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Grim Ambiguity Coupled with Sanguinity:
Submergence of Anthropocentrism
in Dystopian Climate Fiction

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Abstract

This study seeks to carry out a comparative examination of *The Drowned World* (1962) by J. G. Ballard and *New York 2140* (2017) by K. S. Robinson, two examples of dystopian climate fiction, from an ecocritical standpoint. Both the former, written in the 20th century, and the latter, written in the 21st century, speculate on the 22nd century from parallel angles and get involved in unparalleled dialogues with the Anthropocene, which makes it possible to delve into both relatively old and fairly new modes of understanding of the Anthropocene via an ecocritical lens. Despite their parallel points of departures from the severity of ongoing alterations in most spheres of the planet on unprecedented levels, coupled with their parallel subjects of the extirpation of human supremacy in an inundated London and a half-inundated New York, respectively, the comparative eco-spotlight is aimed at the ways in which they submerge the deep-rooted anthropocentrism and bring to light their unparalleled speculations on what emerges when it is submerged. Such a deep dive into the close-knit dialogues of both with the complexities of the Anthropocene is oriented towards unearthing the tangled eco-nets springing from their similarly-formed cores but weaving disparately-based eco-futures.

Keywords: ecocriticism, anthropocentrism, apocalypticism, utopianism, dystopianism

The longstanding idea of building and maintaining a sustainable civilization here on Earth before the biosphere falls to pieces has been thwarted by some of humanity's greatest challenges and crises, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, such as global warming, deforestation, ocean acidification, overpopulation, human-induced toxicity and loss of biodiversity. Despite the unprecedentedly detrimental threat to both human and nonhuman inhabitants of the entire planet, such ecological and climatological issues are not paid significantly fair attention because of the tendency of the human to not believe in such a global threat or the anthropocentric thought that leads them to believe in the full manageability and/or manipulability of it all through the human mastery. Considering the latter scenario, the point of departure for this study is based on the hypothesis that the dawn of the current, human-dominated epoch called the Anthropocene has eclipsed Earth's scientifically acknowledged epoch called the Holocene due to a wide range of human-induced activities, having resulted in ever-increasing environmental and climatic crises, among others. In this vein, the Anthropocene is regarded as the period in which humankind has become a significant geological, ecological and meteorological force by excessively privileging the human over the nonhuman. Since the industrial breakthrough, modernization processes and a whole range of techno-scientific advancements have blown the coals of humanity's deep-seated inclination to regard humankind as the superior form of life. Unsurprisingly, such a blissfully growing indifference to the fact that the human is a part of a larger, more complex web of existence and the human's self-seeking policy of life have been in an unblissful way accompanied by measureless exploitation and degradation of the rest of the forms of life and components of the planet. To put it another way, such one-sided tendencies have resulted in drastic alterations in the ways in which the entire planet used to operate with relatively little or no human

intervention in the Holocene, which has led to the human having made the bed of the Anthropocene, altered in multiple ways, in which both the human and the nonhuman are bound to lie for the foreseeable future.

In this regard, it is worth putting a critical spotlight on the Anthropocene, a multifaceted phenomenon with its accompanying complexities as a fundamental keystone in this study. As a yet-to-be-official “name of the geologic epoch we currently inhabit . . . a separate epoch from the Holocene” (Boes and Marshall 60), the term Anthropocene was first coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer,¹ two atmospheric scientists. Since then, it has been widely employed by many for the purpose of referring to “the geological epoch that the Earth entered with the industrial revolution, around 1800” (Clark 1). Considering the fact that the Pliocene, the Pleistocene, and the Holocene, three prior geological epochs, “translate respectively as ‘newer time,’ ‘newest time,’ and ‘entirely new time,’” Tobias Boes and Kate Marshall set out to translate the extensively popularized term referring to the current epoch of the planet, the Anthropocene, as the “time of the new man” (62). Such a translation seems ironically on-point because this so-called new human has nearly irrevocably come to be detached from all the other forms of life, having assumed a self-appointed superior role and ultimately coming to function as an unprecedented danger on a planetary scale. Since especially the industrial breakthrough and subsequently the “Great Acceleration,”² the human, having become more carefree of the rest of the living beings co-inhabiting the same home planet, has come to assume full supremacy to act freely on their self-seeking agendas, resulting in drastically anthropogenic alterations of the ways in which the living planet operates. In addition, just like there is no consensus about the dawn of the Anthropocene, there is no consensus about its interpretations either. On the one hand, the biophysical complications of the Anthropocene have been central to Earth System Science, which is an interdisciplinary field whose main objective is to study the Earth as a whole and complex system operated by a vast variety of dynamic interactions among the

Earth's many components as well as many co-inhabitants, particularly the apparent influence of human activity over the Earth System as a whole.³ On the other hand, in-depth explorations of the Anthropocene, as well as its multifaceted implications, go beyond the limits of such interdisciplinary approaches and pave the way for brand new avenues of analyses in literary theories and imagination.

As a term initially restricted to geological terminology, the Anthropocene has come to serve as a threshold concept according to Timothy Clark (2015), who draws attention to its both undeniably “frightening” and “intellectually liberating” facets (xi). The flame of the former conceptualization is fanned via “a kind of inertia or potential paralysis” resulting from the complications of the view of the human as a “species-being,” which hints that such an immense power may be assumed in an undifferentiated way by this so-called new human as a whole with this whole new agency as unprecedented forces in most spheres of the planet to introduce an immediate shift (Clark 15). Yet, the transition of the Anthropocene from aforementioned disciplines into the studies of culture, literature, and art has also considerable potential to aid “a sort of species-consciousness,” in other words, an awareness of interconnection that requires responsibility of the human as “an effective agent of change” for the sake of all terrestrial life (Clark 17-8). In a similar vein, Clive Hamilton's conceptualization of the Anthropocene as a rupture in the history of the planet, whose systems are tremendously impacted by human activity for the first time in more than four billion years, calls for a new philosophy. His proposal, driven by the double truth embedded in the Anthropocene, invites a philosophical departure from “the old anthropocentrism” and a philosophical arrival to “a new anthropocentrism” for the purpose of rethinking and reevaluating relationships between the human and the nonhuman (78). Not only the nostalgic hope for the Earth to return to a pre-disrupted state but also the hope for the human to return to a pre-disruptive⁴ state are almost equally lost causes; therefore, this new anthropocentrism, in a departure from the traditional anthropocentrism, which has been the idea of the world revolving around the human, prompts the human to realize

how deeply interwoven the human is, and has always been, with the nonhuman, and how deeply responsible the human is, and/or ought to be, to work towards remediating the anthropogenic damage on the planet (Hamilton 100-1). In a similar vein, Erle Ellis in "Planet of No Return" mentions how "frightening" the Anthropocene is likely to be; yet, he steers clear of paying sole attention to its frightening aspect and interprets such fright in bright terms by offering a more utopian conceptualization via the notion of the "good Anthropocene," highlighting human adaptability and capability, both of which Ellis claims to make it possible to attain a relatively better way of life for the sake of both the human and the nonhuman (38). Such a philosophy rooted in "the mantle of planetary stewardship" (Ellis 42) and seeded with utopian possibilities corresponds to ecomodernism, whose similar philosophical framework vouches for the inseparability of the survival and well-being of the human and the nonhuman and proposes such a state of welfare via human action.⁵

Considering the shortcomings of both its dystopian conceptualizations as a one-way ticket to a doomed eco-apocalypse and its relatively utopian conceptualizations as a one-way ticket to relatively better ways of life,⁶ this study seeks to put an ecocritical spotlight on the liminality of the Anthropocene, blurring the boundaries between dystopian and utopian avenues. By drawing on the Anthropocene, pointing to the novel situation the Earth and all of its inhabitants are in, it is brought to light the ways in which the novels in question portray speculative futures similarly ravaged by unprecedented impacts of environmental and climatic occurrences. The fact that both *The Drowned World*, written by J. G. Ballard in the 20th century, and *New York 2140*, written by K. S. Robinson in the 21st century, speculate on the 22nd century from parallel perspectives, makes it possible to delve into both older and newer modes of understanding of the Anthropocene via an ecocritical lens. Despite their parallel points of departure from the severity of alterations in most spheres of the planet on highly detrimental levels, resulting in extreme rises in temperature and seawater levels, melted ice caps, followed by excessive flooding and drowning of

global cities via Ballard's portrayal of a drowned London and Robinson's portrayal of a half-drowned New York, the main aim of this comparison is to assert that their conceptualizations of the Anthropocene differ significantly due to their engagements with the same coin via one's engagement with its one side and the other's engagement with its other side. By drawing attention to the former's apocalyptic tendencies veiled in a classically dystopian way – that is one of despair and pessimism – and the latter's catastrophic tendencies erupting in a critically dystopian way – one that retains some possibility of utopianism –⁷ this study seeks to investigate the Anthropocene as a liminal concept in light of its utopian and dystopian seeds both of which are embedded within its core. Such a liminal conceptualization of the Anthropocene makes it possible to shed ecocritical light on similarly liminal ways in which the selected examples of dystopian climate fiction contain tangled nets within their cores laying the groundwork for disparate constructions of eco-futures.

In this regard, Ballard's *The Drowned World*, written in 1962, can be regarded as one of the pioneering examples of climate fiction.⁸ Despite the dim light shed on such irrefutable matters in literature prior to the 21st century and the popularization of climate change fiction as a literary phenomenon along with Dan Bloom's coinage of the buzzword, cli-fi, in the 21st century, literary fictions drawing attention to ecological and climatic issues have been in the public realm without attracting serious public attention since the late-19th century. Jules Verne's *Paris in the Twentieth Century*, written in 1883, about extraordinary climatic issues is regarded as one of the pioneering works written by a handful of authors who refused to turn a blind eye to such matters, especially since the mid-20th century, including J. G. Ballard, Frank Herbert, T. C. Boyle, Amitav Ghosh, Barbara Kingsolver, Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood, Paolo Bacigalupi, Ian McEwan, Kim Stanley Robinson among others. In this context, Lawrence Buell, in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, stresses that especially “for half a century science fiction [along with climate fiction in the shadows] has taken a keen, if not consistent interest in ecology, in planetary

endangerment, in environmental ethics, in humankind's relation to the nonhuman world" (56). Thus, it is safe to state that growing inclinations towards such ecological and climatological matters in sci-fi have played a considerable role for cli-fi in bringing such timely matters more to the fore. As stressed by Bloom: "Cli-fi is relevant today more than ever and will remain so for the next 100 years . . . So put sci-fi together with cli-fi and the hybrid mix is ablaze with timely immediacy," and he adds that the primary goal of this expanding literary phenomenon is "to act as a wake-up call, a warning flare, an alarm bell. Literature matters and cli-fi has a future in the 21st and 22nd centuries for sure" (qtd. in Shenoy).

In this vein, Ballard's twentieth-century dystopian climate fiction, engaging with timely ecological and climatological matters deteriorating also in the 21st century and speculating on the 22nd century, draws immense and bleak attention to these longstanding crises via its portrayal of a post-apocalyptic scene in the aftermath of "a series of violent and prolonged solar storms lasting several years" whose fatal solar radiation has made it almost impossible for human beings to survive in most parts of the planet (34). Despite the fact that the root cause of such solar storms is not purely anthropogenic, the deterioration of the ozone layer that has already begun and has anthropogenically worsened long before the 22nd century – even before the 21st century, for that matter – makes it possible to point to the role the human has played in such drastic damages and multifaceted regression in Ballard's speculative future of the planet. In the aftermath of longstanding anthropogenic disruptions of the functioning of the Earth, the consequent atmospheric occurrences that have taken place in Ballard's speculation on the 2070s have resulted in further calamitous disruptions of the Holocene on unfathomable levels, and most of the planet has become uninhabitable for the human in 2145. In an extremely flooded and abandoned 22nd-century London, the story unfolds around a squad of scientists and researchers whose three-year-long surveys on ongoing ecological and climatic changes and their consequent findings bring the grim reality of the planet and its inhabitants to light. As a result of aggressively rising temperatures

having turned most cities and especially tropical areas into uninhabitable waste lands across the globe, people have been forced to find a solution by moving to more Northern territories, to “the Antarctic plateau and [to] the northern borders of the Canadian and Russian continents” to escape heat waves and solar radiation (Ballard 35). The incredible amount of melting of the polar ice caps, having resulted in rising seawater levels and increasing coastal erosion has also played a significant role in nearly irreversible alterations of the landscape across the globe.

The flames of dystopian atmosphere are more aggressively fanned for the human by the involuntary decline the power of the anthropocentrism has fallen into due to the unprecedented transformations with regards to flora and fauna across the planet, and most of the European cities, including London, have ended up being governed by systems of lagoons which have made it arduous and almost impossible for human beings to try to set about re-occupying those cities (Ballard 5). According to the reports drawn up by Dr. Robert Kerans and his scientist colleagues, not only has overexpansion of vegetation gained dominion over Northern Europe but also the flora and fauna have undergone such substantial transformations that they “are beginning to assume once again the forms they displayed the last time such conditions were present [during] the Triassic” (Ballard 67). In other words, the flora and fauna of the planet have gone through a backwards journey, in a way, gone backwards to a condition that is characteristic of the Triassic period, also known as the Age of Reptiles. Such a backwards journey has brought back enormous iguanas, giant tarantulas and alligators that have, in turn, made the lands mostly uninhabitable. Such an incubatory state of the planet, secured by gradual regression to an era that is either less or not at all subject to human interventions, has also secured the long-needed ousting of the human from the throne assigned to the human by the human, indifferent to the rest of the co-inhabitants of the planet. Such a dethronement that may be seen as impregnated with utopian seeds can be said to contain dystopian seeds as well. Considering that any utopianism applies only to the nonhuman, as evidenced by its

flourishing when freed from human intervention,⁹ what is seemingly eradicated in Ballard's vision can be said to be "the old anthropocentrism,"¹⁰ which is oriented towards making the Earth to revolve only around the human. The lack of such a relatively utopian progress coupled with the evidence of such a contrary regress leads, from the perspective of the old anthropocentrism, the human to "emerge as a kind of tragic figure, the central agent, unable to fulfill the dream of modernity, to extricate ourselves from nature and rise above it" (Hamilton 102). Despite the presence of utopian seeds in such an eradication, considering the inhospitality of such a transformed planet for the human to flourish and the seeming plantation of such seeds only for the nonhuman to flourish, Ballard's speculation lends itself to an assertion that the eradication of the old anthropocentrism equals the eradication of not only the old but also the new human, or the possibility of the new human,¹¹ which fans the flames of the dystopian aspect of his literary imagination. In addition to such eradivative tendencies, extirpating any sorts of explicit utopian seeds for the possibility of a more sustainable future accommodating both the human and the nonhuman, what also fuels Ballard's dystopic and apocalyptic conceptualization of the Anthropocene is the lack of total rupture of relations with the old anthropocentrism even in a retrograding world,¹² as well as the portrayal of enthronement of a sort of non-anthropocentrism coupled with ecocentrism to a radical extent as the one and only possible remedy securing a rupture of such endangering relations.¹³

Considering the former, Ballard portrays Strangman and his crew members, who get to London by a hydroplane full of machine guns and some other human-made tools for the purpose of draining the lagoons. What propels such a mission is the desire to make it possible for the submerged European cities, including London, to be reinhabited and supposedly re-civilized. Despite the initial lack of what Hamilton refers to as monstrous anthropocentrism, which is fueled by the growth-driven, techno-industrial systems whose only goal is to profit the human irrespective of the nonhuman,¹⁴ in the pursuit of striving to make it re-inhabitable also for the human,

their mission ends up laying bare the failure of the human to sever all ties with the old anthropocentrism. Their mission, which is initially oriented towards carrying out surveys on flora and fauna in order to grasp the extent of such eco-transformations, takes a different turn as a result of their inability to resist the temptations of the old anthropocentrism, such as greed and acquisitiveness, among others. They set about looting those cities, including London, for valuable material goods and luxurious items such as “a mass of crates,” “a collection of bronze and marble limbs and torsos, fragments of statuary,” “altar-pieces and triptychs,” “equestrian statues,” “goblets,” and some gold relics on a “treasure ship” picked from the “Sistine Chapel” of Vatican City, Rome (Ballard 150-52). Significantly, Strangman’s enthusiastic attempt to sit on a “Renaissance throne, presumably dredged from some Venetian or Florentine lagoon” (Ballard 145), followed by a sense of euphoria among most crew members are among compelling evidence of such a perverse turn their mission takes, as well as of a return to the negligently anthropocentric modes of thought of their past. The inability to make a clean break from such a similar anthropocentrism haunts the rest of the humans residing in the Arctic circles as well. Even though plunderage is designated as an illegal activity by the authorities of the Arctic circles, Strangman and his crew members are supported by the very same authorities and government agencies that have established such laws. As Colonel Riggs asserts, “Reclaiming land . . . is a Class A1 priority. If Strangman is serious about pumping out the next two lagoons, he’ll not only get a free pardon but a governor-generalship to boot” (Ballard 254). Moreover, the very same authorities tend to purchase those looted items despite the so-called legal penalties for looting itself. That is why, despite the role of such anthropocentrism in making the planet utterly uninhabitable, coupled with the role of atmospheric and environmental occurrences in the novel, Ballard’s portrayal of the human’s failure to let such anthropocentrism become a thing of the past in this speculative future makes his conceptualization of the Anthropocene inescapably bleak and close-

ended in a dystopic way for any utopian seeds in the interest of an all-inclusively sustainable future to pierce through.

Considering the latter matter, the human's failure to leave such anthropocentrism in the past in Ballard's speculative future, that fuels Ballard's dystopic and apocalyptic conceptualization of the Anthropocene, his portrayal of what can be referred to as radical ecocentrism as seemingly the one and only remedy ends up promoting the welfare of the nonhuman and neglecting that of the human. Just as the road to be taken by the valuation of the human over the nonhuman, as portrayed in the instances of Strangman, his crew members and those in power in the Arctic circles, is evidently unpromising, the road to be taken by the valuation of the nonhuman over the human, as portrayed in the instances of Kerans and Lieutenant Hardman, can be said to be equally unpromising. Kerans, the biologist protagonist of Ballard's work, can be viewed as the embodiment of non-anthropocentrism coupled with ecocentrism to an extremely radical extent as he overvalues the devolutionary route the nonhuman – and the planet in general – has taken. Despite the human-oriented goal of their surveys in London on the probability of a sustainable future for humanity, Kerans discusses with Dr. Bodkin the probability of humans' devolution into pre-humans, pre-disruptive humans, in consideration of the devolution of the nonhuman into a pre-disrupted state; however, he fails to conduct adequate surveys on the probability of a sustainable future for humanity during his years-long research-focused stay in a flooded and tropical London. Instead, such extraordinary experiences in such a once-familiar, now-strange territory have a transformative impact on his departure from his acceptance of the old anthropocentrism and his arrival in his embracement of a radical kind of ecocentrism. During his stay in an extraordinarily transformed London, the flames of such a radical mindset shift are fanned via unsettling dreams people have begun having, which are then theorized as "Neuronics" by Dr. Bodkin (Ballard 71). According to him, "as [they] move back through geophysical time so [they] re-enter the amnionic corridor and move back through spinal and archaeopsychic time, recollecting [their] unconscious

minds the landscapes of each epoch, each with a distinct geological terrain, its own unique flora and fauna” (Ballard 71). Such an unprecedented backwards journey ends up leading to “a total re-orientation of the personality” as though they were “accepting the dreams and allowing to be carried back without retaining any conscious control” (Ballard 72). In light of Dr. Bodkin’s theory, such dreams threaten the human mind as they result in taking the human consciousness out of the equation, thus taking the human out of the equation altogether. Lieutenant Hardman, who manages to devise his own taxonomical system to carry out his idiosyncratic surveys on the flora and fauna, as well as their ongoing transformations, becomes a significant epitome of radically embracing an ecocentric perspective. His unexpected decision to set out on a journey to the southern territories that are more hostile to the human than the northern ones due to more extreme heat, radiation and so on can be regarded as a rational escape from the old anthropocentrism into a supposed sanctuary of radical ecocentrism. What is more, Kerans takes a similar unpromising route, both physically and philosophically, having become “the second Adam searching for forgotten paradises of the reborn Sun” (Ballard 280) due to his departure from the kind of flight of fancy fantasies fueled by the old anthropocentrism and his arrival in the kind of flight of fancy fantasies fueled by what can be referred as radical ecocentrism. Not only can his attempts to flood back the lagoon, drained by Strangman and his crew members, be said to be influenced by his desire to let the nonhuman take its course without any human intervention for any humancentric reason, but also his southward odyssey driven by his shifted way of thinking that “there isn’t any other direction” (Ballard 92) brings his newly-adopted perspective to light. Such a radical mindset shift, which roots for a radical renewal of the nonhuman, tends to radically root out the human altogether since such similar tendencies to embark on journeys to the southern territories are nothing but suicide missions due to the extreme inhospitality of the southern territories for the human. However, both mindsets and missions stem from a lack of faith in the possibility of a more sustainable future for both the

human and the nonhuman due to the doubt in the former's ability to embrace such a policy of life, accompanied with the blind faith that the welfare of the nonhuman requires the absence of the human. That is why, such escapes from the one-sidedness of the former into the one-sidedness of the latter blow the coals of the dystopian flames of Ballard's work.

In this sense, Ballard's dystopian climate fiction engages in a deep dialogue with the concept of the Anthropocene in a frightening, apocalyptic way. Considering that "our ecological predicament has come about because of our anthropocentrism, then the answer seems to be to replace a human-centered understanding of the world with a biocentric or ecocentric standpoint or one with no center" (Hamilton 88), the way out Ballard's account provides is a bleak one, ousting the human from the center without ousting the concept of the center itself. To put it another way, humanlessness does not equal centerlessness in Ballard's fiction since the nonhuman seems to be centralized this time, and "the continued flourishing of other forms of life and ecosystems" (Hamilton 107) seems to be secured by the absence of the human. Thus, the way in which *The Drowned World* sheds light on the multiple realities of the Anthropocene is apocalyptic, and its portrayal of the possible exit route out of the Anthropocene is dystopic in such a close-ended way that the remedy is as deleterious as the disease.

By contrast, *New York 2140*, written by Robinson in the 21st century and set in a 22nd-century New York City, which has been flooded, half-drowned, and significantly altered by anthropogenic climate change and its detrimental effects, engages in a different kind of dialogue with the Anthropocene. Before delving into the kind of dialogue Robinson's dystopian climate fiction engages, it is worth bringing to light the similar kind of dystopian dialogue that Robinson's speculation offers as well. As one of the nine characters and narrators whose accounts spark off the plot, a nameless citizen, called "A Citizen," comes to serve as the provider of historical background and commentary on the plight at hand. The comprehensive knowledge that this nameless citizen seems to have, of not only ecology but also of politics, finance and

so on, brings to light that the radical submergence of most parts of New York City is due to the impact of unprecedented rises in seawater level, fueled by two anthropogenic eco-catastrophes. “The First Pulse,” which occurs around the 2060s due to the increased ocean heat, has been “a profound shock . . . a first-order catastrophe” while the Second Pulse, which occurs years later, has been “a lot worse than the First in its effects, because the total rise in sea level ended up at around fifty feet. This truly thrashed all the coastlines of the world, causing a refugee crisis rated at ten thousand katrinas” (Robinson 149-154). Consequently, some parts of New York City, including Queens, Brooklyn and the south Bronx, have turned into “shallow seas” (Robinson 42), resulting in increases in displacement and homelessness, among other plights. A decade and a half full of such utterly disruptive eco-catastrophes, regarded as “a complete psychodrama decade, a meltdown in history, a breakdown in society” (Robinson 43), has consequently faced off against “the great depression [of the 2060s] that followed the First Pulse” (Robinson 151) and “the food panic of 2074 . . . and the resulting price jumps, hoarding, hunger, famine and death” (Robinson 388).

Despite such anthropogenic catastrophes waving crimson flags with regards to the unfruitfulness of the old anthropocentrism, the failure of rupture of such relations accompanied with the failure to let overly anthropocentric systems, such as late capitalism, be things of the past contribute to the dystopian dialogue with the Anthropocene the novel enters. Such a dialogue with what is widely referred as the Capitalocene¹⁵ indicates the failure to sever ties with the old anthropocentrism in this anthropogenically half-submerged city. In fact, considering the close-knit connection between anthropocentrism and capitalism and the intensification of that connection in the novel, this half-inundated city gets to be of use for the former to keep the latter afloat and vice versa. The fact that “a crowd in that generation, a certain particular one percent of the population . . . rode things out rather well [as if such catastrophes] didn’t touch them” has made it possible for those to develop an understanding of “the floods, the two worst catastrophes in human

history, equivalent or greater to the twentieth century's wars in their devastation, [as] actually good for capitalism" (Robinson 128). What seems to have fueled such an excessively anthropocentric inference is a new kind of a capitalist fantasy of the rich, that is, to live on the water in lower Manhattan, which is half-drowned, and to enjoy "the so-called SuperVenice, fashionably hip, artistic, sexy, a new urban legend" (Robinson 292). Not only does this fantasy cause the housing prices to incredibly rise in lower Manhattan, but it also makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Even though the more fortunate and their indifference to the less fortunate add what can be referred as capitalogenic¹⁶ fuel to the anthropogenic crises at hand, the longstanding policy of life co-constructed by an immense level of indifference shown to the less fortunate nonhuman by the more fortunate human seems to have been replaced by a radically different policy of life. In the wake of unfathomably disruptive ecocatastrophes, "hegemony [of the old anthropocentrism] had drowned" during the postpulse years by means of "a proliferation of cooperatives, neighborhood associations, communes, squats, barter, alternative currencies, gift economies, solar usufruct . . . and submarine technoculture, including aeration and aquafarming" (Robinson 220). Not only do such steps taken in these directions seem to be oriented towards turning this half-inundated condition of the city into "a giant collaborative artwork; blue greens, amphibiguity, heterogeneticity, horizontalization, deoligarchification" but they are also followed by "free open universities, free trade schools, and free art schools" (Robinson 220). What is more, it is possible to stress that the total indifference to the nonhuman – and to the living planet in general – seems to have been relegated to be a thing of the past through the medium of "rapid decarbonization," which is a systematic attempt to decrease carbon emissions, so "[c]arbon-neutral and even carbon-negative technologies were all over the place" (Robinson 339). In this direction, "energy, transport, agriculture, construction" that are conventionally "carbon-positive activities" have been restructured by carbon-negative technologies" (Robinson 389). In addition to the installations and wide popularization of carbon-negative energy

systems such as “solar [and] wind power,” there have been ongoing attempts to deacidify the oceans and alter carbon-releasing construction processes to drag “biofuel carbon . . . out of the air” (Robinson 392).

Considering the ways in which the far-reaching disruptions of the old ways and policies of life due to anthropogenic eco-catastrophes result in upending and transforming most of the social systems and paving the way for new possibilities, the dialogue Robinson’s climate fiction engages with the Anthropocene derives from new anthropocentrism. Fueled by both its continued dialogue with anthropocentrism, acknowledging “we have the power,” and its discontinued dialogue with certain aspects of it, reacknowledging the “fear [of] its misuse,” the new anthropocentrism is an ecological invitation, not to deny the power the human seems to have possessed “foolishly,” but to come to terms with such power, which calls for “a responsibility for the Earth as a whole” (Hamilton 82-89). The rupture of relations, to a certain extent, with the old anthropocentrism whose final termination signals the termination of life as the human knows it, paves the way for Robinson’s work “tempering the sense of alarm with a host of new insights” (Clark xi). In a similar vein, “[t]he philosophical anthropocentrism,” proposed by Hamilton at this point, “diverges from the anthropo-supremacism that brought [about] the ecological crisis” because the anthropocentric seed within the new anthropocentrism is not anthropocentric in a classical sense, but “it is the reverse of the stance of exploitation and control entrenched in previous anthropocentrisms” (Hamilton 104). Therefore, the attention is drawn to the long-eclipsed fact that the route to a more ecologically sustainable future starts here in the present by coming to terms with the animateness of the Earth and the human’s “ultimate inseparability” from the nonhuman (Hamilton 102). Contrary to the old anthropocentrism, which eclipses such facts and casts some poor and flawed light on how inanimate the Earth is, the new anthropocentrism sheds light on “an active and fractious Earth [where] humans are not free to do whatever [they] want but must restrain and restrict what [they] do”

(Hamilton 105). The idea that “[the human] is always woven into nature, *a knot in the fabric of nature*” is what lies “at the heart of the new anthropocentrism” (Hamilton 102-103), and, contrary to the futilely humanist tendencies of the old form, which suggested the destiny of it all lies in human hands, the new is an anti-humanist anthropocentrism, according to which the destiny of it all lies “as much in the hands of ‘Gaia’ as in our own” (105).

In this regard, in addition to the brand-new directions taken via the dethronement of the old anthropocentrism, what distinctively highlights the dialogue Robinson’s climate fiction engages with the new anthropocentrism is Amelia’s way of taking these matters into her own hands. As an eco-activist and a “cloud” star who broadcasts individual cloud shows on social media, Amelia travels the world in an airship she flies and hosts a widely popular show, a sort of environmental documentary, called “Assisted Migration,” whose suggestive name makes it crystal clear that her mission includes assisting with relocations of endangered species to certain territories that are more hospitable for them, particularly with the relocations of starving polar bears to Antarctica. In addition to her partaking in animal conservation missions oriented towards increasing the survival chance of the nonhuman on “an Earth that is further and further from the [accustomed, hospitable] Earth” (Hamilton 95), she exercises the privilege of her powerful online presence not only to raise public awareness of such matters but also to call attention to both anthropogenic and capitalogenic fuels that have been added to the flames of eco-crises in sight. In the live feed she broadcasts for her massive audience in the novel, she pours out her heart and mind: “I’m sick of the rich. I just am. I’m sick of them running this whole planet for themselves. They’re wrecking it! So I think we should take it back, and take care of it. And take care of each other as part of that,” and her small online spark which is meant to ignite a bigger flame gets more ablaze when she adds that “we the people have to band together and take over. We can only do that by mass action . . . It’s a case of all for one and one for all . . . Civil disobedience. A revolution” (Robinson 537-539). Hence, the type

of call she issues for an end both to the old anthropocentrism and to late capitalism, coupled with her massive eco-agendas, highlights the ways in which she comes to serve as the embodiment of a policy of life aligning with the new anthropocentrism. Unlike Hardman and Kerans, who manage to fully extirpate the old anthropocentrism via what can be fairly considered as the extirpation of the human altogether for the sake of the nonhuman in *The Drowned World*, Amelia's non-suicidal, non-eradicative mission involves calling the human to sever ties with decision-making processes coming from "an exalted place of power-without-responsibility" (Hamilton 90) and to come to terms with the responsibilities springing from this position of power-to-a-certain-extent for the sake of the flourishing of both the human and the nonhuman. Therefore, the explicitness of both the grimness and hopefulness retained in the text brings to light the open-endedness of the dialogue with the Anthropocene that Robinson's dystopian climate fiction engages, not in a classically dystopian way but in a critically dystopian way, which sheds light on its relatively utopian seeds for a more sustainable future offering possibilities for both the human and the nonhuman to co-flourish.

To conclude, both Ballard's speculations and Robinson's speculations from different centuries get involved in close-knit dialogues with the Anthropocene via their portrayals of the speculative endpoints that the Anthropocene leads up to in the 22nd century. Despite the similar light shed by both on the submergence of human supremacy via a submerged London and a half-submerged New York, their overall dialogues with the Anthropocene are considerably discrepant. In light of their analogous emphases on ecological and climatic calamities and the lack of severance of ties with supremely anthropocentric relations fanning the flames of such calamities, the apparently parallel routes they take to topple the old anthropocentrism, which exalts the human and the continued human flourishing irrespective of that of the nonhuman, end up bearing divergent fruits. In this vein, the fruit of Ballard's speculation seems to be borne via the entwinement of non-anthropocentrism and ecocentrism to such a radical extent that

what has ended up being heralded is the continued flourishing of forms of life other than that of the human, suggestive of the discontinuation of the human altogether, while the fruit of Robinson's speculation seems to be borne via the entwinement of the new anthropocentrism with ecocentrism, heralding the continued flourishing of all forms of life, including both the human and the nonhuman, even in times of despair. In essence, such unearthed seeds of fruits in both works make it possible to assert that the ultimate hopelessness due to the lack of a relatively utopian seed to reap for an all-inclusive future culminates in bringing the unmitigated apocalypticism looming over Ballard's dialogue with the Anthropocene to the fore and lends his overall vision in his climate fiction to be deemed dystopian in a classical sense, while the intertwinement of both grimness and hopefulness, both saturninity and sanguinity, renders Robinson's dialogue with the Anthropocene catastrophic in a remediable way and his overall vision in his climate fiction dystopian in a critical way, leading to keeping the flames of possibilities for a sustainably all-encompassing future whose groundwork can be laid by eco-principles rooted in interconnectedness, interdependence, co-existence, and co-flourishing alive.

Notes:

¹ See, for further details, P. J. Crutzen & E. F. Stoermer "The 'Anthropocene'" (2000), and P. J. Crutzen "Geology of mankind – The Anthropocene" (2002).

² Prior to such multifaceted advancements, it is possible to put emphasis on the human's extensive agricultural and forest-clearing endeavors, dating back thousands of years and evidencing the human's ever-present inclination towards claiming to be the superior form of life whose needs matter the most. However, the industrial breakthrough and the subsequent "Great Acceleration" are highlighted here to draw attention to a great number of further advancements that have paved the way for the human to assume more of a self-appointed superior position in which all rights to take any steps, required for the sake of their excessively self-seeking

policy of life, have been granted to the human by the human since then. For further details, see Timothy Clark (2015).

³ See, for more, Clive Hamilton (2017).

⁴ To put it another way, much less disruptive state.

⁵ See, for more, *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* (2015) by Asafu-Adjaye et al.

⁶ See, for more, J. Kunnas (2017) among others.

⁷ Even before the coinage of the term by independent journalist and climate activist Dan Bloom because Bloom himself dates it back to 2011. See, <https://bosphorusreview.com/interview-dan-bloom>.

⁸ In consideration of enormous iguanas, giant tarantulas, alligators among others, coupled with the overexpansion of vegetation.

⁹ See, for further details, Hamilton 2017.

¹⁰ The new human in this context can be said to be the human who strives to adopt a new policy of life rooted in co-existence and co-flourishing of both the human and the nonhuman.

¹¹ Epitomized by absurdly excess value attached to anthropocentric trends of thought, evidenced by Strangman being so raring to sit on the Renaissance throne (Ballard 35) among others.

¹² Epitomized by Lieutenant Hardman and Kerans, who clearly end up taking similar kinds of routes, physically and philosophically, towards the end of the novel through their similar desires to let the nonhuman take its course without any further intervention for any anthropocentric reasons or agendas even if it results in the extinction of the human race altogether. See, for more, Ballard 22 and 69 among others.

¹³ See, for further details, Hamilton 2017.

¹⁴ As stressed by a good number of critics, it is possible to draw attention to the close-knit dialogue between the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene, referring to capitalism as the root cause of a wide range of planetary crises. See, for more, Slavoj Žižek (2010), Jason W. Moore (2017) and Donna Haraway (2015) among others.

¹⁵ See Jason W. Moore (2017) for his attention drawn to the capitalism-induced crises with regards to environment and climate among others.

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