

Representing Environmental Disaster
in the Anthropocene: Varun Thomas Mathew's
The Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay
as an Ecodystopia

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Abstract

In recent years, anxiety around anthropogenic climate change and its consequences has taken centre-stage in the narratives of contemporary novels. The abundance of ecodystopian novels placed in futuristic climate-changed settings with visions of apocalypse or dystopian futures, reflect the contemporary anguish around climate crisis. It is also the case of India, where many contemporary writers have adopted the literary mode of dystopia to envision the future societies grappling with the consequences of climate change and ecological disaster. Against this backdrop, Varun Thomas Mathew's *The Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay* (2019) is an attempt in fictional form to depict the ecological concerns and environmental crisis caused by anthropogenic climate change. It captures the mind by staging an extreme climate crisis like the Arabian Sea invading the whole city of Mumbai resulting in the rise of a dystopian city settling in a gigantic drome. This article explores how Mathew's novel depicts the dystopian imagination in the Anthropocene through the portrayal of a city after an environmental disaster. It also critically engages with the

representations of non-human world's agency and the politics of memory in a collapsed ecosystem. Moreover, this article also makes a parallel reading of dystopian themes by referring to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932).

Keywords: environmental disaster, Anthropocene, climate change, ecodystopian novel, *Brave New World*, non-human agency.

Introduction

“water has a consciousness, that it carries in its memory everything that’s ever happened in this world, from the time before humans until this moment.” (From *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itäranta)

The ongoing global climate crisis has given force, in recent years, to the debate around recognising the humans as the geological agent, at least in the collective sense. The species-based conceptualisation of humans in this context proposes the human being as “something much larger than the simple biological agent. . . . Humans now wield a geological force” (Chakrabarty 206). Dipesh Chakrabarty quotes climate scientist Oreskes who notes that “we have indeed become geological agents. We have changed the chemistry of our atmosphere, causing sea level to rise, ice to melt, and climate to change. There is no reason to think otherwise” (206). Considering “the central role of mankind in geology and ecology,” Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer have proposed the term “Anthropocene” for the current geological epoch (17). The term embodies the irreversible changes made to planet earth by mankind beginning with the Industrial Revolution in the West in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The rise of the Anthropocene framework has led to the need for what Amitav Ghosh has vigorously called the “moment of recognition” of the anthropogenic moulding of the processes of the earth, having significant and longstanding impacts (5).

In *Anthropocene Fictions*, Adam Trexler notes that the “Anthropocene is also anticipatory, indicating humanity’s probable impacts on geophysical and biological systems for millennia to come” (1). Like Trexler, who calls the climate change “our time’s lasting legacy on Earth” (1), Timothy Morton equates the anthropogenic climate change with the “hyperobjects” humans have created which will “outlast us all” (130). Therefore, what the future holds for planetary life is a growing concern at the moment around the globe. Humans are worried about what Chakrabarty calls “anxieties precisely around futures that we cannot visualize” (211). Here literature plays a crucial role in representing some of these anxieties and concerns around the environmental crisis and ecological catastrophe. The genre of dystopian fiction in this context has become a preferred mode of expression in the contemporary literary tradition. Writers imagine alternative worlds overwhelmed by environmental disaster, ecological catastrophes, and fragile ecosystems in which human lives are characterised by precarity, vulnerability and a constant mode of survival. Along with the depiction of climate-changed settings, these environmental dystopias, or ecodystopias, also envision humans under totalising powers, as Pramod K. Nayar notes, “any ecological disaster leads to political and economic chaos, alternate regimes and social violence” (47).

In his seminal book, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), while expressing concerns over the lack of attention given to the fictional writing dealing with climate change, Ghosh has also pointed out the scarcity of fiction on climate change itself. He notes that “it is a striking fact that when novelists do choose to write about climate change it is almost always outside of fiction” (9). He gives as an example Arundhati Roy’s non-fiction on climate change, and his own writing about which he writes, “this subject figures only obliquely in my fiction” (9). However, since Ghosh’s observation, critical scholarly attention to anthropogenic climate change fiction and to new fictions dealing with narratives of environmental disaster have been on a significant rise (Trexler and Johns-Putra 188). Novels such as Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*, and *The Year of the Flood*, or

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* have drawn the attention of critics from various disciplines. Nevertheless, Ghosh objects to the constriction of climate fiction to only an aspect of science fiction. For example, the fictions of Ursula K. Le Guin and Kim Stanley Robinson are “read as constituting a subgeneric category of science fiction – an environmental science fiction” that has “environmentalist possibilities” (Otto 4). Here Ghosh advocates for a tradition of literary texts’ serious engagement with ecological issues, what Lawrence Buell terms as “Environmentality” (28).

Since Ghosh’s observations, a significant rise in the production of climate change fiction, especially in the Global North, can be traced (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 230). However, critics have noted that it is the Global South that bears the brunt of climate crisis the most. Johan Höglund contends that “already vulnerable people in the Global South suffer most acutely from the climate crisis” (447). But surprisingly, the subject of climate crisis has not featured in the literary imagination of the Global South the way it has featured in the West and in America. Gregers Anderson maintains that “Although climate science in general illustrates that many of the areas in most imminent danger of being severely affected by anthropogenic global warming lie in the Global South, it is very difficult to find climate fictions originating from the Global South on the western market” (5). Nevertheless, a host of contemporary writers, especially from India, have adopted the subject for their literary endeavours, and they are producing climate fictions dealing with diverse concerns in various narrative modes. Among them, writers such as Prayaag Akbar, Samit Basu, Manjula Padmanabhan, Shovon Chowdhury and others have adopted the literary mode of dystopia to envision the rise of ecodystopian worlds through climate change and ecological disaster. In this context, Varun Thomas Mathew’s *The Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay* (2019) can be seen as an attempt in fictional form to incorporate the ecological concerns and environmental crisis caused by human-induced climate change. The novel captures the mind by staging an extreme climate crisis such as the Arabian Sea invading the whole city of Mumbai to create a language of recognition of the years of “slow violence” (Nixon 2) that culminates in sudden

environmental disaster. The apocalyptic vision of the novel is premised not only on political upheaval but also on the indifference to the decades of environmental degradation and unchecked pollution. This article critically expounds Mathew's novel as an ecodystopia. Along with the themes of nonhuman agency and the politics of memory in ecodystopia, the article also analyses the novel in parallel to the overarching features of Aldous Huxley's classic dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932).

Nonhuman Agency and the Ecodisaster Narrative

The vision of the environmental disaster and its longstanding consequences are at the heart of Mathew's *Black Dwarves* (shortened title from here on). It is a tale of the future destruction of the city of Mumbai and the reconstruction of the Bombadrome, a gigantic structure in place of the old city. Convent Godse, the narrator and the last civil servant, who was also a core member in the reconstruction of the new city, recounts "the sins" and "the unspeakable crimes" Alas and his DSP party committed to rise to power (Mathew 18). He narrates the whole story from the beginning, before the general election, as the memory of the past has been completely erased from people's minds. Convent Godse, more commonly referred to as CG, narrates how the city of Mumbai had not witnessed any rainfall for thirty years, and the Arabian Sea invaded the land, submerging the city's greatest structures. The wind stopped blowing over as dust and smog covered the sky. There was no vegetation left, and no animals or birds could be spotted. There was no electricity, means of communication, or transportation left. People fled the city as it lay completely devastated. Then Alas, the leader of the ruling party DSP, set out to rebuild the city. In place of old Mumbai, a humongous structure called Bombadrome is raised. It is "a city elevated over the inundated soil, large enough to accommodate all the roads and offices and metro stations and housing required for thirty million people, contained entirely within a million walls and under a single roof" (Mathew 15). Life inside the Bombadrome is tech-driven and programmed by algorithms and authoritarian codes.

Soon the people inside it get used to the new life and forget all about the old city, and all the incidents and catastrophes that have marked their lives up until the present.

Reflecting on critical eco-dystopia, Alexa Weik von Mossner notes that the characters of ecodystopian novels “often learn the hard way that the nonhuman world possesses multiple forms of agency eluding human control as they try to cope with the unintended consequences of the lifestyles of previous generations” (194). In other words, the basic elements of the earth, like water, climate etc., are seen in most ecodystopian novels as more like the living characters that participate in untangling the plot in most cases than merely existing as the background. The nonhuman world acts in ways that are beyond human perception or control. and, therefore, creates an irreparable impact by making humans helpless. The sense of vulnerability is an important trope for the ecodystopian novel, employed in order to create maximum impact. It acts as a reminder of Nature’s unprecedented power that can bring about catastrophe, making people vulnerable. Mathew’s novel draws on this theme of the nonhuman world’s agency to drive home a serious concern in the Anthropocene. Hence, Nature in the narrative has been given active agency. It becomes more than just a backdrop for the characters to act out their roles. The novel gives the earth, the climate, and the monsoon clouds agency to avenge the sins committed by humans for so long (Prasad 136). It attributes to earth the memory of a living being. It uses its forces to usher in destruction and disaster to human civilization. Thus, CG narrates that it was as if “the earth beneath our feet has rebelled against us” (Mathew 11). The novel echoes the tea master’s story of water in Emmi Itäranta’s *Memory of Water*. The story suggests that water has its own will and a consciousness:

Water understands the movements of the world, it knows when it is sought and where it is needed. Sometimes a spring or a well dries for no reason, without explanation. It’s as if the water escapes of its own will, withdrawing into the cover of the earth to look for another channel. Tea masters believe there are times when water

doesn't wish to be found because it knows it will be chained in ways that are against its nature. (91)

Critics have recognised the importance of understanding climate not only as numerical index but also in terms of its agency (Johns-Putra and Sultzbach 2). As Adeline Johns-Putra and Kelly Sultzbach point out, "Climate has more often been defined as what it does rather than what it *is*" (2). In *Black Dwarves*, the narrator reflects on the "peculiar behavior" of the monsoon clouds and can find no explanation, as he notes, "each year, monsoon clouds that shed copious amounts of rain all along their coastal route towards us simply close up when they arrive over our city - until, upon passing clear of its borders, they begin once more to joyfully unload their cargo" (11). This unusual occurrence in the novel can be read along with the tea master's story of water in Itäranta's novel. Just as in the narrative of *Memory of Water*, here also Mathew imagines the monsoon clouds as living entities with memory who can force their own will and evade the landscapes of Mumbai. The devastating consequence makes Mumbai a city that is cursed, as the narrator notes, "Mumbai was abandoned and left to die" (14). However, Mathew's novel presents the environmental catastrophe as a culmination of several events, not only related to ecology but also to politics and culture. It juxtaposes the human-induced climate crisis with the treacherous violence perpetrated on people by a power-hungry political party. Thus, it vividly describes the episodes of social unrest and political upheavals driven by seditious propaganda in the large part of the novel as the genesis of a great crime that summons the earth's wrath. The well-designed plans of Alas and his DSP party to get to power turn out to be the greatest sins committed against the people and the landscape of Mumbai. The evil plans of staging riots, spreading propaganda and even sacrificing people's lives are perceived as the primary driver of a situation in which CG imagines that the earth itself takes revenge against the people of Mumbai. Thus, the nonhuman world in Mathew's novel turns out to be what Eva Horn calls the "understanding of climate as a cultural force" (qtd. in Anderson 1).

Climate-disaster imaginaries such as the one present in *Black Dwarves* need the expanded and flexible framework as the “speculative nature of climate fiction,” Anderson notes, “clearly underpins the fact that anthropogenic global warming cannot be reduced to a chemical process in the atmosphere” (1). It has bearing on the cultural processes, and in the production of meaning, having significant impacts on contemporary discourses as well. Furthermore, by presenting the devastating visions of the nonhuman world’s forces, texts like *Black Dwarves* not only offer a peek into the future worlds but also “provide[s] speculative insights into how it might be to feel and understand in such worlds” (Anderson 1). For instance, when the rain disappeared from the city of Mumbai, the narrator muses on the folklore of the monsoon as a powerful character that has been imagined to be the redeemer of the sinners:

I grew up on the Malabar coast, where people know that the gifts of the monsoons are not just water and wind. No. Here it is believed, or was long ago, that the monsoons also brought forgiveness. Yes, each year the arrival of the rains declared to mankind that their sins stood a chance at redemption. But when the rains failed it meant the land had witnessed something unworthy of forgiveness, and inevitably strange and terrible things would follow. (Mathew 12-13)

The depiction of the earth, the rain, and the climate as the avengers of the sins of the people in the novel is part of a deliberate strategy that aligns with the climate-crisis of the contemporary world. It poses questions for humans in the Anthropocene whether we, as a species, stand a chance at our own redemption.

Disaster, Memory, and Mourning

Critics have observed, in broader terms, two types of climate change novels that are in vogue. There are climate change novels which have the setting of “a recognisable, realist present” and there are novels which are set in “a futuristic climate-changed world” (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 234). The latter category can be further

classified as apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, or dystopian, all of which are set in the future. Sylvia Mayer describes this latter type as “catastrophic” (qtd. in Goodbody and Johns-Putra 234). Thus, the ecodystopian novel, premised on a future ecological disaster, cannot be centered exclusively on the individual psyche and be the story of conflict or struggle of an individual as the contemporary realist novel does (Bernhard 8). The treatment of climate change in the novel always brings out a story of change (mostly negative) that affects more than one or several individuals. Hence, ecodystopian novels, such as McCarthy’s *The Road*, Itäranta’s *Memory of Water*, or John Lanchester’s *The Wall*, though presenting the journey of individuals, envision a dystopian future for the community and have “a species-oriented conception of humanity” (Bernhard 8). The novel *Black Dwarves* also falls into this category as it envisions a dystopian future for the collective propelled by climate change and the subsequent environmental catastrophe.

It has been observed that the texts, while “address[ing] ecocide, environmental catastrophes or climate change, they very often envision it” to take von Mossner’s formulation, “as ‘end-time scenario and global human tragedy’, in short as apocalyptic” (qtd. in Nayar 47). While dealing with climate change and environmental disaster, Mathew’s *Black Dwarves* envisages an apocalyptic scenario as its starting point, on which a dystopian cityscape emerges. The city of Mumbai has been imagined to be a site of apocalypse. As the rain disappears and the sea invades the land, the landscapes of Mumbai lie deserted. The uninhabited cityscapes of Mumbai become “spectral lands” (Nayar 60) which exist against the memories of its magnificent spectacles and great history of modernisation. The crumbling structures, the haunted ruins and the deserted landscape hold “an absence that is a palpable affective memory and history: of a humanity that has disappeared” (Nayar 61). Adapting Julia Round’s concept of “spectral city,” Nayar argues on the post-apocalyptic visions of ecodystopian texts:

the depiction of empty streets, deserted public spaces and open-but-empty homes in the ecodystopian text forces us to acknowledge that this emptiness was preceded and produced by a history. The

collective memory of malls, cinema houses, parks and homes is encoded in the material artefacts that now lie around in ruins, such as we see in *I Am Legend*, *Book of Eli* and other texts. (60)

The ruins and the eerie emptiness create a sense of the uncanny in Mathew's novel. The world outside the Bombadrome also gives a strikingly haunting feeling as the desolation created by the disappearance of humans engulfs the city. The sea separated from the Bombadrome by the enormous coastal wall looks like "a sorrowful, greenish-grey expanse without a single boat or light" which deepens this sense of barrenness (Mathew 31).

However, what Mathew focuses on in the novel is not the absence, but the secrets that the grey sea, the submerged structures and the ruins keep. The forgotten past of the once-alive city of Mumbai is the author's main subject of interest. Thus, there is a lamentation over the loss of memory and erasure of history of the old city which has been seen as "proleptic mourning" or nostalgic futurism (Prasad 132). The narrator is nostalgic about the old city because, apart from him, nobody can remember the old Mumbai. Thus, he laments:

Mumbai was a wild and un-programmed city, filled with suffering and injustice and a beauty that was reserved for the elite. Nothing was black and white, and not a single thing about the old city could elicit only a single emotion. Yet, despite the overwhelming sense of unfairness, I loved it. Or, at least, I preferred it to what we have now, to the Bombadrome. (Mathew 54)

He mourns the absence of memory as well as the site of memory because through the resurrection of the Bombadrome, the landscape of the city gets changed forever, and the new structure obliterates all the signs of the past and recreates a new history for the people of Mumbai. The Bombadrome turns out to be exactly how Alas, the leader of the DSP party, envisioned it to be:

We'll change things forever . . . not just a single law or a policy, but the entire city. I want to rebuild it entirely. Break down the old. Wash away every reminder of the past. With the sea, if I can. And

then build a utopia in its place. Where everything is controlled. Justice is ensured. Equality is enforced. (Mathew 159)

The narrator presents the Bombadrome, a gigantic structure, as “a fortress,” and “a modern citadel,” but also as “this monstrosity” which represents a symbol of the complete erasure of the past (Mathew 15). It comes out of a utopian vision and claims to create a paradise for “it is powered by the sun and hydrated by the sea . . . can survive a nuclear attack and has a near perfect waste management system. Housing, public transport and food are available to everyone within those walls” (Mathew 16). But the humongous structure buries under it the ruins of a history that was once chaotic but alive. Its presence dominates the landscape, overshadowing the once-vibrant ecosystems and underscoring the novel's overarching theme of humanity's detachment from nature. It is evident through the narrator's refusal to live inside the Bombadrome. He tries to cling on to the ruins of the old city as he remarks, “I cannot let go of the past, I cannot accept this terrible present, and I shudder at the vision of the future lying before us” (Mathew 241). Not only the mega-structure of the Bombadrome that enables the destruction of the past but also the programming and algorithms that dictate the human lives inside it enforce amnesia. Through the mourning of the past, the novel creates a parallel to the contemporary crisis of history and the politics of the past. Though the focus of the novel is on climate-changed settings, it cannot leave out its strain of political satire.

Environmental Disaster and Dystopian Imagination

Mathew's *Black Dwarves* presents the post-apocalyptic world of Mumbai as an anxious juncture where the conception of the Bombadrome, a utopian world, takes shape. It is part of that “social dreaming” that imagines a better world for its inhabitants but turns out to be a social “nightmare” (Sargent 8). Therefore, in *Black Dwarves*, the vision of the world inside the Bombadrome is depressingly dystopian. In an interview given to Justin Nisly, Mathew reveals that the conception of the Bombadrome is inspired

by Huxley's classic dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932). Mathew states that "Orwell's and Huxley's two worlds form the two different types of dystopia you can have . . . when I started figuring out about what the Bombadrome would look like, I just leaned completely towards the Huxley side" ("A Bit of Magic Realism"). Indeed, the structure of the Bombadrome can be taken as a miniature of the world state of Huxley's *Brave New World*. Both futuristic worlds exist as technological marvels which can be seen as the gross realization of human aspirations in the field of science and technological advancement. The philosophy of community, identity and stability in Huxley's novel is manifested in the Bombadrome as living reality, not only as principles. A population that is easy to govern, which ensures stability, is very important in the conception of a dystopia. Inside the Bombadrome, stability is ensured in two ways – by creating a sense of content among the people and by controlling people's memories of history.

Just like in *Brave New World*, a sense of content is brought about in the population in Mathew's novel by providing various means of entertainment. The uninterrupted flow of "any form of carnal satisfaction" (Mathew 29) ensures that the population has no time to reflect on the loss of the old world. Hence, people are encouraged to take alcohol, drugs and various substances provided by the state in order to maximize pleasure. The citizens in Huxley's novel are encouraged to take the tablets of soma as soon as they feel miserable and melancholic to stay in a perennial state of happiness and content. In the Bombadrome, the sense of calm and content is ensured by treating the air inside it. Bae Corp is the institution responsible for controlling the air by adding vapourized aerosol dispersants to not only make people feel active, happy and young, but also to force amnesia. Therefore, there is a deliberate attempt to make people forget the life and time before the Bombadrome. The dispersants injected in the air inside the Bombadrome affect the brain's limbic system and induce "a remarkably unique amnesia – one that left its victims' normal faculties untouched but weakened their hold on the perception of history" (Mathew 30). The people are made to let go of history as

this ensures stability inside the Bombadrome. The narrator comments:

The lack of a passionately espoused national history, and the absence of allegiance to another way of life, makes the people in the Bombadrome easier to govern. They're more adjusting, more flexible, and infinitely more willing to live together with millions of other people in a glass-and-iron fortress. Memories of history are unnecessary baggage that have for centuries caused bloodshed and strife in our country, and if the hold of the past on the public mind could be loosened, making people more pliable . . . why not? (Mathew 31)

In a dystopia, the control over memory and language is crucial for the power structure. According to Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, dystopian regimes thrive on “the process of taking control over the means of language, representation, memory and interpellation” (6). In Mathew’s novel, by producing a different history for each community, a sense of false pride for the greatness of their forefathers is created. This eliminates the elements of dissatisfaction and complaint from people’s minds and fosters greater stability and peace. CG, the narrator, observes:

By manipulating history and feeding people what they wished to hear, a great harmony – the likes of which had never earlier existed on the subcontinent – was achieved. People listened to their History Casts episodes and forgot their grievance against their fellowmen and their grouses against their governments and went about their lives in contentment, their eyes dimmed, minds ever turned towards their illusory past. (Mathew 92)

People are deceived with regard to the actual reality through being conditioned in numerous ways since “the official hegemonic order of most dystopias . . . rests, as Antoni Gramsci observes, on both coercion and consensus” (qtd. in Moylan 148). But here, the entire population is conditioned in such a way that consensus is the naturalised condition. In the Bombadrome, people are wearing the AREBO set which “alters their reality to give them the illusion of

privacy with their own god, while digitally wiping out traces of devotees and idols from other faiths” (Mathew 26). The AREBO virtual-reality set alters reality to let people experience every form of fantasy and carnal desire. There is also the Bhasafish translation software that censors and sanitises the expressions of people’s negative emotions so that confrontation can be eliminated. It modifies the translations “to reflect politeness and pleasantness at all times . . . if people swear, their words are censored” (Mathew 28). The technological devices introduced in the Bombadrome by the state work as what Louis Althusser famously terms Ideological State Apparatuses which function not ‘by violence’ but ‘by ideology.’ Here, the utopian vision of Alas and his party thrives on the ideology of communal life, equality and security, which can only be achieved in a technologically controlled drome, “with the manufactured peace, the artificially softened speech and the on-demand gratification of pleasures” (Mathew 92). Therefore, in the Bombadrome, the distortion of the self is the norm.

Mathew’s novel deliberates on the utopian vision of establishing a society characterized by equality on earth. It hints at a shattering vision of digital dystopia in which the self can no longer be able to see outside the framework imposed by the state. And as there remains no reference point, people will never know their compromised state of being, as well as the violent history of the making of this utopia. Thus, the ways and experiences of the old world seem shocking, unnatural and hard to believe for the people of the Bombadrome. Just like in *Brave New World*, where getting pregnant and breastfeeding are seen as shameful acts and something unnatural, in *Black Dwarves* even experiencing the things of the physical world—the soil, the fresh air, the sunlight, the sea—becomes an anomaly. People are conditioned in such a way that they find the ways and experiences of the old world unnatural, immoral or shocking. They cannot imagine a world outside the Bombadrome. The naturalised illusion in which they live revolves around the cycles of self-indulgent hedonism and digitally altered fantasies. Beyond this deception, there is not a crevice through which some awareness of the self can come

through. The drought of imagination is, therefore, not unjustified in the novel.

Conclusion

The anxiety around human-induced climate change and its consequences are manifested in Mathew's novel through the mode of dystopia. Mathew imagines a post-apocalyptic world by presenting a vision of environmental disaster and a reversed natural order. Thus, in relation to the ecological crisis, it narrativises the rise of an authoritarian regime and the enforcement of ideological apparatuses for control, manipulation and deception. The transformative agenda that the novel foregrounds through its satire of the history told to the population before a general election finds coherence in the dystopian novel's approach. Dystopias very often display a utopian zeal for finding ways to achieve a just and equal society characterised by comfort, security and stability. But the paradigmatic vision of utopia often proves to be "Janus-faced," always incorporating the anxiety of utopia gone wrong (Bagchi 2). In the case of *Black Dwarves*, homogeneity is preserved, and equality is attained, but only in an artificial drome. The price of establishing "the happiest city on earth" (Mathew 92) is so high that soon the utopian hope of humanity's redemption gets shattered, and a bleak shadow of dystopia engulfs the whole narrative. Its horrific vision accentuates a sense of approaching vulnerability that mankind cannot defer any longer. Hence, though promulgating a dark vision of the future, the novel is primarily concerned with the present. It weaves a narrative that appeals to the mind and creates a language that engages the contemporary anguish around environmental crisis. As von Mossner rightly notes, "it is the combination of ethical, experiential, and affective appeals then, that makes the effects of fiction unique, and ecodystopian texts are critiques in this sense: they present readers with a dilemma and then imbue that dilemma with emotional value" (195). Mathew's novel, therefore, presents itself as the critique of the contemporary world's indifference to the pressing issues of the day.

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