters are either dead or confirmed to be dying by the end of the novel, but it is evident that only those characters who intentionally sought to create and maintain healthy relations with others can be said to meet a "happy ending."

VI Conclusion

This chapter argues that a critical orientation to the affective valences of the post-apocalyptic setting is a necessary grounding for readers to recognize and unsubscribe from the stupid optimism of the singular narrative of the apocalyptic promise, which insists on "the good life," or utopia, no matter the cost. Divesting from the promise of happiness that western culture and history insists inheres in the arrival of apocalypse hinges on the ability to recognize horror in death—the deaths of many humans due to nuclear war, the deaths of individual humans due to violence in its aftermath, the deaths of animals and other beings, and the decision to move away from its perpetuation in order to generate critical thought about actuality of life post-apocalypse. A close interrogation of desire and fantasy as they occur in post-apocalyptic SF is not just good practice for discussing generic ideologies, but also a practice more broadly applicable to North American—and specifically Canadian—culture in the twenty-first century. Desiring an end to the current status quo in order to attain a better world is not bad in and of itself, but the means by which that change is achieved are not so neutral. For example, desiring more prosperity and jobs for an economically depressed region is admirable, but achieving it by running a leaky oil pipeline through Indigenous territory is, some would argue, a deeply violent method of achieving "the good life" for what turns out to be just one group of people.

It is not revolutionary to desire a future beyond crisis that is merely a concentration of idealized past policies, as discussed in my analysis of *Neuromancer*: likewise, as demonstrated by characters Heather and Sarah, a continued belief in the fantasy of "the good life" despite evidence to the contrary is an inherently conservative move, invested in maintaining hierarchies such as class, race, gender, species, etc. in order to ensure a modicum of personal power. This can be seen in the present-day, nonfiction examples of Canadian and American politicians' treating climate change as just another policy issue (or outright ignoring or silencing scientists and others sounding alarm bells),[145] thereby influencing their constituents to reject present reality for a fantasy predicated on an outdated mode of living influenced by an idealization of the past, despite very real catastrophic consequences on a level with the apocalyptic destruction of *Tsunami*.[146] Refusing to acknowledge change is also a form of stupid optimism, in contrast to being unconcerned by it, which requires cognizance of the apocalyptic moment but chooses not to respond to that moment with violence.

Recognition—of the realities of the present moment, the conditions of living in the post-apocalypse, the validity of all beings' lived experience—is vital to moving beyond a violent investment in survival of the individual and towards a more real experience of a crisis environment as a communal experience. Being critical of the post-apocalypse means being aware of all the ways in which "the good life" does not hold for all beings, many of whom are excluded or consigned to violence due to their identities falling outside of the Enlightenment definition of Human—European, white, heterosexual, cismale human being. This attitude is necessary to dismantling the apocalyptic fantasy of a utopian future shaped by and ceaselessly enacting an ideology of the past that rests on the violent instrumentalization of the Other, as illustrated by the

[145] See: Carty 2013; Gies 2017; CBC News 2018.
[146] See: Hensley 2019; McCarthy 2020.

world of *Neuromancer*. The hope that people in a crisis situation will ignore dominant scripts of disaster survival and instead reach out to one another may seem destined for disappointment but, as Muñoz, writes, "[t]he eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process, in the same way that even though we can know in advance that felicity of language ultimately falters, it is nonetheless essential" (20). It is necessary to commit to envisioning an alternative post-apocalypse that is not characterized by the narrow desire for human survival into the future, but an expansive practice of human and non-human flourishing in the present.

Conclusion

> "The space between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion."
> -Donna Haraway
> "We can explore the strange and perverse mixtures of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism within forms of politics that take as a starting point a critique of the world as it is, and a belief that the world can be different."
> -Sarah Ahmed, 163

The very real consequences of an uncritical investment in the promise of a happy future premised on nostalgia and delivered through unpleasant but necessary violence—such as the secular apocalypse—can be seen in microcosm in the recent Hugo Awards controversy in the (mainly) North American SF community. Over the decades since the awards were begun in the US in 1953, many of the nominees have been women, and/or racially or sexually diverse (Givens 2015). But in the 2010s, the number of nominees who have not been white, straight, cis-men increased—to intolerable levels, some argue. An award theoretically given out on the basis of literary merit appeared to have been very obviously co-opted by identity politics; the "literature of the future" appeared to be judged by many according to the ideological standards of the (American) mid-twentieth century past, where cis white settler men were on top of the social hierarchy and the rights of all others were suppressed, to varying degrees. From 2013-2017, a cadre of authors (the "Sad Puppies" and the "Rabid Puppies," a splinter group) protested the awards, arguing that the inclusion of women and minority writers was the result of affirmative-action-style awards selection, bringing politics into the otherwise politics-free zone of SF (O'Danu 2015). The Hugo Awards had become a synecdoche for the SF community as a whole, which in turn was figured as the garrison that protected white cis settler male SF fans' happy, socially retrograde futures against the feminists and people of colour who were there to take that happiness away. These protests demonstrate feminist theorist Sarah Ahmed's argument that happiness "becomes more powerful through being perceived as in crisis," which "works

primarily as a narrative of disappointment" (7), and that the situation of crisis is seen as resolvable by the panicky protesters only through "a return to social ideals, as if what explains the crisis of happiness is not the failure of these ideals but our failure to follow them" (7). From the point of view of the Puppies, the diverse reality of the SF community in 2013 constituted a threat to their worldview that called for an equally threatening response in order to safeguard their happiness. As Ahmed drily notes, "the face of happiness…looks rather like the face of privilege" (11).

Each of the SF novels under study in these dissertation chapters presents evidence that happiness can never be achieved through conformity after the advent of crisis, as the apocalypse is totalizing in its upending of the standards to which humans have attempted to conform in twentieth-century Canada. What Ahmed terms the "happiness script" is in effect torn to shreds by a disaster so fundamental it overturns the assumptions that subconsciously dictate twentieth-century North American/Western imaginations of futurity: in these SF texts, reproductive futurism, the institutions of race, class, and gender hierarchies, heteronormativity, and other methods by which contemporary culture is divided are shown to be social constructs. Ahmed notes that "where we find happiness teaches us what we value rather than simply what is of value … when happiness is assumed to be a self-evident good, then it becomes evidence of the good" (13). As I discussed in chapter one, the development of SF in North America coincided with the Cold War, but also with the rise of the middle-class, of post-World War Two prosperity, of widely available new technology and affordable goods, and though, as Ahmed observes, it was the privilege of a relative few that allowed them to attain and maintain "the good life" that involved "self-ownership, material security, and leisure time" (13), the overall hallmark of the early SF years in the mid-twentieth century was of prosperity and consequent happiness. And so,

I argue, the impulse to preserve and to defend present lifeways can be motivated by a desire to achieve happiness by following its "script" as it was imagined during the happy and prosperous decades of the past. Ahmed points out that when happiness is present, "it can recede, becoming anxious…. We can become defensive, such that we retreat with fear from anything or anyone that threatens to take our happiness away" (161). The literal apocalypse was imagined, especially in the context of the Cold War menace of nuclear war, as an impending event that threatened happiness as produced by the norms and structures of twentieth-century North American society; correspondingly, the conceptual menace of taking away those producers of happiness in the twenty-first century through diversification or otherwise is interpreted as an apocalyptic-scale threat by those who benefited from/were made happy by twentieth-century norms and structures, even though actual nuclear warheads are not in play.

The emphasis on a singular narrative of the past even in the space of a futuristic SF post-apocalypse means that the visions of the future presented by SF media (literature, TV shows, and movies) are most often rooted firmly in past, western worldviews. They operate on the imagination of happiness as located in the past, as being "what we once had, as being what we have lost in arriving somewhere…. Nostalgic and promissory forms of happiness belong under the same horizon, insofar as they imagine happiness as being somewhere other than where we are in the present" (Ahmed 160-61). Issues which do not fit inside templates of a "Golden Age" past go unrecognized and are in some cases actively scorned as the shoehorning of contemporary political worldviews into what is assumed by many to be an abstracted realm of imagination, free from social commentary. Gender, sexuality, and race are examples of the latter, as in the Hugo Awards debacle. The slogan to make America or Canada great *again* evidences the reliance of this ideology on a (mythic) past, one which patterned the future after itself. Ahmed discusses

Simone de Beauvoir's observation that while happiness cannot be accurately measured in others, "*it is always easy to describe as happy the situation in which one wishes to place them*" (qtd in Ahmed 2, emphasis in original), and Ahmed argues that happiness easily translates itself into "a politics that demands that others live according to a wish" (2). In the current moment of 2021, the rights and freedoms enjoyed by women and other minority groups in Western society are under sociopolitical attack in much the same way as they were just recently in the arena of SF by the self-styled Puppies, attempting to force conformity in order to bring about a "happy future" that is patterned, of course, on the past.

The post-apocalyptic world as imagined as a return to the past, dictated by conservative desires, forecloses the possibility of ideologically new futures emerging from the rubble of the present and so, while these forms do perform the cognitive estrangement necessary to point out an alternative to the present historical moment, they are ultimately not future-oriented in any sense other than in the most basic one of linear time. In order for SF to continue to push the boundaries of innovation and to expose the human imagination to other possibilities, both in fictional futurity and contemporary society, the influx of authors writing from other ideological blueprints, value systems, or worldviews has been necessary. North Americans live the consequences of the singular narrative of American SF imperialism and the mobilization of its values.

Alternative future imaginaries that have existed for decades alongside the majoritarian SF narrative are now impacting the SF future as it is imagined by Westerners in the twenty-first century. Afrofuturism, for example, has been around for decades, and its aesthetic can be sourced to the jazz oeuvre of Sun Ra starting in the 1950s; the term itself was coined in the 1993 by critic Mark Dery (Bruce). The genre "can be understood as a wide-ranging social, political and artistic

movement that dares to imagine a world where African-descended peoples and their cultures play a central role in the creation of that world" (Bruce): in the US, contemporary examples include SF writer Octavia E. Butler's novels, as well as Marvel's *Black Panther* and the Oscar-winning *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (and the two films' comic book inspirations), which follow a mixed Black and Latinx protagonist.[147] In Canada and Quebec, post-apocalyptic SF by authors such as Nalo Hopkinson, Larissa Lai, and Silvia Moreno-Garcia have brought diasporic POC communities into a future beyond the apocalyptic event to resist white supremacist, misogynist tropes of what a hero looks like, disrupting the Western Enlightenment script. I was ultimately unsuccessful in finding exact precursors or evidence for a trend of post-apocalyptic SF from Canada and Quebec in the twentieth century that centres POC experiences and worldview. Yet I read Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* as a white man's attempt to be inclusive, acknowledging racial hierarchy but not disturbing it; Spider Robinson's *Telempath* as jerkily gesturing towards Afrofuturism but ultimately falling far short of its attempts at philosophical revolution; and Walker's *The Lord's Pink Ocean* as a critique mainly of the author's present-day racial tensions, still subscribed to the singular narrative of white supremacy without imagining a future beyond hierarchy.

More contemporary post-apocalyptic SF originating from Canada and Quebec diverges from this singular narrative to imagine the future after crisis as a truly new place, both in the sense of the literal, physical environment and in the social and philosophical realms. Authors such as Waubgeshig Rice (Anishinaabe, Wasauksing First Nation), Thomas King (Cherokee and Greek), and Cherie Dimaline (Métis Nation of Ontario) have intervened in the genre of

[147] Though in the case of both comics, these protagonists of colour were originally created by white artists and writers—Black Panther by Jack Kirby (and Stan Lee), Miles Morales by Brian Michael Bendis and Sara Pichelli—they have been taken up by black writers and artists in the decades since their advent.

postapocalyptic SF to articulate decolonial Indigenous Futurisms that differ radically from the settler postapocalyptic imaginary. The term Indigenous Futurisms was first coined by Anishnaabe scholar Grace Dillon in her introduction to an edited collection of Indigenous SF, *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* (2003), as an homage to Afrofuturism (Killick), and since then it has become a key concept for many Indigenous scholars, SF writers, fans, and their allies. Scholar Alexandra Wikler writes that "the very essence of Indigenous futurism [sic] threatens the longevity of white supremacy and colonialism" as it articulates a future without those fundamental structures; it is "an integral component to revitalization and survival of Indigenous cultures, livelihoods and traditions" (Wikler). As I discussed in chapter three, "Akua Nuten" by Thériault meditates on just that—though the apocalypse is a result of nuclear war—and as such can be argued to be an anticipation of the genre of Indigenous Futurisms, though the story itself is still dictated by the settler ideology of *death imaginary*, which Andrea Smith writes is the idea that "Indigenous peoples [are] always disappearing in order to legitimize settler occupation of the Canadian state" (Smith, qtd in Wikler). I aver that crucially, Kakatso's meditation on settler disappearance and the resurgence of Indigenous peoples and their culture open a brief window on to the possibility of a post-apocalyptic Indigenous future on Turtle Island, one that moves beyond a sense of individual survival and instead locates hope in community resurgence.

Post-apocalyptic community that is defined by diversity and radical hopefulness can be found in the contemporary SF subgenre of solarpunk. The focus on community and solidarity is a base tenet of solarpunk, which I read as an extension of the post-apocalyptic text's acknowledgement of its ruined environment, but one that explicitly incorporates the affect of radical hope in its narratives. As I argued in a 2020 paper, solarpunk is "an explicit refusal of

negativity" (A. Kroon 7), as opposed to the cyberpunk genre's delight in despair and nihilism in a world of capitalism run amok (Flynn); solarpunk narratives instead focus on community-building and subversive action against oppressive forces despite their location. I can see the seeds of this in *Roadshow*, as it emphasizes community, care, and companionship among minoritarian subjects despite—even a result of—the reality of the post-apocalyptic city. Arguably, solarpunk finds its roots in nonwestern, decolonial thinking, drawing inspiration from and often running parallel with 21st century iterations of Afrofuturism, queer and LGBTQIA++ SF, Indigenous Futurisms, and feminist science fictions in its ongoing self-actualization.[148] Its philosophies of community and living lightly on the earth find solidarity as well in queer, feminist, and BIPOC literatures (A. Kroon 5), in order to see a way forward past the current dystopic moment, its apocalyptic nostalgia, and forwards into a radically new future.

The most obvious and ongoing example of the way that the current SF imagination of the future as based in the past has terrible consequences for reality can be found in the language and attitudes surrounding the recovery efforts made by the Global North from the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Though the fascistic slogan of "Make America Great Again" has fallen into disfavour due to its proponent, the 45th president of the United States, being ousted from his position, the 46th president has seen fit to adopt a similar nostalgic sentiment, with a slogan of "Building Back Better." Joe Biden's transition website was named buildbackbetter.gov, and whether oriented and embedded in the context of COVID-19 recovery or an explicit mandate to return America to the way that it was before conservative leadership, the emphasis is on building *back*. This rhetorical move has been adopted by Canada's Liberal (Moscrop) and Conservative parties ("BuildBackBetter") as well: the future, North Americans are told, will be a continuation

[148] See: Arsenault; A. Kroon 6; Cameron "Part 1" and "Part 2"; Hamilton; Light; Springett.

of the past. The (white, cis, settler, male) imagination of a prosperous time before "X"—coronavirus, conservative leadership, queer liberation, postcolonial unrest, feminist intervention, etc.—is blatantly activated, drawing on the dominant SF imagination of the future as a familiar place rooted in past policy.

In each chapter of this dissertation, I have studied at length the ways in which certain post-apocalyptic SF texts deliberately break free from the shackles of the abovementioned imaginary to articulate truly new futures. In chapter one, my analysis of Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* brought out the ways in which the novel itself functions as a rebuke of simplistic cli-fi narratives, even as it preceded the emergence of cli-fi as a genre by several decades. Though there is spectacle, characters such as Kirstie comment on the ways in which the depiction of disaster is mobilized by the media and the government to distance viewers' sense of self from what is happening and to justify the intervention of armed forces into recovery efforts. *Tsunami* is extremely critical of the disaster narrative in its dictation of people's actions in the aftermath of an apocalyptic event, showing in the character of Allison that attempts to define the future as an extension of the past made familiar by action film narratives are doomed to failure. Allison's attempt to control the post-apocalyptic situation through power and violence is a non-starter, whereas the communitarian efforts of characters such as Kirstie, Don, Sam, Einar, and Dennis Chang yield results, though hard-won, in the trust and help of their San Franciscan neighbours and Mrs. Debney's community. The novel ends not with a reassurance that the situation will resolve and that the world will return to pre-apocalyptic stability, but with uncertainty about the very shape of the future environment. Importantly, however, characters are hopeful about their chances of surviving and thriving in the post-apocalyptic world, embracing their transcorporeal

entanglements with the more-than-human environment (Alaimo 2) and reliance on one another to live in the truly new future.

Similarly, Élisabeth Vonarburg's *The Silent City* rejects the patterning of the future after past practices both on the level of genre and within the narrative to present something wholly new. Elisa's struggle with her past training in western, patriarchal scientific methods is lifelong and difficult, but she succeeds in raising her children as informed participants in her Project, with the option to not be a part of it if they so choose. Her striving to break with old habits of thought about her children as subjects of her experimentation and not persons in their own right is ongoing, but she succeeds in modelling a feminist "successor science" (Harding, qtd in Haraway "Situated Knowledges" 172) that, though imperfect in her execution, is realistic in its acknowledgement of her failings and oversight and lifelong commitment. The book itself contains all of the necessary ingredients to build a matriarchal society and become part of the genre of SF feminist utopia, yet pushes back against this generic classification in its exploration and evaluation of power dynamics: exchanging patriarchy for matriarchy in a post-apocalyptic warlike society only changes who holds the power, and not how society is fundamentally arranged around a binary hierarchy of power. As Elisa's Project of gender-changing children pushes back against the essentialist notion that men and women possess certain characteristics by default, the book pushes against the notion that a future society can ever truly be considered different and utopic for all genders if it is still predicated on traditional ideologies about what men and women are fundamentally capable of.

The most obvious rejection of the SF ideology of the future as simply the past, but with more (technology, cities, people, etc.) can be found in my third chapter's study of "Akua Nuten: le vent du sud" by Yves Thériault. Kakatso refuses to be a party to the continuation of the white

supremacist settler state, as he and his family have been exploited and defined by it for their entire lives, he as a wilderness guide, his wife as a maker of cultural goods to be sold, his children in their rejection of their Montaignais heritage. The apocalypse is the reveal: Kakatso is able to see that post-apocalypse, white culture suddenly cannot enforce his compliance and so he is free to act contrary to the Canadian state's dictate that he be a subservient token of multiculturalism. In walking away from the Montrealais, Kakatso deliberately refuses to embody the "helpful Indian" of American and Canadian literary tradition and serve as a survival guarantor for the white city people. In this short story, Kakatso dies, but not before defeating the continuity of the sociopolitical settler state in northern Quebec, leaving room for something truly new to come.

My fourth chapter's reading of Paulette Jiles *The Late Great Human Roadshow* enacts a similar deconstruction of the ideology of white middle class settler expectation of the future as merely an extension of the past despite apocalyptic rupture (so tellingly exemplified in the genre of cyberpunk). Huddled in the Don Jail at the end of the novel, characters Heather, Marta, John, and Victoria are still hopeful that the state will rescue them from their situation, relinquishing their own agency in an inability to think outside of the "reality" of Canadian rule. The characters that thrive in the post-apocalypse (as much as possible considering encroaching radiation sickness) occupy minority positions in society: an older Black woman, children, an old man, a cow, neurodiverse vagrants. Their banding together in a motley community of care enacts a vision of a future community that truly breaks from past ideology of who gets to matter according to the dictates of the Enlightenment worldview, so entrenched in the structures of settler-Canada.

Each chapter, each text under study in that chapter, struggles towards an articulation of a world outside of the traditional future of SF that has been so ingrained in the North-American white male settler psyche. I do not think that there is any room to argue that all settler-Canadian post-apocalyptic SF from 1948-1989 can be bound together by their explicit or implicit display of certain themes, much less that they fulfil some sort of mandate of literary nationalism. However, an observation that I can make now, after years of research and study, is that each of the main texts that I chose to study gesture towards newness and a futurity the likes of which cannot be imagined by settlers within the narratives our society has told itself for centuries. These stories, and the successful survivors within them are, again in the words of Junot Diaz (as quoted by Kim TallBear), "misaligned with the mainstream emotional baseline" ("Sharpening" 0:19:33) enough that the destruction of the structures of their world is not cause for prolonged grief or despair on the part of the characters who are successful. TallBear clarifies that for her personally, she is misaligned with the "incessant dreaming, in whatever political tone, of a successful settler state" ("Sharpening" 0:20:31), and that instead she finds a radical form of hope in the "implosion of the colonial progress narrative" ("Sharpening" 0:20:57). The post-apocalyptic texts studied in my chapters mainly serve to refute the legacy and power of the narratives that created them, to clear the detritus of old systems away as best they can with their limited power to make way for a future beyond the settler imagination.

One of the questions that I posed when this project began was: If survival is only possible by holding to the values of rugged individuality, masculine physical prowess, and xenophobic distrust of outside forces, what alternatives are there to survive? Six years and several cultural apocalypses later, it is clear to me that North Americans tend to think about survival as a guarantor of some sort of "good life" futurity far too much, even five decades after Atwood's

problematic theorization as a fundamental tenet of the settler-Canadian psyche. I do not want to seem to be concluding that humans think about the future too much—very much the opposite; humanity would be in a very different place had the Global North come together to fight climate change in the 1970s. I would argue that humans tend to think about one type of future too much; a future that is not actually ideologically futuristic at all, but merely a continuation of the present. Settler assumptions that survival is key to achieving a "good life," per Berlant's definition, prompt this present-future.

Mythic narratives such as progress, the social contract, *terra nullius*, the frontier, wilderness, compulsory heterosexuality, scarcity, reproductive futurism, and survival are revealed by the apocalypse in these texts to be manifestations of stupid optimism. As my study has shown, in the post-apocalypse, which more often than not is still marked by crises, characters who are able to move beyond these narratives are the ones that in the end are able to create a life for themselves and others worth living—in community, in relations of care, in an acknowledgement of their entanglement with the non-human world and their environment. Their lives are "sites of unromantic flourishing" ("Sharpening" 0:29:15) to again quote TallBear, that do not hinge on continuity into the future but on quality of relations in the present, demonstrated best by *The Late Great Human Roadshow*. Their present actions are not guaranteed to bring a new future, one of less hierarchy, but in their refusal of the apocalyptic affects of violence and despair, the characters in the eponymous Roadshow allow a new mode of relating based on care to intervene in narratives of the post-apocalypse, one that moves beyond a simple, regressive, fear-based survival.

Postscript:

I am finishing edits to this dissertation conclusion while sequestered in my eleventh-story amiskwacîwâskahikan / Edmonton apartment with air purifiers going full blast as smoke blankets the city, the result of over 300 devastating wildfires in British Columbia, northern Alberta, Montana and Idaho (there are more wildfires in various states and provinces right now, but their smoke is moving away from us). Meanwhile, reports of historic and deadly flooding in Europe are making the news. Usually, I have a pretty good view of the suburbs from here; today they are shrouded by particulate matter, as they have been for a week now. I have taken to wearing a mask with a respirator specifically to filter air pollution outside, as people look at me strangely. I am looking up the best respirators to wear for outdoor everyday use, checking the sale prices, ordering extra air purifiers.

Theorizing a future of catastrophe becomes less of an academic challenge and more of a dreaded chore when the present crises outdo even the most detailed description of an SF apocalypse. At least the people in Crawford Kilian's *Tsunami* could breathe, though the production of specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) such as sun-goggles for livestock mirrors the frenzied drive for masks, air conditioners, and air purifiers this summer. Reality is a bit less kind than fiction in this sense, however; our livestock don't get respirators, and neither do the unhoused or the poor (though Kilian didn't specify whether or not they qualified for PPE in his world, either).

After a year and a half of coronavirus lockdowns where we all bunkered down and did not go out to interact with people in person, I am now gathering supplies for my own personal garrison, and I recognize the irony. I want to gather outside. I want to build community. I also want my lungs not to hurt, my eyes not to burn, my throat not to be rough. I do not want to live like Robert Anthony Allison or Matt Koehle; I would much rather be Kirstie Kennard or Roxana

Raintree. I would rather act on survivance in service of community, embodying an ethic of radical hope instead of acting according to a fear-based script where might (or wealth) makes right, but it seems that the latter reality is the ideology of the society in which I have been raised, and it is extremely hard to break free from old habits, but I am trying. It is my hope that, in a future beyond crisis, it will be easier for others to recognize these narratives, reject their dictates, and move forward together.

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